

MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE Gallery

CANVASS

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<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/gallery/>

hours: Mon. – Fri., 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM; Sat., noon – 5 PM

located on the campus of Canadian Mennonite University

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS: The MHC Gallery's budget is met almost exclusively through donations. The gallery receives no government, university or church funding for its operating budget. Please, help keep the gallery alive.

MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4
(204) 888 6781; Ray Dirks, curator, rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca

Gallery statement

More than a year ago, Manju Lodha walked into my office. We had never met previously. She asked if the gallery might be interested in featuring her art — art that encompasses her spiritual journey, inspired by the faiths of her homeland, India, and looking towards other faiths, as well, in a search for understanding. I was immediately intrigued.

I asked how she knew about the gallery. She said, "Everybody knows who you are." Truthfully, "everybody" only refers to that relatively small number of people who are interested in art informed by faith and/or are from outside the traditional Canadian arts mainstream. That's a group the gallery is here to support and I was pleased to hear "everybody knows us".

From that initial meeting has sprung friendships with Manju and her husband, Ganpat, as well as a scheduled exhibit. I have spent time being graciously welcomed at Hindu events and services and have been able to savour wonderful Indian food more frequently. Manju has painted for many hours in our upstairs studio. But, best of all, we've had opportunity to get to know each other's faith journey. I've learned about Hinduism and Jainism, a bit about Sikhism. Manju has learned about Christianity. Our conversations are often informed by a mutual curiosity.

I believe as Canadians, as people in an increasingly multicultural and multi-faith society, whatever faith we follow, it is for our betterment to get to know each other and to do that respectfully and honestly. If Manju and I had approached each other with hostility or suspicion we would have no relationship. The gallery's audience would have had no chance to see inside Manju's soul and her honest journey to discover and reveal faith. It is, I strongly feel, a gift that the gallery, part of a Christian church, is able to host Manju's art and work with Winnipeg's Hindu and Sikh communities.

Manju is a visionary artist. She simply puts on canvas or paper, without reference material, the vision she has in her mind as she thinks of stories from the faiths of India. She is not formally trained. The more I am able to acquaint myself with her work, the more it entralls me. I think formal training, which could have made her art more "sophisticated", would likely have diluted it. Her art is Manju, unfiltered.

Manju sometimes takes a step beyond her homeland to her home for more than the past 30 years, Canada. Prairie references supply the backdrop to a Hindu tale. Emily Carr is credited for inspiring a forest background. These inspirations are now a part of Manju, as well.

We invite you to discover Manju's journey. *Ray Dirks*

Side by Side

spiritual & cultural coexistence
by Manju Lodha

OPENING:

Thursday, April 26, 7:30PM

featuring performers from
Winnipeg's Hindu community

April 26 – June 16, 2007

"Art is like a blissful meditation for me. Through my art, for hours and hours, I escape the real world. It is an embrace of peace and pleasure that gives strength to my mind, body and soul. It is a humble effort to respectfully learn about each other and to express myself with the help of colour through the universal medium of art." Manju Lodha



Proposals?

Artists, please, submit your proposals to us! The gallery hosts exhibits in approximate two month blocks throughout the year.

Mailing list

To receive **CANVASS**, invitations to all exhibitions and other gallery updates contact Connie Wiebe, cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca.

Contact

Ray Dirks, MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB Canada R3P 0M4. Ph: (204) 888-6781. E-mail: rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca

Thanks

Bill and Margaret Fast, Herb and Erna Buller, Frank and Agnes DeFehr, The Winnipeg Foundation, Agatha and Al Doerksen, Friesens, Herb and Donna Peters, Ted and Mary Paetkau, other donors

My creative journey started as a quest to make a few dollars for myself. But I got lost in making art. It gave me immense pleasure to express myself. I forgot about money as long as I had enough to buy supplies.

Growing up in the Rajasthan desert, water is very dear to me. Inspired by the Winnipeg River while living in Pinawa, I started painting a watercolour series in 1996 on the theme of "water" with a multicultural perspective. Seed money was given by the Manitoba Association for Multicultural Education (MAME). I completed fifty paintings with poetry to go with them.

Next came the Kalinga series, depicting how a warrior king turned into a nonviolent Buddhist and sent Buddhist missionaries out from India.

I then worked on Jain and Buddhist series from a feminine perspective. I depicted the philosophies of these male dominated religions of my homeland through the mothers.

I began painting with acrylics in 2003 at the Saint Norbert Arts Centre, completing a large piece titled "Living Together". It was followed by Radha Krishna paintings. The Manitoba Arts Council generously supported a "Holy Ganges" series. At the same time I began to paint many images of Ganesh, often bringing Hinduism and the land of my birth into contact with Canada in the themes.

In 2005, our new Hindu temple was built in Saint Vital and we started an "Art Group" of which I am a part. In 2006, I met Ray Dirks at the MHC Gallery and it became a second creative home for me. Between the two homes, I completed several paintings, mostly in acrylics. The highlights were a series on Sikhism and a watercolour of "Jesus and Ganesh".

I am grateful to the MHC Gallery, the Hindu Society of Manitoba, MAME, the Manitoba Arts Council, the Saint Norbert Arts Centre, my family and all the people I have met who've helped make my dream come true. *Manju Lodha*

gallery news

Global Portraits Watercolour Workshop – stories from around the world, art from Winnipeg, led by Ray Dirks, Friday, May 25, 7:00PM – 9:00PM, Saturday, May 26, 11AM – 4PM. \$50. Limit 13 participants. Contact Connie Wiebe at 888 6781 or cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca to register. Must bring your own supplies.

reminder – This is a slow time of the year for donations. Please, remember the gallery and that it is supported almost exclusively through *your* tax deductible donations.

next – Exhibitions by Jean Wiens and Carol Mills, opening on June 21. Carol, tragically, passed away at far too young an age on February 25. Our thoughts and prayers continue to go out to John and the family. Carol was a good and kind friend, a gentle and lovely spirit. This exhibition, which was so important to her, will honour a life that touched so many.

Other events

Artist Talk and Tour – Saturday, May 5, 2PM. Learn more about Lodha's art and her artistic journey.

Open Studio – Lodha will be working in the gallery's upstairs studio during the exhibition run. Feel free to drop by for a visit. Formal open studio hours will be noon – 3PM, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Call 888 6781 if you wish to reconfirm she will be around.

Discover Sikhism – Wednesday, May 16, 7:30PM – 9:00PM. An interesting evening of music and information led by Gyaniji (priest/learned person) Onkar Singhji from Singh Sabha Gurudwara.

Tour? Would your community, art, seniors or school group like a tour led by Lodha? Call Ray Dirks at 888 6781 to make arrangements.

annual juried exhibition

This coming fall, and into winter, the entire gallery program will be devoted to the theme of "human dignity". The annual juried show will open in November. Consider the following paragraphs:

"What gives dignity to human life? Where is it visible and how is it attained? Can dignity be found in those living in the margins? Do we see dignity in children, the elderly, the sick, those in prison, the poor, the unemployed and unemployable? What about hookers, pimps, johns and addicts? What of all who are victimized by abuse and terror: those enslaved in the sex trade or in mines or factories? Or those with different skin colour or people within traditions and cultures that vary sharply with the everyday of western culture? Are they honoured? Valued? Is their dignity recognized as on par with that of those in the mainstream? And what of our own dignity?"

Jesus of Nazareth and Socrates of Athens – shock us – if we take time to see and hear them. Socrates portrayed love as ugly to look upon but most beautiful in action. Jesus, the crucified and appallingly deformed Christ, is grotesque to look on. Yet, precisely here, in the most cruel of deaths, is hidden the very dignity and glory of human life. This is the strange dignity of love; that it willingly dies in agony for the sake of the beloved.

Is dignity most visible in the invisible?"

Whatever the above inspires you to create, or to consider from existing artworks, we hope to see it submitted. Deadline for submissions is October 20. Submissions can be original artworks, digital images, slides or prints. Please, submit high quality images, if not bringing in the original. Up to five pieces can be submitted for consideration. *Thanks to Gerald Folkerts for the Human Dignity statement quoted above.*

the gallery survives as a result of your gifts...

Donations are tax deductible and should be made out to the MHC Gallery.

I'd like to support the MHC Gallery (PLEASE PRINT)

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Make your cheque payable to the MHC Gallery
 Mail to: MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

The MHC Gallery **CANVASs** is published by the Mennonite Heritage Centre of the Mennonite Church Canada. Gallery curator: Ray Dirks. All correspondence and exhibition proposals should be sent to 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3P 0M4. Phone (204) 888-6781. E-mail: rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca. Contact us and join our mailing list. <http://mennonitechurch.ca/programs/gallery/>



art by Manju Lodha

