

GOTTA HAVE FAITH



GOTTA HAVE FAITH touches on the sacredness inherent in every action. From experimentation with forms to sensitivity to the context. This is a series of work where I partly collaborate with Palanisamy who belongs to the historic art-making tradition of votive terracotta statues for *Ayyanar* shrines in the Pudukkottai region of Tamil Nadu. We have worked together several times in the last decade, an important project being the *Akshara* show, curated by Jaya Jaitley, that began its journey in New Delhi and proceeded to Paris, Egypt & Singapore.

I co-imagine that this body of work is not a passive, pragmatic arrangement between an artist and a crafts-person. Palanisamy and I don't speak a common language, so our communication is through art. With his background in very ornate, very traditional decorations and forms, I constantly have to be at hand in keeping the look simple and contemporary.



This entire collection and installation speaks about faith, ...and the hash we are making of it; of reinterpreting the manifold imagery of thousands of stone *lingams* that dot our subcontinent, and our parched rivers that conceal them. An ambient soundtrack interlaced with the ringing of far-away temple bells welcomes you in. A *Navagraha* collage on the wall draws one into a dark space, only lit 'waist-down', the floor being covered with drying, cracked up mud liberally embellished with ceramic *lingams* and *mukhalingams*, ...as one gingerly walks along the oil-lamp lit pathway made of old ceramic slabs and pavers. Hanging from black cow-ropes, will be large ceramic bells, carved and embossed with *Navagraha-related* motifs. The focal point upfront will be a couple of contemporary *Ardhnarishwar* collages that place the unity of the male, female and the Divine on common ground. This experiential installation would hold together the past and present, nature and culture, design and construction.



"In Collaboration" was an exhibition in 2016 at Pundole's in Bombay, where I had collaborated with Laxma Goud ...where he mostly painted or carved into ceramic forms made by me which were later sodafired. In

my proposal here with Palanisamy, I want to go further by having both of us making and redefining each other's works in stoneware and terracotta, as well as firing them in low and high temperature kilns that we work with in our personal studio spaces.

Much as I hate the current trend of art spewing metaphors, this proposal cannot escape metaphorical values and continuity with history

So be it.

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Here is a link to a three-minute movie GOTTA HAVE FAITH, with tries to establish the ambience I am trying to project with this body of work.

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=u_DrfiUxpFg

This collection has been conceived to be shown as an installation, and its constituents may be individually sold; it comprises of approximately 8 suspended bells, 35 lingams (some on yoni-bases), two sets of Navagrahas & three sets of Ardhanareeshwar portrait platters.







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