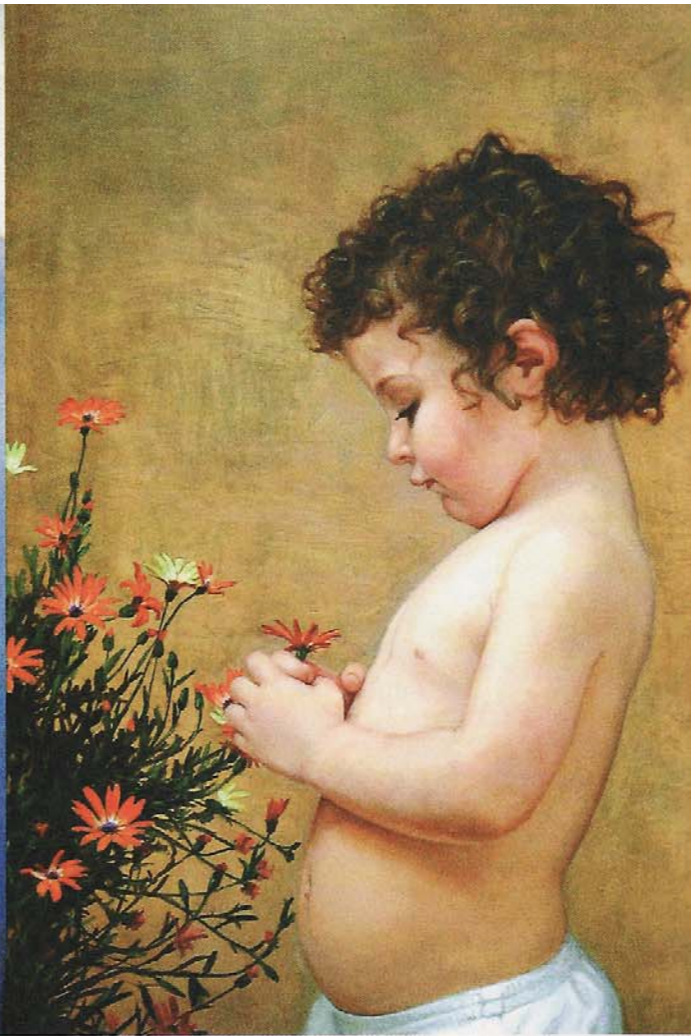


My Sister Pratibha with her Pet Hen, oil on canvas, 30 x 30 in, 2004.



Anna with African Daisies, oil on canvas, 28 x 18 in, 2007.

FRONTROW BY KATE CINO

Passion and precision come together for Manish Om Prakash "I saw her in Florence," says Manish Om Prakash. She must have been well into her 80s, he remembers, but she was still dressed to the nines: fur coat, coiffed hair, high heels trip-trapping across the uneven cobblestones. She was looking down, but proceeding with the utmost grace and efficiency on her daily routines. This everyday occurrence so impressed the artist that he photographed, then painted, the sprightly elder. The fleeting and poignant moment is now part of a new body of work, opening October 14 at Winchester Galleries in Oak Bay.

Award-winning artist Om Prakash is an astute observer of humanity, who delights in capturing special moments on canvas. His images include charismatic characters, precocious children, beloved pets, mythical beings and everyday people. The artist holds the magical, mischievous world of childhood close to his heart, while honing his craft with the precise mind of a scientist. "I am intrigued by the human form," he says, "especially the way that spirit and passion brings us alive."

For his earlier Canadian exhibitions, held at Winchester Galleries in 1996 and 1997, he drew mainly from his fertile imagination for subject matter. Now the painter uses live models and plasticine maquettes to assist him with form, nuance and gesture. Visitors will see the spectacular results of this in works such as *The Weary Cupid*. The painting shows a lovely young woman holding a sleepy cupid/cherub. The woman's white veil and heavenly blue dress suggest spirit. The relaxed, natural expressions and robust body contours speak of earthy existence. The storyline is ambiguous as well. Has his mother taken away Cupid's golden arrows? And why is her small cherub so tired?

The impish, adorable child is again featured in *Anna with African Daisies*. This artwork was one of the top 100 finalists in the 2006 International ARC Salon Competition in New York. Nicolas Tuele, former Chief Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, speaks of the tender moment portrayed as "personal but transcendent, one that offers universal appeal." Tuele comments on the luminosity of paint and warmth of palette found in this compelling



The Weary Cupid, oil on canvas, 30 x 20 in, 2007.

image. "The artist's gift is to illuminate that 'moment between moments'," he concludes.

Points of connection, the transfer of energy, the dynamics of tension/release in both the physical and emotional realm, fascinate the artist. His sketchbook is filled with human and animal studies — quick, energetic drawings that he uses to plan paintings. "Growing up in India," he says, "I was surrounded by a rich profusion of colours and textures." India's vast cultural history, populated with powerful rulers and mythical beings, nourished his imagination. The results? The many parts that make up Manish Om Prakash come together, with passion and precision, in his upcoming exhibition.

The work of Manish Om Prakash is featured at Winchester Galleries, 2260 Oak Bay Avenue, October 14-28. The opening, with artist in attendance, is Sunday, October 14, from 1-5 PM. For more information, phone 595-2777 or visit winchestergalleriesltd.com.