

WEISMAN ART MUSEUM

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Contact: Erin Lauderman, 612.625.9685, elauderm@umn.edu

Many Visions, Many Versions

October 6, 2018 through January 6, 2019



Swarna Chitrakar, *Tsunami*, 2005, fabric paint on canvas. Photo courtesy of Sneha Ganguly.

MINNEAPOLIS – The Weisman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota presents *Many Visions, Many Versions: Art from Indigenous Communities in India* (October 6, 2018 – January 6, 2019). The exhibition, presenting contemporary artists from four major indigenous artistic traditions in India, features 47 exceptional paintings by 24 significant indigenous artists including Jangarh Singh Shyam, Jivya Soma Mashe, Sita Devi, and Swarna Chitrakar, among others. *Many Visions, Many Versions* explores the breadth and variety of cultural traditions in India, revealing a dynamic aesthetic that remains deeply rooted in traditional culture, yet vitally responsive to issues of global concern.

Many Visions, Many Versions brings together art from the Gond and Warli communities of Central India, the Mithila region of Bihar, and the narrative scroll painters of Bengal and is divided into four broad categories: Myth and Cosmology, Nature—Real and Imagined, Village Life, and Contemporary Explorations. The works are drawn from private collections in the United States and Europe. The exhibition offers a unique opportunity for viewers to learn about life and culture in India through these remarkable artworks.

Gond art refers to paintings made by a subgroup of the Gond tribe, the Pardhans, who traditionally paint on mud walls and floors during weddings and festivals. What unifies the work of Gond artists is the pervasive presence of nature in their storytelling, their portrayals of fantastical animals and trees, and their pantheon of deities.



Jivya Soma Mashe, *Coal mining process*, 2011, acrylic on paper.
Photo courtesy of Sneha Ganguly.

The Warli tribe lives in the Thane district of Maharashtra, situated north of Mumbai. Wall paintings in Warli homes depict ritual icons, religious beliefs, harvests, livelihood, and human relationships, and show close links to their deities and to nature. Warli artists still use only red/brown and white pigments.

The Mithila region covers a large part of northern Bihar. Literary references reveal that women in Mithila have been painting gods and goddesses on the interior

walls of their homes since the fourteenth century. The images are intended to create auspicious spaces for domestic rituals and to promote fertility, marital felicity, and general family well-being. Since the late 1990s, the thematic repertoire has included powerful feminist critiques of patriarchy and gender inequality, as well as global events.

The painter-singer communities in eastern India are called Chitrakar, meaning “one who makes images.” Their tradition of singing and painting stories on *patuas* (long vertical scrolls) goes back several centuries. Traveling from village to village, itinerant Chitrakar painter-singers recount stories and legends in song, while unrolling scrolls one frame at a time, and pointing to the corresponding depiction of the events. *Patua* scrolls reference mythological and religious themes, socio-political topics, and local, national, and world events.

Many Visions, Many Versions is curated by Drs. Aurogeeta Das and David Szanton with assistance from consulting curator Jeffrey Wechsler.

Many Visions, Many Versions is organized by BINDU modern Gallery, and is toured by International Arts & Artists (IA&A), Washington, DC.

RELATED PROGRAMS

Exhibition Preview Party October 5, 2018 | 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Learn about life and culture in India through contemporary artists from four major indigenous artistic traditions at the exhibition preview party for *Many Visions, Many Versions*. Start the night by viewing *Sacred Earth*, a dance performance by Ragamala Dance Company that explores the interconnectedness between human emotions and the environment that shapes them. Groove to the sounds of DJ Chamun and nosh on small bites.

FREE admission. Register at z.umn.edu/VisionParty

Negotiating Tradition October 10, 2018 | 7:00 p.m.

Attend a panel discussion about the transformation of traditional narratives and how gender politics and marginalized indigenous communities influence that transformation. Panel includes Anna Seastrand, UMN; Pika Ghosh, Haverford College; Ananya Chatterjee, Ananya Dance theatre; and Richa Nagar, UMN. Register at z.umn.edu/NegotiatingTradition

ABOUT BINDU

The BINDU modern presents rotating curated exhibitions originating from the Gaur Collection of Modern and Contemporary Indian Art. The gallery focuses on the artistic expression that has emerged from India since the 1940s. BINDU modern is also the nucleus from which the Gaurs continue their decade-long activities of promoting modern Indian art through collaboration with museums in the US.

ABOUT IA&A

International Arts & Artists in Washington, DC is a non-profit arts service organization dedicated to increasing cross-cultural understanding and exposure to the arts internationally through exhibitions, programs and services to artists, art institutions and the public. Visit artsandartists.org

ABOUT WAM

Since its origin in 1934, the Weisman Art Museum has been a teaching museum for the University of Minnesota. Today, education remains central to the museum's mission to create art experiences that spark discovery, critical thinking, and transformation, linking the University and the community. The Weisman Art Museum is located at 333 East River Road, Minneapolis, on the University of Minnesota campus. Admission to exhibition galleries is always free.

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