

Thank You

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Gokche Erkan
Gallery 401
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A Space



cover: Shelly Bahl. *Journey To The Muses*, 1994, (detail) Mixed media installation

AGAINST THE WALL

visual arts at Desh Pardesh
may 9 to 14 1995

visual arts at

Against the Wall is a gallery exhibit of multidisciplinary visual art by South Asian artists living in the diaspora. A collective voice of transformation and reclamation is expressed by the artists as they explore aspects of identity in their struggles against various walls of oppression.

Students from Turner Fenton Secondary School **Navdeep Bhatia**, **Parmdeep Kaur Judge**, **Apeksha Kumar**, **Farah Purewal**, and **Sima Dinesh Shah** explore racial identity by incorporating dominant art traditions from South Asia into their sculpture, painting and mixed media pieces. This traditional imagery is accepted as authentic representation of their heritage and the culture of South Asia as a whole. While this point of reference is orientalist in its tendencies, it is a start in reclaiming a culture transmuted through displacement and exile.

On the other hand, **Ayisha Abraham** subverts the historical status quo in her critique of colonialism by recounting visits to a colonial furniture store using sound and photography.

Alternative constructs of gender are envisioned by several women artists. **Surjit Bansal's** mixed media unmasks the stereotype of the virtuous South Asian woman to reveal the true self, while **Natasha Singh** paints the feminine principle as a transformative principle with

specific reference to Kali, goddess of creation and destruction. **Alia Ghani Toor's** painted floor piece uses the seed as a metaphor for identity and female sexual energy in an Islamic context and **Shelly Bahl** recontextualizes images of dancing figures from Hindu temple sculptures to question their authenticity and to give them new meanings.

Another line of investigation on gender can be seen in the photography of **Ajay Dutta** and the paintings of **Sutapa Majumdar** as they re-image the human body from their individual male and female perspectives.

Sheherezade Alam, **Sharon Fernandez** and **Gitanjali** explore ritual and healing through ceramics, painting, and installation respectively. These pieces invite the viewers to engage in rituals unique

to each work. **Alam** sees the clay vessel as the vehicle through which the spirit can be celebrated and experienced. **Fernandez** uses painting as a ritual for cultural survival. **Gitanjali** presents a memorial to the unknown number of Indo-Germans who underwent various forms of brutality and forced labour, and who perished along with other groups during the Nazi regime in Germany at the Ravensstock concentration camps.

Healing is also a concern for installation artist, **Neena Arora** who works out her feelings of guilt and displacement around her mixed race identity, by creating her own myth.

Against the Wall is an exhibition where different points of struggle and transformation are encountered in a maze-like setting, a simulation of the processes we experience in our own journeys through life.

Against the Wall

Gallery 401
401 Richmond St. W, Studio 240
Toronto, Ontario M5V 1X3
Tel: (416) 506-9595

Gallery Hours

Wed. May 10 - Sun. May 14
11am - 6pm

Opening

Tuesday, May 9, 7pm-10pm
Gallery 401

Workshop with Shelly Bahl

The Role of the South Asian Artist in Contemporary Art
Friday, May 12, 2pm-4pm
Desh Pardesh Office
96 Spadina Avenue, Suite 607
Toronto, Ontario M5V 2J6
Tel: (416) 504-9932

Coordinators

Rachel Kalpana James
Pamila Matharu

Desh Pardesh