

The allure of the East



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The culture of Eastern countries will be on display in the upcoming group exhibition *American Artists and the Allure of the East*. Taking place at Schomburg Gallery at Bergamot Station Arts Center in Santa Monica, California, the show features work by members of the Representational Artists Alliance of America and India.

"In the past there have been art shows exploring the theme 'East,' but almost all of them were focused on either Japanese or Chinese culture and art. In the 19th and 20th century of America there was an explosion of interest in everything Japanese, and it reflected in the art world too," says Rency Punnoose, curator of the show and an exhibiting artist. "But now the Western world is witnessing a sudden and increased interest in other parts of the East. This art show, *American Artists and the Allure of*

the East, is exploring the new and wider East. Even though there are paintings depicting Chinese and Japanese images in the show, we have several paintings that speak the spiritual and cultural language of India, Thailand, and Sri Lanka."

Among the other artists with work in the show are Scott Burdick, Susan Lyon, Leah Waichulis, Stephanie Deshpande, Suchitra Bhosle, Sivananda Nyayapathi, Raj Chaudhuri, Richard Weinstein, and Karen Yee.

"The participating artists are not just some American artists painting some Eastern images. Artists like Scott Burdick, Susan Lyon, and Richard Weinstein travel a lot to India and other Eastern countries and experience the life and culture on a very intimate level," Punnoose shares. "And other artists in the show—Karen

Yee, Stephanie Deshpande, Sivananda Nyayapathi, Raj Chaudhuri, Suchitra Bhosle and myself—have very strong ties to the East, either by ethnicity or by being married to a person with Eastern roots."

Yee's painting for the exhibition is the acrylic on canvas *Chinese Bride*, which is a formal portrait of a young bride in traditional dress. "The classic is married to the modern in the composition and setting of the painting," she explains.

Yogi - To a Higher Self, by Bhosle, is another on view. "This painting is an experiment on the visual concept of equalization of tones. The scene demanded to capture the warm sunset tones bouncing randomly everywhere in the picture plane and was the main inspiration for this composition," says Bhosle. "I have used the varied paint quality to explore the representational design."

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Karen Yee, *Chinese Bride*, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 20"

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Suchitra Bhosle, *Yogi - To a Higher Self*, oil on board, 20 x 16"

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Rency Punnoose, *The Power of Harmony*, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20"

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Raj Chaudhuri, *Offerings of Milk and Ash*, oil on linen, 24 x 18"



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Of his piece *Offerings of Milk and Ash*, Chaudhuri shares, "This *sadhu* is preparing some milk to give to his devotees after the *pooja* in the evening as a blessing, or *Prasad* in Hindi. Along with the milk they will give you a mark of ash on your forehead as a blessing, as well. Abstractly it is a local tone painting. I'm trying to capture the richness of the reds, purples and darks all around. I wanted to paint him as beautifully as I could."

In *The Power of Harmony*, Punnoose paints the Kerala, India, fishermen community. "They live a life of harmony and unity. They share everything and have almost no secrets," he says. "They have to work in harmony and in close proximity when they are in a boat in the ocean. They throw the net and pull the net together. They row in the same rhythm. In this painting you can see the human power that overcomes the power of ocean—the power of harmony."

American Artists and the Allure of the East runs September 9 to October 10, with a reception on September 12 from 4 to 7 p.m. ●