



Details of portraits of Chano Devi (left) and Urmila Devi (right), by Martine le Coz (from the artist's collection, to be shown at RU Art Museum on Tyler's "Martine le Coz: A French Homage to the Ancient Myths & Contemporary Artists of Mithila, India" exhibition, opening September 14, 2022.)

RADFORD, VA: On September 14, Radford University's Tyler Gallery will premiere a collection of original illustrations by Martine le Coz, a member of France's Legion of Honor, best known for her works of fiction. Four of Coz's most recent books focus on the myths, artists, and art of North India's Mithila region of India and this will be the first public display of her original illustrations for those publications.

Le Coz is one of the first European writers to study the art of Mithila's Dalit community, a group once known as the "untouchables."

The Dalits have historically occupied the bottom of traditional Hindu caste society. Economically repressed and socially ostracized, their art and artists have received little attention, either in India or elsewhere.

Le Coz, however, became fascinated with their art and culture, making many trips to the region. Her book, *The King of the Mountain: The Epic of Raja Salhesh*, offers a creative retelling of Mithila's Dalit mythology.

Illustrations created for that book forthcoming illustrated edition will be on exhibit. Additionally, artwork for an elegant abecedary (i.e., an 'A-B-C book') illustrating India's Devanagiri alphabet, and some Le Coz's portraits of the artists (belonging to the Dalit community and various other castes) who inspired her will be on display.

The exhibition is part of a historic constellation of five Mithila-related art exhibitions in the New River Valley, the first of its kind in the world.

The Floyd Center for the Arts will feature *Mithila Medley: Contemporary Arts from an Ancient Culture in North India* in the Hayloft Gallery through December 1st. Many of these works, primarily by women, depict environmental, political, and social issues as well as the struggles related to natural disasters and Covid 19.

A solo exhibit of works by the Dalit artist Naresh Paswan can be seen at Miller-Off-Main, a gallery in Blacksburg, from September 6 through October 14.

Beginning on October 13, the Art Museum at the Covington Center on Radford's campus will begin a major exhibition highlighted by numerous Mithila paintings recently donated to the university by the Berkeley-based Ethnic Arts Foundation.

The exhibition, entitled *Raja Salhesh's Garden*, runs through December 3. Dozens of intricate and vibrant paintings and drawings will be on display. Mithila art has been studied by RU students, as can be seen in a small display on view through November 18th in McConnell Library's Andrew W. Ross Gallery, titled *Inspired by Mithila: Shadowboxes by RU Design Students*. Further insights into Mithila art and culture will be offered in a public symposium on October 13th—titled *Mithila Musings*—to be co-hosted by RU Art Museum and the Floyd Center for the Arts. An illustrated e-book/catalogue with scholarly essays will become available—via free/PDF download—from the museum's website in early October.

All events are free, and the public is encouraged to visit.