

Society for Art & Cultural Heritage of India and  
Palo Alto Art Center in partnership with  
Asian Art Museum, San Francisco

**Are Delighted to Present Visiting Mithila Artist  
Shalinee Kumari in a special appearance**

In Conjunction with Asian Art Museum Exhibition  
*Painting Is My Everything: Art From India's Mithila Region*  
Sep. 7 - Dec. 30, 2018

Please Join us for an exciting Mithila exhibition highlight as  
Shalinee Kumari Narrates her Personal Story  
through her Art in an Illustrated Presentation

**My Paintings are My Feelings: A Voice from India**

Followed by a stimulating Conversation with Shalinee Kumari,  
and scholars Malini Bakshi, and Vijaya Nagarajan

**Mithila and Kolam Painting:  
Celebrating the World of Women in India**



**Daughters Are for Others** | Place of Origin: India, Bihar state, Mithila region | Artist: Shalinee Kumari (Indian, b. 1985) | Date: 2006

**Thursday, October 18, 2018, 6 PM**

Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto  
Free and Open to the Public

**World of Women:**

Women's worlds in India can be filled with extraordinary drawings, paintings, and creations on the floors and walls of households and temples. The dialogue this evening with Shalinee Kumari, framed by Vijaya Nagarajan and Malini Bakshi will travel to northern and southern India, to Mithila region in Bihar and to Tamil Nadu, to explore the complex traditions of women's ritual art, and the unfolding of ravishing contemporary Mithila paintings and Kolam paintings.

These art forms have evolved from ancient roots, and yet speak directly to a contemporary world.

Artist and scholar discussants will explore the trajectory of the two regional art forms and their women practitioners. The differing emphasis in contemporary applications of the two traditions provide interesting world views: transferring ephemeral wall art to a portable and more permanent paper format saw a radical empowering shift for Mithila women; Tamil women pride in the ephemeral 'painted prayers' and soul nourishing empowerment of daily kolam painting ritual. Both maintain a global online presence.

**Mithila Painting:**

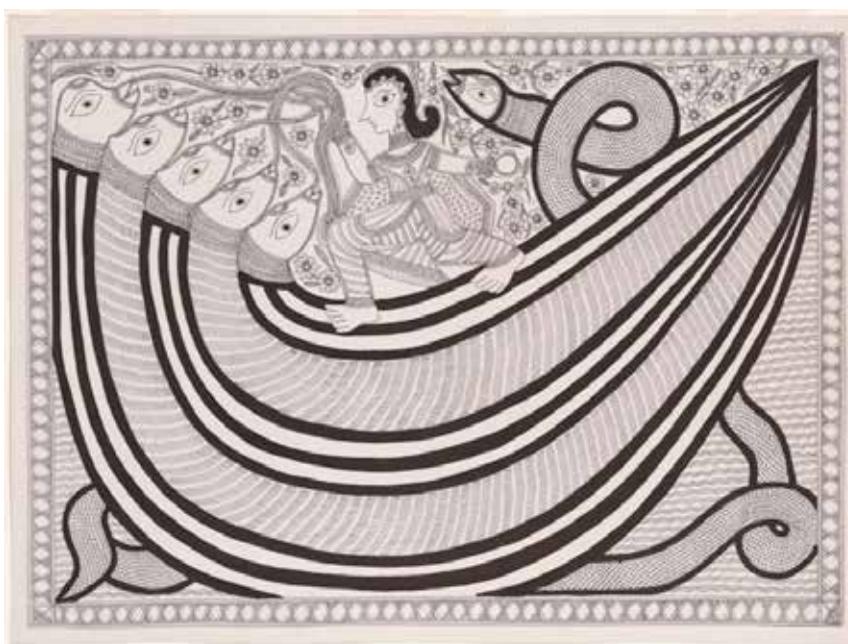
Women painters in the villages of Mithila have been creating folk art for centuries. Since they lived in a closed society, their art remained unknown to the western world. It came to light publicly only when a severe drought in 1966-68 and the resulting economic crisis led women artists to transfer their wall paintings on to handmade paper for commercial sale.

This visionary approach ushered in a dramatic change not only in the ways of presenting Mithila art form, but also in transforming the lives of women.

With their bold compositions, stylized images, exquisitely detailed surfaces and vibrant colors, paintings from the Mithila region of India's northeastern Bihar state are uniquely apparent. This rich painting practice provides local artists a powerful means to express their personal voices and lived experiences. "I have this perfect medium to speak, to write with my paintings, to create" - Artist Rani Jha

Through painting they express ideas and themes that are at once local and global, personal and universal. Artist Shalinee Kumari is known for paintings that reflect upon her life as a woman in a patriarchal society. They call for female independence and equality.

Women artists, especially from the Mithila tradition, are well-known to the outside world. Their art on paper often narrates a life story or is a reflection of the world. Many Mithila women have transcended their traditionally defined roles in the confines of their home to experience moments of great pride, joy, and self-fulfillment in creating artworks and in receiving local, national and international recognition.



**The Hindu deity Krishna overcoming the serpent Kaliya** |

Place of Origin: India, Bihar state, Mithila region  
Artist: Baua Devi (Indian, b. 1944) | Date: 1988/Materials: Ink on paper

**Kolam Painting:**

Kolam patterns honor the goddess, who envelops the home with auspiciousness. It is said, in the symbolic use of rice flour as an artistic medium, the kolam is the "feeder of a thousand souls" providing nourishment to birds, worms, ants, and the smallest of insects through the day. Nagarajan, scholar and kolam researcher expresses, "the kolam is a ritual of generosity, of gratitude, of auspiciousness". The concept of feeding a thousand souls "to honor those strangers we expect no gifts from", is also the title of her forthcoming book, *Feeding a Thousand Souls: Women, Ritual, and Ecology in India*.

The spirit of kolam, and the crafting of a kolam - the joining of dots and wavy lines in repetitive rhythms, akin to meditation - connects over 20 million women of Tamil Nadu every morning in a daily renewal act. What is striking about the kolam is that "it is ephemeral, transitory, impermanent".



**Mother Nature** | Place of Origin: India, Bihar State, Mithila region | Artist: Shalinee Kumari (Indian, b. 1985) | Date: 2008



**Shalinee Kumari**, a Visiting Mithila Artist from India, will be an Artist in Residence, October 17-21, 2018 at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, during the Special Exhibition, *Painting is My Everything: Art from India's Mithila Region*.

Working in a centuries-old tradition of Mithila painting, she conveys a distinctly modern point of view in projecting themes based on her own experiences. Born in 1985 in a rural Mithila village, she studied Geography before attending Mithila Art Institute. Now based in Hyderabad, India, Shalinee is one of the young female artists working in the Mithila painting tradition using the style for personal self-expression.

"I took the fine art skills I had learned and my thoughts of the world and I combined them", explains Shalinee. Drawing on both ancient and modern Indian art traditions, she expresses original visions, personal struggles, and critiques of international politics. Her work intertwines global and local concerns. However, her core artistic expressions revolve around feminist issues.



**Malini Bakshi** is a Product Designer in the technology industry with a long standing interest in the arts. She taught Design and Typography at the Academy of Art University, San Francisco, while also following the evolution of individual Mithila artists since 1995. Through an organization she founded in 2002, Pink Mango, Malini has been involved in organizing Mithila painting exhibitions and projects across communities in Northern California. Her focus remains on gaining appreciation for the contemporary painting tradition, and in bringing life and art sustaining income for the Mithila artists.

She is the co-author with David Szanton of the publication, *Mithila Painting: The Evolution of an Art Form* published by the Ethnic Arts Foundation and Pink Mango, 2007.



**Dr. Vijaya Nagarajan** is an Associate Professor in the Departments of Theology/Religious Studies and Environmental Studies at the University of San Francisco. She has also taught at the University of California, Berkeley and at Harvard University. Her book, *Feeding A Thousand Souls: Women, Ritual and Ecology in India, An Exploration of the Kolam* (Oxford University Press, 2018) is a deep investigation of the South Indian women's ritual art form, the Kolam, an ephemeral rice-flour painting performed daily on the thresholds of homes, temples and businesses. She has been active in the American Academy of Religion and in the environmental movements in the United States.

Nagarajan was born in a South Indian village and raised bi-culturally in New Delhi and Washington D.C. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley in the fields of South Asian Studies/Anthropology/Art History/Tamil Language and Literature.

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