

NGMA ART EXHIBITION

ThePrint

New Delhi, Mar 3 (PTI) Serving as a metaphorical bridge between mythology and surrealism, an immersive art installation at a Ramayana-themed exhibition here depicts the birth and life of Lord Hanuman through a series of animated holographic images 'encased' in a glass pyramid.

The artwork, created by a Gurugram-based multimedia artist and animation filmmaker, draws inspiration from the holy text of 'Hanuman Chalisa'.



Hanuman floating in glass pyramid, 'Divine Walk' over fluid steel at Ramayana exhibition © PTI

"Hanuman's Journey: Verses Through Vision" is among nearly 100 artworks which have been displayed at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) here as part of the 'Ramayanam Chitrakavyam' exhibition that was inaugurated on Friday evening.

The exhibition showcases an eclectic array of artistic masterpieces such as paintings, textiles, sculptures, shadow and wooden puppets, theatrical masks, prints (oleographs, chromolithographs, lithographs), installations, and more by eminent Indian modern, contemporary, and traditional artists, the NGMA said.



Hanuman floating in glass pyramid, 'Divine Walk' over fluid steel at Ramayana exhibition © PTI

The featured immersive art installations are created with state-of-the-art technologies by contemporary artists.

Charuvi Agarwal, who created the hologram-based art installation, says the art piece showcases the story of Lord Hanuman "but in a more visual, metaphorical way".

The idea of the installation was born while working on a short animation film "Hanuman Chalisa" which was made in 2013, the 40-year-old artist said.

"The current artwork is a holographic piece showcasing the story of Hanuman but in a more visual, metaphorical way. In a sense, it's floating. So, you can actually walk around the whole pyramid, made of glass, and in a sense it's reflecting the story inside, it is almost as if the story is captivated inside the glass itself," Agarwal told PTI.

She said the film "Hanuman Chalisa", about 14 minutes long, which she made after some research, became the basis of the various artworks she created later on.

Agarwal, also the co-creator of "The Legend of Hanuman" series, said her vision about this installation project was, "What if it was a story floating in a vacuum, you could walk around it, sort of captures the whole journey of Hanuman, from where it all started, how he got power, what pushed him to go on this journey, in a very symbolic manner. Everything is woven together in the form of a story, which is floating."



Asked if she was a follower of Lord Hanuman, the artist said, "I wasn't a Hanuman follower. For the project, I went to Varanasi for six months to understand the holy text. And, the more you dive in, the more you become passionate about the virtues he (Hanuman) stands for."

"The Hanuman Chalisa has 40 verses, all non-linear, and there is absolutely no narrative to it. So, the idea struck for a 'non-linear visual poetry'," Agarwal said.

"I treated every single verse in the form of a painting, a painting was created for every single verse, and that painting was translated into an animation verse. And, all of those works were put together as an entire verse for the film. So, the film is on the Hanuman Chalisa while the art installation was inspired by the Chalisa," she added.

The installation was kept at her home and has been "publicly displayed for the first time", 11 years after it was executed over a period of six months.

And if Agarwal's work depicts 'floating divinity' in a digital avatar, artist Vibhor Sogani has created an illusion of small waves of glistening water using the medium of steel for his installation 'Divine Walk'.

"This work is in steel, mirror-finished stainless steel. It's called the 'Divine Walk'. It is the God walking over water... On top of that is a series of brass steps which are of God (metaphorically). The Almighty can move over water, so that's what I am trying to express here. And that's in gold finish. It's a walk into the horizon," he told PTI.

Sogani, 55, also based in Gurugram, said he conceived this art installation almost 10 years ago.

"The idea that Gods, in all religions, can move over water... since, I work in stainless steel medium, so I wanted to make stainless steel appear like water, like waves, it was a challenge, so that's where the explorations and experimentations happened," he said.

Falling shaft of light on the elongated art installation piece at the gallery gives it a shimmering feel akin to the surface of a water body under the sun.

"On the edges, I was able to get that droplet feel, a very special shine, that stands out, which completes the story. This whole wave of water has that glistening water droplet feel. So fluid, so watery, so liquid, yet it's steel," he added.

The steps have been represented artistically with slippers' thongs made of brass with a gold finish.

"I wanted everyone to relate to it, not miss it," said Sogani on using the slipper as an artistic representation of a walk.

A caption next to his work reads that the artwork is an "abstract interpretation of the mystical walk of Lord Rama over the ocean towards Lanka".

"The 'Divine Walk' delineates Rama's gentle stride upon the immensity of water, a test of his faith and courage as he journeys to reunite with his beloved, a voyage towards the horizon, both tranquil and serene," it says.