

## VIRGINIA JARAMILLO

Hilarie M. Sheets, *Komal Shah, Champion of Female Artists, Works to Raise Their Profiles*, The New York Times, March 22, 2023



Installation view of *Virginia Jaramillo, The Curvilinear Paintings, 1969-1974*, The Menil Collection, Houston, 2020. Photo by Paul Hester.

Komal Shah said she was one of only three women in her master's program in computer science at Stanford in the early 1990s but never perceived gender as an obstacle. Born and raised in Ahmedabad, India, and the first in her extended family to study in the United States, she was intent on proving herself, and she did, rising over the next 15 years to senior positions at Oracle, Netscape and Yahoo. It was after quitting the male-dominated tech world to give extra support to her young children, and then beginning to collect art seriously in 2014, that her eyes were opened to what she described as vast inequities faced by women artists in market prices, museum acquisitions and overall visibility in the art world.

"I started realizing how the odds were so stacked

against women, who were making amazing work and were just not getting their dues because of a lot of societal biases," said Ms. Shah, 53, at her home in Atherton, Calif., which she shares with her husband, Gaurav Garg, a founding partner of Wing VC, a venture capital firm; their two children, now in college; and a museum-quality collection of painting and sculpture that resounds through the space with vibrant color, form and pattern.

Made predominantly by generations of women working in abstraction, from the mid-20th-century artists Joan Mitchell and Lenore Tawney to the young contemporary painters Firelei Báez and Jadé Fadojutimi, the collection isn't obviously about gender. Rather, it embodies a feminist perspective through its

bold expressiveness.

“I want to make a point with the collection, which is how excellent these artists are — they belong in every single museum,” said Ms. Shah, who in less than a decade has amassed nearly 300 works, about 10 percent of which circulate among institutions at any given time.

“If I’m going to throw my resources and my time into this, I want to do something that has a positive impact,” Ms. Shah said. She cited a 2019 investigation showing that only 11 percent of museum acquisitions over the past decade were of works by women artists and a 2022 report, detailed in *The Guardian*, that found works by women sell for 10 cents on the dollar compared with those by male artists. “It’s literally the lowest in any industry,” she said.

In May, “Making Their Mark: Art by Women in the Shah Garg Collection,” edited by the curators Mark Godfrey and Katy Siegel, will be published by Gregory R. Miller & Company.

“I want the book to serve as a starting point for scholarship about women artists,” said Ms. Shah, who commissioned Mr. Godfrey and Ms. Siegel, as well as six art historians, to write about the themes in her collection, and to pen short essays on the more than 135 women spotlighted in the book. The book also includes 14 artists’ reflections on their peers, including Charles Gaines on Lauren Halsey.

“The structure of the book is nonhierarchical,” said Mr. Godfrey, noting that the market stars Julie Mehretu and Cecily Brown are treated with the same significance as long-overlooked artists, such as Mary Grigoriadis, a founding member of the A.I.R. Gallery, and Virginia Jaramillo, who in 2020 had her first solo museum show, at the Menil Collection in Houston. Now, Pace Gallery is representing Ms. Jaramillo and showing her at Art Basel Hong Kong this week.