



Twenty-nine artists have contributed to the exhibit, with works touching on themes of sexuality, terror, disease, the environment, race, and more.



Visitors at the event.

Art for art's sake

good work.”

Curator Vijay Kumar explained the unifying theme of the show is simply that the artists are Indian American and they represent a diversity of perspectives, worldviews, and backgrounds. It is not meant to be divisive in any way, hence the title of the show.

“People tell their stories through their craft — whether their stories related to their own lives or not, the expression is what’s important,” he said. “And it’s not a political show or activism-based; it’s a community show. I tried not to go in any one direction because that makes it more complicated than it needs to be. It’s art for everyone to enjoy.”

That being said, the participating artists were narrowed down based on technical and aesthetic criteria from over 60 who applied.

Kumar, an artist himself and an art teacher, felt a wonderful part of the experience is seeing the number of talented Indian American artists who are out there, submitting their work and hoping to be a part of the show. Even more than that, seeing the community come together the

arts is the real reward.

“Art is something we can really share, and this is the platform we’ve been using,” he said. “It’s a great way of getting South Asian artists together — of course most are from India, but some are from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka sometimes — and this is a fantastic way to meet.”

“Erasing Borders means getting rid of all lines and boundaries,” Kumar added.

“It’s unfortunate that we have these boundaries; as a child of Partition, I know we hurt even though it’s been a long time. Of course reality is different, but here, mentally and physically we can unite. And New York is the place that makes this all possible.”

While many of the artists chose to focus on issues related to identity, he said, it was certainly not a must, and some spoke of memory and time, dreams, imagination, myth, and illusion as concepts behind their work.

One of the artists present, Antonio Puri, explained his piece, which included manila paper with swatches of color ranging from beige to a deep, dark brown in a chart of sorts.

“It’s part of a larger project I’m doing on skin studies, and questioning the idea of Varna, which comes from the Rigveda, and it relates the caste system,” Puri said.

“So what I wanted to create a visual argument for was

that we have a global caste system based on the stacking of colors, so I want to address that from continent to continent. And I want to use legal as well as scholarly evidence related to color and pigment this to create social change.”

The exhibit attracted a crowd of largely brown faces, but one that appeared artistic and unconventional, with a number of mixed ethnicity couples and people in eccentric Indian-Western fusion fashion.

Young people, including children as well as twenty-some-things, who explained they had come from Brooklyn as part of a Sunday museum-hopping group they have started, were taking in the array of work. The youngsters had no idea upon choosing to check out Erasing Borders that the artists were all South Asian.

Shivdasani’s dream of Indian art being seen as art, at least in this case, has certainly come true.

“The main purpose is to build awareness for Indian artists and artistic disciplines here in North America, but it shouldn’t be seen as odd or peculiar,” she said. “I think we have come a long way in that since the first show 11 years ago.”

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provocative exhibit, with work touching on themes of sexuality, terror, disease, the environment, race, and more.

“We want to erase borders between us as human beings, so as Indian Americans, we help create the cultural fabric of this country, and people should come and see this show out of interest in these artists’ work and hang it on their walls just the same as they would do any Western artist — the art itself should attract them,” said Aroon Shivdasani, executive director, IAAC.

“They should want to come and see the art not because it’s by Indian artist, but because it’s an artist who’s done