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One to Watch

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Sudarshan Shetty

Though renowned in India for his absurdist mechanical sculpture, Sudarshan Shetty remains a relative unknown in the US and Europe. However, that's likely to change as the Indian art scene attracts the same megacollector and curatorial interest that recently propelled China into the art world's limelight. In the 2006 exhibition *Love* at Bangalore's Gallery SKE, Shetty piqued international attention with several complex installations. Notable among these was a massive T-rex skeleton, cut from stainless steel, with an outsize phallus thrusting towards the rear of a cream-white, vintage convertible.

In 2007, Pittsburgh's Mattress Factory hosted Shetty's *Pure*. In the multipart installation, a PVC-pipe tree stood in the center of a whitewashed space, while in the corner, a video of traffic was projected onto the top of a stack of china dishes. To the rear, glass vases overflowing with milky fluid filled a large vitrine; the liquid was continuously pumped from the bottom of the case to the top in a looping, regenerative action shared by many of Shetty's kinetic works.

Currently on display at New York's Tilton Gallery, Shetty's first US solo exhibition showcases both his signature mechanical sculptures and several incorporating a new-media component. On the ground floor, a handmade clay pot spins precariously on a bed of wheels mounted to the wall. Nearby are two tall steel cases: in one, a robotic arm dips a man's suit in the same cloudy solution seen in *Pure*; in the other, a swatch of leather is immersed in blood-red fluid. Upstairs, red Plexiglas encases nine animal skeletons. Tiny whirling cameras situated within their rib cages record abstract images, which are fed to a grid of wall-mounted monitors. Thanks to his morbid and pensive sense of humor, Shetty dodges artistic clichés about mortality; as parts move and liquids circulate, his kinetic sculptures take on lifelike characteristics, and although they're bluntly mechanical, they echo the simple functioning of our own bodies.

-H.G. Masters