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Robert Reid, Record staff | Wed Mar 28 2012 |  0 Recommend

## Trio of exhibitions explores multiculturalism

*The Bridge*, a group of three spring exhibitions at the Homer Watson Gallery, represents and reflects the cultural diversity of southwestern Ontario.

Each exhibition filters larger social, political, cultural and esthetic concerns through a personal creative lens.

Brantford-based artist Alejandro Arauz's *Cantino: A Fresh Diaspora Perspective* negotiates the cultural crossroads between Latino and Canadian perspectives.

Soheila Esfahani's installation *12/10/12* celebrates the two decades the Iranian-born artist has lived, attended university and practised in Waterloo Region.




*Navigating Heart* features work by Fergus-based artist Supria Karmakar, created in response to the death of her East Indian father.

Arauz's 28 prints and paintings employ multiple-image and collage techniques to embody and enact the sense of fragmentation that accompanies the immigrant experience in which people struggle to integrate different — sometimes conflicting — cultures.

Social values and politics, history and memory clash as personal and cultural identities evolve through change and transition, blending past and present.

Esfahani's installation mediates her having lived in two distinct cultures for the same period of time. It consists of three components.






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Hand-drawn wallpaper incorporates repeated images of cows and trees, a reference to gallery namesake Homer Watson; images of Esfahani sitting with her sister as children; and stacks of pallets which have become for the artist a personal metaphor representing the migration of culture.

A group of small bird statues collected from Canada and Iran, made from clay, glass, metal and wood, sits on a fireplace mantle in the gallery.

The last component is an altered print drawn from an original Homer Watson plate by fellow Waterloo artist Nicholas Rees, a former gallery artist-in-residence.

By mixing and matching cultural iconography from two cultures, Esfahani examines the notion of belonging within a museum context.

Karmakar's 16 encaustic, mixed media collages examine the temporality and transitory nature of life.

Some of the works are highly textured paintings, while others are painterly sculptural boxes with cavities containing various found objects.

A variety of images drawn from nature (trees, roots, caterpillars, butterflies, eggs, birds, thorns, flowers) and human anatomy (heart, rib cage) suggest existence as a series of metamorphoses.

Life is depicted as a mystery we both negotiate and attempt to unlock, as suggested by keys, compasses and maps.

*The Bridge* continues through April 29.

[rreid@therecord.com](mailto:rreid@therecord.com)

The Bridge

The Bridge: A Multicultural Exhibition

Homer Watson Gallery

On view through April 29

Information and gallery hours at 519-748-4377 or online at [www.homerwatson.ca](http://www.homerwatson.ca)

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