


Joseph Chin | Apr 19, 2011 - 3:32 PM |  | [Report a Typo or Correction](#)

Gallery showcases Bollywood art

The Art Gallery of Mississauga is doing its part to help create buzz for the 2011 International Indian Film Academy Awards, set for June 23-25 in Toronto.

Ahead of the event, AGM will pay tribute to the Bollywood art form, which has evolved over the last 75 years in India, with the exhibition, *Picture House: The Art of Bollywood*. It runs May 12 to July 10.

The exhibition — a collaboration by AGM, South Asian Gallery of Art and Canadian Community Arts Initiative, and sponsored by CIBC — features 25 hand-painted billboards and posters for Indian cinema created by three generations of artists who have taken the craft to the level of fine art. Several of the larger-than-life billboards are being shown for the first time outside of India.



Bollywood art. The poster for the film, *Kohinoor*, by C. Mohan, is among works by 10 Indian artists that will be exhibited at *Picture House: The Art of Bollywood*, from May 12 to July 10 at the Art Gallery of Mississauga. *Supplied photo*

"Some of these artists studied at India's best art schools while others apprenticed in studios from an early age and grew up learning the techniques and styles of painting from their fathers or mentors," said Asma Arshad Mahmood, one of the curators (along with Ali Adil Khan) and a visual artist herself.

Among the show's highlights, Canadian artist Mike Hansen will respond to the Bollywood theme through a video, a mural (*The History of Bollywood*) by M.F. Husain, who's been called the Picasso of India, will be exhibited, and Concordia University Prof. Thomas Waugh will lecture on Bollywood, Stardom, Spectacle and Sex.

Finally, an award-winning documentary, *Painted Nation*, by Toronto-based filmmaker Cyrus Sunder Singh, will be screened on June 16.

Mahmood says the exhibition is an appreciation for the creative geniuses of the billboard and poster artists of Indian cinema — unsung heroes, she calls them — who, despite their limited resources, were influential in giving a "larger-than-life" image to actors that they never actually met.

"They became important pioneers of that early grassroots marketing campaign ... evolving to become a multibillion-dollar multi-media advertising business today," she said.

Mahmood says the show has been two years in the making.

"It became apparent during our early discussions in conceptualizing this exhibition that we needed to explore this distinct art form in a wider scheme of things," said Mahmood. "We wanted to get beyond the exotic imagery and touch upon the profound influences of this art on the visual culture of India."

Mahmood notes that the Bollywood phenomenon remains the largest single representational export of India.

"Over the years, Indian cinema has reflected the fashions, politics and values of its communities. It is remarkable that Indian cinema has lost none of its charm despite the kitschy, over-the-top and increasingly Western themes. This also reflects strongly in the psyche and

lifestyles of Indians as they emerge as a rich cultural and intellectual community."

The AGM exhibit also coincides with Mosaic 2011, this city's premier multi-disciplinary arts festival. Now in its sixth year, it takes place July 8-10 in Mississauga Celebration Square.

AGM is located inside the Civic Centre.

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