

owfield is the part you don't want to acknowledge, but it's there."

Ms. Kumar recounts having a strict Catholic upbringing, but no longer believes in heaven and hell. "As a child, I wondered where balloons went," she says "I thought, 'Wouldn't it be nice if you went to heaven and the balloons met you there.'" So she has painted "At the Gates of Heaven: The Souls of Balloons Will Meet You There."

Referring to Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers*, chronicling the lives and successes of people from Mozart to Bill Gates, Ms. Kumar says she always felt as if she didn't fit in. Another favorite book is W. Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*. "I've read it every three years of my life since I was 16, and each time I get a different perspective," she says. Most recently, she has felt the most compassion for Isabel, the character who was the fiance of the protagonist who wants to spend his life searching for meaning.

"Isabel married someone else, but she always loved Larry," says Ms. Kumar, expressing her feelings in the painting "Like a Razor's Edge."

"Do you think viewers will understand these themes in your work?" asks Mr. Udell.

"As an artist, I speak a different language, but if I can speak to people's hearts, then I've done my job," Ms. Kumar says.

"Jack-in-the-Box" was created for the *Inside/Out* exhibit at Ellarslie last year. It is in this exhibit, but also in Mr. Udell's collection. Ms. Kumar says this painting is about mid life, and coping with the loss of people you love, as well as the loss of youth.

The tune of the jack-in-the-box and the jack, when he emerges, are happy, but Ms. Kumar wondered what he was going through when he was inside the box, and so she painted him inside the box. "The jack-in-the-box scared me when I was a kid," she says. "I feel sadness for people who don't delve deeply. Jack is not a happy camper. If we don't examine these issues, we become stiff and frightening to come up against."

Cracks in the Road and Other Stories: Watercolors with handmade paper by Renee Kumar is on view at the Queenstown Gallery, 24 W. Broad St., Hopewell, through July 10. Gallery hours: Tues.-Fri. 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Opening reception May 16, 5:30 p.m. 609-466-0817; www.thequeenstowngallery.com

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"As an artist, I speak a different language, but if I can speak to people's hearts, then I've done my job," Renee Kumar says. Facing page: "Stormy Weather." This page, clockwise from top left: "The New Archetype," "Poppy Fields" and "Thunderstorm," all on view at Hopewell's Queenstown Gallery in *Cracks in the Road and Other Stories* by Ms. Kumar.

