



■ Mixed media, glass, watercolours, oils, charcoal — she has done them all. Not to forget the illustrations for the children's book, *There's A Mouse in Roosevelt House*, written by Jacqueline Lundquest.

"I enjoy working in layers," she says. Some of the paintings have layers of as many as 12 colours. Sheyna clarifies, "There are not layers in the sense that the colours are one upon the other. All 12 colours are visible on the work. I like working in glass as well. I like the way the transparent canvas lends more meaning to the work done on it, because one can see beyond it" — the painting on the glass, the mixed media work behind (dried peepal leaves and rice paper dipped in tea sewn together), and the shadows of this work on the glass. Layers of sand, too, characterise many of the works. "They add texture and movement," she says.

■ Sheyna's first exhibition was at school in England.

"I was on an arts scholarship to Millfield School in Somerset, England, where I completed my A levels. In my last year, I had my first exhibition — a sponsored solo show," says Sheyna. Thereafter she completed her Foundation Course from Chelsea School of Art, London, and acquired a Bachelor de-

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gree in English Literature and Fine Art from St Martin's School of Art and design.

■ However, her advent into the world of exhibitions occupied the backseat for a while.

"I wanted to make it on my own and support myself before I started exhibiting. So, I freelanced as a graphic designer for a while, gave private art tuitions to children, worked in a sports production company during the cricket World Cup, and got involved with a school for street children, in New Delhi, till I felt I was ready," she says. She took a decision two years ago to hold a show, booked a hall and worked backwards for a year to put together her first solo exhibition after graduation. "The response was encouraging and very positive," she says. And the show? "It was sold out," she beams.

■ Before she could say, *Aviva* (Spring — the title of her current show), things began to fall in place for Sheyna.

"During the exhibition in Delhi, members of the Ohio Arts Council, who were visiting Delhi, dropped in, saw my work and invited me to their



Sheyna Baig's exhibition of 36 works, recent and old, envelope the gallery with their colours and levels of interpretation

'artist in residency' programme in Ohio. So, there I was on my first trip to Ohio, a few months later. And strangely enough, a chance encounter with a gallery-owner on a subway from New York to Ohio, led to my first show in New York and second in the US," she smiles. That was in September-October, 2000.

■ Amidst the conversations with children, nature and herself, Sheyna's portraits of her uncle and grandmother are also on display. What is not there, but is nevertheless interesting, is the portrait she made of Sir Donald Bradman.

"We were in Sydney, when I met Sir Bradman for the first time. When he realised I was an artist, he asked me if I would make a portrait of his. I said I would but soon forgot about it. When I returned to Delhi, he mailed a photograph of his," recalls Sheyna (who is also the daughter of former cricketer Abbas Ali Baig). The portrait reached Bradman on his 85th birthday. He wrote back to say, "You're very talented, but the forehead's too big!"

— NILANJANA SENGUPTA

(*Aviva* by Sheyna Baig is on at Cymroza Art Gallery, till April 28. Time: 10.00 am to 7.00 pm)