

Press Release

Exhibition Title: **The Bird that Sings Within: An Exhibition of Textile by Ajit Kumar Das**

Dates: **January 10 – February 28, 2025**

Venue: **Emami Art, 1st Floor Gallery, KCC**

Presented by Emami Art

Exhibition Overview

The exhibition of one of India's foremost natural dye artists brings together some of his brilliant hand-painted recent natural dye fabric works, most of which the artist has not shown before. With a career spanning more than fifty years, Ajit Kumar Das creates works characterized by his love for nature – flowers, plants and birds – and his extraordinary skill, experiments and understanding of the medium of natural dye, enhanced, modified and refined by his decades-long working experience in the Weaver's Service Centre (WSC) in Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Hyderabad and Kolkata. His works greatly admired by luminaries like Haku Shah, Riten Mozumdar and craft revivalist Martand Singh show a delicate blending of professional craftsmanship and refined artistic visions.

Centred around the theme of nature, the exhibition speaks of the relevance of beauty in today's prosaic worlds, the aesthetics of artistic craftsmanship and ecological ethics.

About the Artist

Ajit Kumar Das was born in 1957 in Tripura to a traditional washer family who worked for the royal family of Maharaja Udaymanikya. He came to West Bengal around 1972 and started his first job in a block printing unit in Srerampore in 1976. In 1980, he joined the Weaver's Service Centre (WSC), where he worked as a master craftsman at WSC for many years in Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Hyderabad, and Kolkata, until his retirement from his service in 2017.

He has been the subject of many solo exhibitions, including the one at Nandan Art Gallery (Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan, 1993); 'The Cloth is Canvas' at Eicher Art Gallery (New Delhi, 1997), 'Colours of Nature' at ICCR (Kolkata, 2014), and many more. During his WSC years, he participated in numerous group shows and major historical exhibitions, such as the Vishwakarma (London, 1982), Sweden Festival (1986), Animals (New Delhi, 1990s), all of them curated by legendary craft revivalist Martand Singh, and India Festival by Handicrafts & Handlooms Exports Corporation of India Limited (Gallery Lafayette, France, 1994).

He received many awards and honours, notably the Government of India's National Award in 1987 and the Kalamani Award in 1993. His works are part of significant international collections, including the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Sarabhai Foundation, India; Crafts Museum, India; and the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada.

Ajit Kumar Das lives and works in Kolkata.

Quote by Richa Agarwal

"Ajit Kumar Das's *The Bird That Sings Within* celebrates his mastery of natural dye, a medium he has elevated into a profound and innovative form of creative expression. Recognized as one of the foremost artists in this field, Das integrates exceptional artisanal skill with a refined artistic sensibility and a deep connection to nature. At Emami Art, we are dedicated to championing diverse artistic practices, ranging from painting and sculpture to performance, photography, and new media. This commitment extends to significant design and textile exhibitions, including our landmark showcase of the legendary Riten Mozumdar in 2022. Through archival documents, rare photographs, and a symposium on his practice, we place Ajit Kumar Das's work within a meaningful historical and cultural context. This exhibition offers inspiration and insight for art enthusiasts, students, and scholars, and we believe it is a journey worth revisiting time and again."

(says Richa Agarwal, CEO, Emami Art)

About Emami Art

Emami Art is a prominent contemporary art gallery and cultural production space located on the ground floor of the Kolkata Centre for Creativity's Green Building. Established in 2017, it adopts a forward-looking, multi-dimensional approach that reflects South Asia's history, socio-cultural, and geo-political narratives. Emami Art operates within an inclusive framework where profitability supports sustainable resource regeneration and public service.

The gallery features a dynamic program of curated exhibitions, ranging from large-scale presentations to more intimate displays. It actively participates in both national and international events and art fairs. Emami Art represents a wide spectrum of contemporary artists, including emerging, mid-career, and established talents, with a special emphasis on the East and North Eastern regions of India. Several of its artists' works are featured in prominent national and international collections, including public foundations and museums.

A key initiative is the annual Emami Art Experimental Film Festival, which provides a platform for alternative and experimental filmmaking, video art, and moving image practices. This festival brings together internationally acclaimed artists and filmmakers alongside recent critical productions from India.

Through short- and long-term projects, Emami Art supports the local and regional arts community by offering regular mentorship programs, workshops, residency opportunities, and innovative educational activities. These initiatives foster artistic development, build collaborative networks, and provide a supportive environment for emerging talent. The gallery also organizes regular talks, seminars, panel discussions, and conversations with artists, curators, and key partners, creating a space for critical engagement.

Committed to promoting a regional, national, and international agenda, Emami Art emphasizes community engagement, socially relevant initiatives, and institutional partnerships. With a multi-year vision for the future, it continues to be a catalyst for change, research, innovation, and inclusivity.

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Place: Kolkata