

Presented by Latcham Art Centre

# Inward Identities

Recent Works by Vicky Talwar



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Installation view of *Inward Identities: Recent Works by Vicky Talwar*. Latcham Art Centre, January 2022.  
Image courtesy of Dennis Hristovski.

Vicky Talwar is an interdisciplinary Whitchurch-Stouffville artist who draws upon her personal experience as a Hindu-Canadian to produce painting, mixed media and installation artwork. In her artistic practice, she addresses themes of cultural hybridity, displacement, movement and memory. Latcham Art Centre is pleased to host Vicky Talwar's recent work, which also serves as her Interdisciplinary Master's in Art, Media & Design thesis exhibition with the Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCAD U).

In her paintings, she expresses the contrasts of her identity by embracing both vibrant colour and textured materiality. Talwar uses reoccurring spiritual motifs including intertwining flower garlands, mala beads, sacred threads and salt to create a sense of presence and intention while playful brushstrokes and an atmospheric background produce a feeling of liminality and transcendency. Her salt-based installations explore similar themes. Inspired by the ritualistic qualities of the mandala, she uses salt as a purifying and healing material to accentuate her spirituality and highlight the space between what is tangible and what is a distant memory. Acting as a self-portrait of her enlightening individuality, *Inward Identities* showcases Vicky Talwar's relationship with art throughout her life and encourages our community to engage with their own cultural experiences through the visual arts.

It was my pleasure to have the opportunity to work with Vicky Talwar, learn of her distinctive practice and engage with her artwork. The following text highlights three central themes in *Inward Identities*: Colour, Salt and Healing. Together, these themes contribute to Talwar's artistic vision of exploring her own multi-faceted identity.

Lastly, I encourage you to visit and participate in our Community Mandala wall and comment your thoughts, feelings and reactions to the exhibition.

Carolyn Hickey, Curator

Front cover:

Detail of *Divinity*. Acrylic and Mixed Media on canvas, 2020. Image courtesy of the artist.

## COLOUR

The choice of pigment in Talwar's paintings is the foundational element that the remainder of the artwork is built upon. Talwar utilizes a range of bright and vivid colours that represent her emotional energy and meditative process in the creation of the work. Talwar was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario. At the age of thirteen, her family moved to New Delhi, India and by the age of nineteen, they moved back to Toronto. Talwar recalls this as a formative, confusing and traumatic experience:

"I remember arriving in New Delhi and feeling entirely out of place. However, in time, it got easier living there. When my parents unexpectedly and permanently moved us back to Toronto, it recreated a traumatic experience all over again. With each relocation, I left an important part of myself behind. The cultural disruption I experienced left me feeling confused about my identity."



*Release*, Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 2021. Latcham Art Centre. Image courtesy of Dennis Hristovski.

Inspired by memories of her interconnected identity as a Hindu-Canadian, Talwar explores how colour can engage memory and heal.

The inclusion of diptychs and triptychs in this series, enhances the value of colour to compare, contrast, and ultimately balance the palette used throughout the exhibition. This is especially evident in works such as *Release* and *A Look Within*, which capture a call and response effect. Talwar explains:

“I juxtapose one style of painting with another, further suggesting a cultural disruption and I examine how colours change when placed together. I see my spiritual practice as deeply connected to my artmaking practice. In it, I reflect on my embodied experience of colour, Eastern spiritual teachings, and Western teachings about colour.”



*A Look Within*, Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 2021. Latcham Art Centre.  
Image courtesy of Dennis Hristovski.

Her paintings include a selection of recognized spiritual objects such as intertwining flower garlands, mala beads, and sacred threads. In her process, Talwar also produces meditative brushstrokes with intention that individually become her own recognized spiritual motifs throughout her series. Seen in the diptych *Rising Above*, Talwar paints colourful ribbon-like brushstrokes that for her trigger a state of tranquility and self-healing. The floating form of each brushstroke seems to hang in the misty void of the vibrantly coloured canvas. This contrast of the atmospheric backdrop with the pressured energy of the brushwork evokes a sense of vitality and presence.



*Rising Above*, Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 2021. Latcham Art Centre. Image courtesy of Dennis Hristovski.

## SALT

Salt is used and represented in each artwork featured in *Inward Identities* as a purifying and grounding material. In her paintings, salt is used on the wet canvas to create texture, transforming her

canvas into a topographical and indistinctly hazy state producing a feeling of floating tranquility, seen in the painting *Essence of the Soul*. More noticeably, salt is used as the main element in her installation artwork.

Talwar discusses the significance of salt in her practice:

“Pink Himalayan salt is believed to have many spiritual and healing properties and is considered a neutralizer that cleanses the environment by repelling negative energy. My relationship with this spiritual material has allowed me to re-engage with nature and gain a sense of belonging. The energy felt when surrounding myself with rock salt has intrigued me to participate with these materials in various forms physically.”



Detail of *Essence of the Soul*, Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 2021. Image courtesy of the artist.



*Interconnectedness*, chiffon, pink Himalayan salt, 2021. Latham Art Centre. Image courtesy of Dennis Hristovski.

In the installation work *Interconnectedness*, the spiritual elements of salt and light fuels an affectual and physical interaction between the artwork and the viewer. The fabric moves as you navigate the space around the installation, creating an interactive push and pull. Talwar describes the materiality of the work:

“Chiffon fabric is used in many Indian garments like the sari. The touch and feel of this sheer and light material brings back memories of my time in India. I printed my Himalayan salt rock images onto this fabric and its semi-transparency which allows me to connect with this material and the salt as well as observe how the material moves with the presence of its viewers.”

The scale and location of the artwork not only commands the viewers’ attention and curiosity but also challenges the body to move around the work and in turn responds to the viewers movements.



*A Transformative Shift*, Plastic, LED lights, pink Himalayan salt rocks, 2021. Latcham Art Centre. Image courtesy of Dennis Hristovski.

## HEALING

By combining the elements of colour, the materiality of salt and the shape of the mandala, Talwar expresses her hybrid identity by creating an environment that encourages healing. Talwar explains the significance of the mandala shape featured in both *A Moment to Myself* and *A Transformative Shift*:

“Mandala in Sanskrit means ‘circle’ and symbolizes unity and completeness. It is a spiritual symbol in Hinduism and Buddhism. A mandala is used in meditation to assist in healing the maker as well as the viewer.”



Still image from video performance of *A Moment to Myself*, featuring Buddhist Monk, Lama Jam.  
Video Production by Moe Marino, 2022.

The video displayed in the gallery shows Talwar completing the colourful salt and light installation *A Moment to Myself*. As Talwar works to complete the salt mandala, Buddhist Monk Lama Jam performs Sound Energy Therapy using Tibetan Medical Singing Bowls. Talwar uses the sound and energy vibrations to produce

and guide her in the creation of the mandala. Talwar describes the experience, stating:

“Working with a circular mandala shape has been a reminder that there is no beginning or end and that we are all interconnected. As I work gradually outwards to form my mandala, it symbolizes the universe and continuity. The spiritual meaning of the bowls as well as the vibrational sounds help relieve pain and improve the flow of energy in areas of the body. I have learned how the sounds of the Tibetan Medical Singing Bowls transfer positive energy and are therapeutic to even inanimate objects such as salt.”

It was important to Talwar for the community of Whitchurch-Stouffville to be able to engage with her artwork in a meaningful way. The Community Mandala across from reception presents an opportunity for visitors to share their thoughts or reactions to the exhibition and participate in a community art piece inspired by Talwar’s artwork and practice. Talwar explains the intentions for the exhibition as:

“Understanding the effects of colours, exploring different materials and analyzing shapes have all contributed to my belief that the healing power of art can be introduced at any age.”

## **Video Installation Credits:**

Buddhist Monk, Lama Jam  
[www.fivewisdomstemple.com](http://www.fivewisdomstemple.com)

Moe Marino, Videographer  
[www.voidsetup.moe](http://www.voidsetup.moe)



Detail image of *A Moment to Myself*, Plastic, LED lights, Acrylic stained pure salt rocks, 2021. Latcham Art Centre. Images courtesy of Dennis Hristovski.

**Latcham Art Centre gratefully acknowledges the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, Ontario Arts Council, and Tiny Seedings for their generous support of this exhibition.**





**Vicky Talwar** is a Hindu-Canadian interdisciplinary artist living in Stouffville, Ontario, with a lifelong passion for painting with mixed media. She is recognized for her uniquely vibrant and colourful artwork that engages with themes of cultural disruption, movement, and memory.

She has exhibited both nationally and internationally, including Toronto, Los Angeles, New York, and the United Kingdom. Vicky has participated in group exhibitions at The Graduate Gallery at OCAD U and The Elaine Fleck Gallery in Toronto as well as two solo shows at Hashtag Gallery in Toronto. In 2017, she was the recipient of the Juror's Award for the Annual Juried Exhibition presented by Latcham Art Centre.

Vicky holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Ontario College of Art and Design and a Bachelor of Education from York University. Vicky is completing an Interdisciplinary Master's in Art, Media & Design at OCAD U. She is currently an elementary Visual Arts Teacher for the York Region District School Board. This is Vicky Talwar's first solo exhibition at Latcham Art Centre.

# latcham

ART CENTRE

Latcham Art Centre inspires the community to engage with visual art through exhibitions of contemporary art and education programs including classes, workshops, artist talks and tours. It is funded by donations, sponsorships, membership and fundraising events as well as annual grants from the municipality of Whitchurch-Stouffville and the Ontario Arts Council.

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