

Artist bridges culture, time in vibrant design

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Kambo

Seated at her childhood dinner table, Roopali Kambo could be found flipping through the pages of magazines like Architectural Digest. These publications were ordinary place settings within her family as her parents and siblings pursued architecture in their careers. As an architect's daughter, Kambo appreciated the modernity of Frank Lloyd Wright's "geometric stained glass windows," and family vacations always centered on what new structures could be seen.

"If I see a painting and the perspective is off, that's the first and only thing I see," laughs Kambo. "I can just hear my dad going, 'Where's your vanishing points? What happened to the perspective? That's going to fall over.'"

These experiences have carried over into Kambo's life as a painter and graphic design professor at Tallahassee Community College. As an artist, it's greatly impacted how she views form and shape, which she hopes attendees will experience in her works "Quest for Wisdom" and "Untethered" at the TCC Art Faculty Exhibit this September.

"[Untethered] has a lot of greenery and foliage, with two men walking and all you can see are their backs," describes Kambo, who says the vegetation reminds her of monsoon season in both her native India and Florida. "They have water pitchers balanced on their heads, and there's this camaraderie in this old world. I want to walk with them."

Kambo can recall her sense of wonder after receiving her first box of Crayola 64-count crayons and the swirling pigments of the tie-dye she made in school. Her primary medium uses acrylic on canvas, though she will often handle acrylics like watercolors, going for a softer look overall and utilizing mixed media and gold leaf to texturize.

"In my design, color can accentuate and augment a message, and in my painting it can change a message completely," said Kambo. "I've never shied away from very rich colors, whether it's as accents or imbued completely in vibrant colors for the emotion it conveys."

A graphic designer by training and vocation, Kambo has always been passionate about art. She experimented with everything from ceramics to fabrics before settling on painting as her primary medium. She attended the University of Tennessee for her BFA



ROOPALI KAMBO

Quest for Wisdom by Roopali Kambo, a painter and graphic design professor at Tallahassee Community College.

and Purdue University for her MFA, beginning her career as a communications professional in the Supreme Court of Florida and other state offices.

Eventually, Kambo transitioned into working as a professor at Florida State University for seven years before taking on her current position at TCC. She imparts her passion for design to her students each semester, partnering with the City of Tallahassee to provide them with real-world applications for their skills. When it comes to her tandem professions, she feels painting and design enrich and support one another, and hopes to devote more research to analyzing ancient scripts alongside recent technology like design typography.

"I'm fascinated with typography as an art form," says Kambo. "Developing my own scholarship has become important as the overlap is getting stronger for me as an artist. I'm looking at script that gets incorporated into my work and the shared beauty of the form."

The juxtaposition of old world charm versus modern innovation comes across in her paintings in both lettering and landscapes. During her past travels, she's been most inspired by the merging of old and new world designs in iconic city skylines like Chicago and Dubai.

Thematically, Kambo ruminates on symbols and mythology and often delves into eastern philosophies and spiritualism as her main subject matter. Walking around museums, she most enjoys viewing turn of the century



RAMPOOLI KAMBO

"Untethered" by Rampooli Kambo will be part of the faculty exhibit at TCC.



If you go

What: TCC Art Faculty Exhibit 2017
When: 12:30-4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, through Sept. 26
Where: Tallahassee Community College Fine Art Gallery, 444 Appleyard Drive
Cost: Free
Contact: Visit www.tcc.fl.edu/student-life/arts-and-culture/tcc-fine-art or call 850-201-889.

works and the ancient remnants of the first civilizations. The rougher sculptures, jewelry, cave drawings, and totems capture her imagination as she divines visual landscapes from texts and images.

In previous paintings, she's incorporated a range of symbols and imageries from dancing peacocks to the yogic chakras. As a self-ascribed "multicultural person," Kambo is curious about intersections between her own heritage and culturally shared icons like the "giving tree," which spans continents. In one particular series, she focused on spirals after reading a passage that described them as "a path leading from the outer consciousness to the inner soul."

"It's always something I've seen or read that's the trigger," states Kambo on what sparks her ideas. "The spiral appears in many different parts of the world. To me, it symbolized the journey and growth, and from a spiritual aspect, your awareness."

Kambo ascribes qualities like "dreamlike," "celestial," or "make-believe" to the worlds she paints. Summer allows her the luxury to explore her own growth as an artist, and she feels that many of the leaps she has accomplished on the canvas have occurred during this lush and productive season.

She welcomes varied perspectives on her artwork, often soliciting feedback from colleagues in order to gain a better understanding of her own work. For the TCC Art Faculty Exhibition,

which will show through Sept. 26, she is excited to share the gallery with instructors Carlos Miranda, Ljiljana Obradovic-Edmiston, Julie Baroody, and Ed Toner. Kambo believes viewers will appreciate a refreshing range of work that will allow them to "see more."

In her work, "Quest for Wisdom," currently hanging in the gallery, Kambo remarks on the detail in the man's beard and eyes. He is an imagined person, however, not recreated from a reference photograph. In many ways, these are Kambo's pieces of human architecture, as they convey emotion through form. Whether it's the strength of their eyes or height of their stance, they each contain a message of blending worlds — the old with the new, side by side, always evolving.

"I think everybody has a signature, but I don't want to get into one specific style," says Kambo. "I want to be able to play with color and forms and see how that expression comes out. I want to be able to experiment because to me that's growth as an artist."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).