

WHEN POP ART MEETS SPIRITUALITY

Artist Jenny Bhatt talks about mapping the influence of social media and consumerism on urban minds in her new exhibition

Rinky Kumar

A melange of pop colours peppered with symbols of spiritualism and consumerism is probably the best way one can describe Jenny Bhatt's latest creations. The award-winning artist is showcasing 50 works at her exhibition titled *Swimming in the Subconscious*, which is currently underway at the Jehangir Art Gallery.

These paintings are the 18th episode of *MokshaShots*, a series she conceived in 2009. While *moksha* means salvation, she defines *MokshaShot* as a taste of the sublime, which essentially means doing things that are fulfilling and elevate your mood instantly.

Jenny's new works take this concept forward by depicting the mental state of urban citizens who are constantly exposed to social media and have increasingly become consumerist. The artist, who is showcasing her works after three years, says, "My paintings are about the pervasiveness of the social media. I've used icons from the digital medium that are part of our everyday life and get embedded in our psyche."

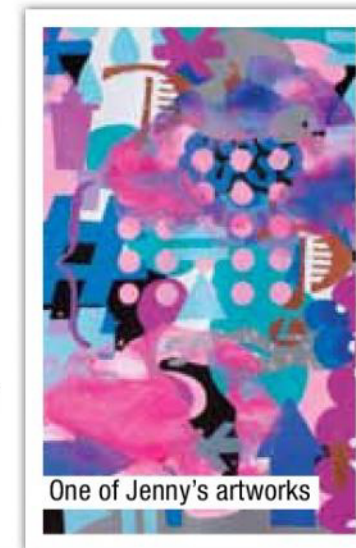
They feature symbols of consumerism alongside *mandala* spirals that are strewn on the canvas. She reasons, "Our way of absorbing and processing information is no longer linear. It's exactly the way we interact with digital media where we are doing several things at a time."



Jenny has been actively making pop surreal art. She was inspired to add elements of spirituality and alternative healing practic-

es when she was introduced to them in the late 90s. She started practising them as a means to ease her stress while tending to her ailing mother.

Last year, she decided to turn her *MokshaShots* into a webcomic that featured deity characters called MokshaPets. The first *MokshaShots Comic Book*, comprising a compilation of the most popular panels, has been released as part of the ongoing exhibition. They were conceptualised to depict how Indians make demi-gods out of cricketers, politicians and actors. Each of these pets represent an aspect of the Self and comment on the current socio-political situation. While MokshaCat makes funny revelations



about feminism, MokshaBum, a philosopher, makes tongue-in-cheek comments about politics and religion.

The artist admits that though she was happy to reach out to people

through social media, she decided to publish a book as that would help them to have it for keeps. "Social media has a wide reach but it's so fleeting. Today, people still want to own a book that they can re-read whenever they want to," she adds. Jenny, who has showcased her works at New York, Sydney, London, Amsterdam and Berlin, believes in remaining true to herself. She says, "I want to enjoy what I'm doing. I'm a spiritual seeker but I don't take that aspect of my personality too seriously. At the end of the day, life is meant to be lived, not analysed."

Swimming in the Subconscious is on at Jehangir Art Gallery till December 11, 11 am to 7 pm