



◀ **MOUNTAIN LIONS** © Mia Bosna, 2000  
Gouache/colored pencil  
**Mia Bosna** is trained as a traditional illustrator and fine artist from Pennsylvania, but is mostly known for her ability to incorporate the intangible qualities of intuition and her spiritual life into her paintings. From The University of the Arts to the The Foundation of Shamanic Studies, she has been a student of many great institutional and indigenous teachers. Her paintings are created to inspire and motivate us to utilize our gifts and move towards our deepest desires. The symbology shown in "Mountain Lions" emerged from her shamanic journey for a client in Pennsylvania.

# The Art of Human Experience

## *Inspired by the Ramayana*

Kandinsky once said, "That is beautiful which is produced by the inner need, which springs from the soul." On October 7th, 2010, LYFE Yoga Center is presenting a group art show, "The Art of Human Experience," comprised of artists' reinterpretations of the Ramayana. Written over 2000 years ago, the Ramayana tells the story of love and war, truth and ideals as well as fear and courage.

In times of strained relations amongst community and individuals, art movements spontaneously respond to counteract these inequities. Ancient texts continue to provide guidance for today's social dilemmas. People are looking to artists to lead the way into new realms of thought, or in this case, illuminate threads of thought that have remained illusive for centuries.

In creating the show, the owner of LYFE Yoga Center, Michael Ruccolo and guest curator, Crista Riccio selected ten American artists to portray the classical themes of the Indian epic. They set out to explore these themes despite the cultural and historical differences. For the show, they focused on the fourth book, Kishkinda Kanda, because within its story, two different communities unite for one common goal. Each artist based their work upon selected chapters, not to retell the story, but to convey the common beauty and richness that unites us all.

Ruccolo sat with Loyal Marymount Doshi Professor of Indic and Comparative Theology Christopher Key Chapple to discuss the story of the Ramayana.

**CHAPPLE:** *How might these paintings inspire Yoga students to learn more about traditional Indian culture?*

**RUCCOLO:** This Epic is such a beautiful story and like the Bhagavad Gita, The Ramayana profoundly affected me. My hope in integrating an Indian text with contemporary art is to provide our yoga community yet another way to elevate our Human Spirit.

The Ramayana is a classic tale of man meets woman, man overcomes obstacles to win her hand in marriage, happiness follows, interrupted by tragedy. Through adversity and with tenacity, man and woman are reunited and then live a happy life, but not without a taste of enduring irony and a bit of sadness. The Ramayana does not shy away from the emotional highs and lows of life. Ravana steals Sita from Rama. With Hanuman's assistance, Rama rescues Sita, but harbors suspicions of infidelity (unfounded) until the very end.

**How does Rama represent Everyman?**

Rama represents the preserver of Life. And with such an awesome responsibility man isn't left with the rules for preservation, leaving him to suffer. But the source of power to overcome all suffering lies within him. "The mind and heart always sway capricious but the Self unswerving is the greatest guide."

**How does Sita represent Everywoman?**

On a universal level, Sita represents kindness, grace, beauty, restraint and awareness. Her [womanness] is metaphorically described in the story of Siva's Bow. Siva arrived at his father-in-laws to kill all who disgraced his wife Sati; but, instead, Siva paused, reflected and observed the act he was about to commit and chose to forgive, laying down his bow.

**How does Hanuman represent the faithful servant and friend?**

Hanuman represents someone you can lean on — someone you know will be there when times are prosperous or challenging. With a steady clear mind, Hanuman doesn't question either his monkey King Surgiva nor friend Rama.

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▲ **TRACTION**, 2008  
30 x 30 inch Chromogenic Print

**Jeff Charbonneau** and **Eliza French** are Los Angeles-based photographers whose collaborations have been featured in solo gallery exhibitions, international art fairs and museums since 2006. They have been featured in Photograph Magazine, American Photo Magazine and the catalogue for the exhibition "The Art of Caring: A Look at Life Through Photography" which opened at the New Orleans Museum of art in 2009 and is currently traveling throughout the U.S. Charbonneau attended the University of Wisconsin and UCLA where he studied music, anthropology and photography. French attended NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and UCLA where she studied dramatic writing and art history. The artists use large format film and traditional darkroom techniques to create narrative photographs that are a product of teamwork from conception to finish.



▲ **RAPTURE**, 2010  
Natural African Bubinga hardwood

Abstract in form, the woven pieces of **Charles Gardner** represent a whimsical yet contemplative perspective of the energy that unites us all. This intertwined landscape initially presented itself to Gardner through a life-changing experience in late 1999. First appearing as separate strands, life's infinite expressions gently merged into an interconnected woven fabric since then the motivation behind his work. It is simply the sheer joy of being another strand of expression in the weave of this continuous evolving tapestry of life. Carving "Rapture" by hand out of a solid piece of African Bubinga hardwood in the open air of his Redondo Beach studio was both an internal as well as external process of discovery.

▶ **HOMAGE TO THE JOURNEY**, 2007  
21 X 18 inch Photographic print

**Victoria Sebanz** is a multi-media artist based in Los Angeles, California. She expresses herself through poetry, photography, dance, mixed media and painted works. "As a dancer I learned to connect to others and play through the senses. Movement, texture, shape and shadow became the bones for my work. In the end, (If there is any) it is about holding a moment, a thought in time and allowing it space to stretch, to breathe." Asked about "Homage to the Journey" she answered, "This is a perfect metaphor for the chapter I've been assigned. The key (the answer) is with us all the time, yet we often fail to recognize it as such. Instead we trudge through life heavily burdened and distracted from the truth."

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He acts with strength and courage, against all adversity. While others rage or lament, Hanuman is there to transcend the mind's conditions. Whether he assures his King of no worry, reminds his King of a promise made or overcomes his own doubt, Hanuman is not only a faithful servant and friend, Hanuman is a teacher and warrior.

***How might Sita, whose name means "furrow of earth" be seen as the ongoing movement and dance of life?***

What a great question. Without Sita this Indian Epic would not exist. Rama lives for Sita and Sita lives for Rama. When Sita is taken by Ravana, he gives her a year to accept him, to fall in love with him. Every act or movement that occurs on either side of the sea is because of Sita, but some don't necessarily consider her a source for life. Vibheeshana, Ravana's brother, calls her out as the end of Ravana.

***How might their union and reunion be seen as the ultimate connection of Self to Self?***

Are you asking if the individual Self is connecting to the Cosmic Self? Rama and Sita are human. They are affected by what they see, hear, feel, taste, smell and think but together their strength overcomes the powerful senses that distract us from our purpose.

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*"The Art of Human Experience" opens October 7th from 7- 9PM at the LYFE Yoga Center, 1310 Pacific Coast Highway, Hermosa Beach, 90254. The opening party includes a screening of an animated version of the story called "Sita Sings the Blues", and a performance of traditional Indian dance. RSVP by going to: [www.LYFEyogacenter.com/contactLYFE.asp](http://www.LYFEyogacenter.com/contactLYFE.asp) or email directly to: [events@LYFEyogacenter.com](mailto:events@LYFEyogacenter.com).*

