



# Zimbiri

Grosvenor  
Gallery

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Asian Art in London  
East Asian Art Week

# Zimbiri

Solo exhibition

30. October –  
20. November 2020

Grosvenor  
Gallery

19 20 20

ASIAN ART  
IN LONDON



Tyger! Tyger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand, dare sieze the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? what dread grasp  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,  
And water'd heaven with their tears,  
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

— *The Tyger* by William Blake (1757–1827)



## Introduction

Zimbiri is a native of Thimphu, the capital of the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan. Her works start with the traditional materials and techniques used in Bhutanese art: “sa-tschen” (earth paint) and “rhay-shing” (hand-woven canvas). These impart a ghostly presence to the images that she paints, communicating a sense of fragility, as if these traditions themselves might soon disappear. Many of her works also employ the technique of “tsapa,” this being the template of perforations which follow the lines of a drawing and enable it to be transferred on to a wall to be replicated and painted.

Although Zimbiri’s works start from this traditional Bhutanese foundation, her approach is informed by schools of Western art in the 20th century, namely Minimalism and Colour Field Painting. Her paintings are the perfect amalgamation of Post-Modern and Contemporary; combining the local with the global, and the current with the traditional.

The body of paintings that have been selected for the show are from Zimbiri’s ‘Tiger’ series. The tiger for her is a symbol with multiple connotations and mythic references. Not only does it exude strength and power, but fragility, and precariousness in the complex dynamics between man and nature. Zimbiri says she decided on the tiger because it is endangered as well as considered precious in Bhutanese mythic history. Most of the animals in their mythic tales belong to the past and the tiger, too, will one day become a species of the past.



Zimbiri in her studio in Thimphu, Bhutan

Since tigers are indigenous to the Himalayas, Zimbiri depicts them from the blending of realism as well as imagination, as brave and fierce spirits, which makes portrayals of them highly desirable.

Since tigers are indigenous to the Himalayas, Zimbiri depicts them from the blending of realism as well as imagination, as brave and fierce spirits, which makes portrayals of them highly desirable. Her tigers tend to have different facial expressions and suggestions of temperaments as well. In her boxed series, you see the animal filling the entire frame almost squeezed into a confined space, much like the geographical nature of Bhutan which is nestled amongst Tibet (China) to the north, India and Nepal to the east and west and Bangladesh further south.

Her paintings draw attention to what man has done to nature. Globalisation is not limited to modern society but is a long-standing tradition. She points, unconsciously, to the truth that a tiger is a cultural and intellectually natural asset. Her works embody diverse traits from different Eastern cultures and tell us that tigers are a valuable heritage of our biodiversity.

Zimbiri brings alive William Blake's 'Tiger, tiger burning bright....' in which he leaves us in awe at the complexity of the creation and the sheer magnitude of God's power. The perspective in Blake's poem involves a sophisticated acknowledgment of what is unexplainable in the universe, presenting evil as the prime example of something that cannot be denied but will not tolerate a simplistic explanation either. The open respect and amazement of the tiger brings us to the understanding and a belief in a benevolent universe.

The background is an abstract composition of organic, flowing shapes. Large areas of bright yellow are separated by dark, almost black, irregular lines and shapes. Some of these dark shapes have a greyish or blueish tint, particularly in the upper left corner. The overall effect is one of dynamic movement and high contrast.

# Plates





***Head in a Box***  
2020

Saa-tshen on Rhay-shing  
(Earth paint on canvas)  
Signed

60.9 x 60.9 cm  
24 x 24 in





***Head in a Box 2***

2020

Saa-tshen on Rhay-shing  
(Earth paint on canvas)  
Signed

60.9 x 60.9 cm  
24 x 24 in



***Boxed 8***

2020

Saa-tshen on Rhay-shing  
(Earth paint on canvas)  
Signed

76.5 x 76 cm  
30 1/8 x 29 7/8 in





***Boxed 7***  
2020

Saa-tshen and charcoal on Rhay-shing  
(Earth paint and charcoal on canvas)  
Signed

137.2 x 91.4 cm  
54 x 36 in

***Boxed 6***  
2020

Saa-tshen on Rhay-shing  
(Earth paint on canvas)  
Signed

91 x 117 cm  
35 7/8 x 46 1/8 in







***Boxed Love***  
2020

Saa-tshen on Rhay-shing  
(Earth paint on canvas)  
Signed

176.5 x 165.7 cm  
69 1/2 x 65 1/4 in



***Boxed 5***  
2020

Saa-tshen on Rhay-shing  
(Earth paint on canvas)  
Signed

147 x 147 cm  
58 x 58 in





***Circle***  
2020

Saa-tshen on Rhay-shing  
(Earth paint on canvas)  
Signed

161.8 x 166.6 cm  
63 3/4 x 65 5/8 in



***Boxed Twin 2***  
2020

Saa-tshen on Rhay-shing  
(Earth paint on canvas)  
Signed

160 x 160.7 cm  
63 x 63 1/4 in



***Boxed Twin 1***  
2020

Saa-tshen on Rhay-shing  
(Earth paint on canvas)  
Signed

160 x 160.7 cm  
63 x 63 1/4 in



## Zimbiri

Born and raised in Thimphu, Bhutan, Zimbiri finished her under-graduate studies from Wheaton College, MA, with a double major in Economics and Fine Arts. Her first exhibition, 'Faces' in 2015 was the first female solo exhibition in Bhutan. The paintings were variations of the three eyed 'Mahayana Mask', illustrating the metaphoric masks we wear and how we use them as a means of protection. She has worked on a series of paintings that are an exploration of traditional Bhutanese paint (sac-tshen) and imagery. These works were featured in her second exhibition 'Found Icons' and more recently in International art fairs: Serendipity Art Festival (2017), India Art Fair (2017), and Art Basel Hong Kong (2018).



## Interview

### When did your romance with art begin?

I think my relationship with art started off as more of an affair than a romance. Growing up in Bhutan I was surrounded by brilliantly creative people, but it was just something they also did, a hobby. So going into college I had decided on majoring in economics. Art wasn't something I saw myself committing to as a career, but it turned out it wasn't something I could stop either, so I took one art class my first semester in college. Then another, then another, until I thought since I had enough credits might as well major in art as well. Even then I don't think I realized that art would be it for me. There wasn't this moment where I decided that I would pursue art as a career, I think it was just a series of steps that led me to where I am today, or as my mom would say it was destiny leading me by the nose.

### What inspires you as an artist?

A number of things inspire my work. They are usually my questions, observations, cautions I have. Usually its about people. The people in my life, the ones around it and even the ones in my head! Also Society, and the way the two interact and how they affect one another. My culture is a great source of inspiration for me, but for a while I tried to cut it off from my art. I thought doing so would give me a chance to be a 'real artist' and not be a Bhutanese novelty. It wasn't until after college when I was back in Bhutan that I realized what an essential part of myself I was cutting off by denying that part of me.

It is still something I am mindful of in my work but I allow my culture to pass through my eyes and my experiences and onto the canvas. And finally but most importantly my parents. Whose encouragement and support allowed me the freedom to paint with my heart and my truth, without fear of being homeless and hungry.

**Faces, was the first female solo exhibition in Bhutan, how was it received and how have you evolved as an artist since then?**

“Faces” was also my first solo exhibition. It took place at the Royal Textile Academy in August 2015. The paintings were variations of the three eyed Mahayana Mask, illustrating the metaphoric masks we wear and how we use them as a means of protection. I remember the most common observations from artists was the scale of my works and the professional presentation of the pieces. I’m not sure how fair a judge I’d be as assessing the success of my show, but I would like to think it was received quite well. It’s strange to think it’s only been three years as I feel the evolution of my work from Faces to Found Icons has been significant. Not just visually, but in the process and what the works are trying to say, I feel that I am more free and confident in the pieces I create.

**What is the Art scenario in Bhutan like currently?**

With the great fore sight of our Kings our traditional arts have been preserved and are in practice to this day. With the School of 13 arts (Zorig Chusum) grooming and educating students the traditional art scene in Bhutan is

thriving. The contemporary art scene in Bhutan however is fairly new, and slowly growing. I believe we have many talented artists, but we lack many key components for art to truly take off like galleries, critics, curators, auction houses...etc, Artists or friends and family of artists are usually forced to fill out these roles and with little to no experience and knowledge makes it more challenging to break into the art world.

**What is in store for you for the remaining year?**

Honestly, I’m not sure. I’ll just keep painting, creating and learning. Work hard and allow destiny to lead me by the nose.

**Interview published in *Platform Magazine*, 2019**

## Exhibitions

### Solo Exhibitions

2020	Solo Exhibition, Grosvenor Gallery, London
2017	Found Icons, Royal Textile Academy, Thimphu, Bhutan
2015	Faces, Royal Textile Academy, Thimphu, Bhutan
2015	Faces, Taj Deccan, Hyderabad, India Group

### Group Exhibitions

2020	Art on a Postcard, All Bright, Mayfair, London
2020	Bhitta, A step into the Future, Tulikaa, Nepal
2019	Delhi Contemporary Art Week, Nature Morte, Habitat Center, New Delhi
2018	Art Basel Hong Kong, Nature Morte, Hong Kong
2018	Lateral Thinking, Nature Morte, New Delhi, India
2017	Serendipity Art Festival, Exhibit320, Goa, India
2017	Her Expression IV – VAST, Thimphu, Bhutan
2016	Her Expression III, VAST, Thimphu, Bhutan
2015	Her Expression II, VAST, Thimphu, Bhutan
2014	Her Expression I, VAST, Thimphu, Bhutan

## Acknowledgements

To my Mom and Dad who love and encourage me, to my brothers JampheI who inspires me and Ugen Dorji who taught me to dream, to Aunty Tania and Arjun who supported me and to Peter who took a chance on me. Without you this journey wouldn't be as wonderful as it has been.

Thank you!



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## Solo exhibition

30. October –  
20. November 2020

### Opening hours

Monday – Friday 10.00–18.00

Saturday 31. October 12.00–16.00

Sunday 1. November 12.00–21.00

Saturday 7. November 12.00–16.00

Sundays closed

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**Grosvenor  
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