

This artist has 30,000 Ganeshas, wants 70,000 more

A Bangalore-based painter's love for Ganesha is taking him to different parts of India hunting for idols and images of the elephant-headed god. In three years he has gathered 30,000 pieces. His aim is to take the collection to 100,000 in the next seven years.

'My idea is to paint as many paintings on Lord Ganesha as possible in a period of 10 years. I have also made idols of Ganesha in terracotta, wood, pulses and marble to name a few,' Kadhivel, 32, told IANS on the sidelines of an exhibition of his collection he has been organising for the last three years to coincide with the annual Ganesha festival.

The festival this year falls on Sep 3.

Kadhivel paints mostly Ganesha themes and landscapes. His friends and well-wishers help with funds to collect the images of Ganesha, he said.

'Since it is humanly impossible for me to create 10,000 Ganesha-based artworks in a year, for the last three years I have been visiting Maharashtra, West Bengal and Karnataka to buy Ganesha works from local artisans,' he said.

He has also been exhibiting his collections for the last two years. This year's exhibition, a five-day affair, drew a large number of visitors before ending Tuesday.

'It is unique that one man has managed to bring such a large number artworks based on Ganesha together under one roof,' said art lover and college student Andy Reddy, admiring a piece of Ganesha idol made of pulses by Kadhivel.

On display were Ganesha in terracotta, sculptures, wall hangings, pots, canvas/paper paintings, brass and ceramic.

'I have been painting for 10 years and experimenting with Ganesha forms. Thus I came up with the idea of holding an exhibition of artworks based on the god. Each year I want to showcase 10,001 new works on Ganesha,' he said.

'But the most arduous task is when I have to travel across the country to collect Ganesha's artefacts with little money. But the experience is worth the pain as I get to meet poor artisans busy giving various shapes and forms to the lord,' he said.

The exhibition is a showcase of pan-Indian artworks inspired by Ganesha.

'Making the lord's idol is the prime occupation in Pen (in Maharashtra). Our entire livelihood depends on making Ganesha idols, year after year,' Waman Manik Wadke, 77, an idol maker from Pen, told IANS over phone.

Ganesha has always fascinated artists, who paint or mould him in various forms and shapes. He is portrayed sitting, standing, dancing, fighting the demons and so on.

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