

From the Land of Five Rivers

Vipin Kapoor

Baljit Kaur

Jay Panesar

Dave Singh Benning

Jarnail Singh

Mandeep Wirk

May 13 – August 14, 2011





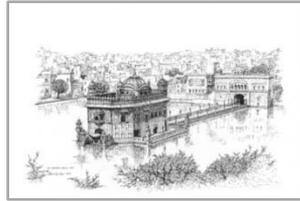
Vipin Kapoor
Lovers, 2006

Baljit Kaur
The Blue Girl, 2006



Dave Singh Benning
Sri Harmandir Sahib, 2008

Jay Panesar
Years of Tears and Joy, 2009



Jarnail Singh
The Poet, 2009

Mandeep Wirk
Inside the Gurdwara, 2011



From the Land of Five Rivers

In recognition of the Year of India in Canada and the Asian Heritage Month, Surrey Art Gallery invited South Asian Canadian artists who are based in Surrey and the surrounding region to present artworks that feature the traditions and history of their homeland and their experiences of living in Canada. The title, *From the Land of Five Rivers* given to the exhibition, reflects the ancestry of these artists, as they trace their roots to the Punjab.

The artists' works present the life of the people and the places of the Punjab—otherwise known as the 'Land of Five Rivers'. There are paintings of beautiful women, seated and standing in traditional dress, images of the Punjabi people, pastoral landscapes and architectural studies from the Punjab.

They also showcase their creative responses to the environment and surroundings of their new adopted country. There are images of the Canadian landscape and works that show local sites and religious traditions.

These artists wish to share the beauty and life of their ancestral homeland and also celebrate their new home.

About the Punjab

Punjabi civilization is one of the oldest on earth, with its distinctive language, culture, food, attire, script and folklore. The Punjabi language has its originating sources in Sanskrit, Brahmi and Braj. Punjabi is distinct from other Indo-European languages in that it is a tonal language. There are many dialects spoken across the Punjabi region.

The word *Punjab* derives from which a combination of the Persian words 'panj' (پنج) meaning *Five*, and 'āb' (آب) meaning *Water*, giving the literal meaning the Land of Five Rivers to this region. These rivers, tributaries of the Indus River, are the Beas, Chenab, Jhelum, Ravi, and Sutlej. Due to its important agricultural output and strong farming traditions, the Punjab is known as the "The Granary of India" or "The Bread Basket of India."

The Sikh state of Punjab was the last region in the subcontinent to fall under British rule during the Colonial Period. In 1947, when that rule came to an end, the British partitioned the region. The Punjab was divided: the area covered by 4 of the 5 rivers was included within the nation of Pakistan and the remaining river's land was included in India.

List of Works

Vipin Kapoor

<i>The Letter Writer</i> , 2004	oil
<i>Blue Sari</i> , 2005	oil
<i>By the Window</i> , 2005	oil
<i>Hill Scene</i> , 2006	oil
<i>Winter Fun</i> , 2006	oil
<i>Lovers</i> , 2006	oil

Baljit Kaur

<i>The Blue Girl</i> , 2006	oil
<i>The Letter</i> , 2006	oil
<i>Enchanted Valley</i> , 2009	oil
<i>Sweet Memories</i> , 2002	oil
<i>Past Memories</i> , 2009	oil
<i>Evening Dreams</i> , 2010	oil

Jay Panesar

<i>Years Of Tears And Joy</i> , 2009	photograph
<i>Thoughts</i> , 2009	photograph
<i>Jaipur Junction</i> , 2009	photograph
<i>When It Rains</i> , 2009	photograph
<i>Emerald</i> , 2009	photograph
<i>Fatehpur Sikri</i> , 2009	photograph
<i>Time To Relax</i> , 2009	photograph
<i>Arches and Pillars</i> , 2009	photograph
<i>Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple)</i>	photograph

Dave Singh Benning

<i>Sri Harmandir Sahib</i> , 2008	pen & ink drawing
<i>Sri Harmandir Sahib (bank view)</i> , 2008	pen & ink drawing
<i>Sri Harmandir Sahib (side view)</i> , 2008	pen & ink drawing
<i>Arches</i> , 2008	pen & ink drawing
<i>Window</i> , 2008	pen & ink drawing

Jarnail Singh

<i>The Poet</i> , 2009	oil
<i>I Have Seen Life</i> , 2001	acrylic
<i>Holy Men</i> , 2001	oil
<i>The New Necklace</i> , 2010	oil
<i>Fall Splendor</i> , 2011	oil
<i>Sikh Warrior</i> , 2005	oil

Mandeep Wirk

<i>Sea of Color</i> , 2011	watercolour
<i>Communal Meal at a Wedding</i> , 2011	watercolour
<i>Worship</i> , 2011	watercolour
<i>Nishan Sahib (Gurdwara Flag)</i> , 2011	watercolour
<i>Inside the Gurdwara</i> , 2011	watercolour
<i>Gur Sikh Temple in Abbotsford</i> , 2011	mixed media
<i>Acceptance at Long Last</i> , 2011	collage
<i>The Mool Mantar (Basic Teaching)</i> , 2011	collage

If you are interested in purchasing work or learning more about the artists, the reception desk has contact information for the artists.

About the Artists:

Vipin Kapoor

Vipin Kapoor is an artist and actor. He mainly works in acrylic and oil paint. He has experience in Mural Art, Portraits, Landscapes, Airbrush, Digital Art, Graphic Designing, Photography, and video graphing.

Kapoor's birthplace is Ludhiana, in the state of Punjab, India and he came to Canada in 1999. Vipin has his own company called Kapoor Arts. He learned art making from his father, Kishan Kapoor, who is a graduate of J.J. college of Fine Arts In Bombay, India, who helped Vipin develop a strong passion for art. His father has also done film set designing, movie posters for Bollywood movies, and paintings of Hindu religious themes.

Following in the steps of his father, Kapoor likes painting variations in different mediums. Besides being a painter, he is an accomplished actor with a special talent for comedy and mimicry. He currently lives in Delta, BC, Canada.

Baljit Kaur

Baljit Kaur is an artist who paints mainly portraits of women in oil on canvas. It is rare for Punjabi women to pursue a career as an artist. In fact, Kaur noted that out of 3500 student at her college only about 15 girls chose to study Fine Arts. Art was part of daily life for Kaur, who grew up in a home watching gifted family members draw and paint. Her parental Uncle and her brothers who are engineers also enjoy drawing and painting as hobby.

Baljit Kaur loved to draw and paint even as a young child. At secondary school, she Kaur remembers that she was the only girl student in her drawing class while the other girls took the embroidery class. Naturally, Kaur undertook a four- year program in Fine Arts at Government College for Women (G.C.W.) in Chandigarh, India where she studied drawing and painting, as well as vocal music (classical raag).

Shortly after graduating with her Bachelor of Arts degree, Kaur married Jarnail Singh who is also an artist. "I received most of my encouragement and inspiration for my art from my own family," says Kaur. Father-in-law, legendary Sikh painter Kirpal Singh, always provided her with lots of encouragement to continue with her painting, as did her husband Jarnail Singh. Kaur has been painting for the past 20 years, and has participated in a number of group exhibitions in India and Canada, including husband-wife exhibitions.

Jay Panesar

Jay Panesar comes from a family with a rich artistic tradition. He grew up in a home where everything revolved around art. In fact, art has been a way of life for the Panesar family for three generations. Grandfather Kirpal Singh told the story of the Sikh people to the world through his paintings of pivotal moments in Sikh history. Also, Panesar's parents Jarnail Singh and Baljit Kaur are well known in the community for their paintings depicting the historical and cultural heritage of Punjab. So, art has always been a great part of Panesar's life from the very beginning.

Born in Chandigarh, Jay came to Canada as a young boy with his parents when the family moved to Canada in 2000. The Panesar family settled in Surrey, British Columbia and opened their studio.

However, it wasn't until the last and final year of high school in a photography class where he discovered that his true passion was photography. What began as a mere hobby has now become a part-time profession. Panesar chose photography over other art forms because it allows him to explore and capture the richness and authenticity of life as it is. He is so fascinated by the play of light and shadows on people and everything around him that he enjoys capturing those precious moments with his camera.

People and places also fascinate Jay. He finds extraordinary beauty in the everyday moments of life. In the coming years, he expects to expand his brand Noir-Images into a full-time creative activity, specializing in Fashion, Commercial and Wedding Photography. His motto: *Photography is Life!*

Dave Singh Benning

"I was born in the UK in 1969, the youngest child of parents who moved there in 1952 from Punjab, India. I moved to BC, Canada in 1989 and live here happily with my wife and daughter.

"I was always interested in Art and was encouraged by them to pursue my talent and dream. I studied graphic arts throughout school and college and eventually worked as a graphic designer for a silk screening company. With the introduction of computer design, I began to lose interest in the lack of hands on creativity and decided to follow a career in Fine Arts.

"My chosen medium is acrylic on canvas and I specialize in Popular Culture Portraits. The work created for this exhibit is very different to my regular work. I have created detailed Pen and Ink drawings that depict The Harmandir Sahib, Golden Temple in Amritsar. This is a reflection of my Culture and beliefs. Without the guidance and respect for my Culture, I would not be the Artist and Man I am today.

"Living in Canada has offered opportunities to myself, and to my family, but we can never forget where we came from. I hope my work makes one reflect on their heritage, honour and beliefs. These are the values I hope we instil in our children and make them proud to be who they are."

Jarnail Singh

Jarnail Singh is an artist, illustrator, designer, photographer, and art journalist. Born in Zira, a small town in northern Indian state of Punjab, he received a Bachelor of Arts Degree at Punjab University in Chandigarh. He emigrated from India to Canada in 2000, and now resides in Surrey where he has become actively involved in the local arts community.

His father, Kirpal Singh, an important artist in the Punjab, first introduced him to art. From his father, he inherited not only a talent for painting, but also an appreciation for historical images, and their role in teaching the history of the Sikh faith. Jarnail Singh's practice not only continues the tradition of classical portraits of Sikh Gurus and historical events, but also images that capture scenes of the quickly disappearing traditional Punjabi folk culture.

More recently he has produced a series of portraits of the exceptionally beautiful women from the Punjab, and has begun a series of paintings of BC's landscapes. Jarnail Singh has exhibited his paintings and photographs internationally, and is frequently sought out for commissions.

Singh's work is represented in many international collections, including the Central Sikh Museum, Sri Darbar Sahib, Golden Temple, Amritsar, and a large mural was recently completed for the Gurdwara Singh Sabha in Surrey. He has also published numerous articles, authored the books *Punjabi Chitarkar* (Punjabi Painters) and "*Vishav de Parsidh Chitarkar Shahkar*" (World Famous Painters and Paintings) and is a contributor to the Punjabi writer's forum.

Singh was recently honoured with City of Surrey's First Civic Treasures Award. He was among twelve people from various fields from Arts, Literature and Culture honoured for their lifetime contributions to the city's art field. The Vancouver Sun Newspaper also included him in its list of 100 prominent South Asians who have made significant contribution to life in British Columbia.

Mandeep Wirk

Mandeep Wirk is very much a global citizen. Her grandfather emigrated from the Punjab in India and settled in Kenya, Africa. Like her father, Wirk was also born in Kenya but grew up in neighboring Tanzania where her family had their sawmill business. As a little girl, she immigrated with her parents to England. It was at the English elementary school that had a strong emphasis on the arts, that Wirk developed her passion for painting. Then in the year 1972 when multiculturalism became official policy, She immigrated with her parents to Canada. The family settled in Abbotsford, British Columbia, where she is currently based.

After graduating from high school, Wirk attended The University of British Columbia and earned her Bachelor of Science degree and completed her teacher training there too. She has a Master of Arts degree in Psychology (Social and Personality). Mandeep also regards herself as a lifelong student of culture and has also studied Cross-Cultural Psychology. Teaching for many years in Canada, she has also lived and worked as a Native English Teacher in Osaka, Japan for five years.

Wirk creates art in a diversity of media (acrylics, watercolors, colored pencils, pastels, crayons, and graphite) and uses a multiplicity of artistic styles. Her subjects are as diverse as she is: people, buildings, still life, landscapes and portraits. Besides being an artist and an educator, she is also a photographer and a freelance writer and journalist.



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