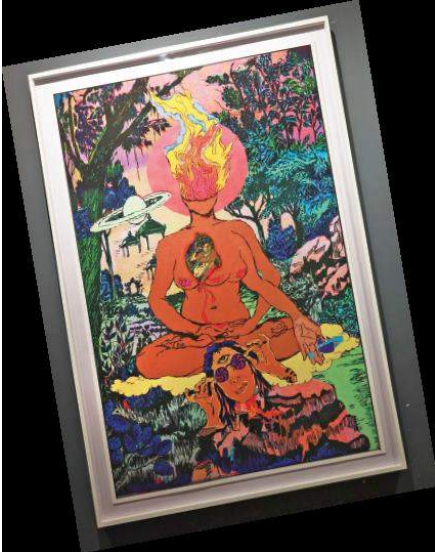


Pushing gender boundaries through art



Chitra Ganesh is an artist who uses comic strips in her works to narrate stories that push the boundaries of gender and power representations.

Published: 08th January 2019 10:47 PM | Last Updated: 09th January 2019 02:01 AM

By Express News Service

KOCHI: Chitra Ganesh is an artist who uses comic strips in her works to narrate stories that push the boundaries of gender and power representations. At Biennale, where her works are on display, she draws inspiration from myriad sources -from Hindu mythology to Buddhist icons - to explore stories seemingly hidden or nestled within contemporary narratives. Thus, India's popular Amar Chitra Katha drawings is a source to draw from to express her discerning views on subjects as weighty as race, feminism and queer rights.

For this artist born to immigrant parents in America and lives in New York's populous Brooklyn, part-alternate realities and part-badass feminist interventions form the core of her ideas. "I am interested in working across media. Such as installation, drawings, comics, digital collage and mostly animation. I also pursue how text and image illuminate one another in my wall drawings." said the 43-year-old artist. She is also inspired by the comic form's "relation to more ancient forms such as cave paintings and mosaic murals."

A graduate from the Ivy-League Brown University, Chitra studied literature, semiotics and social theory. All of these find a steady reference in her works. "My background in

literature has influenced my desire to go for experiments in integrating text and image,” says the artist, an MFA in visual arts from Columbia University.

At Aspinwall House in Fort Kochi, Chitra has a digital-animation video installation. Titled ‘The Scorpion Gesture’, the work was originally commissioned by the Rubin Museum of Art, New York, for a show curated by Beth Citron. It has five screens juxtaposed to be visible simultaneously. Together, they merge thousands of animated images to pull viewers into a surreal realm.

The theme follows a broad canvas: art history, politics and everyday life. “I have been continuing an exploration of the inextricable entanglements between deep past and far future. There is a dynamic connection between mythology and science fiction,” she notes. “There are always untold stories trying to rise to the surface. I find these particularly inspiring.”

The work is inspired by select paintings, sculptures and illuminated texts from the Rubin Museum’s collection of Himalayan art. All the same, it is influenced by surrealism, sci-fi, early stop-motion animation, vintage comics and expressionist theatre to shape her treatment of photographic and video material. “I have tried to weave together scenes that explore concepts of transformation and circular patterns in time,” reveals Chitra, who gave a lecture on her work at the Biennale Pavilion in Cabral Yard on January 4. “Central to this work is the hand symbol, known as the ‘scorpion gesture’. It symbolises unlimited potential for transformation and renewal.”

The artist also delves into the representations of Maitreya, a future iteration of the Buddha whose arrival will mark a new beginning. It is believed to follow an era when the world becomes subject to human and ecological destruction. “I think is very relevant to today’s time. Maitreya, whose prophetic arrival is said to usher in a new age of a time when the terrestrial world has lost its way,” says Chitra. “The endless stream of images of political, social and ecological upheaval that we are bombarded with on a daily basis seems to be an uncanny alignment with apocalyptic moment associated with Maitreya,” she adds.