

# Myriad tales of laughter

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A group-art exhibition, which began in the city recently and is on till June 2021, showcases laughter through art



📷 Artwork by artist Chitra Ganesh

The small lane leading to Shrishti Art Gallery, one of the oldest art galleries in Hyderabad, was recently abuzz with activity as people dropped in at the gallery after a long time since the pandemic. They were there to attend a group art exhibition titled License to Laugh — clearly a much-welcome concept following the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Curated by Lina Vincent, the exhibition, which marks the gallery's 19th anniversary, showcases artworks by seven contemporary artists from all over India, expressing their interpretation of laughter. The artists include Chitra Ganesh, Farhad Hussain, Gurjeet Singh, Princess Pea, Smruthi Gargi Eswar, Thukral & Tagra and Tushar Waghela.

After an extended period of disorientation and complex navigation of the 'new normal', it seems like License to Laugh brings under one roof artworks that attempt to alter perceptions and shift perceptions towards humour and satire. Especially for the past one year, people have been living a tensed life, and the exhibition aims to bring out humour in a quirky style.

The gallery director Lakshmi Nambiar tells us that the concept around License to Laugh was one that she had in her mind for the past three years. “I was, however, able to bring it to life due to the show’s curator, Lina, whose help and knowledge helped us get together and make this show a possibility,” says Lakshmi, adding that one of her favourite artists in the exhibition is Chitra Ganesh for the latter’s contemporary style of work. “The way she uses her art to tell a story is very unique and intriguing,” adds Lakshmi. Speaking to us about what led to the concept of the exhibition, Lina states that while conversing about the exhibition, she and Lakshmi realised there are different meanings to laughter for everyone. “What makes me laugh may not make others laugh and what someone thinks satirical may make someone else angry,” says Lina

## **Of never-before spectres**

As she shares her thoughts on the exhibition, Lina also points out that most of the artists in the exhibition have not been showcased in Hyderabad before. “They bring together styles that reference popular culture and outsider art — graphic visual vocabularies of comics, cartoons, animation, graffiti, posters, and legacies of domestic aesthetics, bazaar art and games, she adds.

A walkthrough of the exhibition presents viewers with an interesting journey. A sculpture titled ‘Dadi’ by artist Princess Pea is inspired by the concept of women leading protests, as a grandmother taking the centre stage in the world’s biggest protest, the farmers’ protest in Delhi. The sculpture made of wood and into a figurine speaks up for our rights, the long present suppression of women and the gender role shifts in the site at Delhi borders, where men were cooking and the females were leading the stage. Unlike Princess Pea’s, artist Tushar Waghela’s work has a childlike innocence with all the vibrant colours of life and love. Gurjeet Singh’s works, on the other hand, are part of a series that explores and shares hidden fantasies, taking place behind closed doors. This narrative relates to a boy named ‘Kirat’ who recalls a crush of his past days while travelling in a bus.

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**Tags: shrishti art gallery, chitra ganesh, lakshmi nambiar, contemporary art**

**Location: India, Telangana, Hyderabad**