Contemporary artist Seema Kohli, vibrant and versatile in her expression, imbues ancient symbols and narratives with new forms and meanings, at once rooted in time and transcending time.

A theme that captures the artist's imagination, is one of the goddess Hariti, the focus of our presentation. She assumes many shapes and forms over millennia, from Gandhara to modern Delhi, with incarnations across all the Buddhist lands of Asia. In her earliest forms Hariti is a fearful devourer of children. Buddhist stories show her illuminated by the Buddha and transformed to a benevolent goddess who protects and nourishes children and safeguards and empowers women.

Kohli's series of paintings, drawings, sculptures, and writings inspired by the multifaceted goddess Hariti take on a very original, expansive and liberated form freed of gender, race, time and social conventions. Female figures abound in her lush landscapes where ancient archetypes meld with the skyscrapers of a modern city. Birth and creation engulf us.

Seema Kohli taught in Stanford's Department of Religious Studies for 21 years, retiring in 2017. She is a distinguished scholar and translator of North Indian mystical/devotional poetry, especially the works of the 15th-century poet Kabir as they reach us in oral, written, and musical forms. Her publications include The Rhythm of Kabir: Singing Emptiness: Kumar Gandharva Performs the Poetry of Kabir; and Bodies of Song: Kabir Oral Traditions and Performance Worlds in North India. She has also written about Tulsi das and the Ramnigaon of Ramnagar. She lives in Berkeley, California.

Linda Hess and Seema Kohli came together through their shared love of Kabir music, both being followers of the great Kabir singer of Malwa, Madhya Pradesh–Padmashri Pramodnath Pranlal Singh Tipaniya.

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