

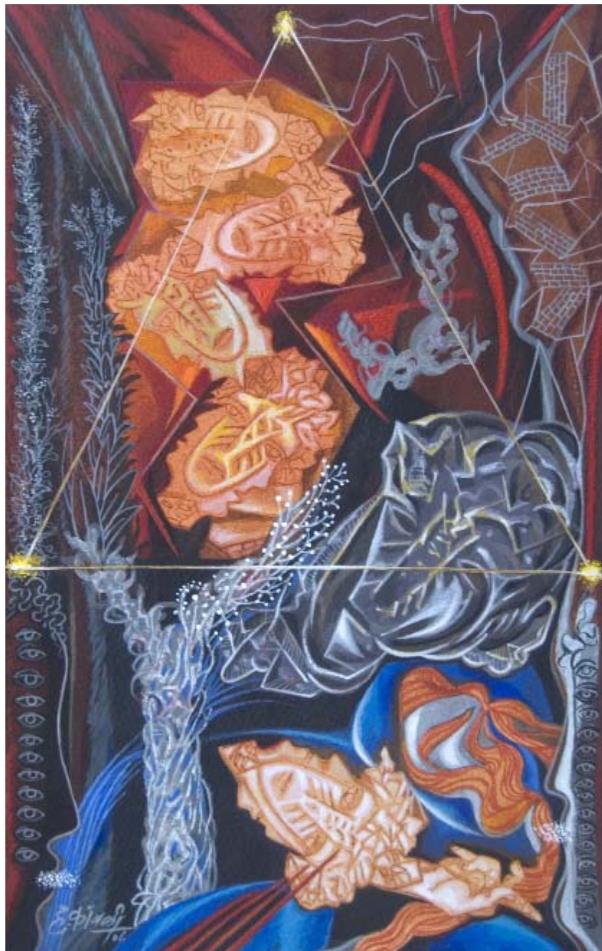
Junctures and Constellations

A Story of Fulbrights and Friendships By KATHRYN MYERS

A painter and art professor at the University of Connecticut since 1984, Kathryn Myers' work and life have been influenced by her visits to India and her connections with other Fulbright scholars.



Kathryn Myers, Obscure and Common Duties, Ahmedabad, gouache on paper, 2007.



Kathryn Myers and Hanuman Kambli at the opening of "Junctures & Constellations."

Hanuman Kambli, Catch, acrylic on paper, 2006.

Junctures and Constellations" is my poetic attempt to describe the chance meetings—in life, academia and art—that develop into a web of relationships resulting in series of unforeseen events. The phrase is drawn from a particular description of Samkhya, a complex and subtle school of Indian philosophy in which an individual is described as a field of energies simultaneously interacting with innumerable other fields, and that each of us are a "juncture or constellation" of these interactions.

I was searching for a suitable title for a 2008 exhibition to be held in India and the United States that would reflect my friendship with Hanuman Kambli, professor of printmaking at the Goa College of Art. I also wanted to reflect through my art the increasingly rich and complex web of individuals, encounters and events that led up to, and then beyond it.

The story starts with my 2002 Fulbright experience at the Government College of Arts and Crafts in Chennai. In what was to be a series of serendipitous yet connected events, I was asked

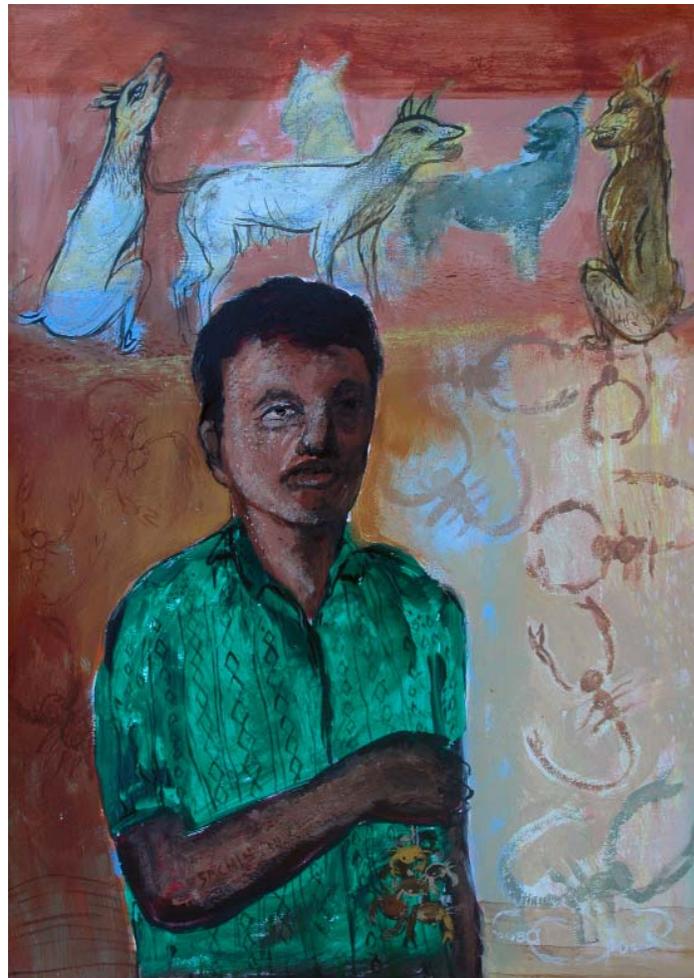
by the Fulbright office if I would be interested in running a painting workshop in Goa. I immediately agreed and looked forward to getting to know artists from the region.

In the meantime, Kambli had recently returned from his Fulbright work at Michigan State University in Kalamazoo and had been asked by the Fulbright office if he would be interested in hosting a visiting professor from the United States. He said "Yes" before even knowing how or where he would facilitate my visit.

As it turned out, Yolanda Sousa and Rudolf Kammermeier generously sponsored the three-day painting workshop and exhibition at their gallery, Art Chamber, in the beach town of Calangute. It included Kambli's students and other area artists and allowed me a first glimpse into art-making in Goa. I began to understand how the unique heritage of the state is expressed in many of the artists' works. Kambli stressed that when I returned to India, I must come to Goa and work with his students again. I didn't get the sense that he was merely being polite. We kept in touch, although the next opportunity was not until my sabbatical



Dattaram Naik, Man and Nature, acrylic on paper, 2008.



Sachin Naik, Around Me II, acrylic on paper, 2008.



Above, from left: "Coast to Coast" exhibition at the University of Connecticut's Jorgensen Gallery; Hanuman Kambli with students from the University of Connecticut printshop; Goa College of Art students and alumni with Kathryn Myers (far left) and Hanuman Kambli (far right) at Ruchika's Art Gallery in Panjim.

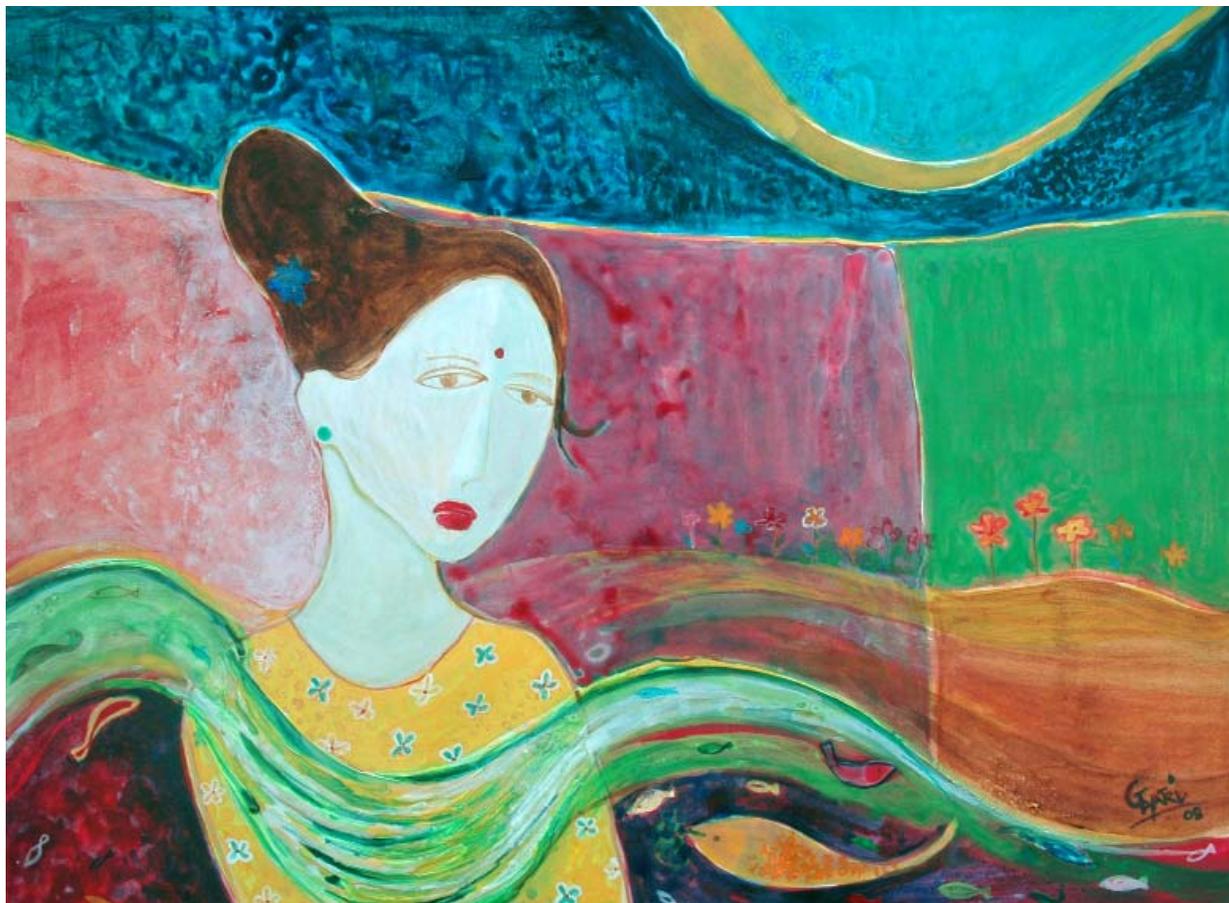
from the University of Connecticut in the winter of 2006.

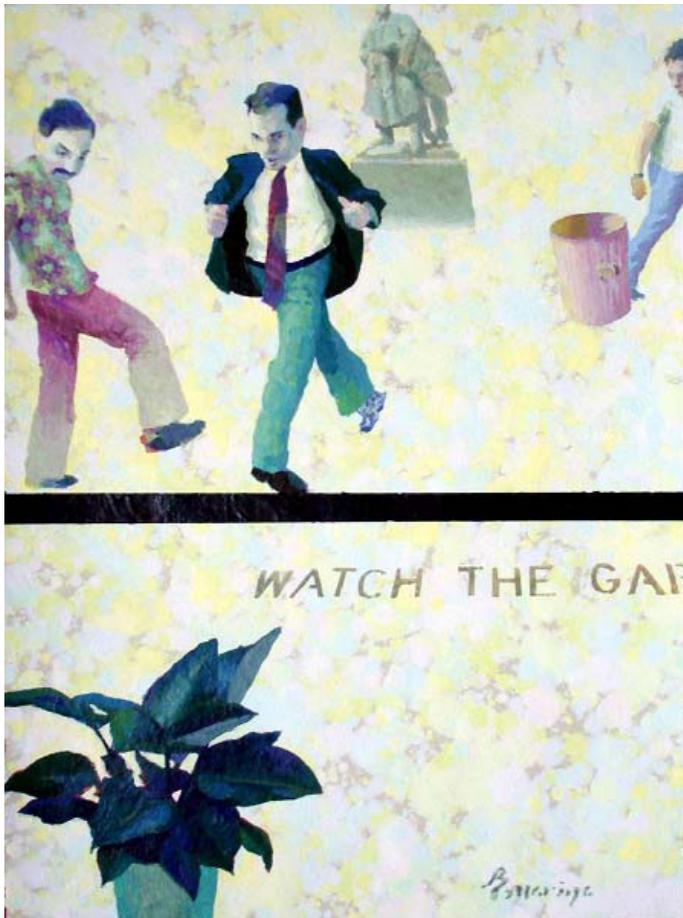
Yet another link, to another individual and another culture, was made when Kambli and I were allowed to conduct our February 2006 workshop in a beautifully restored building in the heart of the historic district of Fontainhas in Goa's capital, Panjim. This was made possible by Sérgio Mascarenhas, director of the Goa-based Portuguese private organization, Fundação Oriente. Kambli chose a select group of his postgraduate stu-

dents, and for three days we explored ideas of narrative in painting from different formal, conceptual and cultural perspectives.

The following year, Mascarenhas was touring the United States and was a guest of the University of Connecticut's India studies program. His presentations illuminated, for my students and others, the intertwined history of Portugal and India. This visit was also a catalyst for the further intertwining of the art being created by Kambli, myself and our students. Upon his return to Goa, Mascarenhas was inspired to facilitate the first joint exhibition of the work of Kambli and myself in India and the United States, scheduled for May 2008 at Fundação Oriente. When he unexpectedly decided to return to Portugal, the exhibition was generously sponsored by Jaywant Chowgule and Sameer Gupta at Ruchika's Art Gallery in the Miramar district of

Gayatri Jotkar, Untitled, acrylic on paper, 2008.





Brad Guarino, *Watch the Gap*, oil on paper, 2008.

indeed been fulfilled. The only thing missing in the web of relationships, events and exchanges was for

Kambli to visit the United States to work with the students of Bebout and myself. And so it happened.

Bebout, along with The Global Education Center and the Department of Art at Montclair State University, subsequently invited Kambli to be a visiting professor for the spring 2009 semester. He is teaching a course in printmaking and Indian culture. In March he visited the University of Connecticut where he shared the story of his life, from a small village without electricity to successful artist and beloved teacher, and met with the printmaking class of professor and fellow printmaker Gus Mazzocca.

I often think of how uncanny it has been that my engagement with the two enormous countries and diverse populations of India and the United States has made my world so much smaller. In our "Junctures & Constellations" exhibition brochure I recalled philosopher and art critic Thomas McEvelley, who wrote of the necessity "in a shrinking and terrifying world to begin to use each other's languages, as the future is an unknown language that we will speak together." In thinking back on the chain of events that led to Kambli's visit to our campus, I now see how phone calls in 2002 by the Fulbright office to Kambli and myself developed over time into an increasingly rich web of relationships; one that at first was unpredictable but now has a significant form that will continue to evolve.



Kathryn Myers is a professor of studio art at the University of Connecticut, where she serves on the board of the India Studies Program and developed a course on Indian Art and Popular Culture.

Panjim. As a second generation Indian American from Los Angeles, Gupta was particularly interested in continuing the exchange between India and the United States. He and Chowgule, for instance, had recently hosted an exhibition and workshop by Catherine Bebout, professor of printmaking at Montclair State University in New Jersey, during her Fulbright scholarship in 2008.

Along with our joint exhibition at Ruchika's Art Gallery, titled "Junctures & Constellations" I had the opportunity through this third workshop to reconnect with artists I worked with before and to meet some of Kambli's recent graduates. The theme was "Self-Portrait, Fact-Fiction-Fantasy." I was planning to bring Kambli's work to the University of Connecticut for the second part of the exhibition at the Jorgensen Gallery that fall, but was so impressed with the paintings from the Indian students that I decided to include them as well.

After a discussion with Kambli and Gupta, we decided that my university students would create work on the same theme and all of the paintings from both groups of students would return to Goa to be exhibited at Ruchika's Art Gallery in December 2008. The exhibition subsequently traveled to DakshinaChitra Art Gallery in Chennai through the generosity of Deborah Thiagarajan. Another link back in time: I had worked with her during my 2002 Fulbright scholarship.

Because the exhibition was traveling from the coast of Connecticut to the east and west coasts of India, we titled it, "Coast to Coast, Students and Alumni from the Goa College of Art and the University of Connecticut." This joint exhibition of the students of two former Fulbrighters felt like something had



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