

TOLERABLE DIVERSITY SERIES

Juanita Tumelaire

This body of work was generated by a strong sense on my part that the world cannot continue its present level of intolerance and perceived moral superiority, which justifies crimes to be committed in the name of God, in the name of Allah, in the name of Jehovah.

When I describe the impetus of this work as positive, it is not my intent to trivialize the acts that bring it to the world's attention. A characteristic of survival is a strength and resilience and hope for something better. This, then, is about survival.

This body of work is called "*Tolerable Diversity*", and deals with cultural tensions in several ways. The individual pieces do not have titles, they have descriptors. Pieces like "*Tibetan Tea Cup, Chinese Phoenix Textile*" respond to the annexation of Tibet by the Chinese Communists and the systematic repression of culture and religion.

The etching "*Turkish Coffee Pot, Armenian Carpet*" responds to a genocide, which occurred before the word itself, was constructed by Rafael Lemkin –before the Holocaust.

The series of plastic icons on Islamic backgrounds speaks to the divergence of intent as experienced by Muslims and Catholics. Do Catholics worship the statue of Mary, or does it simply lead them to communicate with their God?

"*Raggedy Ann, Miss Baby; African-American Slave Quilt*" touches on our history, and the tensions which exist to the present time. The etchings comprising "*Nepali Game of Bagh Chal, map*" sets Nepal in a geographical context, in which can be seen its proximity to and precarious relationships with China, Tibet, and India.

I have chosen representative conflicts, and made no attempt to portray those with which I have no real experience: I have lived in Afghanistan, I have lived in Nepal, and I can give these people faces and names, and have called many of them friend.

Finally, and with what may sound like cynicism, I am aware that no one wants to hear this. When Rafael Lemkin, the man who crafted the Geneva Convention died, there were seven mourners at his graveside.

These pieces then are meant to function on several levels: strong color or strong composition and complex textures to pull you into the piece and provoke thought about the context and perhaps create a need to find out more. They are printed on or presented on handmade papers from Sikkim, Nepal, and Thailand: examples of indigenous craft. Ultimately, these pieces are about exhibiting the beauties inherent in diverse cultures and owning "Judge not lest ye be judged".

The phoenix is a recurrent motif in these pieces: consumed in fire, it recreates itself. The world will not be the same. Let's hope that this metaphorical fire is purifying, and our re-creation is better, stronger and more tolerant.