

LOIS LAMBERT GALLERY **SHEININA L. RAJ**

at Bergamot Station
2525 Michigan Ave E3
Santa Monica, CA 90404

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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"Intercultural"

September 19, 2020 – November 2020

Zoom Reception and Virtual Reality Tour: Saturday, September 19, 7pm to 9pm

SANTA MONICA, CA -- Sheinina L. Raj, "Intercultural", opens at Lois Lambert Gallery on Saturday, September 19th, 2020. Crossing metaphorical boundaries of culture, race, nation, and tradition Raj stages photographs of self-portraiture in which she embodies the portrayal of different women from across the world in a journey of unity and understanding.



"Moroccan Woman", Edition of 6, Giclee print, 52" x 42"

Taking from the traditional female garb of Fiji, India, Pakistan, Morocco, Armenia, Jordan, Saudi-Arabia, Spain, Turkey, Greece, Portugal, Japan, Thailand, Mexico, Native America, Hawaii, Brazil, Sicily, Iran and North America, this collection of self-portraiture simultaneously highlights the differences and ultimate similarities between peoples and cultures. At a time when the world yearns for common ground, Sheinina's photographic series speaks in a visual language universally understood. With each image accompanied by a unique self-written essay, her work serves to "enlighten cultural ideologies, initiate respect for diversity and unify humanity for a peaceful coexistence worldwide" - Raj.



"Japanese Woman", Edition of 6, Giclee print, 52" x 42"

Appearing in each work through self-portraiture and donning the quintessential dress of different women from around the world, Raj herself becomes the thread of commonality between the consecutive photographic images and serves to highlight the superficiality of difference. While in one image she takes the form of a Saudi woman fully covered in black with nothing shown but eyes peering behind a veil, in another she wears the vividly colorful kimono of Japanese tradition. What becomes different, then, are merely the physical items of cultural expression rather than the women - or woman - behind them. Through her consistent photographic presentation Raj creates an artistic language of unification and coexistence, showing us that it is the person which is central to humanity, rather than the divisive markings of any one culture or nation.

Born of English and Indian-Fijian descent, she channels her personal and familial experiences of a culturally diverse life through her projects. Confronting her own experiences of racial fluidity, Raj fully assumes



"Greek Woman", Edition of 6, Giclee print, 52" x 42"

each different persona being captured to address inflexible perceptions of ethnicity as obsolete. In a process that bridges the gap of diversity itself, the attire for each woman that she portrays is meticulously sourced and research is done to ensure that the representation is symbolically accurate. Oftentimes, the proper regalia is found through friends and family of different backgrounds, who call upon their own life experiences and stories to help Raj achieve the proper look.

During the staging of each photograph it was important for Raj to have no emotional reaction and to be in a neutral pose with hands crossed, reminiscent of meditation. It is essential that Raj becomes a blank slate emanating peace and inner calm. For Sheinina this is an essential component to the proper viewing experience. It is through this staging that the viewer has the space to avoid confrontation and observe the image in all its symbology, moving past all the conventional barriers of heritage and culture that are confined by our limiting conceptions of ethnicity and tradition.



"Jordanian Woman", Edition of 6, Giclee print, 52" x 42"

Raj was born in the UK and emigrated to Vancouver at the age of 5, where she would later graduate from Emily Carr University of Art + Design at Langara College with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Beginning in 2016 Raj collaborated with Nelly Furtado on her seminal interdisciplinary art experience "Intercultural" that has since toured parts of the world, including Miami Art Basel, Frieze New York, and World Art Dubai where she was selected as the winner of the 'Most Innovative Artist Award' in 2018. Raj's work is also part of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Ontario, Canada and has been featured at the Miami Design Preservation League Art Deco Museum, the A+D Architecture and Design Museum in Los Angeles, and the National Gallery of Contemporary Arts Fiji. In 2019 Sheinina L. Raj received the Gold Winner award from the Tokyo International Foto Awards at the Shibuya Cultural Center in Tokyo, Japan. Raj has given lectures throughout the country and her work has been featured in various magazines including the Wall Street International.