An abstract painting featuring warm, earthy tones of brown, orange, and pink. The composition is dominated by dark, expressive outlines that define various shapes and forms, possibly suggesting a human figure or a landscape. The background is a textured wash of color, with some areas appearing more saturated than others. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

# THE DARK EDGE OF GREEN

**ARUNIMA CHOUDHURY**  
WORKS 1995 - 2022

**CURATED BY NANCY ADAJANIA**

**JUNE 19 - AUG 20, 2022**

# Foreword

I am delighted to present *The Dark Edge of Green*. The retrospective-scale exhibition shows a substantial body of Arunima Choudhury's mature work in the last three decades, between 1995 and 2022. I thank Arunima Choudhury, an exceptional painter and one of our valued represented artists, for her support and deep engagement in this project. The exhibition testifies to our long-term friendship and incredible journey of working together.

A fine and prolific artist, Arunima Choudhury develops her unique pictorial style, which is formally innovative and intrinsically delicate. I have long been familiar with her paintings and am fascinated with their freshness and spontaneity. Her use of handmade botanic colours, mainly green, yellow, and blue hues, activates the painting's pictorial space and internal tensions. Nature has long been central to her artistic imagination; it operates at many levels as external reality and organic materials, as well as internal drives and emotions. Deeply ingrained into the rich vernacular traditions of Bengal and autobiography, her work speaks of her broader vision and womanly worldview that do not separate nature and the environment from the human worlds. It reveals as much as it hides the complexities of the relationship, constituting the core of Arunima Choudhury's visual poetics.

I want to thank Nancy Adajania, the well-known curator, art critic and writer, for conceiving and curating this fantastic, thought-provoking show, highlighting lesser-known aspects of the artist's oeuvre. Emami Art is always committed to bringing such well-curated exhibitions to expose the audiences to the best of Indian and South Asian modern and contemporary art. Exhibiting generations of artists – from modern masters to younger artists, our presence in the art world has been constant through art fairs and large-scale institutional shows in India and abroad that we have organized or co-operated with others. In the last two years, besides gallery activities, we have grown with a library, publications, seminars and archival research projects on lesser-known artists to explore the possibilities, little by little, to create an accessible space for the audience and shape critical awareness of art.

Lastly, I extend my earnest gratitude to my team at Emami Art. Without their efforts and dedication, the exhibition would not have been possible.

Richa Agarwal  
CEO, Emami Art and Chairperson, KCC

# The Dark Edge of Green

'The Dark Edge of Green' embraces almost three decades of Arunima Choudhury's practice from 1995 to the present. This retrospective-like vista allows for an expansive engagement with her restless experimentation across various mediums including gouache, acrylic, enamel painting, ceramics, as well as eco-prints on cotton and rice paper.

The earliest work in this exhibition dates back to 1995. I saw 'Death of a Poet' for the first time on Arunima-di's terrace as she and her husband Gautam-da valiantly fought the wind gods to hold this 8-foot-long painting up. The raktakarabi red from the painting rent the air even as a golden glow suffused the sky, filling my heart with melancholic what-ifs. The subjunctive tense has often haunted my curatorial practice, compelling me to retrieve moments of art history that have been lost, suppressed or left unacknowledged.

Arunima-di and I speak of the loss of love and belief, of planetary erosion. In her mind, darkness is associated with childhood trauma, having seen her mother endure the constraints of patriarchy. But equally, the darker forces of the subconscious have propelled her vision, freeing it of social and sexual inhibitions. I would argue that it is this dark edge that cuts through the simplistic reading that her works revolve around women and nature, too often seen as uncomplicated synonyms.

Yes, it is true that Arunima-di privileges the nurturing, generative female principle in her work, greening her women protagonists and all creatures great and small. But, to adapt the American poet Forrest Gander's insight for this occasion, hers is an eco-poetics that does not merely deploy nature as subject matter. Rather, it is an expression – artisanal and ethical – of a deep human entanglement with the natural world. In this, Arunima-di is a true legatee of the Santiniketan philosophy, which encouraged the practice of eco-art *avant la lettre* and rejected the colonial hierarchy that set art above craft.

Nancy Adajania  
Curator

# Arunima Choudhury

Artist



Arunima Choudhury was Born in 1950 in Siliguri, West Bengal. The artist received her diploma in Fine Arts from the Indian College of Arts and Draftsmanship, Kolkata.

Working with an array of mediums, Arunima Choudhury's artworks, in their effortlessness, dynamism and chromatic exuberance, express a rare spontaneity of creative momentum. Spending her growing

up years in the abundance of nature within the viridescent hills of Dooars and Darjeeling, lush tea gardens of Assam and the mountains of Sikkim, nature became a lifelong source of her inspiration, often acting as a metaphor to translate the quintessential feminine in visual terms. In her later life, inspired by the natural and cultural atmosphere of Santiniketan, Choudhury's artistic vision found its true path under the broad aesthetic vision of Rabindranath Tagore. She was attracted to the new ideal of modern Indian art, rooted yet cosmopolitan, and the crucial roles of medium-specific crafts in modern art practices.

Shankha Darshana, the classical Indian school of philosophy, explains nature as the embodiment of feminine energy. Similarly, nature deities worshipped within many indigenous cultures around the world indicate a tendency to understand femininity compared to nature and vice versa. But Modernity swiping over the general cultural consciousness, granted a new interpretation to the classical. Tagore's famous poem *Krishnakali* praises the black beauty of an indigenous girl in the colonial atmosphere of Bengal, where nature plays as a vital metaphor. Later with Arunima Choudhury's painting *Krishnakali* (2015), we experience an equivalent visual trans-creation. Her works like *Mother and Child*, *The Girl*, and *Wings* (2020) explore the quintessential theme of womanhood through many stages.

In Choudhury's works, the intermingling of colours, the tenderness of lines, and the lyrical shapes create a language where form and content become synonymous. Her continuous interaction with various materials, on the other hand, translates the central theme into diverse dictions. Whether it is organic colours on handmade papers, paintings on enamel plates or ceramics figurines - across mediums, her works convey a primordial playfulness charged with abundance and an urge for celebration.

CANVAS



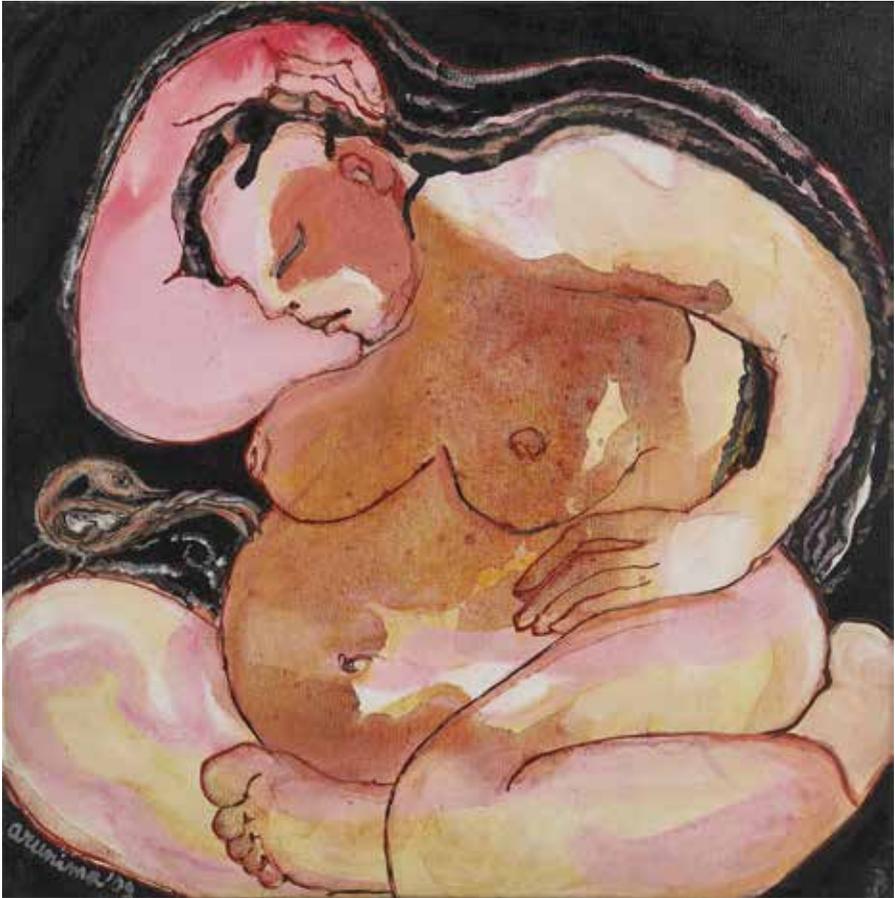
*Girl Lying*  
Acrylic on canvas  
24 x 36 in. (61 x 92 cm.)  
2012, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower right)

AB1



*Landscape in Red*  
Acrylic on canvas  
24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm.)  
2018, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower right)

AB3



*The Woman and the Bird II*  
Acrylic on canvas  
24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm.)  
2009, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB4



*Blue Girl with Red Hibiscus*  
Acrylic on canvas  
36 x 24 in. (91 x 61 cm.)  
2011, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower right)

AB8

Detail of Blue Girl with Red Hibiscus



Installation View



2014



2014



2014

Installation View



Installation View



CERAMIC



*Untitled I*  
Ceramic  
11 in. (29 cm.) dia.  
2020, Kolkata  
Signed in Bengali (lower middle)

AB10



*Untitled IV*  
Ceramic  
10.4 in. (26.5 cm.) dia.  
2020, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower right)

AB13



*Untitled V*  
Ceramic  
10 in. (26 cm.) dia.  
Kolkata  
Signed in English (upper left)

AB14



*Untitled VI*  
Ceramic  
10.4 in. (26.5 cm.) dia.  
2020, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower middle)

AB15



*Untitled III*  
Ceramic  
10.4 in. (26.5 cm.) dia.  
2020, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower middle)

AB12

Detail of *Untitled VI*





ECO PRINT



*Untitled XVII*

Eco print on rice paper  
29.5 x 21.5 in. (75 x 55 cm.)  
2020, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB29



*Untitled XVI*  
Eco print on rice paper  
30 x 22 in. (76 x 56.5 cm.)  
2022, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB28



*Untitled XXI*

Eco print on rice paper

29 x 22 in. (74 x 55.5 cm.)

2022, Kolkata

Signed in English (lower left)

AB33



*Untitled XXV*  
Eco print on rice paper  
27 x 21 in. (69.5 x 54 cm.)  
2022, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB37

Installation view



WORKS ON PAPER



*Death of a Poet*

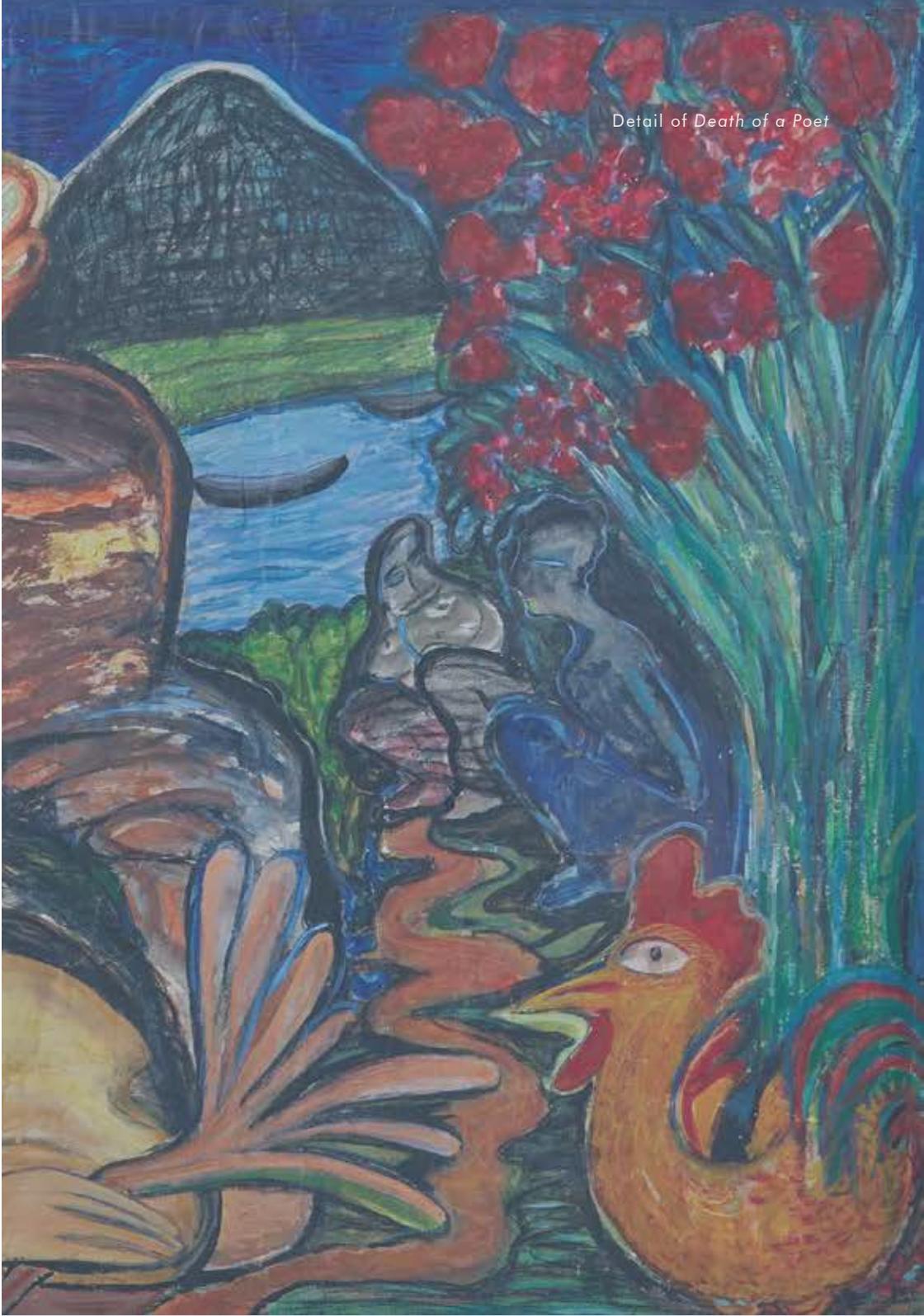
Acrylic, watercolour and dry pastel on paper  
64 x 99 in. (160.5 x 251 cm)

1995, Kolkata

Signed in English (lower right)

AB9

Detail of *Death of a Poet*





*Her Companion*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
27.5 x 22 in. (70 x 56.5 cm.)  
2015, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB42



*Nest*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
30 x 22 in. (76 x 56.5 cm.)  
2020, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB43



*Daydream*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
28 x 22 in. (70.5 x 56 cm.)  
2020, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower right)

AB44



*Flowers*

Vegetable colour on handmade paper

27.5 x 22 in. (70 x 56 cm.)

2020, Kolkata

Signed in English (lower left & right)

AB45



*Onlooker*

Vegetable colour on handmade paper

27.5 x 22 in. (70 x 56 cm.)

2020, Kolkata

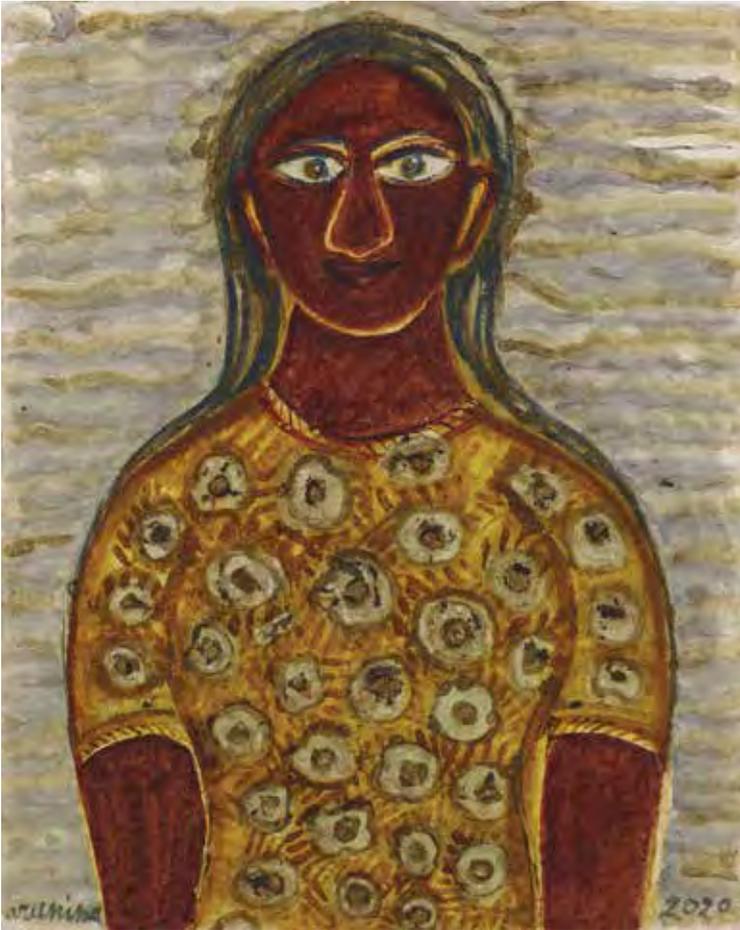
Signed in English (lower right)

AB47



*Prayer*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
28 x 22 in. (70.5 x 56.5 cm.)  
2020, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower right)

AB48



*A Girl*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
27.5 x 22 in. (70 x 56 cm.)  
2020, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB71



*Cosmic Dancer*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
28 x 22 in. (71 x 56.5 cm.)  
2020, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB79



*Diba ar Nisha*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
29.5 x 43 in. (75 x 109 cm.)  
2022, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB55

Detail of *Diba ar Nisha*





*Landscape II*

Vegetable colour on handmade paper

43 x 29 in. (109 x 74.5 cm.)

2021, Kolkata

Signed in Bengali and English (lower left and right)

AB56



*Landscape III*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
43 x 30 in. (109.5 x 75 cm.)  
2022, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB69



*The Forest I-IV*

Vegetable colour on handmade paper

9 x 7 in. (22 x 17 cm.) each

Undated, Kolkata

Signed in English

AB64 - AB67

Detail from *The Forest III*





*Vegetable Drawings from Notebook IX-XVI*

Vegetable colour on paper

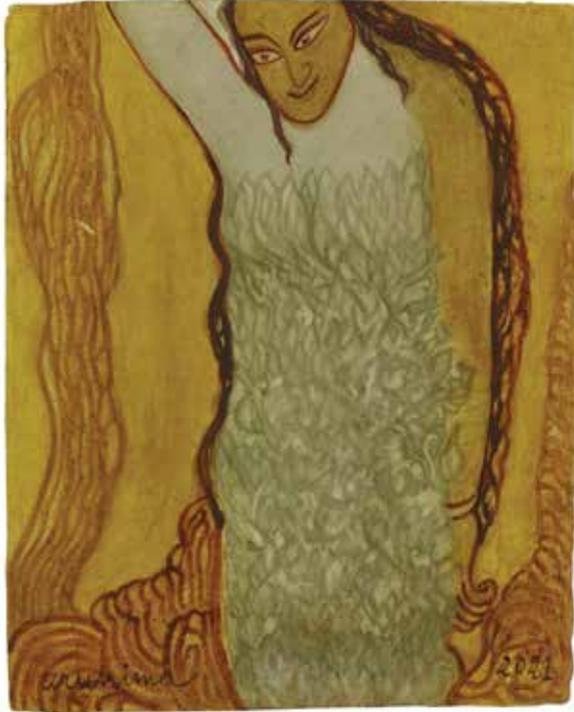
47.5 x 18 in. (121 x 46 cm.) overall

Suite of 8 works

2021, 2009, 2009, 2022, 2015, 2010, 2019, 2021, Kolkata (from above)

Signed in English (lower left and right)

AB82 (A to H)



*Waiting*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
27.5 x 22 in. (70 x 56 cm.)  
2021, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB57



*Girls*

Vegetable colour on handmade paper

30 x 43 in. (75 x 109.5 cm.)

2022, Kolkata

Signed in English (lower left)

AB68



*Beastly Games and Other Love Stories VI*  
Vegetable colour on acid-free handmade paper  
12 x 16 in. (29.5 x 41 cm.)  
2008, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower right)

AB140



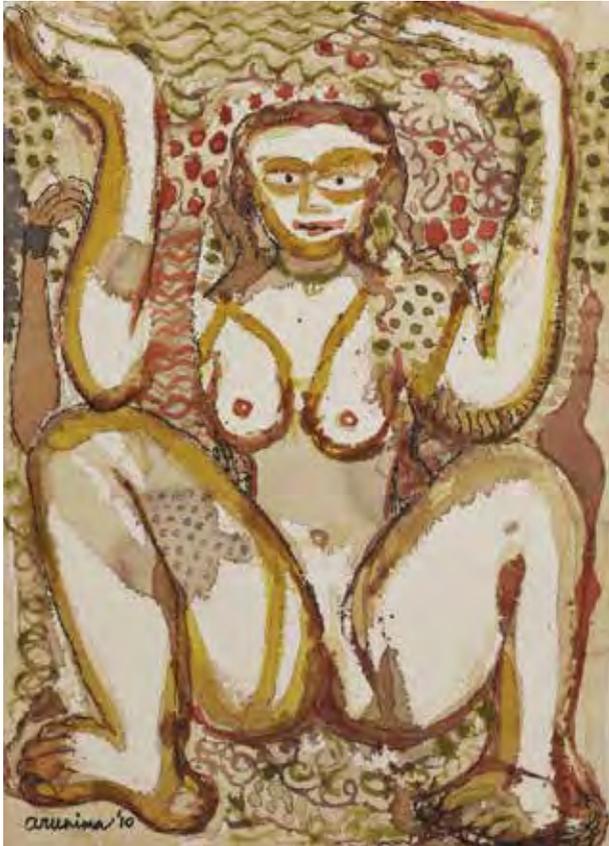
*Beastly Games and Other Love Stories II*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
16 x 12 in. (41 x 29.5 cm.)  
2008, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB136



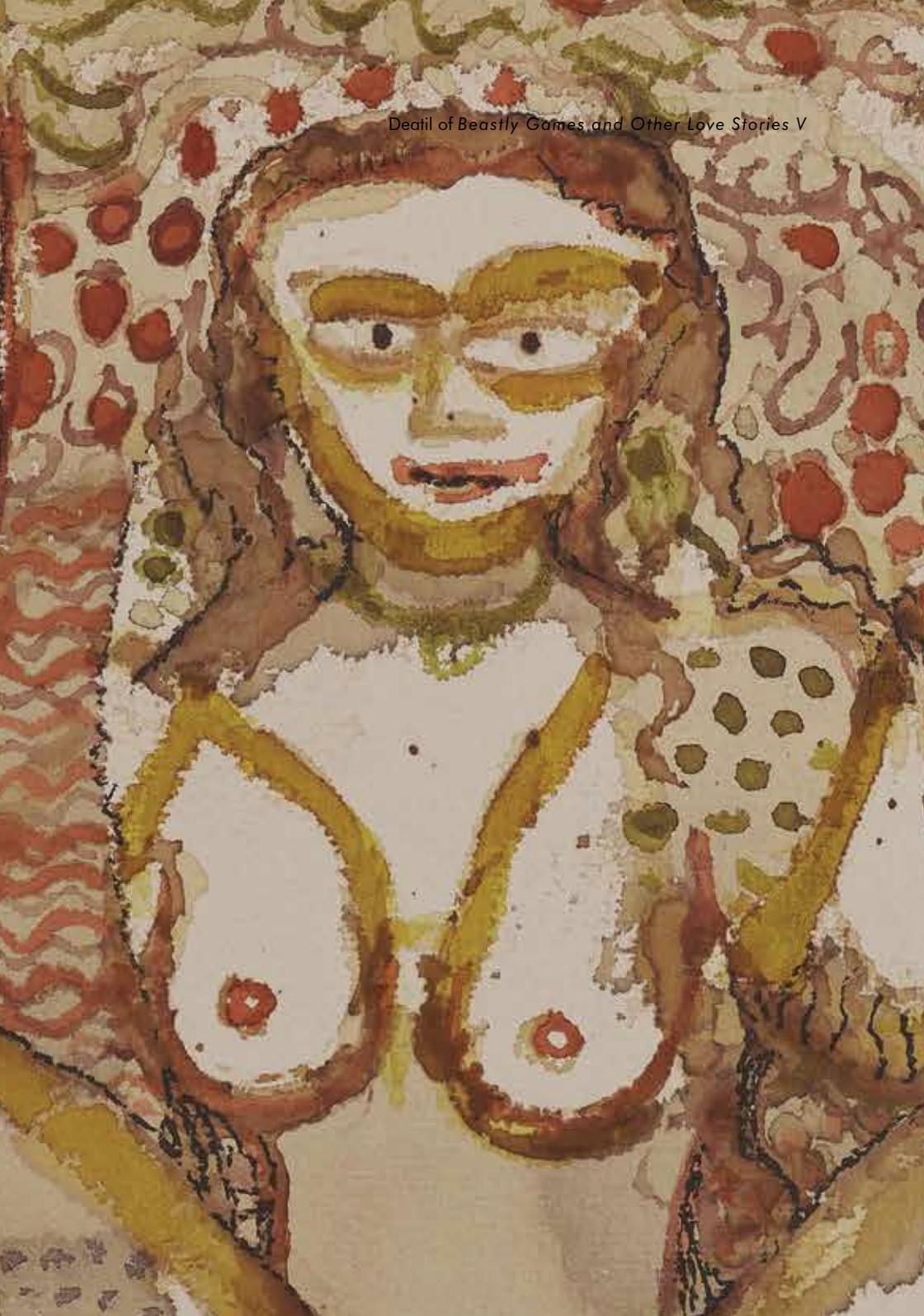
*Beastly Games and Other Love Stories III*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
12 x 16 in. (29.5 x 41 cm.)  
2008, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB137



*Beastly Games and Other Love Stories V*  
Vegetable colour on handmade paper  
16 x 12 in. (41 x 29.5 cm.)  
2010, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB139





*Beastly Games and Other Love Stories VII*  
Vegetable colour on acid-free handmade paper.  
16 x 12 in. (41.5 x 29.5 cm.)  
2010, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower right)

AB141



*Beastly Games and Other Love Stories VIII*  
Vegetable colour on acid-free handmade paper  
16 x 12 in. (41 x 29.5 cm.)  
2009, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB142



*Beastly Games and Other Love Stories IX*  
Vegetable colour and crayon on handmade paper  
16 x 12 in. (41 x 29.5 cm.)  
2009, Kolkata  
Signed in English (upper right)

AB143



*Beastly Games and Other Love Stories XII*  
Vegetable colour and gouache on handmade paper  
16 x 12 in. (41 x 29.5 cm.)  
2009, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower right)

AB146



*Beastly Games and Other Love Stories XI*  
Vegetable colour and acrylic on handmade paper  
16 x 12 in. (41.5 x 29.5 cm.)  
2008, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower right)

AB145



*Beastly Games and Other Love Stories X*  
Vegetable colour on acid-free handmade paper  
15 x 18 in. (37.5 x 45 cm.)  
2009, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower left)

AB144

Detail of Vegetable Drawings from Notebook IX-XVI



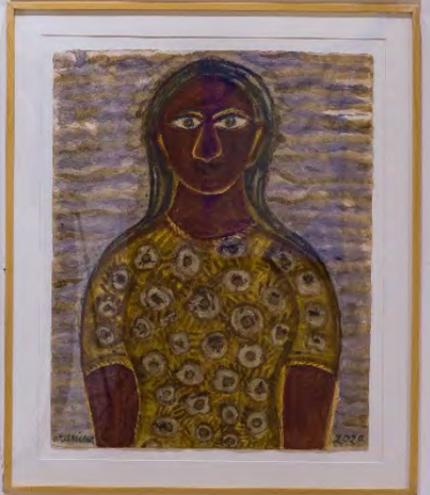
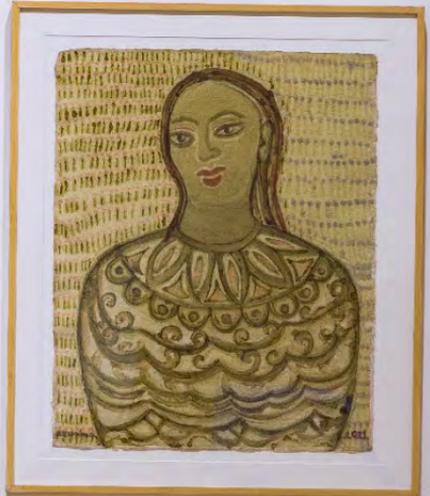
Installation View



Installation View



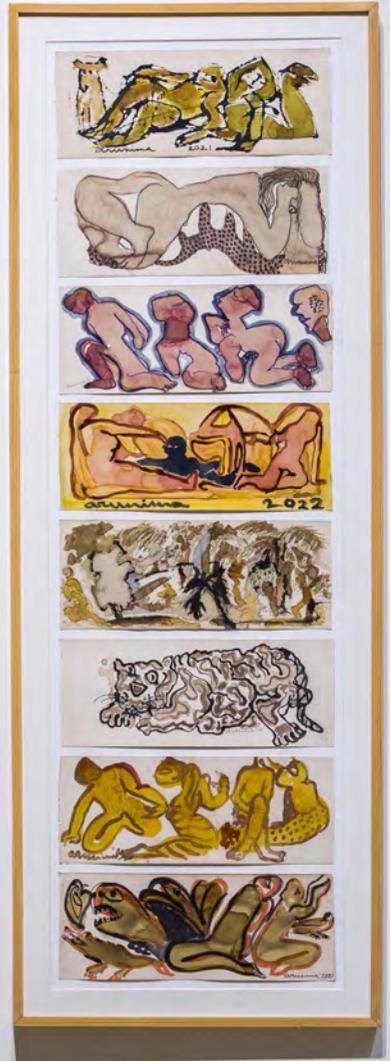
Installation View



## Installation View

"Everything I have done, I have enjoyed. Exploration is the best achievement of my life."





Informational text block, likely a label or plaque, located on the left side of the installation view.

Installation View



1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8

1. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

2. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

3. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

4. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

5. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

6. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

7. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

8. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

9. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

10. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

11. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

12. *Untitled*, 2010, Acrylic on paper, 15 x 15 cm

Installation View



# ENAMEL PAINTING



*Drawing V, VIII, IV*  
Enamel painting on metal sheet  
8 x 8 in. (21 x 21 cm.) each  
2009, Kolkata  
Signed in Bengali

AB110



*Untitled XXXV*

Enamel painting on metal sheet

4 x 4 in. (10 x 10 cm.) each

9 x 19 in. (22.5 x 47.5 cm.) overall

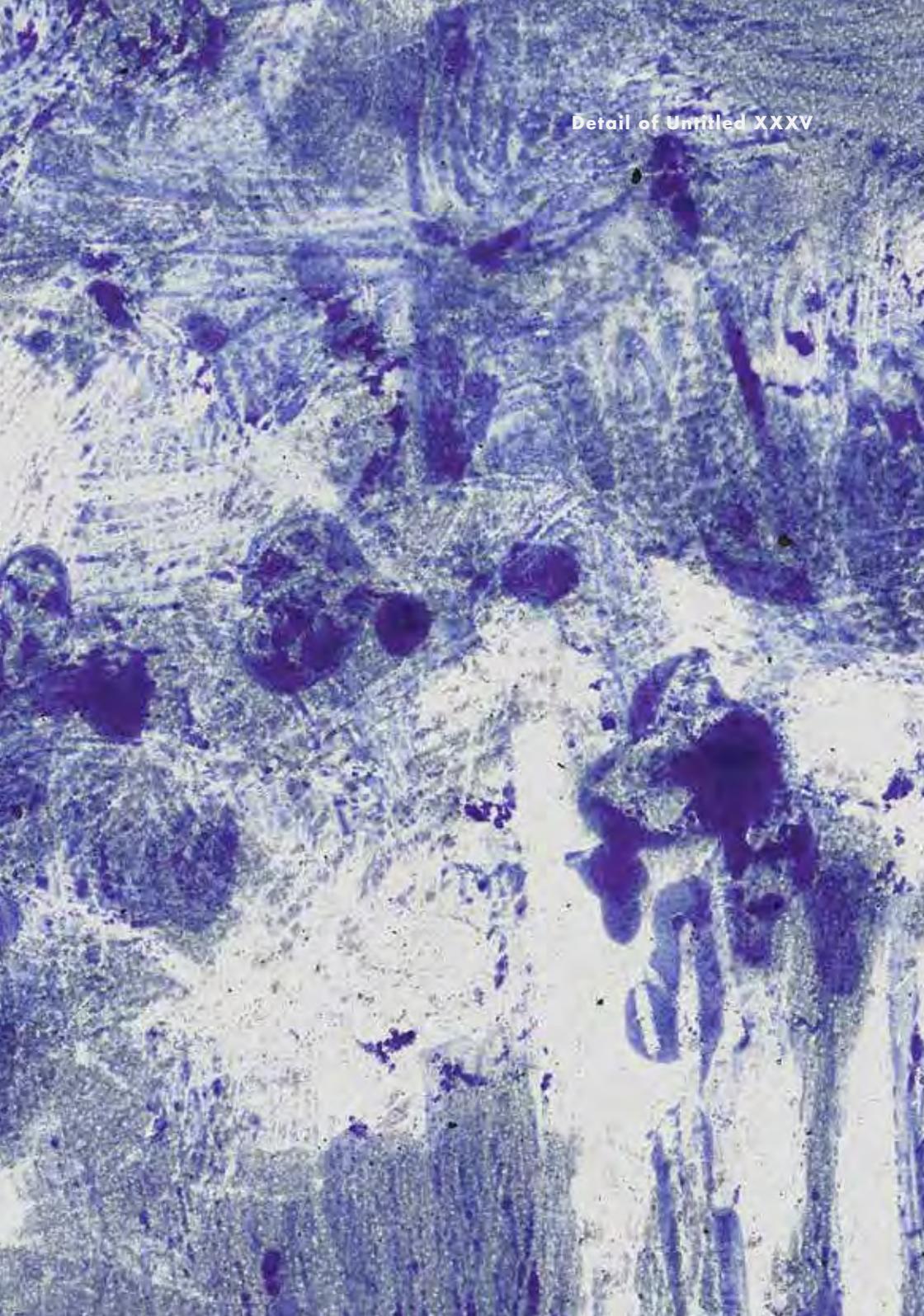
Suite of 8 works

2017, Kolkata

Signed in Bengali (upper and lower left)

AB123 (A to H)

Detail of Untitled XXXV





*Egg Seller*  
Enamel painting on metal sheet  
8 in. (20 cm.) dia.  
2007, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower middle)

AB125



*Fish Seller*  
Enamel painting on metal sheet  
8 in. (20 cm.) dia.  
2007, Kolkata  
Signed in English (lower middle)

AB126



*Shakti*

Enamel painting on metal sheet

17 x 17 in. (43 x 43 cm.)

2017, Kolkata

Signed in English (middle left)

AB106



*The Gardener*

Enamel painting on metal sheet

16 in. (41.5 cm.) dia.

2002, Kolkata

Signed in Bengali and English (back and lower left)

AB129



*Where there is Love, there is a Bird*

Enamel painting on metal sheet

36 in. (91 cm.) dia.

2015, Kolkata

Signed in Bengali and English (back and lower right)

AB133

Detail of Where there is Love, there is a Bird



Installation View



Installation View



Installation View



# Nancy Adajania

## Curator



Nancy Adajania is a Bombay-based cultural theorist and curator. She has curated a number of major research-based exhibitions including the Nelly Sethna retrospective, 'The Unpaved, Crusty, Earthy Road' (Chatterjee & Lal with Cymroza Art Gallery, Bombay, 2021); 'Zigzag Afterlives: Film Experiments from the 1960s and 1970s in India' (Camden Art Centre, London, 2020); the Mehlii Gobhai retrospective, 'Don't Ask Me About Colour' (National Gallery of Modern Art/ NGMA, Bombay with Chemould Prescott Road, 2020); the

Sudhir Patwardhan retrospective, 'Walking Through Soul City' (NGMA, Bombay with The Guild Art Gallery, 2019) and 'Counter-Canon, Counter-Culture: Alternative Histories of Indian Art' (Serendipity Arts Festival, Goa, 2019).

Adajania has proposed several new theoretical models through her extensive writings on subaltern art, media art, public art, collaborative art, transcultural art and the biennale culture in the Global South. Her recently published essays include 'Affordances: Degrees of Freedom Wrested from Phantom Narratives' in *Between the Material and the Possible* (Sternberg Press, London/Edith-Russ-Haus, Oldenburg, 2022) and 'The Crafts have the Power to Redeem Art' in *Indian Ocean Craft Triennial 2021: Curiosity and Rituals of the Everyday* (Western Australia, 2021).

She conceptualised and led an online curatorial workshop, 'Once Upon a Cultural Famine: A Curatorial Thought Experiment', for the Kochi Biennale Foundation (2021). Adajania was the juror for the Video/Film/New Media fellowship cycle of the Akademie Schloss Solitude (2015-2017). During 2013/2014, she taught the curatorial practice course at the Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts. She was joint artistic director of the 9th Gwangju Biennale, 2012.

## About Emami Art

Emami Art, one of the most significant art institutions in the eastern part of India, is a key space for cultural production in the region. The organisation is focused on a future-forward, complex, multi-dimensional approach and steadfast in the advocacy of emerging, mid-career and established artists as well as an engagement with contemporary and historical material. The gallery aims to create dynamic, wide-ranging registers of exhibition-making and viewing.

In addition to hosting exhibitions, participating in art fairs and events of national and international import, Emami Art has a diverse parallel programming. With a focus on engagement with the region and beyond through continuous short and long-term projects, Emami Art has launched *EA Locus in Focus*, *EA Co-labs (Collaborative Programme)*, *EA Initiative (Public art endeavors)* and *EA Hybrid* which integrates both the physical and virtual interfaces. Other programs include *EA Incubator* that comprises of mentorship programs, workshops, residency opportunities and innovative educational activities that facilitate artistic development, help build networks of collaboration and provide a supportive environment for emerging talent. As a centre of excellence, Emami Art wishes to be identified as a platform rather than just a facility.

Critical discourses, interactions, documentation and exchange are also essential to our agenda. Under the umbrella of *EA Discourse*, we are committed to developing and producing original writing, artist's books, monographs, periodicals and catalogues that will focus on artistic, creative and pedagogical materials. Furthermore, the *EA Communicator* lineup of talks, seminars, panel discussions and conversations with artists, curators and key partners provides a space for critical engagement as part of our knowledge-making and archiving process.

Deeply committed to promoting a regional, national and international agenda through innovative and alternative programming, emphasis on community and socially relevant engagements, institutional partnerships and more via a multi-year vision for the future, Emami Art is resolute to be a catalyst of change, research, innovation and inclusivity.



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