

# Rapid resumé



**Deepa Mann-Kler** (BSc Social Policy and Administration 1991) has taken a year off work, from the Equality Commission, to pursue her dream of being an artist, and held her second solo show, entitled *A Strange Kind of Peace*, at Waterfront Hall, Belfast in February 2008. Her work takes equality and identity as its key themes, and explores the inter-relationship between race, gender and our understandings of the spaces we inhabit and the symbols we use.

## What led you to study at LSE?

There were several factors that led me to choose LSE. Firstly, I was aware of its amazing reputation with extremely high academic standards; secondly I wanted to study in an international environment; and finally I wanted to be in the heart of London. LSE ticked all these boxes. I know that by attending LSE, I secured a place on my Master's in European Social Policy, which led to working in Brussels and then moving to Northern Ireland in 1996, which is where I live now.

## What do you remember most about your time at the School?

I suppose my memories go back to all the wonderful friends I made. Another very precious memory is the Shaw Library, at the top of the Old Building. It was a haven, with its decor and soft music. There

were inspirational lecturers, who readily shared their learning and humanity. I loved the main Library as well. There is something very reassuring about being surrounded by books and the smell of them.

## What have been the highlights of your career so far?

One of the most defining moments in my career was researching racism in Northern Ireland in 1997 in a report called 'Out of the Shadows'. The report was the first of its kind to highlight the shortcomings of public bodies here in ensuring services met the needs of minority ethnic people, and it made many policy recommendations. It has formed the basis for much of the anti-racism work that is now commonplace. It was really exciting to conduct first hand research on an issue that you knew had not been explored because of the 'The Troubles'. There were so many misconceptions and stereotypes

that existed about race prior to this report. 'Out of the Shadows' established my credibility as a researcher in Northern Ireland and allowed me to spend the first eleven years of my working life in the field of equality.

## Has what you learned at LSE influenced your art?

Absolutely, in a very positive way. I took a social policy degree because I was and remain committed to social justice. What better place to start than right where you live. My career therefore has always specialised in equality – from race issues, to Section 75, to gender and political equality, in fact the whole range of equality issues. Prior to my career break, I worked as a senior manager in the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. My art work has been strongly influenced by this, since equality is part of who I am. My work is largely figurative and has focused upon gender and race. My style is contemporary, and so the paintings are bright and bold. I'm fascinated by the contrast between light and dark, and I explore this constantly in my paintings. I think I am one of the few artists in Northern Ireland who has used race as a theme for her figurative work.

## What are your plans for the future?

I have two young children and last year I started a two year career break from the Equality Commission. As well as enjoying much more time with my children, I am continuing to establish my artistic career. My work now sells through a private gallery in Belfast, Canvas, and I have a further two solo shows planned for this year as well as seven group shows to participate in. In addition to this, I keep my brain ticking over by serving on several management committees and I hold a public appointment as a non-executive director with the South Eastern Health and Social Services Trust.

I am delighted with the changes to my life and I'm relishing the opportunities I currently have.

## Any advice for LSE students today?

Enjoy every minute of your time. This is a time in your life when your focus is to study, make friends, party and fully involve yourself in the community of university life. Take advantage of all the wonderful opportunities open to you, whether it's meeting people from all over the world or joining the unlikeliest clubs. Just try new things for the sake of it. You're protected in a way that you do not always realise: university days are incredibly precious.

To see more of Deepa's art, visit [www.deepamannkler.com](http://www.deepamannkler.com)

