

# SHEININA LOLITA RAJ

## INTERCULTURAL

My name is Sheinina Lolita Raj, a person who was born from distinctively diverse ancestors, culturally, religiously, linguistically and physically.

Racially speaking I am half Indian and half English. I do however consider myself Canadian. Believing in the promised land of Canada my parents immigrated to Vancouver when I was five years old. Hopeful that I would enjoy a peaceful life free of prejudices we said farewell to loved ones for good. Although, the truth is you cannot run from racism. I can remember tearfully expressing to my father how I did not want to be brown as children would tease. While I have grown to appreciate the tonality of my skin, in this era of cultural assimilation my identity continues to be misunderstood.

As a person of ethnic descent living in the multicultural metropolis of Los Angeles for more than a decade, I've become keenly aware of racial prejudices. Mankind has evolved to visually interpret their environment, a survival instinct ensures individuals are categorized.

When the colour of my skin presents an unfamiliar reference, inevitably a barrier of discriminative notions are formed. In honour of cultural diversity, "Intercultural" reflects just how different yet the same we are. Adorned in the worldly traditional regalia of Armenia, Egypt, Greece, Guatemala, Hawaii, India, Jordan, Mexico, Native America, North America, Pakistan, Portugal, Saudi-Arabia, Spain, and Turkey, this collection of self-portraits unifies authentic heritages. As cultures around the world collide this art could not come at a more precarious time. Raising awareness to the misinterpretation of the nationalities living in our modern day societies, "Intercultural" enlightens ideologies while initiating a common respect for all humanity and ultimately a peaceful coexistence.

**SHEININA LOLITA RAJ**  
Los Angeles



*The Elaine Fleck Gallery*  
*is proud to present*  
*Intercultural by Sheinina Lolita Raj*



SOHO HOUSE ART TALK  
Wednesday April 6, 2016 7 pm  
MEMBERS ONLY

192 Adelaide St W, Toronto, ON M5H 0A4 [www.sohohousetoronto.com](http://www.sohohousetoronto.com)



## INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST AND OCAD U PROFESSOR: **BARBARA ASTMAN**

Interview by Maggie Broda • President of OCAD University Alumni Association • Visual Artist

Maggie Broda

Good day Barbara, thank you in advance for your time and thoughts. Your career is filled with innovation and uniqueness. Could you ever have been anything but an artist?

Barbara Astman

Well my parents, who were worried about my future as an artist, thought I should be a dental hygienist and then marry the dentist. Guess you could say I did not take their advice. I defined myself as an artist early on in kindergarten. In fact, I actually said "girl artist."

MB The Polaroid camera was a primary tool in your early work and now seems like a precursor to the technology of today. In retrospect can you comment on your motivating factors during that period of your work?

BA I am basically an impatient person. So I quickly fell in love with the immediacy of the Polaroid technology. I had stories to tell, my stories, and the Polaroid camera allowed me to perform for the camera in a very immediate way. I also became enamored with the thick, painterly colours of the Polaroid SX-70 film which existed somewhere between painting and photography.

MB Your method of using light and colour in unconventional ways gives your photography a distinctly artistic and unique style. How do you see your work moving forward in the future?



Wonderland, 10 • 43" x 43" • Digital Print • 2008 • Available at The Jane Corkin Gallery

BA I am very interested in using the analogue colour and black and white darkrooms again and feel motivated to create photographs in non-traditional ways. The darkrooms become my research labs for investigation purposes. The images I have been working

on have richness in color and surface texture to them that only traditional photographic paper allows for. I have not forsaken digital imagery and am also working on a new series of digital images. I always have a few bodies of work on the go simultaneously. They inform one another.

MB Your successful integration of art and architecture in public projects, such as the Baycrest Project, with architect Jack Diamond, or the Murano Building on Bay St. appears to be perfectly matched. What inspires your work and how does it play out in a project?

BA The public art that I engage with is partially a collaborative process. But you actually have set parameters given by the design of the building, the use of the building and location among other things. Your work needs to fit within what is already designed. It is a very challenging process but also a very rewarding one.

MB In what ways if any do you feel your current work relates to your art in previous decades?

BA I think the sophistication of the technology advances, I get inspired by that. I was inspired by the early colour Xerox copiers and created work that I could not have done in any other way. The same for the Polaroid technology that felt so advanced for its time. I seem to be responding to the changes and embrace the challenges of the changing technology while also building upon my conceptual approaches. I think in narratives and sometimes I can see direct links in the varying bodies of work and other times it takes me quite a while to understand the relationships between my bodies of work. Sometimes it takes someone else writing about the works for me to fully comprehend all that is going on in the work. Interestingly, the AGO has mounted an archival based exhibition: *Look Again: Co-*

*lour Xerography Art Meets Technology at the AGO*, Art Gallery of Ontario. It is based on a 1976 Colour Xerography exhibition they showed in the Walker Court. Since they have my archives, they are able to re-create sections of the murals I created for that exhibition. The show is on until the spring of 2016.

MB Do you have a particular piece or project that gives you the most satisfaction or pride?

BA It is all an ongoing journey and I learn from all of the work I have done over the years.

MB As a member of faculty at OCAD University what are some of the pivotal issues you advise students to prepare for?

BA In the 4th year classes I speak about the compulsion aspect of making art. If you are not compelled to invest the time, energy and possibly money to create, then maybe you should think about some other career choices. There is so much more to being an artist than merely enjoying making things. I see it as a compulsion.

MB Lastly, can you tell me where is your next project taking you and who are you watching from past or current stars? And again thank you.

BA I always seem to have more stories to tell visually, the narrative continues. I am less interested in art stars or who is the most popular artist at this given moment. It is always in flux, always something new coming along and I just try to be aware of it all.