



When art is mentioned as therapeutic, the therapy is naturally assumed for the author, not by. As a survivor of the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, artist Schandra Singh definitely finds solace in her work, but her work also serves as a way for others to heal, move on, and see the world when its potential is realized.

The need to help her local community has ironically made Singh an international smash. Her work has been featured in the top galleries around the world, including exhibitions at the RARE and Baumgartner galleries in New York and one upcoming at the Galerie Bertrand & Gruner, in Geneva. We tracked the elusive Singh down to get a take on her art, success, and her experiences as a New Yorker at its darkest moment.

TCM: How do you feel like your experience during September 11 influenced your work before and after their destruction?

SS: I think my work has been greatly influenced by my own personal experience of living a block from the world trade towers and being there on September 11. My paintings deal with the notion of a loss of innocence. With the recent paintings, I choose purposely silly situations to talk about something quite serious. Something that could be explained as an existential crisis.

The images in the paintings are supposed to be relaxing, floating in water, vacationing, yet they are painted aggressively. Expressionistically it is clear something is not right. In a way I am asking, “How do we relax? How do we escape, or in the midst of floating in a world of paradise are we not living with turmoil?”

personally feel that I lost a part of my own innocence on September 11. If I lay on a beach on a beautiful day with a smile on my face in happiness the blue of the color of the sky unfortunately is not the same for me as it was the day before September 11. I think this is evident in the paintings.

TCM: Though each piece may have a specific message, do you feel that your art overall contains a general message from you. If so, what?

SS: This is a difficult question to answer. I believe that all work should be open to interpretation (this is what makes it so wonderful). Each painting does have a personal meaning that connects with the whole body of work.

TCM: As art and what art means seems to change or evolve, does that evolution ever affect how you work or is your art not influenced by the climate of art, given your success?

SS: I think the climate of art is quite ironic. To me, you can look at recent paintings by a contemporary artist and find direct parallels to work from centuries ago. Interestingly the work I find most compelling is more in the conceptual edge where there are "aha moments" where the viewer is taken off guard.

Such as the work of Alfredo Jarr and his shedding light on Rwanda or that of Glen Ligon and his work with school children and coloring books from the sixties. I guess you could say what they share in common is a social out reaching with there art practice. To me, painting begins with seeing the moment and knowing the idea is right, then allowing the idea to transform itself within the painting to allow my own interpretation and feelings to come through. The climate of art does not affect what I do; I would say I am more effected by the climate the world.

by EJ Jacobs