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*Asia Pacific: Perspectives*  
Center for the Pacific Rim  
2130 Fulton St  
San Francisco, CA  
94117-1080

Tel: (415) 422-6357  
Fax: (415) 422-5933  
perspectives@usfca.edu

# Asia Pacific:

# PERSPECTIVES

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*Introduction* >>.....John Nelson 1

*Grounding Terrorism on Ground Zero: How 9/11 Informs U.S. Press Coverage of Political Violence* >>.....Kevin Mack 2

*How the West Lost Us: A Critique of Media Coverage of the Mumbai Attacks* >>.....Vamsee Juluri 17

*An Interview with Vamsee Juluri* >>.....John Nelson 19

*Profile of the Artist: Shalinee Kumari* >>..... 24

*Gathering Reactions on the Mumbai Attacks, India's '9/11' on November 26th, 2008* >>.....Lotika Gulvadi 25

*Asia Pacific: Perspectives* is a peer-reviewed journal published at least once a year, usually in April/May. It welcomes submissions from all fields of the social sciences and the humanities with relevance to the Asia Pacific region.\* In keeping with the Jesuit traditions of the University of San Francisco, *Asia Pacific: Perspectives* commits itself to the highest standards of learning and scholarship.

Our task is to inform public opinion by a broad hospitality to divergent views and ideas that promote cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and the dissemination of knowledge unreservedly. Papers adopting a comparative, interdisciplinary approach will be especially welcome. **Graduate students are strongly encouraged to submit their work for consideration.**

\* 'Asia Pacific region' as used here includes East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Oceania, and the Russian Far East.



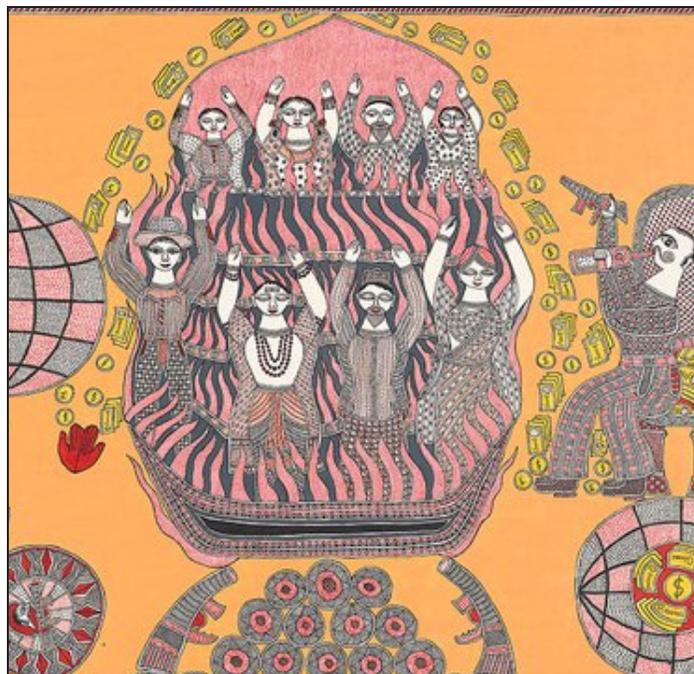
**Mumbai's Taj Hotel in Flames**

## Profile of the Artist: Shalinee Kumari

Shalinee Kumari is from a remote village in the Mithila region of Bihar, one of India's poorest and most rural states. For centuries the women of Mithila have adorned their homes with auspicious wall paintings of deities and ritual icons in preparation for engagements, weddings, and other life cycle events. Shalinee continues and expands upon this tradition by depicting current world events as she learns of them, often through BBC radio. She focuses on four global subjects: capitalism, terrorism, environmentalism, and gender equality, all through her vibrantly colored paintings on paper.

San Francisco Curator Wendi Norris learned of Shalinee's paintings through Dr. David Szanton, President of the Ethnic Arts Foundation. Ms. Norris, co-owner of the Frey Norris Gallery, feels the art is directly aligned with her gallery's penchant for showcasing "politically intoxicating art. Shalinee is uniquely positioned as an artist in that she presents such a fresh and pure body of work, even as she utilizes an eye-catching, age-old tradition" (Nataraj 2009). According to Dr. Szanton's profile of the artist...

"Shalinee Kumari was born in 1986 in the village of Haripur Baxi-Tola, in the state of Bihar, India. Baxi-Tola is a rural village, yet is famous for producing religious scholars and intellectuals. Shalinee's father is an official of the Agriculture Department and her mother is a home maker who does not paint (contrary to the common misconception that most women in Mithila paint). Shalinee started painting in 2004, as part of the second group of students to attend the Ethnic Art Foundation's Mithila Art Institute in the town of Madhubani, some 12 miles from Baxi-Tola. Her teacher was



**Terrorism Victorious**

Santosh Kumar Das, who painted the Gujarat Series included in the renowned international traveling exhibition "Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India," organized by The Asia Society in New York. Shalinee has also been influenced by photos of paintings by Ganga Devi and Sita Devi, the two most famous painters of the Mithila tradition in the 1970s to 1990s. Shalinee's paintings have been exhibited in New Delhi and were the subject of a 2007 Symposium on Indigenous Images of Women's Empowerment at the Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts in New Delhi.

Shalinee is the first artist of the Mithila region to tackle so many contemporary subjects from global warming, capitalism and terrorism to gender issues and women's empowerment. The Berkeley Art Museum, the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Asia Society and Museum, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Syracuse University, Oberlin College, and the Craft and Folk Art Museum of Los Angeles all collect and/or exhibit this unique painting tradition. Shalinee has recently finished an MA in Geography at Darbhanga University, and now intends to move to New Delhi to continue her painting and begin a PhD in Geography.

The editors of *Asia Pacific: Perspectives* are grateful to the artist for permission to reproduce her work, and to the Frey Norris Gallery (<http://www.freynorris.com/index>) and Dr. David Szanton for their roles in bringing her work to a wider public.

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