

Ela Shah

Education

Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ — M.A. in Fine Arts
C.N. College of Fine Arts, Ahmedabad, India — Diploma in Fine Arts
S.N.D.T. University, Bombay, India — Bachelor's Degree

Awards

2023: New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowship for Sculpture
2006: New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowship for Painting
1999: New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowship for Sculpture
1999: Dodge Foundation Full Fellowship, Vermont Studio Center
1998: Winner, "Strokes of Genius" Outdoor Sculpture Competition, Montclair Art Museum, NJ
1995: Innovative Printmaking Fellowship, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
1994: Medal of Honor and Amelia Peabody Memorial Award, National Association of Women Artists, NY

Selected Solo and Group Exhibitions

2023: AAPI Montclair Heritage Show, Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ
2023: Art in Embassies Loan Exhibition, U.S. Embassy, Bratislava, Slovakia
2023: Social Memory, South Asian Women's Creative Collective (SAWCC), Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York, NY
2022: Inspired by George Inness, Leach Gallery with Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ
2022: Pages, Studio Montclair Gallery, Montclair, NJ
2022: New Jersey Arts Annual: Reemergence, New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ
2017: ViewPoints 2017, Studio Montclair — Honorable Mention
2017: Arts in Montclair Banner Project, Studio Montclair — Winner
2014: H1-B, Twelve Gates Arts, Philadelphia, PA (Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center)
2013: Passages, Solo Show, Bernstein Gallery, Princeton University, NJ
2009: National Association of Women Artists: 120 Years, UBS Art Gallery, New York, NY and Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick, NJ (catalog)
2008: Erasing Borders, The Guild Gallery, New York, NY; Hammond Museum, North Salem, NY; Queens Museum of Art, Corona Park, NY; Brownson Art Gallery, Westchester, NY (catalog)
2007: 'Sultana's Dream' Exit Art Gallery, New York, NY (Catalog)
2007: 'Erasing Borders' Guild Art USA New York, NY (Catalog)
2007: 'Erasing Borders' Queens Museum of Arts, Queens, New York (Catalog)
2006: Solo show 'Power Of Faith', Tomasulo Gallery Union County College, Cranford NJ
2006: 'art wallah' Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, Los Angeles, CA
2006: 'art wallah' Bamboo Lane Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2005: 'Fatal Desire' Queens Museum of Arts, Queens, New York. (Catalog)
2004: 'Erasing Borders' Sponsored by Indo-American Arts Council, New York, NY (Catalog)
2004: 'Territories' Arts India Gallery, New York, NY. (Catalog)
2004: 'Masala' Diversity and Democracy in South Asian Art, The William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT
2004: 'The apparent Intersection of near and far: International perspectives in Contemporary Art' Hunterdon Museum of Arts Clinton, NJ (catalog)
2004: 'Immigration Expectation' Paul Roberson Gallery, Rutgers University. Newark, NJ (Catalog)
2004: 'Merging Culture' William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ (Catalog)
2004: 'Unveiling The Image' New Jersey Center For Visual Arts, Summit, NJ (Catalog)
2004: 'Icons, Symbols and Altars', Noyes Museum Of Arts, Ocean Ville (Catalog)
2004: 'Celestial Boundaries' Montclair State University, NJ (Catalog)
2003: 'Art Explores Religion' Newark Museum, Newark, NJ
2002: 'NJ Artists make prints' Rutgers Center for Innovative Print, N.J State Museum, Trenton (Catalog)

Recent Public Collections

N.J. State Museum, Trenton, NJ, Zimmerli Museum, Rutgers University, NJ. Johnson and Johnson Headquarters, New Brunswick, NJ Hunterdon Art Museum, Clinton, NJ. Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ. Newark Public Library, Newark, NJ Air India, NY, NY, R.C.I.P Rutgers University, NJ

Biography

Ela Shah was born in Bombay, India. After receiving her Bachelors degree in Psychology and a Diploma in Fine Arts from India, she traveled around the world and subsequently moved to the United States and received her M.A. in sculpture at Montclair State University. Although an American citizen, she has been able to hold on to her Indian heritage and incorporate elements of it into her artwork along with Western influences.

Her work has been exhibited in museums like Museum of Modern Arts in New Delhi India, Queens Museum of Arts New York, William Benton Museum in Connecticut, Hunterdon Museum, Noyes Museum, Newark Museum and grounds for sculptures in New Jersey and other Museums around the country. She has also held positions as a chairperson for the National Association of Women's Artists in N.Y, and has curated shows for them and other institutions.

Her work is in collection in N.J. State Museum, Montclair Museum, Jersey City Museum, Newark Library, Hunterdon Museum, Zimmerli Art Museum N.J, Air India, Indian Embassy and other public places and private collectors. She has received numerous awards and fellowships including two awards from National Association of Women Artists in New York, which are the Amelia Peabody Memorial Award and Elizabeth Morse Genius Foundation Award, the Dodge Foundation residency award and the New Jersey Innovative Printmaking Fellowship at the Rutgers University. She has received from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts 1999 fellowship for sculpture and 2006 fellowship for painting. Recently her work was chosen for the Smithsonian Museum of Asian Pacific American Center web site.

Artist Statement – *Structures of Faith*

My work is about search and survival. I search within myself in order to survive in a complex, contradictory world and to live with open faith.

Structures of Faith explores humanity's belief in the unknown and how cultures express faith through architecture—monumental public structures, sacred spaces, and small personal shrines. These forms become vessels of devotion, memory, and hope.

For me, these structures represent spiritual faith in oneself, in humankind, and in a divine, unseen power. They echo Islamic architecture, Indian temples, and the verticality of churches, merging traditions into a single symbolic language. Each tower becomes a vessel of history, ritual, and identity—towers of memory and migration.

Figures within the sculptures carry stories of resilience and survival. Snakes appear as symbols of healing, rejuvenation, fear, and transformation. Indian gods and goddesses coexist with contemporary icons, reflecting a shared human longing for hope, justice, and belief.

Structures of Faith is ultimately about endurance—the human need to believe, transform, and carry hope forward.