



The Light Show
Vanessa Hedwig Smith
The Village Gallery
14 Hauz Khas Village
New Delhi 110 016
India

November 1 to November 30, 1996

Cover: Dymmie 11" x 7" Gouache on paper 1996

Back Cover: Bharat 11" x 7" Gouache on paper 1996

Evening

The sky puts on the darkening blue coat
held for it by a row of ancient trees;
you watch: and the lands grow distant in your sight,
one journeying to heaven, one that falls;

and leave you, not at home in either one,
not quite so still and dark as the darkened houses,
not calling to eternity with the passion
of what becomes a star each night and rises;

and leave you (inexpressibly to unravel)
your life, with its immensity and fear,
so that, now bounded, now immeasurable,
it is alternately stone in you and star.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Growing up, my house had a fireplace with a beehive inside. My mother did not want to kill the bees so she did not light many fires. I was told that the souls of the dead are supposed to enter into flies and bees. Light and fire figure large in my visual memory as powerful.

My mother used to decorate our dining table with small candles and Mexican toys. I was fascinated by the shapes dancing in the candlelight. I loved the flickering low light, the way it bent around forms in our Spanish-blue dining room. To this day I am enchanted by candlelight, born from the bees.

Soon after moving to Delhi four years ago, the streets were lined with oil lamps and strings of colored lights for the festival of Diwali. I was once again brought into the candlelit room of my childhood with a dance of shadow and light charging my imagination. Everything was energetic and alive.

My favorite time of the day has always been evening. Although I cannot see color well enough to paint by at night, this is the time my work is really born.

One of the ways to live is to create, to form a world for oneself. The paintings in this show attempt to capture the visions of the night of Diwali and other special nights. The works are fragments or paths to something, not destinations. They are about the change from light to darkness in our world.

My lessons in art began as a little girl when I posed for my mother's portraits. I dedicate this show to my mother who showed me beauty, my father who taught me to respect and love others, my brother who has taught me to strive for perfection, and my husband who has been my strength.

My loves in this world are clouds, butterflies, rain, low whistling, folk tales, hydrangeas, copper, eucalyptus trees, the oboe, dance, and the moon.

Vanessa Hedwig Dymock Smith, 1996

Four-year old Vanessa in front of a painting of her grandmother, Hedwig, painted by Vanessa's mother, Annette





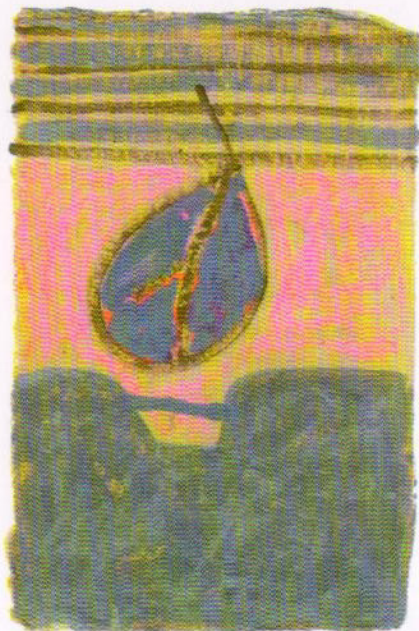
Diana Cloud 11" × 7" Gouache and pen on paper 1996

What has always most struck me about Vanessa's work is its deceptive innocence, an innocence that manages to be self conscious but uncalculating. It is a quality that explains to me why her images are simultaneously fragile and fearless. Aware of themselves and of their vulnerability – the ease with which they could be crushed – they are nonetheless unafraid to be themselves, and that is what gives her work, despite its frequent playfulness, a distinctive moral animation.

John Taylor

Senior Writer - Esquire Magazine

New York 1996



Marriage 11" × 7" Gouache and crayon on paper 1996

I have worked with Vanessa in a shamanic fire ritual. I have seen her profile and transparent eyes lit by the fire. I have seen her walk the Inca Trail and go to India. I see that she can paint.

The images I see have the same great energy that climbs mountains and sits in temples. She wrestles with silence; she lights candles and leaves. She is in several places at one time.

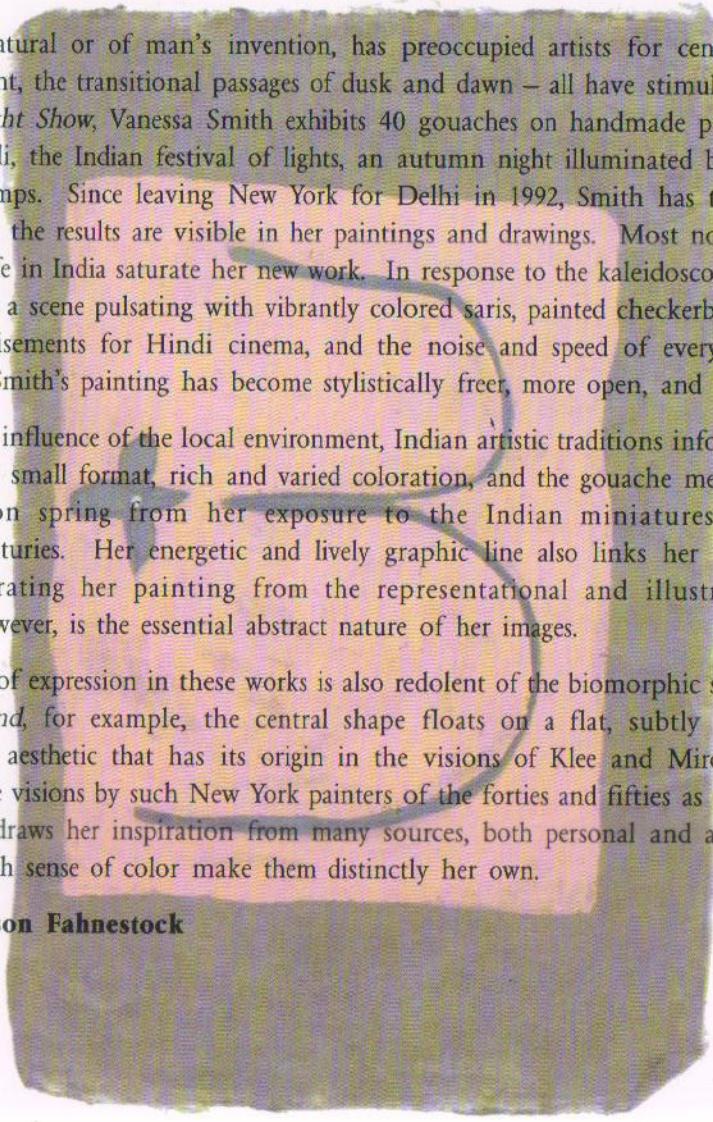
She always has poetry and Indian jewelry in her purse.

She sits where things are revealed.

Lorna Roberts

Shaman - Visionary Artist

New York 1996



Light, whether natural or of man's invention, has preoccupied artists for centuries. Candlelight, moonlight, firelight, the transitional passages of dusk and dawn – all have stimulated artistic exploration. In *The Light Show*, Vanessa Smith exhibits 40 gouaches on handmade paper inspired by her response to Diwali, the Indian festival of lights, an autumn night illuminated by fireworks, colored lights, and oil lamps. Since leaving New York for Delhi in 1992, Smith has taken India into her consciousness and the results are visible in her paintings and drawings. Most notably, the color and texture of daily life in India saturate her new work. In response to the kaleidoscopic confusion of the streets of Delhi – a scene pulsating with vibrantly colored saris, painted checkerboard sidewalks, large and lavish advertisements for Hindi cinema, and the noise and speed of everything and everyone on the streets – Smith's painting has become stylistically freer, more open, and strongly graphic.

In addition to the influence of the local environment, Indian artistic traditions inform much of Smith's recent work. The small format, rich and varied coloration, and the gouache medium of the objects in the exhibition spring from her exposure to the Indian miniatures of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Her energetic and lively graphic line also links her work to the Indian tradition. Separating her painting from the representational and illustrative objective of the miniature, however, is the essential abstract nature of her images.

The artist's mode of expression in these works is also redolent of the biomorphic shapes of surrealism. In *Hold My Hand*, for example, the central shape floats on a flat, subtly modulated, colored background – an aesthetic that has its origin in the visions of Klee and Miro, succeeded by the reworking of those visions by such New York painters of the forties and fifties as Gorky and Gottlieb. But while Smith draws her inspiration from many sources, both personal and artistic, her vigorous originality and lush sense of color make them distinctly her own.

Andrea Henderson Fahnestock

Art Historian

New York 1996

Peace 11" × 7" Gouache on paper 1996



Hold My Hand 8" × 5" Gouache on paper 1996



Mercedes 7" × 10" Gouache on paper 1996

The world is small today. It is getting smaller. And with it, we have the emergence of the international artist. Vanessa Smith, equally at home in New Delhi, Kathmandu, New York, or Los Angeles, is one of those artists. In her work, we can sense the universality of certain forms, like the intersection of the vertical and horizontal planes that might be a crucifix, an element of tribal folk art, or reminiscent of floor decoration. Or again triangles, circles, and spirals are borrowed from different cultures to express these universal symbols of mankind as universals. They need not be trapped in the shackles of one culture or another.

These abstractions of Vanessa's express a condition of humanity beyond the present. This is what art does. It materializes these hopes in forms that may be transitory like body painting, or more enduring like stone sculpture; but behind it all is a desire to express the oneness of humanity kept divided only by the vested interest of a few. International art today, therefore, rises above mere ethnicity, even if the expression is rooted in the physical experience of the artist and in a particular social and historical context.

The transitory quality and fragility of Vanessa's work reminds us that the walls of the past are crumbling while the spaces of the future are beginning to reveal themselves. This is the quality of much of our modern art which is not satisfied with merely being contemporary as it looks beyond the very limited present.

Suneet Chopra

Art Critic - Writer

New Delhi 1996



Evening Father 7" x 10" Gouache on paper 1996

Several years ago, driving through the desert Vanessa and I were caught in a sudden hailstorm. She became wildly animated, pointing out the interplay of greens and pinks, sepia and violet in the rolling sky that had previously seemed like so many shades of grey. Even though her eyes were open, it was clear that she was feeling these colors viscerally. The storm was an ecstatic dance of pure light and color for Vanessa, occurring in the familiar realm of weightlessness and shimmering metamorphoses. This is where her work lives.

Vanessa's paintings and videos are informed by her heightened sensitivity to the vibrations of color. She takes us into her belly where these light frequencies hum into chords and discords that hover on the surface of her images. Communicating this striking tonal awareness, she makes space for us to feel the evanescent world.

Molly McBride

Filmmaker

New York 1996

VANESSA HEDWIG SMITH

BORN: NOVEMBER 13, 1957
SAN PEDRO, CALIFORNIA

EDUCATION

- 1981-82 ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN, Pasadena, CA.
Film and design courses.
1980 STANFORD UNIVERSITY, Palo Alto, CA.
Bachelor of Arts degree in Urban Design.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1996 THE VILLAGE GALLERY - "The Light Show,"
New Delhi, India.
1988 DOME GALLERY - "Hylozoism," New York, N.Y.
1987 DOME GALLERY - "Creation Myth," New York, N.Y.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1997 PALOS VERDES ART CENTER - Palos Verdes Estates, CA.
1995 ARTIST'S SPACE - "Night of 1000 Drawings,"
New York, N.Y.
1995 HYATT REGENCY HOTEL - New Delhi, India.
1994 ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE - New Delhi, India.
1994 INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTER - New Delhi, India.
1994 GALLERY STEPS - New Delhi, India.
1991 BARRETT HOUSE - "New Directions," Poughkeepsie, N.Y.
1991 DANIEL SAXON GALLERY - "Of Nature and the Human
Spirit," Los Angeles, CA.
1990 HURLBUTT GALLERY - "Fresh Paint," Greenwich, CT.
1990 BROOME STREET - "Seven Artists," New York, N.Y.
1989 SAXON LEE GALLERY - Los Angeles, CA.
1988 PALOS VERDES ART CENTER - "Visions '88: Inner
Voices," Palos Verdes Estates, CA.
1988 BRIDGE STREET GALLERY - "Artists and a Personal
Vision," Bigfork, MT.
1988 PASADENA ART ALLIANCE - Group Show,
Pasadena, CA.
1987 ART PHASE I - Chicago, IL.
1987 CHARLES COWLES ANNEX - "Stanford Artists,"
New York, N.Y.
1987 EMERGING ARTISTS - Group Show, New York, N.Y.
1986 S.R. RAGE GALLERY - "Romanticism," New York, N.Y.

- 1986 CIVILIZATION - New York, N.Y.
1986 PALLADIUM - New York, N.Y.
1986 DONGHIA - "Three Artists," Chicago, IL.
1986 PASADENA ART ALLIANCE - Pasadena, CA.

FELLOWSHIPS

- 1994 ART CAMP MAYO COLLEGE, Ajmer, India.
Painting, lecture, and demonstration for students.
1988 VERMONT STUDIO COLONY, Johnson, VT.
Painting fellowship.
1987 REYNOLDA HOUSE MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART,
Winston - Salem, N.C. Fellowship for studies in
American art, literature, and music.

SELECTED COLLECTORS

- Rebecca Adams and Ralph Gerberich, London, England.
Jane Alexander and Ed Sherin, New York, N.Y.
Sayed Ali, New York, N.Y.
Virgima Lee Babbitt, Vista, CA.
Mildred Beckstrand, Los Angeles, CA.
Mr. and Mrs. David Boss, Los Angeles, CA.
Timothy Anglin Burgard, San Francisco, CA.
Peter Cohen, New York, N.Y.
Nancy Eberlee, Chicago, IL.
Lee M. Edwards, New York, N.Y.
Betty Field, Los Angeles, CA.
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Goldenberg, Los Angeles, CA.
Andrea Henderson Fahnestock, New York, N.Y.
Richard Himmel, Chicago, IL.
Hannah Kelly, Los Angeles, CA.
Lisa Jackson, New York, N.Y.
Kingfischer Productions, New York, N.Y.
Hans Li, New York, N.Y.
Joshua Mailman, New York, N.Y.
Nancy Moss, Pasadena, CA.
Mrs. Robert Norman, Los Angeles, CA.
Palm Springs Marquis Hotel, Palm Springs, CA.
Rebecca Rutledge, New York, N.Y.
Robin Schiff, Los Angeles, CA.
Van Vlissingen Company, Lincolnshire, IL.
Alan and Barbara Weeden, Greenwich, CT.



Inside Air 11" × 7" Gouache on paper 1996



