

PASSAGES: Mixed Media Artwork by Ela Shah

Exhibition dates: June 24 – September 11, 2013

Closing artist reception: Sunday, September 8, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m., Bernstein Gallery, Robertson Hall, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University

Gallery hours: Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and by appointment

Contact: Kate Somers, #609.497.2441

Ela Shah was born in Bombay, India. After receiving her Bachelors degree in Psychology and a Diploma in Fine Arts in India, she traveled around the world before settling in the United States. She received her M.A. in sculpture at Montclair State University. Although an American citizen, she has held on to her Indian heritage, and as an artist, she has woven her roots into her artwork.

As an immigrant, Shah's work is filled with symbolic references to her home country where she spends time every year. Much of it comments upon issues of faith and survival, both personal and political. Her mixed media works combine iconic Indian and Western imagery, from Jainism, Buddhist and Hindu deities, and architectural fragments of ancient Indian temples, to American pop culture images such as Spider Woman and Big Bird. Brilliant flowers, pieces of puzzles, snakes, and collapsing towers add to the kaleidoscope of swirling personal symbols that evoke a world struggling to balance itself.

In describing her work, the artist writes, "It addresses conflicts of spiritual and material worlds, and the complexity in women and children's lives in this postmodern world. I search myself through art and it helps me survive and have faith in this confused and often contradictory world."

Shah's work is in many private collections and museums, including the New Jersey State Museum, Montclair Art Museum, Jersey City Museum, Noyes Museum, Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, and the Newark Museum. She has received numerous awards and fellowships, including two awards from the National Association of Women Artists in New York, the Dodge Foundation residency award, a New Jersey Innovative Printmaking Fellowship, as well as fellowships for both painting and sculpture from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

Photo credit:

Passages, 1996

Mixed media on canvas

30 x 24 inches

Courtesy of Haris Shah