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## Shari Fox’s circle of life

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Written by staff  
Wednesday, 09 September 2009

By Laurence Levey

The centerpiece of Life Journeys, the intensely personal new Westboro Gallery exhibit by Shari Fox at Tatnuck Booksellers, is “Wedding Chuppah,” a large quilted work depicting trees, one light and one dark, intertwined in root, body and branch. With its themes of union and rooted connection, the piece can be seen both as a symbol of the life-force from which the artist’s early artistic inquiries and later domesticity spring, and a hub, a turning point signifying great emotional changes.

The earlier works mark a period of spiritual and intellectual questing, during which Fox visited Japan, Hong Kong and Indonesia. Images of the Buddha abound, in lithographs, monotypes, mixed media and encaustic. Though “drawn to images of the Buddha” while in Asia, Fox says these works reflect her “interest in world religions” rather than in Buddhism specifically.

Other works shift focus to more personal and familial concerns. Influenced by Joseph Cornell, Fox’s assemblages “Biological Clock” and “Nesting” unite her interest in travel with a dawning awareness of her desire to start a family. “I like artwork that has a lot of hidden meaning,” she says. Written words seem to materialize in several pieces as though from disembodied voices, as in “Ani l’doli, v ‘doli li,” in which the words of the artist’s wedding contract with her husband appear amid foliage and sky surrounding a tree limb.

In a series of Adobe Photoshop pieces, Fox examines her father’s battle with and eventual death from complications due to diabetes. Frank, unsettling images, blood-red depictions of kidneys, amputated limbs and the human circulatory system – a world coming apart – contrast with a vascular, vital world of tree limbs like veins that twist and circle down into the earth like roots. “Roots connect us to our family,” says Fox, who drew inspiration from Frida Kahlo, in particular Kahlo’s words in the face of herself losing a limb: “Feet, what do I need them for if I have wings to fly?”

The final sequence of works tells of the conception and growth of Fox’s children. The grief and turmoil so present in the works about her father resolve into bright watercolors and colorful, playful, multiplied Photoshop images of her children. The circle of life has turned.

Since majoring in art at Brandeis and receiving a master’s in teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design, Fox has taught art at Shrewsbury High for 14 years and been a member of Westboro Gallery for two. “I get inspired by my students,” she says. “I’m around art all the time.” She and several of her students are creating a mural for the daycare center she uses.

Life Journeys documents Fox’s progression: from curiosity about and attraction to spirituality, through the life-affirming embrace of union and family, to the rending pain of loss and regeneration. In a highly personalized idiom, she illuminates universal desires, sorrows and joys.

“Life Journeys” runs through Nov. 14 at Tatnuck Bookseller and Cafe, 18 Lyman St., Westboro. Sponsored by the Westboro Gallery, [westborogallery.com](http://westborogallery.com).



Shari Fox holds daughter Rebecca, who was the inspiration behind her most recent work of art, shown at the opening reception for her Life Journeys exhibit at the Tatnuck Booksellers gallery in Westboro.

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