



Klineman (above) and her works: magic of colours on the screen



Different Strokes

An American artist does an Andy Warhol on Indian deities

AS far as contemporary Indian art is concerned, Ganesha is a cliché. But for New York-based artist Hedy Klineman, it is a fascination bordering on an obsession. Using the silk screen technique as popularised by pop art icon, Andy Warhol, she has represented Asian gods and goddesses in an unusual vibrancy of repetition, colour and metallic lustre.

"Klineman has shown the deities in a completely different style," says Roshni Jaiswal, a New York-based art collector. "She has done away with the traditional oils on canvas, used a combination of surfaces and colours and put it all together. And it works."

It was not faith or religious belief that inspired Klineman's recent canvases. "It is about higher energies," says the artist, whose personal 'spiritual journey' has brought a new perspective to the images of deities like Ganesha, Shiva and Buddha. "I don't worship the deities. To me, they are the three-dimensional physical expressions of entering a higher realm of en-

ergy or spirituality, along with the rituals of meditation, chanting, and lighting candles," she adds.

Sculptures, post-cards, books, paintings of deities are photographed and then transferred through silk screens on to an assortment of surfaces—canvas, velvet, and plastic—which are coated in part with gold, silver and copper leaves. "It's like painting with the silk screen which becomes part of the texture and process," says the artist. The Ganesha series includes an enormous image of the elephant-headed god on a canvas surrounded by over a dozen similar, smaller, differently-coloured images.

Klineman's spiritual journey began in 1990, with yoga and meditation becoming an integral part of her life. A trip to India in 1994 confirmed her spiritual beliefs. She found an empathy with the country, particularly to Ganesha, which prompted the series on the widely-worshipped God. Klineman's career has seen several phases. The '60s were devoted to

abstract expressionism. The '70s saw the artist's colour field phase before she moved on to fashion, working for several years as the US representative for Charles Jourdan, the French shoe company. It was here that she met Kent Klineman, her venture-capitalist husband.

It was in the '80s that Klineman made a name for herself. Using signature pieces of clothing—Warhol's glasses; Marcus Leatherdeale's leather jacket and cut-off jeans; Julian Schnabel's studio clothes—she created life-size portraits of celebrities, reflecting her partiality for non-conventional surfaces and textures.

Priced between \$2,000 and \$12,000, the works in the deity collection will be exhibited in April next year at the Bridgewater Lustberg Gallery in New York. "The paintings are too kitsch to appeal to conservative Indians. They are much more likely to draw a New York audience," says Sharan Appa Rao, owner of The Gallery in Madras and Contemporary Arts in New York. —VIKRAM GOYAL