



## Emami Art

Presents

### The Dark Edge of Green

#### Arunima Choudhury Works 1995-2022

Curated by Nancy Adajania

**Kolkata, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2022:** Emami Art is honoured to host the exhibition ‘**The Dark Edge of Green,**’ a retrospective-scale exhibition of Arunima Choudhury, recognized as one of the most important contemporary artists from Bengal. Curated by Nancy Adajania, the exhibition aims to shed light on Arunima Choudhury’s practice through her restless experimentation across various mediums including watercolour, acrylic, enamel painting, ceramics, as well as eco-prints on cotton and rice paper. The exhibition will be on view from 19<sup>th</sup> June – 20<sup>th</sup> August 2022, from 11:00 am – 6:00 pm on the ground floor at Emami Art. The show will be open to all.

‘The Dark Edge of Green’ embraces almost three decades of Arunima Choudhury’s practice from 1995 to the present. The exhibition explores the artist’s preoccupation with the female energy that animates both the social sphere and the natural world, as expressed through her protagonists, who transit between the realms of daily experience and mythic archetype.

“I have structured this exhibition around two stories – an artist memoir written in 1999 and a recent family anecdote. To re-animate Arunima-di’s childhood memory of finding her classmate Bina Das’ body in the mora-kata-ghor or autopsy cell in Siliguri, we have specially created a cell-like installation that breaks into sharp angles at strategic points. While the memoir invokes fear and forbidden desire, among other turbulent emotions, it also proposes a cathartic means of overcoming fear, which is weaponized by the patriarchy to ‘show women their place’ in society. The accompanying selection of watercolours, ‘Beastly Games and Other Love Stories’ (2008-2010), does not illustrate the memoir. Instead, it functions as a testament to Arunima-di’s irrepressible subconscious and her transgressive energy, which re-wilds women, trees and tigers in equal measure. The second story is an exchange between the artist and her granddaughter about the ethics of mending and repairing the planet by living in a mindful manner. It is nestled in a series of eco-prints on cotton and on rice paper. Luminous but no less edgy, these sombre impressions of leaves – guava, neem, lotus and rose – are as much psychological portraiture achieved through Rorschach twinning, as they are a meditation on slow time and interspecies hospitality.” **says prominent curator and cultural theorist, Nancy Adajania.**

“I am extremely elated to announce the opening of our exhibition “The Dark Edge of Green” by Arunima Choudhury which is one of our thought-provoking shows. I have been long fascinated with her works as they are deeply ingrained into the rich vernacular traditions of Bengal and unique in style. The most fascinating part lies in her handmade botanic colours which outlines her works and her artistic creation. Curated by the well-known curator, art critic and writer Nancy Adajania, this exhibition will be a wonderful opportunity for art lovers in the city to come and visit the series of works by the talented artist whose words speaks through her paintings” says **Richa Agarwal, CEO Emami Art.**

**About Arunima Choudhury:**

Arunima Chowdhury 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 Chowdhury's artworks, in their effortless, 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, Chowdhury'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 Chowdhury'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 Chowdhury'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.

**About Nancy Adajania:**

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. 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. Emami Art, Kolkata Centre for Creativity 777 Anandapur off EM Bypass.

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