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Mithila Women painters of India—last weeks



"Women Can Do Everything Now" by Shalinee Kumari. Acrylic and ink on handmade paper. Image courtesy of Frey Norris Gallery.

These are the last weeks of two opportunities to view contemporary Indian paintings by artists of the Mithila region of India at the Asian Art Museum and Frey Norris Gallery.

Closing on July 19 Frey Norris Gallery is showing the American debut of **Shalinee Kumari**, a contemporary Indian woman artist painting in the style commonly referred to as "Mithila" or "Madhubani" painting. Mithila is a region in Bihar, a state in NE India. Madhubani is the name of a town in this region.

Traditionally (and still today), these graphically engaging paintings were done by women as mural art decorating the walls of their homes, often marking an important celebrations, a wedding or the birth of a child, for example, or religious themes. The current gallery show, however, shows the transformation of this painting style into a contemporary form of expression on paper and canvas that is now sold to art collectors. While stylistically linked to traditional forms, some Mithila artists are exploring a wider range of issues. According to the [gallery's web announcement](#):

Shalinee Kumari is arguably the most progressive of these artists, producing highly narrative, vibrantly colored critical works on hand-made paper illustrating currently pressing issues such as the evils of dowry, bride burning, capitalism, inflation, corporate control of the media, global warming, terrorism, and the sexual exploitation of women. But she also does paintings on women's cricket, gender equality, and women's liberation.

The Asian Art Museum also has a collection of **Mithila paintings** some of which are currently on view on the 3rd floor. This installation includes a male painter in this genre, who is among those encouraged by the economic success of the women artists to enter this once purely local, folk art tradition. The museum installation of Mithila paintings closes after Sunday, July 26 and conservation policy states that these light sensitive works go into dark storage to rest for five years so that they may retain their brilliant colors for generations to come. Come see 'em while you can!



Holy man in a forest (the Hindu deity Shiva as Lord of the Animals), 1981 By Jyotsna Devi (Indian). Mithila, Bihar state. Colors on paper. Asian Art Museum, 1999.39.39.

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- cristina: Could be! According to Arpana: "The formless cannot be painted so I thought of this blue luminous..."
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- cristina: Cue for the first and fourth: think sharp things! Also, at least one is in the next rotation (mid August)
- bittermelon: Wow, all handsome acquisitions. I just wanna pin that white rose into someone's hair. Thanks for...

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