

IN THE SHADOW OF TIBET: A CULTURE IN EXILE

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION BY KIRAN AMBWANI

MAY 1ST, 5 P.M. TO 7 P.M.

Opening cocktail and launch of exhibition
with special musical guest **KALSANG DOLMA**

followed by a lecture by **LARA BRAITSTEIN**

MANDALA, ENTERING THE SACRED CIRCLE, 8 P.M.

Maison de la culture Plateau-Mont-Royal
465, Ave. Mont-Royal East

Free admission



The Festival Accès Asie kicks off its celebration of **Asian Heritage Month** by declaring its passion for Tibet, a country that has been oppressed for over fifty years. To begin with, the festival presents an exhibition of photographs by **Kiran Ambwani**. The sensitive lens of the photographer evokes the ethereal beauty of Tibetan monks living in the snow-peaked mountains of the Himalayas. Kiran's compassionate images leave no one indifferent as she bears witness to the reality of the Tibetan people in exile. During the opening cocktail, **Kalsang Dolma** will sing the ancient songs of a glorious past civilization, playing her Dra-ngen, a tibetan musical instrument. The audience is invited to let their auditory senses be caressed by the gentle voice of the carrier of the Dalai Lama's message to the Tibetan people in the powerful documentary film «What Remains of Us» by Hugo Latulippe and François Prévost. Following the vernissage, the Festival Accès Asie proposes a journey into the symbolic world of the mandala and their pervasive role in art with **Lara Braitstein**, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism Professor of McGill University.

In the Shadow of Tibet: a Culture in Exile

PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION, APRIL 17 – MAY 10, 2009

OPENING ON MAY 1ST, 2009

How can we immerse ourselves more profoundly in the beauty and richness of the Tibetan culture than by looking at the stunning photography by artist Kiran Ambwani? Her photography exhibit, *In the Shadow of Tibet: A Culture in Exile*, at the Maison de la Culture Plateau-Mont-Royal, invites viewers to experience the profound wisdom of Tibetans and their civilization.

Kiran first became aware of the plight of the Tibetan people while living in India, where she met a Tibetan refugee and fellow student. Since the Chinese invasion in 1949, Tibet has become a country in peril. Tibetans are continually persecuted, their lands desecrated and their religious traditions on the verge of extinction. In Tibet, learning traditional spiritual practices and even learning their own language is severely restricted by the Chinese. The majority of Tibetans have taken refuge outside their native homeland, in India. To preserve their cultural identity, Tibetans have built several monasteries, monastic universities, Tibetan-language schools and cultural institutions.

Photographer Kiran Ambwani is deeply inspired by the perseverance of the Tibetan people in exile to safeguard their cultural heritage. She hopes that her images portray the resilience and resistance of the Tibetan culture in the face of genocide. In her ongoing odyssey to capture the spirit of the Tibetan people, she has travelled to Tibetan settlements, children's villages and monasteries in Dharamsala, Bylakuppe, Ladakh, and Nepal. One day, she hopes to travel to a Free Tibet.

KIRAN AMBWANI

Passionate about the visual documentation of people, things, spaces and moments, Kiran Ambwani is a freelance photographer based in Montreal, Canada. Kiran's images reflect a sensitivity shaped by her background in anthropology and her travels. Driven by a curiosity for different cultures, she has explored, among others, the lives of Tibetan monks in exile, the workers of Asia's largest slum Dharavi, the tea pickers in South India, and the indigenous women of Nepal. Kiran has collaborated on several humanitarian projects with NGOs in Canada, India, and Nepal. Along with publishing her work, she has also participated in group and solo exhibitions in Canada. Born in 1978 in Lucknow, India, Kiran is a graduate of McGill University and the Dawson Institute of Photography.

KALSANG DOLMA

Originally from Tibet, Kalsang Dolma was born in the refugee camp of Hunsur, in south India. At the age of 14, she leaves the land of Gandhi to follow her father to Montreal. It is because of her father that she owes her love for Tibet. She is only able to see her beloved homeland for the first time when she is 28 years old. For the filming of 'What Remains of Us' Kalsang makes four long pilgrimages to Tibet as the spokeswoman for film directors François Prévost and Hugo Latulippe. She becomes the carrier of a message from the Dalai Lama, which she secretly delivers to the people living inside Tibet. Through this message of hope, the people who continue to live within the frontiers of Tibet are able to hear that people outside of Tibet are praying for them.

Proud of her Tibetan origins, Kalsang studied the guitar and the traditional songs of Tibet. Her silken voice accompanies the documentary film "What Remains of Us". To this day, Kalsang continues to invest all of her energies, often with her own personal resources, in order to ensure that 'What Remains of Us' is seen by as many people as possible around the world. During her free moments, Kalsang continually cultivates her passion for music because it never ceases to resonate within her spirit and the spirit of her people. She is currently working on new songs that will become part of her first album.

MANDALA, ENTERING THE SACRED CIRCLE

LECTURE BY LARA BRAITSTEIN

Professor, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism at McGill University

May 1st, 2009, 8 p.m.

Mandalas are one of the most visible and least understood symbols of Tibetan Buddhism. These colourful geometrical forms portray the universe of Buddhist deities as a pure and sacred kingdom. Learning the structure and symbolism of these magnificent creations offers a rare opportunity to enter into the world of Tibetan Buddhism.

LARA BRAITSTEIN

Lara Braitstein is Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism in the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University. She received her Ph.D. from McGill University in 2005 and teaches courses on classical Tibetan literature, Mahayana Buddhism, Vajrayana Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism. Her principal areas of research include esoteric literature and Buddhist literature in Sanskrit.

