

Samskriti - Society for Indian Performing Arts
in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Presents a 2-day International Conference

AJANTA - MIRACLE IN THE MOUNTAINS

April 18-19, 2009

Museum of Fine Arts Houston, 1001 Bissonnet Street, Houston, TX 77005



Bodhisattva Padmapani ("lotus-hand")
in Ajanta Cave Number 1.

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Commissioned art works created exclusively for this conference

Ajanta caves - A collage: 3 ft x 3 ft x 1.5 ft - Geetha Rau and Madhu Sulladmath

This is a three dimensional mixed media work of art, using polystyrene, paint, glue, paper and print and some found materials. The 3D collage of the caves brings to life the paintings, pillars, statues and other architectural details. It highlights jewelry and hair styles of Ajanta period which are in vogue even to this day.

An ode to Ajanta – 24”x 28” This piece is a relief, based on the wall paintings from the caves of Ajanta. It is in the basso-relievo style on Carrera marble.- **Cuauhtemoc Murphy**

Apsaraas of Ajanta- 40” x 30” alkyd oils with a base coat of acrylic paint on canvas-**Sangeeta Pasrija.**

Beauty and Grace - George Ty

Among the interesting features of the Ajanta Cave paintings are the female figures and one of them is the consort of Padmapani. This particular figure caught my eye because of her facial expression filled with outward beauty, elegance, and inner peace. It seems that she is an isolated island in the middle of a turbulent sea. This inspired me to make a reproduction of this painting and hopefully my interpretation does justice to the original work. My paintings are mostly evocative and I believe that this piece is a fitting representation of my art.

Bodhisattva Padmapani - 3 ft x 2 ft x 1.5 ft (To be mounted on a pedestal)- **Sharat Valluri** (3 dimensional Sculpture) Medium: Synthetic Clay surface painted using acrylic paints. This is an attempt to give three-dimensional form to this most iconic of Ajanta paintings.

Dancing Apsara- 24”x 30” Acrylic on Canvas - Rashmi Murthy

A painting inspired by a mural of a dancing lady surrounded by musicians in the Ajanta caves. The color palette, the intricate jewellery, the dresses and the line work are inspired by different Ajanta murals.

Expressions of Life – 48”x 36” (see description) – Sharmyn Ali

This painting is a diptych and the technique used in this painting is called the old masters technique of glazing in oils, which adds depth. The painting is about conversion of Nanda, a cousin of Buddha who gave up worldly comforts to live a simple life and was seen begging for alms at his own palace. The expression of Nanda and his spiritual journey creates a serene peacefulness that is emitted from the original artwork. The second part of the diptych depicts Nanda’s wife Queen Janapada kalyani, whose expression shows, she is greatly disturbed to know that her husband is outside begging for alms.

Kalakendra- 24”X 24” Oil on paper – Vinod Patel

An ultimate homage to Supernatural Human Experience: Bodhisattva by a mere rearrangement of Cosmic Rock Dust on a two dimensional plane of paper is a tribute by Head Heart Hand: Tri Ratna, in communicating a multi modal miracle of the beauty, emotion and grace; using a language of line and color to achieve the Tranquility-Tejas.

King Mahajanaka and Queen Sivali, 24" x 30”, a combination of two paintings using mixed media on canvas - **Bhavana Vaishnav**

Kirthimukha carved on a pillar: **18”x15”**, 50/50 clay – **Rachelle Gomez**

Nandi Vardhan, 24" x 30" (framed) oil painting. This is a ceiling painting painted in Cave No.1 at Ajanta – **Bharati Venugopal**

Shibi - 36"x 48" oil on canvas painting. - **Carmen Flores - Mexican Artist**

The use of line, the free brushstrokes and the use of warm colors are the main features in this painting. The king Shibi is represented among a crowd of characters in motion

The conversion of Nanda: 24" X 30" Multi Media – **Neil Sen**

Nanda was a cousin of the Buddha. Among the incidents of the Lord's life, his conversion of Nanda is one of the favorite themes of Buddhist artists. In this detail (right) we see Nanda after he has renounced his palace life to become a wandering mendicant (bhikshu). This gentle soul, who is made so graceful by his divine introspection, is seen here begging for alms in his own palace door. Nanda with his inward look radiates a serene peacefulness which holds the attention of the viewer most compellingly. Nanda's wife Queen Janapada kalyani (left) has been informed that her husband, once the king, has come to the palace door begging for alms. The queen is deeply disturbed by these unusual events and wonders how to win back the attention of her husband.

The Path – 24"x 48" Mixed Media – **Harleen Chhabra**

The work centers on Lord Buddha, surrounded by various scenes from the Ajanta paintings of His previous births. Each scene depicts a human emotion, pleasure or vice- which still envelops us today- that have to be overcome to follow The Path shown by the Enlightened One.

Timeless Beauty – 48" x 36" mixed media on canvas. - **Geetha Prakash**

The artwork chosen is the figures of Bodhisattvas Padmapani and Vajrapani in Cave 1 of the Ajanta Caves . Together they represent Compassion and a Regal Majesty respectively. The artwork attempts to capture the spirit of compassion and the subtle but radiant beauty of the paintings. Towards this end, the painting is embellished with semi-precious stones and gold foil for the crown, similar to the traditional style of Tanjore painting prevalent in Southern India.

The artists



Bharathi Venugopal: Ever since I was a child, I was fascinated by colors. I used to look over the shoulder of my mother and marvel the flowers coming to life with the help of vibrant colored threads she used for her embroidery. Even in school, I enjoyed the coloring part than the actual drawing I did. I always wanted to pursue my passion for art formally but could not do so while being busy with raising the family and managing the career. Once my husband took early retirement and decided to move to Houston from New York, I was very happy to quit my job in Insurance Industry and was dreaming of getting formal art

lessons. I was fortunate to find a teacher who excelled in museum quality luminous oil painting method. That was 10 years back and since then there is no turning back. I have painted over 100 pictures on variety of subjects and various mediums such as water color, acrylics, colored pencils and mixed medias also, but still oil painting is my primary choice. Several of my paintings are sold and several more are in private collection here and abroad.



Bhavana Vaishnav

Growing up in a very creative environment in Indore, India, I began painting as a kid. With all its colors and activity, Mother Nature inspired me to paint using my perspective. After my high school studies, this hobby turned into passion and became the turning point in my life, my wonderful and creative journey as an artist began. I attained education in Arts and continued to grow as an artist. After marriage I moved to Houston, TX and have participated in various solo and group exhibitions.

Over the course of my journey, I have added various mediums and media to my repertoire. In addition to using oil color for realistic painting, I now paint more abstract with acrylic colors using texture. Web site addresses www.artbybhavana.com and www.artquestpearland.com



Carmen Flores - Mexican Artist

Ms. Flores got her bachelor degree in Fine Arts in 2003 at "Universidad de las Americas-Puebla" Mexico. She won the Antonio López Sáenz painting award in 2005. In 2006 she won the Sinaloa State Fund for Culture and Arts Grant and the AP70 Gallery commissioned her a series for the 'Banco del Bajío' in Mexico. She has had seven solo shows; the last one was at the Gallery of the Artist Alliance of Sugar Land in 2008. This year she was commissioned by the Sugarland City Hall to participate

in the Sugar Land 50th Anniversary art project. Since 2007 Ms. Flores lives and works in Houston, Texas.

Cuauhtemoc Murphy is a multitalented artist and educator. His classical approach to color has made his oil paintings very popular-- they are vivid and accurate representations of a unique perspective. His recent works in watercolor have been applauded; they successfully capture moments or moods which are otherwise fleeting. His favorite medium, sculpture, has achieved the most critical success. He has used the lost wax technique to great effect with his bronze sculptures, though he frequently works with other materials as well. In addition to being featured in various art shows, his works appear in numerous private collections.

Mr. Murphy's dedication to fine arts makes him a gifted teacher. Students surprise themselves in his classroom: when allowed to bring nothing but their best, they find they have more to offer than they ever knew. Now in his fourth year teaching Art at Bay City High School, a number of his former students have gone on to study art at colleges. His classes have also participated in community and school projects, in addition to an annual show at the Matagorda County Museum. While Mr. Murphy also enjoys teaching adults, he finds the challenges of teaching high school students very rewarding.



Geetha Rau is a multifaceted artist excelling in Porcelain doll making, oil painting, embroidery and other fabric arts. She has been continuously involved in the cultural and social activities in the community for long time.



Madhu Sulladmth is an entrepreneur with a flair for painting, design and model making. By virtue of owning a corporate gift industry has wide experience in design and execution of projects using different mediums like leather, silk, cotton and faux fur.

Geetha and Madhu own "Sadagara" the Event Management Company. They organized a very thematic banquet as part of the Vijayanagara conference conducted by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston in 2005. In 2006 as part of the Royal Legacy seminar at Museum of Fine Arts, they created a 40 feet long table scape of the famous Mysore Dasara parade with an unique collection of miniature dolls.



Geetha Prakash: Post Graduate in Textile Designing from Madras University with University Rank . Won various prizes in art and craft competitions at the school and collegiate levels in Madras.

Moved to the UAE after getting married and was a member of the Dubai International Art Centre. Was an active member of the Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation and was exposed to various Painting techniques like Oil Painting, Pastels, Water Color, Silk Painting and Glass Painting. In 2005 and 2006, participated in the Camel Caravan and Falcon Public Art projects in the UAE. My designs were chosen and the life-size colorfully painted camels and falcons were displayed at various public places earning appreciation and accolades.

Moved to Houston in mid-2006 . Joined the Sugarland Area Artists Association (SLAA) and have been an active member . Have won various prizes in the Art shows conducted by SLAA , and have picked up new painting techniques by associating with the artists there. Donated a painting for silent auction at Sri Meenakshi Temple (Houston). Also donated a painting at the Founder's Ball Gala to raise funds for Sugarland Cultural Arts Foundation and won a cash prize. **Raison D'Etire for Painting:** I have enjoyed Art from a very early age. I love the creativity that accompanies artistic abilities and the freedom of expression that it allows. Experimenting with colors and using different media is what motivates me most. I believe that there is a strong link between Art and Charitable causes, try to make this happen from my end whenever possible.



George Ty Among the interesting features of the Ajanta Cave paintings are the female figures and one of them is the

consort of Padmani-pani. This particular figure caught my eye because of her facial expression filled with outward beauty, elegance, and inner peace. It seems that she is an isolated island in the middle of a turbulent sea.

This inspired me to make a reproduction of this painting. My paintings are mostly evocative and I believe that this piece is a fitting representation of my art.



Harleen Chhabra : Harleen's art subjects capture the coexistence of the two worlds- the current issues that plague our globe, like environmental plunder, war & terrorism and the beauty in hope & cheer that still thrives. Her goal is to create works that inspire involvement in the viewers, shedding the popular view of apathy.

Harleen showed interest in drawing since childhood and participated in numerous art shows and competitions in her school days. Having gone to Engineering and Business schools for formal education, and currently in a Corporate career, she felt the need to go back to pursue her interest in the arts. Mostly self-taught, she recently started studies under the esteemed guidance of Mr.

Indranil Sen in Houston, Texas.



Neil Sen : Neil Sen is a freelance artist, who has exhibited his work in different parts of the country and produced illustrations for books and magazine covers. He is currently involved in teaching numerous classes both for kids and adults and has been doing so for over 10 years. He is widely known in the community for his inspirational teaching and his passion for art. He is a natural teacher and is in the process of writing a book for children which will work as a guide for kids to learn art easily. He has also been a consultant and artist for several organizations.



Rachelle Gomez is a high school junior in ceramics, at the Bay City Independent School District in Bay City, Texas. She has produced another Ajanta piece which is being shown in the school as a part of an exhibition.



Rashmi Murthy - I was born in Bengaluru, India. Since my father worked in the Indian Army, I got to travel and live in

different Indian states. Because of this I had the opportunity to experience first hand, the vast cultural and religious diversity *that is* India. This experience has primarily shaped my world-view and has held me in good stead in my design endeavors. I have a Masters Degree in Architecture from the University of Houston. I design residential high rises, religious buildings, schools and commercial interiors just to name a few.



Sangeeta Pasrija has earned a degree in Visual Arts and Advertising after coming to the US. Living in Houston, she is married to Dr. Arun Pasrija, a technology entrepreneur. Daughter, Nikki is currently a junior at SMU in Dallas and son Kunal, is a sophomore at the Kinkaid High School. Painting and drawing are her favorite hobbies. Her work has been displayed at local art galleries and received rave reviews. She donates her paintings to local charities to raise funds at their annual galas and auctions. Her keen interest in Indian dance and poetry events in Houston are worthy of mentioning.

Sangeeta was the Secretary and board member of the Houston based Indo-American Charity Foundation, which raises funds for many local charitable organizations.



Sharat Valluri, in today's world, is a rare artist. A painter and sculptor in the tradition of pure romantic school of art. His art is beauty oriented, joyous and benevolent. His paintings are saturated throughout with a delicate, noble beauty difficult to find elsewhere - depicting a universe of serene happiness. Sharat showed interest in art at from his childhood days. He is mostly self-taught, and has briefly studied under Ms. Merl Ross at Berkeley, California. He continued further studies under the guidance of

Mr. Jim Robertson in Houston, Texas. Sharat currently lives in Houston, USA and is well regarded among the

discriminating in Houston Arts Circle having executed both private and public commissioned artworks. His work was recently exhibited by APAHA at the Chase Bank building in downtown Houston. He was also commissioned by Houston Kannada Vrinda to create the signature theme painting of the *Stone Chariot at Hampi* for the Seminar on Vijayanagara Empire held in 2004 in Houston.

Inspired by the exquisite sculpture at the Hoyasaleswara temple in Halebidu in Karnataka which he visited a few years ago, Sharat has created a number of artworks. To enjoy his extensive collection of photographs from the Halebidu temple please visit www.Halebidu.com and to enjoy Sharat's art work, please visit his website, www.SharatValluri.com.



Sharmyn Ali: Art evolved into my passion. As a child, I was always interested in coloring, painting, and drawing. It was an honor that my paintings were appreciated and selected by art authorities for competitions where I won awards. I got my first silver medal at the age of 12 in a Japanese art competition and that gave me the courage to learn more.

Winning first place consecutively for the past two years at The Sugar Land Town Square art show changed a lot of things for me and I decided to turn my hobby into my profession. I started participating in shows and competitions and won quite a few awards. Some of my prominent achievements so far are winning the Christmas card contest in 2007 that depicted the reflection of City Hall in Sugar Land on the Christmas ornament and the Mayor of Sugar Land; Mayor David Wallace purchased my painting. I also won first place on my portrait at the State level. An image of my recent painting depicting 'The Eldridge Memorial Hospital' has been printed in the 2009 calendar for the City of Sugar Land's 50th year Anniversary.

I love to paint and I enjoy it even more when people can enjoy my painting as I believe art is an expression from the heart and one can feel the energy from a painting. I like to explore and be creative in my paintings. I paint landscapes, floral, abstract, portraits etc., but putting my expression on the painting is an accomplishment and my intention is for the audience to enjoy my paintings the same way I enjoy creating them. My website is www.sharmyn.com and e mail address is sharmynali@gmail.com



Vinod Patel: While aspiring to become a modern artist from earlier school days and getting recognition from Gujarat state Lalit Kala academy; Vinod R Patel was gently nudged away to a fulltime Engineering College, but tenaciously hung in touch with Baroda school artists like Jayant Parikh and invited art criticism for his works from Dean K.G. Subramaniyan. Vinod kept on painting and exhibiting in group shows during vacations, and was also commissioned to art projects by G.S.F.C.Ltd. and B.V.M. Sardar Patel University annual events for 7 years in a row.

After completing Masters, Vinod worked on nuclear plants for sixteen years, owned a technology company for fifteen years- but the creative fire still burning deep inside his guts, kept him in touch with late Bhupen Khakhar, Mr. Jeram Patel and the Baroda group. He recently exhibited his works in USA group shows for Dravo Corp, .Pittsburgh, the Gujarati Samaj of Houston, India Culture Center and Shangri La Art Gallery, Houston to name just a few.