

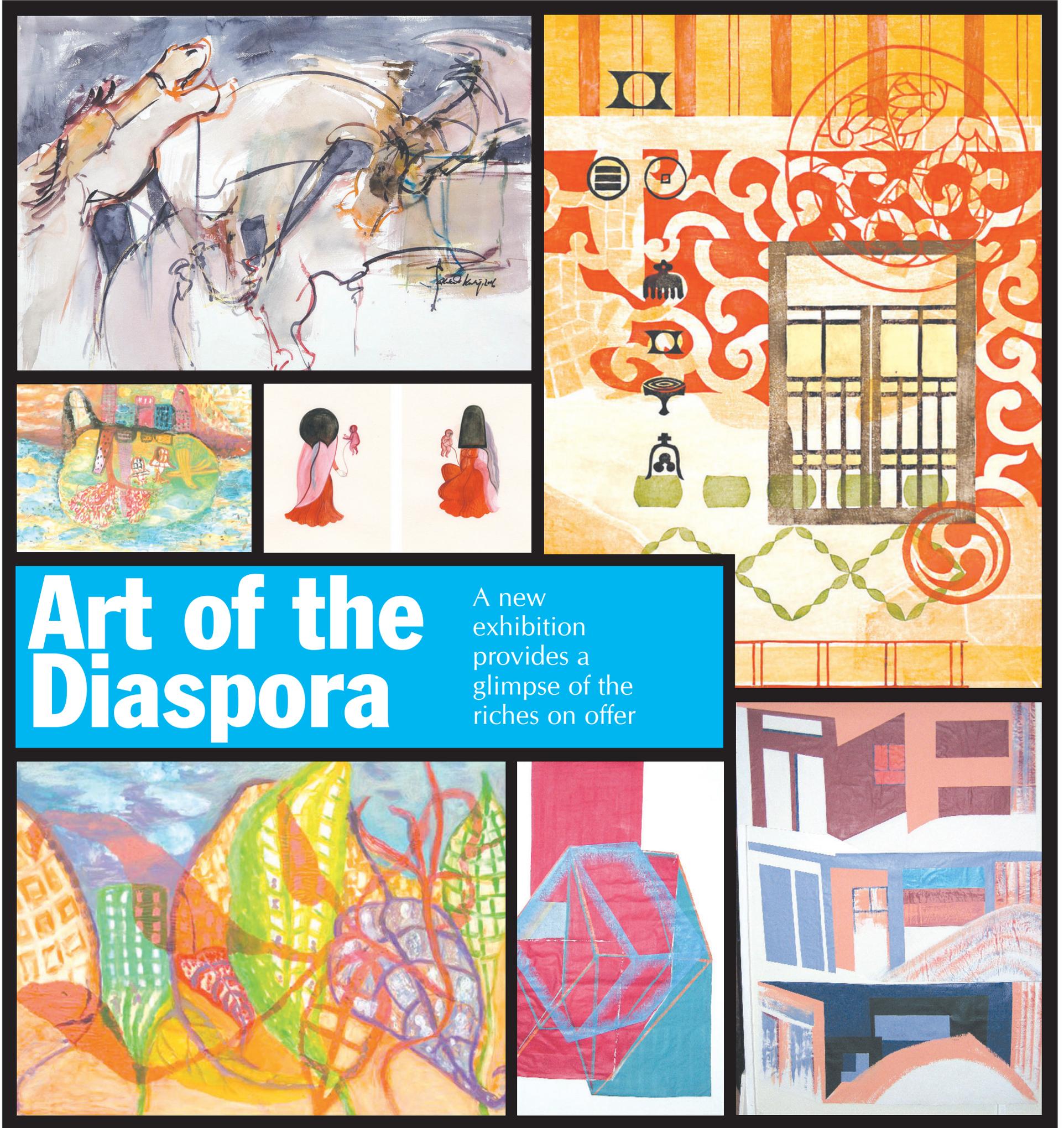
India *in* New York[®]

A GUIDE TO EVENTS AND ENTERTAINMENT FROM INDIA ABROAD

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Art of the Diaspora

A new exhibition provides a glimpse of the riches on offer

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Horse, by Alka Mukherji, one of the paintings at the exhibition



Below, the featured artists with Consul General of India Neelam Deo



Artists and organizers and special guests at the museum. Top row, from left: Satish Joshi, Queens borough president Helen Marshall, Indian Consul General in New York Neelam Deo, museum Executive Director Tom Finkelpearl, IAAC Executive Director Aroon Shivdasani, exhibition curator Vijay Kumar, Antonio Puri. Bottom row, from left, Niyeti Chadha, Alka Mukherji, Anna Bhushan, Vijay Dave and his daughter, Tara Sabharwal and Bivas Chaudhuri

Art of the Diaspora

A new exhibition provides a glimpse of the riches on offer

P RAJENDRAN

If artists thrive on the novel, the angst-ridden and the confusing, 16 artists of Indian origin based in the United States certainly had something to show of all their experiences at the Queens Museum of Art in a new exhibition titled *Erasing Borders*. While possibly the first such exhibi-

tion at a major museum, it bore some similarities in plan, if not execution, to the work by Asian-American artists presented at the Asia Society in New York last October.

"We wanted to reflect some of the diversity of Queens," said Tom Finkelpearl, the museum's director,



Tokyo Streets, by Nandini Chirimir



Niyeti Chadha was even more austere in her use of lines and simple angles to create optical illusions; if Antonio Puri relied on layers of translucent detail and texture to tell an abstract tale, Siona Benjamin used explicit visual metaphors to explain an immigrant's feelings of loss and hope; if Alka Mukherji used watercolors only to enhance the feelings of movement created by a few spare brush strokes and avoided commentary, Ela Shah used mixed media on wood and exaggerated forms and fine detail to tell a story of the burden of expectations on a woman.

Vijay Kumar, the curator of the show, said that while there were 10 Indian-American art galleries in the city, they essentially catered to the NRI market. "Who's going to take care of us," he asked. Actually, he is. He's had some experience

thought her work as a mix of the political and personal.

Siona Benjamin, who, as a Jew born in India, can speak from the viewpoint of a minority many times over – as a woman, a Jew in India and an Indian in America – said she felt no insistent compunction to belong.

"There's no compartment to be safe in," she said, adding that while the odd pang for community does strike her, she feels freer the way she is.

Antonio Puri said he prefers to experiment with media and – not covering up the many layers that artists lay down but hide – would rather not clean up and thus conceal the process of development.

Neelam Deo, consul general of India in New York and the guest of honor, said while she was very impressed with the



Above, The Mother by Anna Bhushan; left, Encroaching by Reena Karmakar; below, Leaf Home Man by Tara Sabharwal



Yamini Nayar



Siona Benjamin



Nandini Chirimar



focused on shows of South Asian interest, including *Edge of Desire*, an exhibition of the works of contemporary artists from India.

While the artists often drew from Indian motifs and designs, a rich variety of influences permeated the works on view, from the use of miniature paintings to the use of novel media.

If Reena Karmakar provided perspectives of rectilinear shape in non-primary hues,

in addressing that problem, having organized other exhibitions involving Indian American artists. Kumar, whose works are also on view at the exhibition, said he could not represent everyone he wanted to at the show, given the limitations.

Chadha said it was not easy to gain a foothold in the US: the struggles were harder, the rewards smaller. But Tara Sabharwal saw the exertion involved purely as a one of the prices of growth and

range of work she saw, she felt they were very different from those she had seen in India. Many of those were rooted in nature; here, she said, there were far more urban influences at play.

Erasing Borders was organized in collaboration with the Indian American Arts Council, the effort driven, in particular by Aroon Shivadasani, its executive director. The exhibition will be on at the Queen's Museum of Art until March 4.

► Page 12

who is hoping that people, drawn by exhibitions of talent from within their community, expand their interests to art beyond it. With that in mind, the museum has