



## Emami Art at ART DUBAI 2024

### BOOTH W - 6

**Preview:** 28 - 29 February 2024

**Dates:** 1 - 3 March 2024

**Venue:** [Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai - United Arab Emirates](#)

**Bawwaba**, meaning 'gateway' in Arabic - showcases artists from the Global South who think of art as a place of reckoning and healing, confronting social and political issues, engaging in critical dialogue, and creating a sense of community and belonging. It is curated by Emiliano Valdés, Chief Curator of the Museum of Modern Art, Medellín and Associate Curator for the 10th Gwangju Biennale.

### Programmes:

1) **Solo presentation of Debashish Paul** at the **BAWWABA Section: Booth W-6**, of Art Dubai, 2024, Curated by Emiliano Valdés

2) **Scent of the Celestial Garden: A Live Performance by Debashish Paul – Commissioned by Art Dubai, 2024.** Debut on **28th of February (Wednesday)**, followed by a second performance on **1<sup>st</sup> of March (Friday)** at Water Terrace, on Sundown.

### Quote by CEO

It feels truly special to present a solo show of Debashish Paul at the seventeenth edition of Art Dubai's *Bawabba* section – specially crafted for exclusive works created for the fair by artists hailing from the Global South. Paul, from Varanasi, one of the most significant holy sites of India - has absorbed spirituality in the most sensitive and profound ways. His performances are a wholesome assemblage of sculptural dress, choreography, universal love and reconciliation. I hope Paul's works spread the message of intimacy beyond binaries and invoke the realm of tranquil healing. It is also a pleasure to collaborate with Art Dubai. I thank the entire team for all the arrangements and Emiliano Valdés for the stunning curation.

(says Richa Agarwal, CEO, Emami Art and Chairperson, KCC)

### Synopsis

1) **Emami Art** is proud to present **Debashish Paul's** solo at the seventeenth edition of the Middle East's leading International art fair, Art Dubai's **BAWABBA Section, curated by Emiliano Valdés.**

Landscapes and rivers are integral to Paul's narrative, express complex emotions and symbolic connections. However, the landscape is a site of enlightenment and healing in his works. Water bodies, especially rivers, reflect the fluidity of their inner self and the body, which is sedimented with memories and time.

The presentation will exhibit multi-disciplinary artist Debashish Paul's new drawings and photographs along with a sculptural costume and headdress from a recent performance. Independently or as part of his sculptural dresses, drawings are essential to his practice. They are made from paper pasted on fabric with drawings that carry visual lexicons of his memories, self, stories and imaginations of body and intimate things. Site-specific photography is an

extended part of his practice, where he appears in sculptural dresses, signifying certain connections and elements relating to the place and theme of his performance. The body and landscape in the photographs on view, blend in, resonating with each other. Paul's unique multi expressionist practice is devised through dialogues with the self, society and nature.

**2) Scent of the Celestial Garden: A Live Performance by Debashish Paul, Commissioned by Art Dubai, 2024** - debut on **28 February, Sundown**, at **Water Terrace**, Madinat Jumeirah followed by a second performance on **3rd March**.

*The Scent of the Celestial Garden* is a new piece by Paul debuting in the 2024 edition of Art Dubai. It purports to celebrate happiness and rejuvenation. For Paul, a garden is a speculative space where aspirations, hopes, and desires intertwine, and the concept of scent is a reminder that in the depths of his internal existence, there exists a source of inspiration and a connection to something greater. His devising of symbolic images through sounds and scents, body movements along with the shape of his sculpturesque attire, fosters a collective aspiration for the higher realms of existence – utopic and ecstatic. Through the amalgamation of the natural and heavenly, and with his mastery of form and movement, he is set to beckon his surroundings into a liminal space where the terrestrial and ethereal converge. Although his performances have no connection to any rituals, there is a distinctive ‘ritual quality or effect’ the onlookers have an elevated experience of time that separates them, for a moment, from the mundane everydayness in which they live.

### **Brief Bio of the Artist: Debashish Paul**

Debashish Paul, a multidisciplinary artist born in 1994 in the Nadia district of West Bengal, explores the problems of queer identity in a society dominated by heterosexual norms. Paul graduated with a B.F.A. in Sculpture from The Indian College of Art and Draftsmanship Kolkata, and an M.F.A. in Sculpture from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi in 2019 and 2021 respectively. Paul has many national and international shows and performances including ‘The Magic of the Silver Swan’ curated by Kinnari Sariya, Bowes Museum, Bernard Castle, UK, 2023-24; Prince Claus Fund Biennial Symposium in Sri Lanka, 5 Dec 2023; Performance program with HH Art Space, supported by Pro Helvetia’s “To-gather” International Collaboration, 2023; Cité internationale des arts, Institut français Paris Residency supported by Prameya Art Foundation, and the French Institute in India in 2023; Kochi-Muziris Biennale Performance Residency in collaboration with HH Art Space and Nikhil Chopra, 2022-2023; The Students’ Biennale at Kochi Biennale, 2021; ‘Of Liminal Beings and Other Spaces’ at Emami Art, Kolkata in 2021; ‘Beyond Binaries: Sensing Art through Queer Lensing’ at KCC, Kolkata in 2021; and ‘Emami Art Open Call Exhibition’ at Emami Art, Kolkata in 2020. His works have been shown by Emami Art at India Art Fair 2023 in New Delhi where he was also the India Art Fair Artist in Residence. His other shows include Art Dusseldorf, Dusseldorf, Germany in 2023 and an upcoming Solo presentation by Emami Art at Bawwaba section, Art Dubai 2024 curated by Emiliano Valdez.

Paul has several awards to his credit including The Inlaks Fine Art Awards and Residency at 1 Shanthi Road Studio/Gallery, Bengaluru in 2022. He has participated in the Kala Sakshi Workshop in 2021. Paul was awarded the Kalanad Scholarship 2022-23 by the Prafulla Dahanukar Art Foundation; the Seed Award by the Prince Claus Fund in 2022; the Inlaks Fine Art Award by Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation in 2022; the Allegro 1st prize by Contemporary LYNX, London in 2021; and the Indian Artist Relief Fund 2021 by Museum of Art and Photography in partnership with 1 Shanthi Road Studio/Gallery.

Debashish Paul lives and works between Varanasi, in Uttar Pradesh and Nadia district in West Bengal, India.

### **About Emami Art**

Emami Art is a leading Indian contemporary art gallery and a platform for cultural production. Established in 2017 in Kolkata, Emami Art represents emerging, mid-career and established artists and organises a dynamic programme of exhibitions and public seminars. Since its inception, the gallery has curated and hosted intimate and large-scale

exhibitions and regularly participates in national and international art fairs and conferences.

With a focus on a future-forward, complex, multi-dimensional approach that echoes South Asian history, the programme explores socio-cultural and geo-political narratives about visual art practices today. As part of its knowledge-sharing and archiving activities, Emami Art regularly hosts talks, seminars, panel discussions and conversations between artists, curators and audiences to create a safe space for critical engagement.

Deeply committed to promoting a regional, national and international agenda through innovative and alternative programming, the gallery emphasizes knowledge production and socially conscious themes. Emami Art aspires to be a catalyst of change, research, innovation and inclusivity and welcomes all sections of society.