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For Immediate Release

Spence Gallery Presents “Prairie Lands” a Solo Exhibit of Renowned Trinidadian Artist Shastri Maharaj, April 2- 24, 2011

Spence Gallery is pleased to showcase paintings from Trinidadian artist Shastri Maharaj in a solo exhibit from April 2 to 24. Maharaj, who received his formal fine arts education at the University of Manitoba in the 1980s, feels “at home” exhibiting in Canada.

Maharaj has long been recognized in Trinidad and Tobago, regionally and internationally as a noteworthy contemporary Caribbean artist. In his 30 plus years as an artist, he has used his culture and landscape as the inspiration for his paintings. They have commented on religion, ethnic identify, the environment and social issues. The over 20 paintings in the collection of the current exhibit continue that conversation.

Maharaj, who primarily paints with acrylic on canvas, admits that his work is not always perceived as stereotypically Caribbean. This is no surprise to the artist since his paintings speak a universal language. As he takes us on a journey across landscapes, in the serenity of his paintings, Maharaj hopes to convey to his audience feelings of connection, empathy, nostalgia and relationship. Iconic women stand in harmony with these landscapes – the matriarch, a symbol of strength.

Maharaj’s work eschews detail while emphasising colour, clarity of form and compositional simplicity. He makes a conscious attempt to be minimalist. *“My intent is to rely on the viewer to identify and empathize with the simplicity of the subject matter. I want to communicate with my audience using the language of art in an unpretentious and honest manner... I hope people find some comfort in my paintings.”* states Maharaj.

In addition to the private and corporate collectors, Maharaj’s art has also been acquired as part of the permanent collection of the National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago. He lives in rural Trinidad and works creating and implementing the visual arts curriculum for the education ministry. He hopes to retire soon to focus solely on creating art.

The artist will be present at the opening wine and cheese reception on Saturday, April 2nd starting at 6:00 p.m. For an interview with the artist and further information, contact Joan Spence, Director of Spence Gallery.

SPENCE GALLERY, located in Mirvish Village (Bathurst & Bloor), is a one of a kind gallery in Toronto. The gallery was founded to share culturally diverse artistic expressions. It provides a taste of contemporary art of Caribbean, Latin American and African artists and the Diaspora. It is dedicated to diversity and celebrates the cultural influences of the artists.

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600 Markham Street Toronto, ON M6G 2L8 ☐ Wed - Fri: 5 - 8 pm; Sat & Sun: 12 - 6 pm