

SMALL TOWN * BIG ART – expression of interest

Artist: [REDACTED]

1. BIO

[REDACTED] is a Dubai-born, Indian origin, Canadian 3rd culture artist.

Drawing influence from various stages of her life: her upbringing immersed in Indian block-printed textiles and handicrafts, her youth reading comic books over her brother's shoulder, her life-long interaction with Islamic and Arabic architecture and patterns, [REDACTED] style evokes a recognizable hybrid aesthetic. Her interest in existentialism, mythology, human behavior and human-natural interactions coupled with a BA in Art and Culture and an MA in Sociology results in a curious search for meaning through drawing. Having painted in over 10 countries, [REDACTED] a passion for public art and its impact on social interaction and placemaking. In 2010 she received the Sheikha Manal Young Artist Award in Dubai and has since played an active role in the developing street art scene in the Middle East as a curator over the past 12 years. Passionate about social reform through art, she has also worked on outreach projects in Dubai, India and Jordan.

In my own words:

[REDACTED].
I was born and raised in Dubai, am of Indian origin and now a Canadian immigrant as well. Growing up between cultures and identities, art has been my means of finding a voice of my own. Possibly influenced by a number of visual prompts in my upbringing including Indian textiles, Arabic calligraphy and architecture, tapestries and comic books, graffiti and a love for story telling and making marks that are distinctly my own, has helped me find my voice and make sense of the world around me. Thematically, I like to tell stories and add a little poetry to life. I'm interested in how we navigate our existential conundrums through our innate ability to express ourselves, depict and portray. My own life challenges have led me to find power through art making; giving humour and romance to our tragic day to day narratives. I love mythology, folklore, symbols and semiotics and generally the imaginative ways humans give meaning to existence and their interaction with the world. Drawing, to me, is a means to personal freedom and mental fortitude. Finding galleries restrictive at times and having a love for working at scale, I ventured into public art early and did a BA in studio art and an MA in sociology to further understand how art moves society forward. I believe in art's ability to heal and transform. To transcend boundaries and connect. And that has taken me on an incredible journey through studying art, curating shows and projects, working with challenged communities and painting large public walls.

3. Statement of Interest

What grabbed me the most reading about Small Town Big Art was this idea of public art creating an intersection between the past, present and future. I'm at a stage in my life and my career where I'm very consciously distinguishing what aspects of the 'civilized' world is positive and toxic, what pre-dates our realities and ways of life, and what exists as universal sentiments in the way we work towards the future. As a 3rd culture kid, an immigrant, I'm always looking for the larger themes that connect me with people in other cultures because there are many intersections worth celebrating. Story-telling, poetry, mythology; messages of wisdom, resilience, power and hope; these exist across the world and reinforce communities as we face the challenges of the future.

I am curious about Hawaiian culture. I'm always keen to learn more about cultures and have deep mythology, ritual, rich culture to them just like my own Indian culture. I am keen to listen and use my skill to highlight these larger ideas and messages that help create a feeling of belonging which has been an important mission in my life. A sense of place. I switched from working in galleries to public space for reasons Small Town Big Art states: accessibility, humanizing man-made impersonal public spaces, and also for creating moments of encounter and magic that celebrate the human spirit. I've worked in community contexts before in Canada, Jordan and in India where my style is a vessel but the story and message is a collective one conceptualized together.

4. Project Description

I really enjoyed listening to the dialogue between Kekoa Enomoto and Kauwela Bisquera. (talkstory #12). Intriguing stories about brave women and themes of identity, journey, love, migration, honouring history and celebration of the human spirit. I thought about women warriors; the resilience ambition of women who persevere through adversity, stand for what they believe, act as vessels of love and kindness and move the world forward. (My body of work 'the humans' has been, in part, about exploring larger universal aspects of the human spirit). Speaking of warrior women really transcends boundaries and is relevant to every society, recognizing some of the challenges women across the world still experience today. As a woman who has traversed my own challenges, this resonates with me strongly.

But this of course is just my initial thought and reaction to the podcast. Community engagement would be key to really bringing to the surface stories and messages important to the people of Maui. It may or may not be an appropriate starting point, I am open to the concept of the mural shifting and taking form and evolving through discussion. I feel enthusiastic to really immerse myself in local culture, connect with local community, share stories, learn language, gain deeper learning of history and execute this project in a meaningful and impactful way. I think without these there isn't much point to public art.