

## ARTS

# Painter takes gray out of Tokyo

By SHIRO YONEYAMA  
*Kyodo News*

**A** lawyer by training and mother of a 4-month-old daughter, Monica Jahan Bose is an up-and-coming artist whose colorful works reflect her belief that Tokyo is "a very energetic, vibrant city."

"Color is always an important part of my work," Bose said. "I use colors to express myself, and I feel life is very exciting and vibrant and I feel a lot of energy all the time and color helps me express that energy."

Bose, who teaches environmental law at Temple University's Tokyo campus, talked about her first independent exhibition at the Tokyo American Club's Genkan Gallery. The event runs through March 5.

The exhibition features intersections and other ordinary scenes of the Japanese capital from 1996 to 1999 in extremely bright colors, all acrylic on paper.

"People tell me that Tokyo is so gray and ugly and the buildings are so strange," Bose said. "There are a lot of gray buildings but there is so much vitality and energy I feel in the city from people and from the music, signs and the way the buildings are."

"It's very haphazard in Tokyo. You don't see so much



Photo courtesy of the artist

Monica Jahan Bose stands in front of some of her paintings of Tokyo street scenes.

zoning," she said in an interview. "I find it very vibrant and visually very stimulating and I see a lot of colors and energy, even in what other people see as gray. So I use colors to express the kind of vitality and energy I feel in Tokyo."

But her works in recent years are mostly devoid of people. "I'm focusing more on buildings and structural things and shapes and shadows and blocks

of shadows and patterns."

"I used to paint with more thick paint and more brush work, more curves, shapes, designs," she related. "I've been interested in the lines and shapes of the buildings and the way the buildings meet the sky and the way the telephone lines intersect."

Born to Bangladeshi parents in Britain, Bose grew up in Bangladesh and the United

States, where she studied law at Columbia University. She also studied art in Wesleyan University in Connecticut and did graduate work at Viswabharati University in India.

It was at Columbia Law School that she met her future husband, Mike Bennett, who she says is a good art critic. The couple were married in Washington in 1994.

While her baby daughter Tuli

was being held by another woman and her husband was busy greeting guests, Bose also talked about her life as a lawyer-painter and now a mother.

"It's really difficult for me only to paint. I become lonely," she laughed. "The life of an artist is very lonely."

"I need to interact with people. It's difficult to find a balance, actually. The ideal situation is what I'm doing, half the time painting, half the time doing some kind of work."

She said she sees herself as a serious painter and a lawyer. "They are two very separate parts of my life but both are important. I cannot stay at home every day. A lot of artists enjoy being at home or in the studio every day by themselves to paint. I need to do a lot of other things also to keep my mind active."

"But Tokyo for me is the most visually stimulating city I've seen really. I've lived in New York City for many years but did not have this kind of inspiration to paint in New York," she said.

She and her family will leave Tokyo in early March for Washington, where her husband will work for an international financial institution.

"I want to try to do everything" in Washington, as in Tokyo, Bose said.