

Woven / बुना हुआ

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Cultural identity has become nearly synonymous with personal identity. It influences our attitudes, beliefs, and values and resides in us in such a way that it can never be wholly separated from who we are as individuals. As the product of both Indian and American heritage, my identity is constantly shaped by such influences. In this exhibit, I seek to explore the fluidity and duality of Indian and American culture as the two appear in my life.

This body of work consists of paintings and studio rags on panels and a handmade book of abstracted watercolour paintings. Throughout these pieces, I utilize the visual and material presence of fabric as a metaphor for familial and historical narratives. The small-scale nature of the work allows for intimate dialogue with the audience. Repetition of textiles as imagery and material narrate how the two cultures create tension between and complement one another. Actual, tangible fabric samples, taken from my maternal (Indian) grandmother and my paternal (American) grandmother are juxtaposed with tightly rendered illustrations of fabric. These areas of precise rendering are rooted in the Indian miniature painting tradition, while flowing areas of pigment reference Western abstract painting.

Paradoxical notions of chaos and order, material and immaterial, and cerebral and visceral weave a personal narrative, revealing the fluctuating nature of my Indian and American influences. Here, textural paint forms flow into peaks and valleys throughout the paintings, leaving openings which reveal personal conceptions of identity and individual narratives. Areas of detailed rendering and gestural passages of pigment create a visual dialogue that formally reconciles these conflicting impulses, inviting viewers into the folds of the textiles before they dissipate into the fluid, white expanses. The branching and bleeding of pigment from meticulously painted forms into free-flowing paint fields seeks to marry such contradictions as a unified whole.

The book of abstracted watercolour paintings presents my Catholic and Hindu background and utilizes bold, religious imagery to provoke a deeper contemplation of two belief systems. While my paintings reveal a highly intentional coalescence of my dual upbringing, the studio rags have a more visceral function. I recognized that this fabric, which belonged to my (American) father, now bear the serendipitous mark of the Indian painting tradition of cleaning brushes and hands – forming another metaphoric bridge between cultures and ideas of “making” within them. Overall, the elements seen in this exhibition are not intended to be about the beauty of textiles and patterning, but rather the underlying intimate relationship that fabric has to personal and cultural identity.

In this show, I explore conceptions of Indian and American culture and the dynamic nature of culture as it manifests in my own life. I emphasize how, for me, Indian and American culture are inseparable influences which I am constantly working to comprehend and join. Through sculptural paintings, tangible textiles, and a collection of abstracted watercolour paintings, I create a space in which fabrics weave the personal narrative of my multicultural upbringing – a space which references the warp and weft of turmoil and balance.