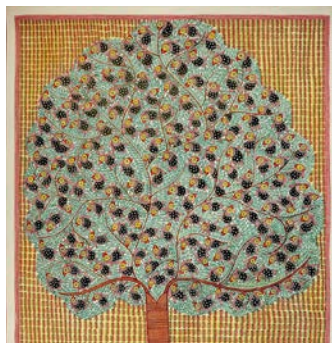




Shalini Karn | India | Painting
Kachni and bharni techniques join to create brilliant artwork



As a little girl, Shalini Karn and her siblings lived with their grandparents so their own parents could work. Karn was studious and dedicated to art-making from a young age, eventually receiving a scholarship to attend college, where she studied art.

young girl, Karn watched her mother create these delicate paintings before picking up the brush herself. "I craft my own pictorial language using Mithila traditional technique, expressing my imagination and things I've experienced firsthand," says Karn. This translates into deeply personal imagery including the artist's perception of abstract concepts like the passage of time, to events she witnessed, such as the time her village flooded.

Each of Karn's designs takes careful planning. Once she decides on a subject, she typically outlines imagery in black pigment to be filled in later, a technique called kachni. To apply color, in a process traditionally known as bharni, Karn uses prepared pigment purchased from local markets and brushed onto a prepared surface. Characterized by careful handling of paint and harmonious arrangements of color, the work combines tradition and modernity, resulting in rich textures and colorful patterns which practically vibrate with intensity.

An important aspect of Karn's identity as an artist is her stewardship of traditional Mithila painting, and also giving back to her community. "I have been running workshops for underprivileged young girls," explains Karn, adding that she hopes "students from across the country will one day be contributing to this tradition."



Madhubani art or Mithila painting was traditionally created by Maithil women of India and Nepal, and Karn's family has been involved in its creation for generations. As a

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST