

Ruma Choudhury

Portfolio



Ruma Choudhury, a contemporary artist and independent researcher based in Santiniketan, India, hails from Birbhum, the land of red soil – and as a result, has always been surrounded by and inspired deeply by nature. Her artistic practice involves collecting and documenting the minute details of nature which may or may not be tangible or visible in everyday life. She gathers natural materials which are generally considered waste – natural fibres discarded after human use, rain water, tree bark, stones, skin of insects and animals, nests, dry flowers, and so on – and creates her works using the various possibilities this collected matter provides. She resonates the personal memories of loss in her life with this process of collecting and documenting lost identities.



Watch the artist discuss her practice



Choudhury has adopted nature as her source to narrate how it is getting depleted as a result of human greed. She then constructs these archives of found materials into an abstract narration – thus communicating and responding to them. Having studied Painting at Kala Bhavan, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, Ruma Choudhury has replaced industrially-made paper with organic paper that she makes herself, in her works. Paper, for her, is not only a medium on which she creates; but also a work of art itself.



Watch the artist discuss her process





The artist collecting grass to be used as the base of her paper-making practice



In her artistic practice, Choudhury has successfully extracted 34 different fibres from various sources to construct the material base for her work. This meticulous process not only elevates these seemingly mundane materials to the realm of art but also underscores the interconnectedness between her practice and the natural surroundings of Santiniketan.



"I collect materials from the land and in order to hold on to their memories I store them. I have been doing this as long as I remember, from the time when I had tiny fingers. I pick up feathers, butterflies, skeletal remains, thorns, shredded skins, beehives, bird nests...whatever once held a life, had an identity. I find them and give them a home in my library of found objects."

Collected matter from Ruma Choudhury's archive





Extracted natural fibres:
straw, sugarcane, tussar silk, banana,
bamboo, bark of fig, bark of ramie,
screw pine, mixed grass, jute, cotton,
canna indica

"Life is complex. Throughout its journey, relationships grow their roots. Somehow, I find this metaphor in the knit of my fibres. I make art from fibres, and give birth to my creative imagination by binding the fibres. My bare hands are enough to build the bond – the purest one with no fallacy, no self obsession, and no sense of insecurity."



Cotton fibre dyed in natural dyes extracted from:

- Manjishtha (*Rubia cordifolia*, commonly known as Indian madder)
- Khoir (*Acacia catechu*)
- Aamloki (*Phyllanthus emblica*, commonly known as Indian gooseberry)
- Baabla (*Acacia nilotica*, commonly known as gum arabic)
- Indigo
- Onion
- Lotus



Ruma Choudhury's artistic practice is deeply influenced by the natural rhythms of the river Ajay, a rain-fed river that flows through the Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. The river connects Choudhury's childhood hometown in Dubrajpur, and her current place of residence in Santiniketan – both in Birbhum, West Bengal. Incorporating a bird's eye view of the land, this work traces the journey of the river, mirroring Choudhury's own life trajectory and the memories she has associated with the river over the years. The cotton threads represent the artist's memories. The natural fibres used in this work are prepared using water from the river itself – the Ajay river thus becomes a medium as well as a source of inspiration.

River Ajay: Waves of Floating Memories
Lokta fibre, cotton fibre, wood pulp, indigo dye,
catechu, and cotton thread
2025-2026, Santiniketan



Installation view

River Ajay: Waves of Floating Memories

Lokta fibre, cotton fibre, wood pulp,
indigo dye, catechu, and cotton thread
2025-2026, Santiniketan



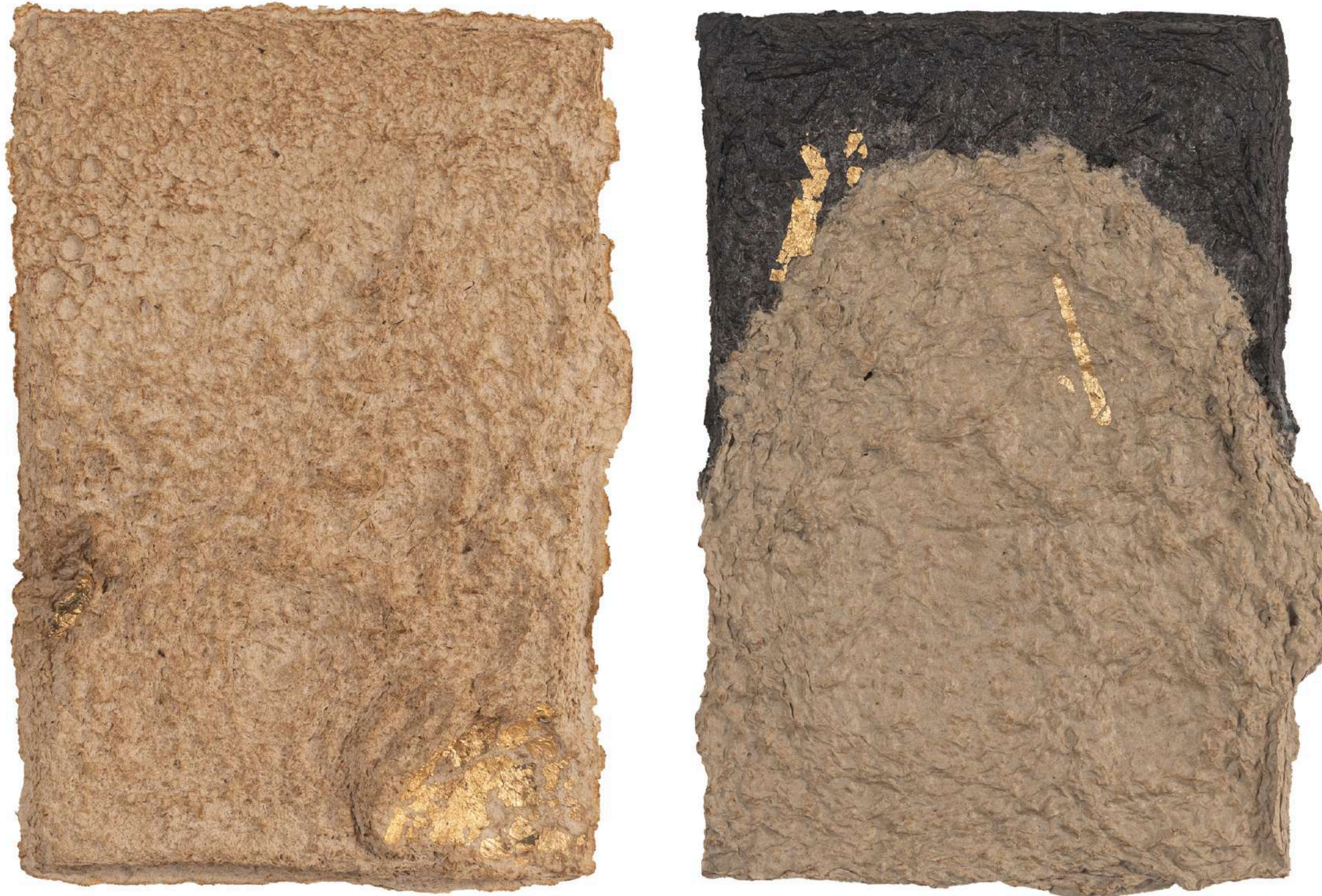
A pivotal moment in Ruma Choudhury's experimentation in making paper occurred when she left a freshly made handmade paper in the rain. The raindrops, in their dance with the paper, created a mesmerizing texture, enhancing the bind quality and revealing a collaboration between the fibres and the rain. This set of works too are created thus. Here, the rain assumes a triple role, serving as the medium, the subject, and the documentation. The paper becomes a living record, documenting the intricate patterns, forms, and textures crafted by the raindrops.

Droplets from the Sky II

Tussar fibre, fig fibre, Lokta fibre, banana fibre, and wood pulp

Overall dimension variable

2025-2026, Santiniketan

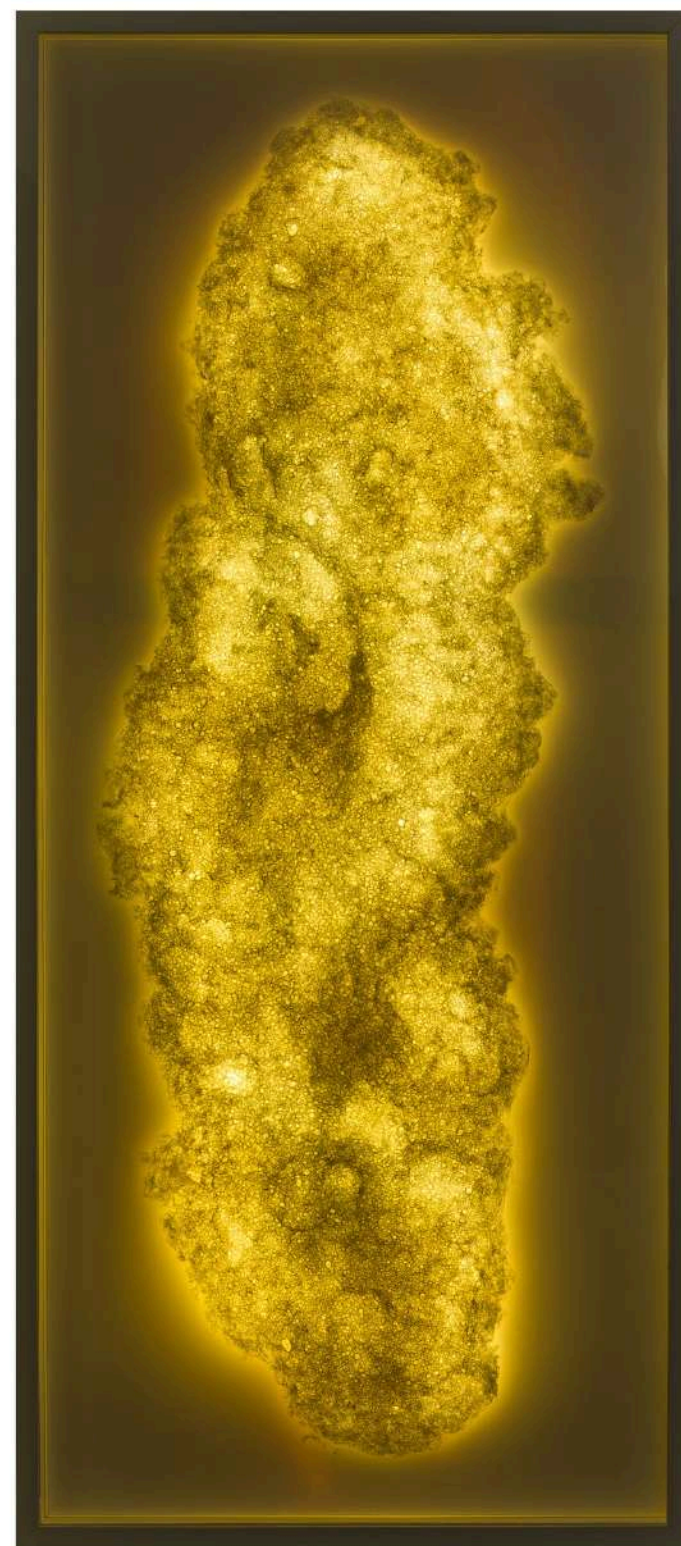


Ruma Chowdhury works creatively in paper pulp. Instead of using paper as a pictorial plane, she uses it as an absorbent surface that carries the impression of other surfaces, environmental situations, and foreign objects. The separate paper panels are like the body of a vast landscape, revealing her experience of rural lands in and around Santiniketan, where she lives and works. This work draws inspiration from the marks left on relatively hard surfaces by continuously falling or flowing water.

Impressions of Water I
Straw fibre, waste paper, wood charcoal and gold leaves
Overall dimension variable
2025-2026, Santiniketan



Without light



With light

This set of both-sided work by Ruma Choudhury incorporates raindrops and stands as a harmonious commitment between art and nature, where the elements collaborate to create a narrative that transcends human intervention. The paper becomes a living record of the intricate patterns, forms, and textures crafted by the raindrops.

Cloud VI
Lokta fibre and wood pulp in lightbox
60 5/8 x 21 7/8 in.
2025, Santiniketan

নীল জমি by Ruma Choudhury draws inspiration from the abandoned indigo plantations that are found along the borders of Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal in India. These farms, now non-operational, still have indigo plants growing on them sometimes. Choudhury dyes the different natural fibres – Lokta, cotton, straw, and sugarcane – in indigo and records how each fibre responds to and holds the dye.

নীলজমি I (*Blue Land I*) [Series: নীলজমি (*Blue Land*)]
Straw fibre, sugarcane fibre, Lokta fibre, cotton
fibre, indigo, catechu, bamboo sticks, cane sticks,
and gold leaves
2025-2026, Santiniketan





Installation view

নীল জমি I (*Blue Land I*)

Straw fibre, sugarcane fibre, Lokta fibre, cotton
fibre, indigo, catechu, bamboo sticks, cane
sticks, and gold leaves

2025-2026, Santiniketan



Paper, for Ruma Choudhury, is not only a medium on which she creates; but also a work of art itself. Inspired deeply by nature, she gathers natural materials and creates her works using the various possibilities this collected matter provides. This work uses wild grass collected from around Birbhum, the land of red soil – the place she hails from and as a result, has always been surrounded by and inspired deeply by nature.

Wild Grass III (Series: Wild Grass)
Burnt wild grass on paper made of
sugarcane fibre
Overall dimension variable
2025-2026, Santiniketan



Installation view

Wild Grass III (Series: *Wild Grass*)

Burnt wild grass on paper made of sugarcane fibre

Overall dimension variable

2025-2026, Santiniketan

Ruma Chowdhury works creatively in paper pulp. Instead of using paper as a pictorial plane, she uses it as an absorbent surface that carries the impression of other surfaces, environmental situations, and foreign objects. The separate paper panels are like the body of a vast landscape, revealing her experience of rural lands in and around Santiniketan, where she lives and works. This work draws inspiration from the marks left on relatively hard surfaces by continuously falling or flowing water.

*Impressions of Water II (Series:
Impressions of Water)*
Lokta fibre, sugarcane fibre dyed in
indigo, waste paper and gold leaves
2025-2026, Santiniketan





Installation view



River Ajay: The Journey of Autumn (Series: River Ajay)
Indigo dye on handmade paper made of banana fibre, Lokta fibre, and sugarcane fibre
2025, Santiniketan

Ruma Choudhury's artistic practice is deeply influenced by the natural rhythms of River Ajay, a rain-fed river of Eastern India which flows near Santiniketan, where the artist lives and works, mirroring its ebbs and flows. The river's cycles of flood and drought, and its impact on the surrounding landscape and people, resonate with the highs and lows of the artist's own life. After monsoon comes Autumn – the turmoil subsides, peace prevails, and the river Ajay emerges with a new personality. Its course and rhythm change. A part of the riverbank is submerged under water while another rises from beneath. The river flows nonchalantly over what once was a tradeable sandy trail. The indigo autumn sky carrying fluffy white clouds, inspires one to look far, to look deep. It represents the peace that nature achieves after her bout with monsoon, just like the peace that occupies a mind after a struggle to accept adversity.

Detail

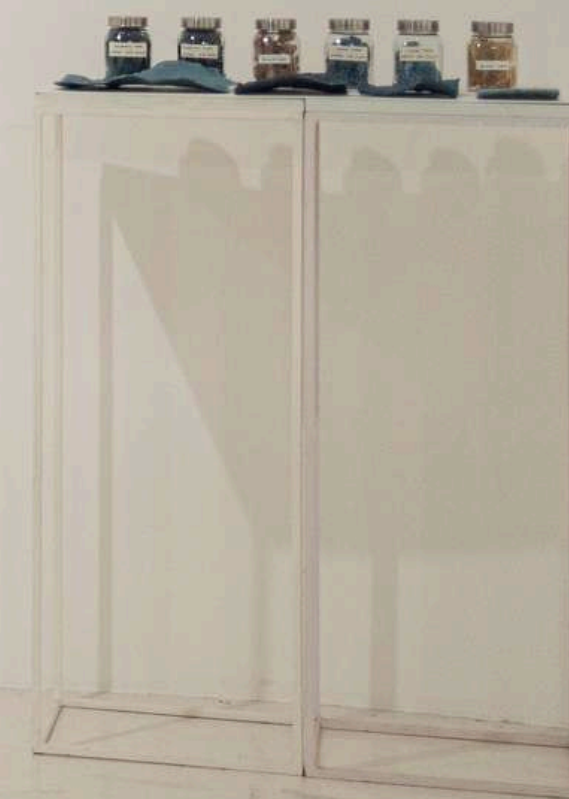
***River Ajay: The Journey of Autumn* (Series: River Ajay)**

Indigo dye on handmade paper made of banana fibre, Lokta fibre, and sugarcane fibre

Polyptych

2025, Santiniketan





Installation view

Convergences: A Shared Ground - Lineages, Practices, Futures

A Satellite Exhibition to the 7th Edition of KCC's Annual Symposium, **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**

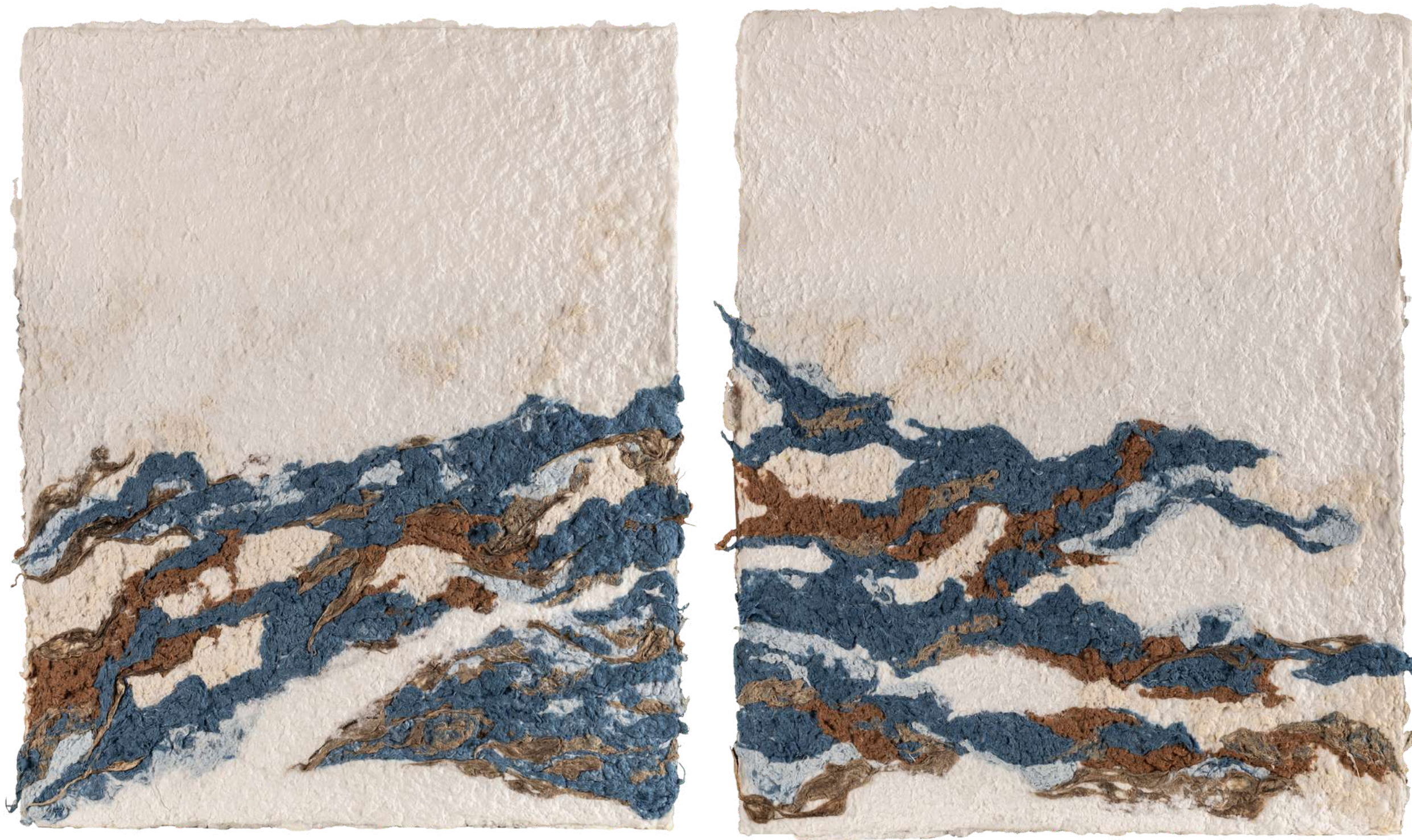
2026, Emami Art



In this work, Ruma Choudhury has replaced industrially-made paper with Ramie, Lokta, and Tussar silk fibre that she prepares herself alongside natural colours derived from organic sources.



Birbhum Landscape: Up in the Air II (Series: Birbhum Landscape: Up in the Air)
Tussar silk fibre, Ramie fibre, Lokta fibre, handmade natural colour, and ink
85 3/8 x 37 3/4 in.
2025, Santiniketan



Birbhum Landscape

Cotton fibre, Tussar silk fibre, and cotton fibre dyed
with indigo and catechu on handmade paper

Overall dimension variable

A: 22 x 19 1/8 in. (56 x 48.5 cm.)

B: 22 1/4 x 18 1/2 (56.5 x 47 cm.)

Set of 2 works

2025, Santiniketan



Detail

Birbhum Landscape

Cotton fibre, Tussar silk fibre, and cotton fibre dyed
with indigo and catechu on handmade paper

Overall dimension variable

A: 22 x 19 1/8 in. (56 x 48.5 cm.)

B: 22 1/4 x 18 1/2 (56.5 x 47 cm.)

Set of 2 works

2025, Santiniketan

River Ajay: Proticchobi

Cotton fibre and Tussar silk fibre on handmade paper

Overall dimension variable

A: 23 1/4 x 19 1/4 in. (59 x 49 cm.)

B: 23 1/4 x 19 1/8 in. (59 x 48.5 cm.)

Set of 2 works

2025, Santiniketan





Mycorrhizal by Ruma Choudhury refers to the symbiotic association between a fungus and a plant, in which the fungus helps the plant absorb water and nutrients while the plant provides the fungus with carbon from photosynthesis.

***Mycorrhizal II* (Series: Mycorrhizal)**
Straw fibre, and handmade paper
87 x 40 1/2 in. (221 x 103 cm.)
2025, Santiniketan





Birbhum Landscape: Up in the Air I (Series: Birbhum Landscape: Up in the Air)
Ramie fibre, Lokta fibre, handmade natural colour, and ink
77 1/8 x 41 7/8 in.
2025, Santiniketan



Bihar Landscape (Burning Land)
Cotton fibre, cane of kans grass
(*Saccharum spontaneum*), gold leaves,
found object, and burnt wood
11.5 x 6.5 ft
Set of 4 works
2025, Santineketan



Bihar Landscape (Burning Land)

Cotton fibre, cane of kans grass (*Saccharum spontaneum*), gold leaves, found object, and burnt wood

11.5 x 6.5 ft

Set of 4 works

2025, Santineketan





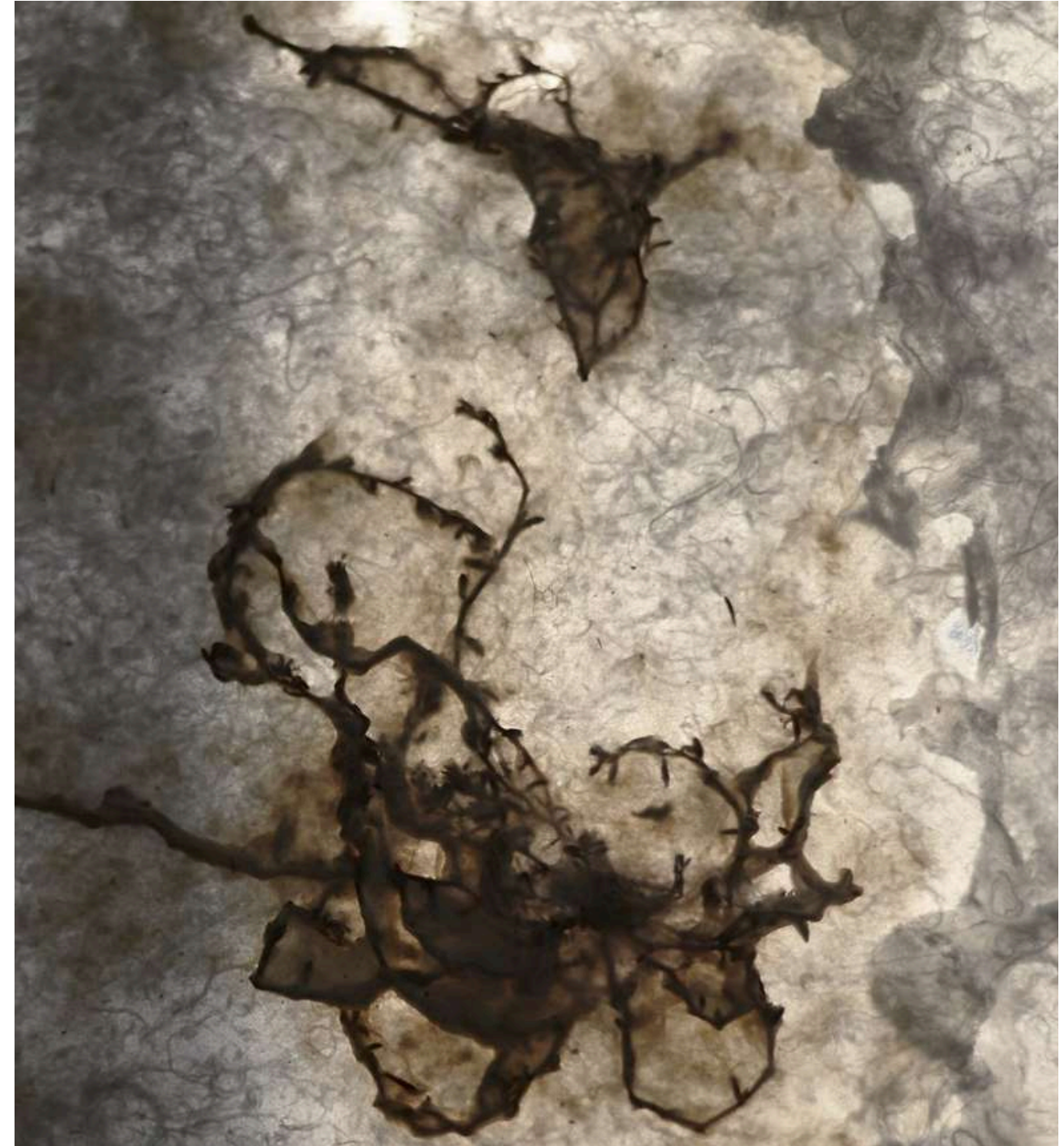
Work in progress

Memory of the Rural Landscape | Cotton fibre, Ramie fibre, gold leaves, greens, found objects, and natural colour, Set of 50 works, 2025, Siwan



Detail

Memory of the Rural Landscape
Cotton fibre, Ramie fibre, gold leaves, greens, found objects, and natural
colour
Set of 50 works
2025, Siwan



Detail

Memory of the Rural Landscape
 Cotton fibre, Ramie fibre, gold leaves, greens,
 found objects, and natural colour
 Set of 50 works
 2025, Siwan



Bihar Landscape (Burning Land)
Straw, found objects and burnt straw
12.8 x 6.6 ft
Set of 4 works
2025, Santinektan



Detail

Bihar Landscape (Burning Land)
Straw, found objects and burnt straw
12.8 x 6.6 ft
Set of 4 works
2025, Santinektan

Birbhum Landscape Project

“Hailing from Santiniketan, Birbhum, West Bengal—a place steeped in the legacy of visionaries like Rabindranath Tagore, Ramkinkar Baij, and Benode Behari Mukherjee—I find myself immersed in the essence of a small suburban town where agriculture forms the backbone of the community's livelihood.

Santiniketan, known for its arid landscapes, is characterised by the dry expanse of the Khoai and the vital presence of the Kopai river. This confluence of river and land serves not only as my artistic muse but as an intrinsic part of my existence. In the footsteps of artistic pioneers like Ramkinkar and Benodebehari, who utilized the very earth of Birbhum as their canvas, I too have sought inspiration in this unique synergy.

The land, with its red soil, not only influences my color palette but also serves as a primary art material. The rich hues extracted from the earth become an integral part of my artistic expression, forging a direct link between my work and the geographic characteristics of Santiniketan.”



Ruma Chowdhury works creatively in paper pulp. Instead of using paper as a pictorial plane, she uses it as an absorbent surface that carries the impression of other surfaces, environmental situations, and foreign objects like stuck wooden reeds. The separate paper panels are like the body of a vast landscape, revealing her experience of rural lands in and around Santiniketan, where she lives and works.



Birbhum Landscape

Straw, sugarcane, wood fibre, cane of kans grass, found objects and charcoal

Overall installation dimension: 80 x 308 x 2 in.

Set of 7 works

2021-2024, Santiniketan



Ruma Choudhury working on ***Birbhum Landscape***

Detail

Birbhum Landscape

Straw, sugarcane, wood fibre, cane of kans grass, found objects and charcoal

Overall installation dimension:

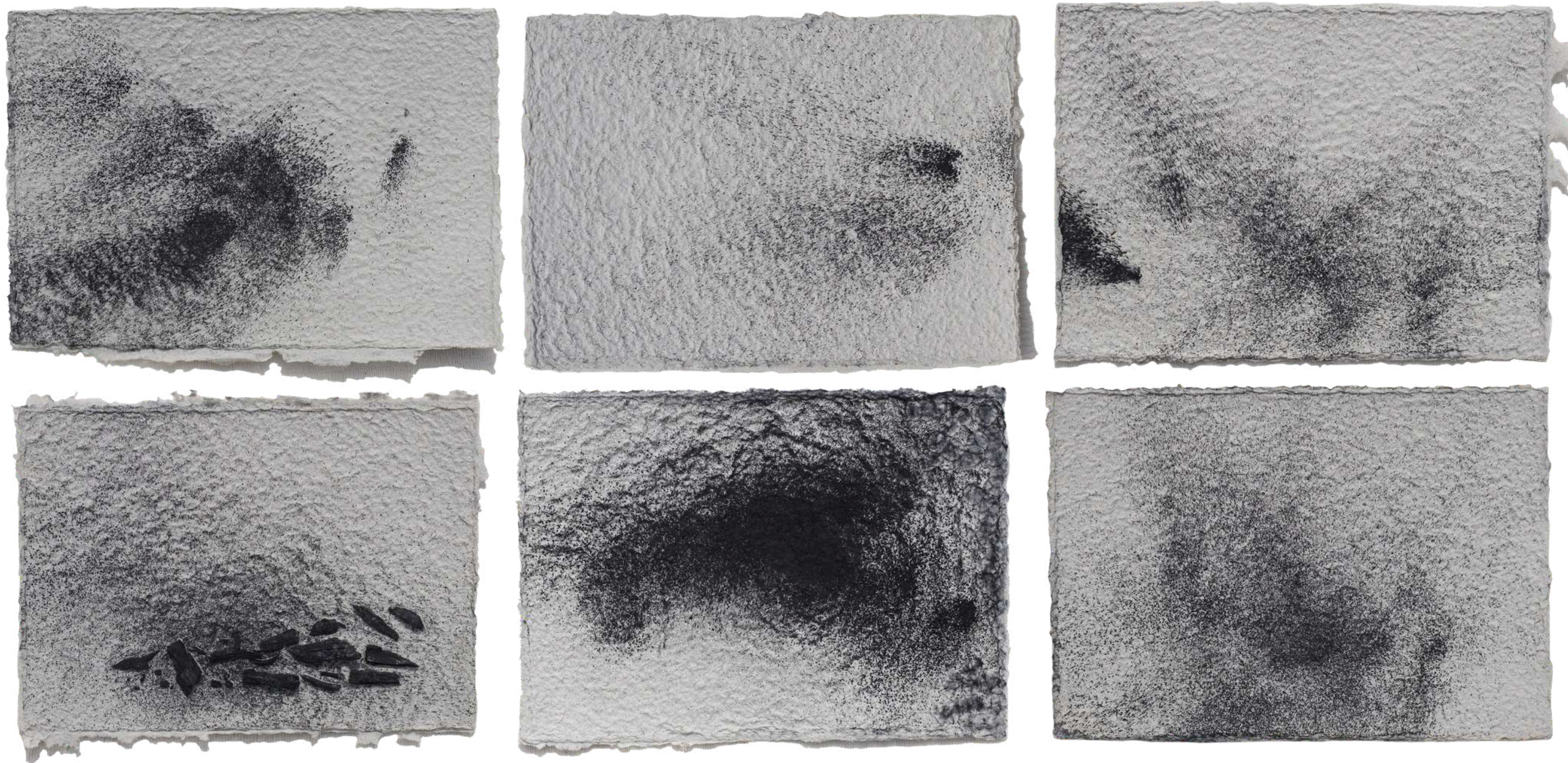
80 x 308 x 2 in.

Set of 7 works

2021-2024



Installation view
There are Tides in the Body: Indo-Swiss Group Exhibition
Curated by Damian Christinger
2025, Emami Art



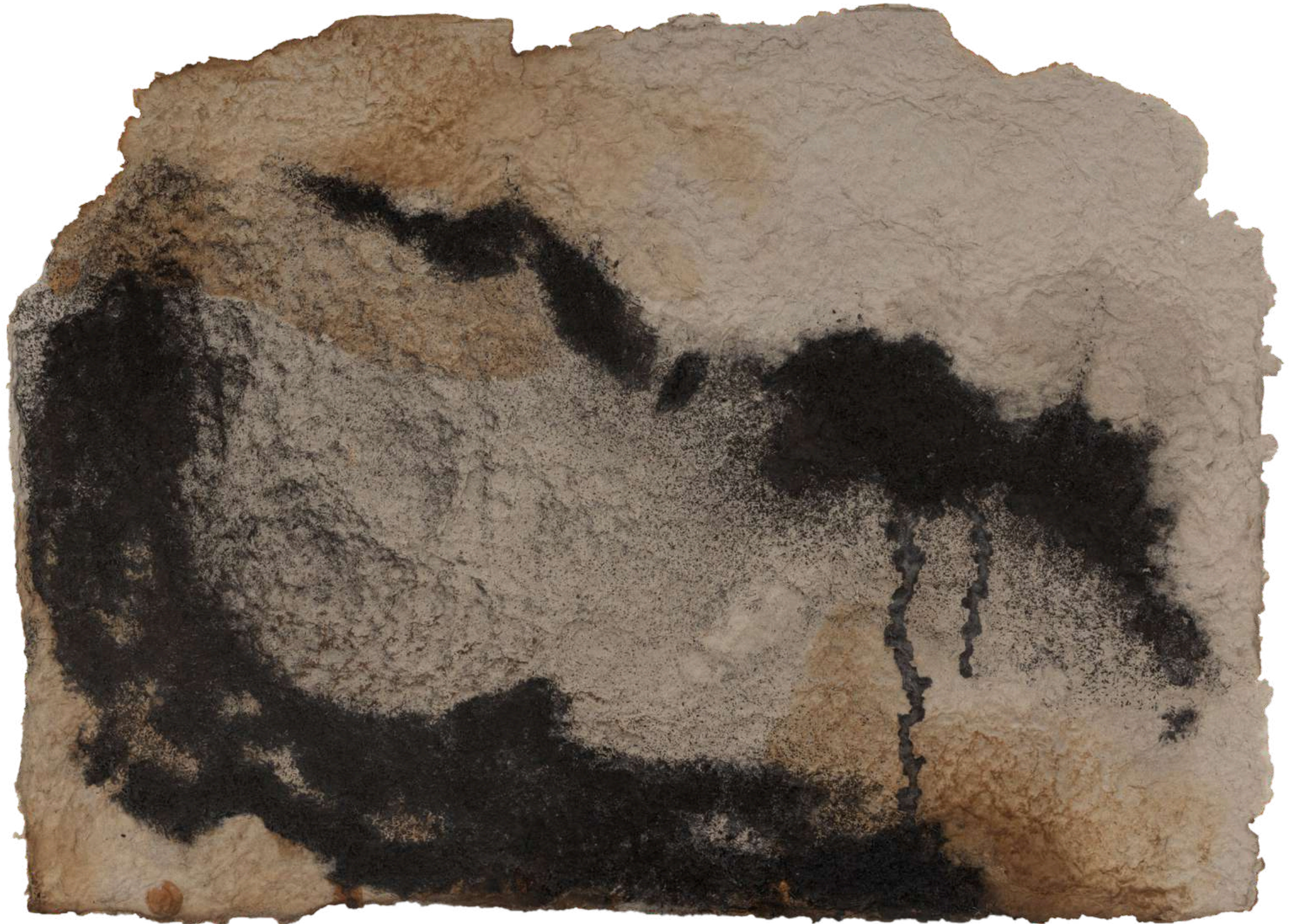
Birbhum Landscape
12x 10 inches
Set of 6 works
2024



Birbhum Landscape V (Series: Birbhum Landscape)
Cotton, natural colour, burnt wood and found object
10.2 x 18.1 in. approx.
2024, Santiniketan

Birbhum Landscape II (Series: Birbhum Landscape)
Cotton, natural colour, burnt wood and found object
14.56 x 20.78 in. approx.
2024, Santiniketan

Ruma Choudhary creates her landscape work using paper pulp, a medium which carries impressions and often objects in its body. Her work explores the aspect of the medium, treating the landscape itself as a body, a physical site of deposition and sedimentation. Her works' natural materials give a unique sense of materiality.



Monsoon Project

"The Monsoon Project is a testament to the symbiotic relationship between art and nature. One pivotal moment in this exploration occurred when I left a freshly made handmade paper in the rain. The raindrops, in their dance with the paper, created a mesmerizing texture, enhancing the bind quality and revealing a collaborative masterpiece between the fibers and rain.

Here, the rain assumes a triple role—serving as the medium, the subject, and the documentation. The paper becomes a living record, a documentation of the intricate patterns, forms, and textures crafted by the raindrops.

The materials used in this particular series include the pulps of straw, cotton, and sugarcane. The touch of the first pulp resembles wet clay, malleable and soft. Unlike traditional molding, in my process, it is the rain that shapes the paper. The initial raindrops create a texture on the soil—a texture that subsequent rains cannot replicate. The meeting points of rain and dry soil in my work mirror the textured beauty created by the first rain in the Birbhum landscape, resonating with the very essence of the land."

Detail





Birbhum Landscape, Monsoon Project
Straw fibre and cane of kans grass
29x 19 in.
Set of 3 works
2022, Santiniketan
In private collection



"A second layer of inspiration is drawn from the mud homes of the Adivasis, the indigenous people of Birbhum. As my art delves into the rural life of Rarh Bengal, the Adivasis and their traditional mud homes become a source of influence. These artisans, who construct their homes with mud and thatch roofs with straw, are artists in their own right. The first rain touching the eroded walls of these mud homes generates a unique texture—an art form shaped by rain, wind, and insects. My work mirrors this process, showcasing the captivating textures and forms bestowed upon it by nature.

The Monsoon Project thus stands as a harmonious commitment between art and nature, where the elements collaborate to create a narrative that transcends human intervention. It is a celebration of the artistry inherent in the raindrops and the textured poetry etched by the elements, embodying the profound connection between my work and the ever-evolving canvas of nature."

Birbhum Landscape, Monsoon Project
Straw fiber
18 x 17 in.
2022, Santiniketan



Ajay Nadi

"The rivers in India are symbols of motherhood. There are ebbs and flows, highs and lows, floods and droughts. River Ajay is no different. My life has been like her flow. My works have always been inspired by nature. This river forms an integral part of the co-existence of natural elements for this region of Santiniketan, Birbhum.

The river has been my source of inspiration and astonishingly it has been my life. I can relate my life with the winding course of the Ajay. It not only influences me but also the neighboring landscape and the people around it. During the floods, life in the adjoining villages are affected. The villagers face difficulties and their livelihoods also dwindle. Displacement from their homes inflict pain and suffering. Similarly, in my life, the highs and lows affect and influence my practice. Periods of overwhelming crisis and surplus are reflected on the art pieces I create. When the tides subside, there lies the land where again the villagers try to get back to their normal lives."

Ajay Nadi

Kans grass, banana fibre, cotton and Ramie fibre

81 x 46 in. each

Set of 2 works

2023-24, Santiniketan



Detail

Ajay Nadi

Kans grass, banana fibre, cotton and Ramie fibre

81 x 46 in. each

Set of 2 works

2023-24, Santiniketan

The ingredients gathered for this piece have been collected from the Ajay river in one way or the other. The collection includes kans grass that grows along the banks of the river Ajay, banana fibre collected from the village site. Apart from this, the work also holds within it cotton and ramie fibres.



Detail

Birbhum Landscape, Monsoon Project

Straw fibre

16 X 11 X 3 in.

2021, Santiniketan



Detail

Birbhum Landscape, Monsoon Project
Wood fibre
13 X 9 X 2 in.
2021, Santiniketan



Detail

Birbhum Landscape, Monsoon Project

Straw fibre

13.5 X 9.5 X 2 in.

2021, Santiniketan



This series of works were conceived during the second lockdown period, when the images of the wrapped dead bodies found on river beds, road corners etc. became an everyday news. I responded to the action of wrapping the body with layers of materials which snatched the identifying element from the dead person, by wrapping the dead parts of objects collected from nature as an everyday routine during the lock-down phase. For me, nature is as precious as a human life.

Through this series, I wanted to question how easily we take nature for granted and forget that we are surviving because of its presence. Though the action of wrapping in the case of covid was to discard the human body, here on contrary the layers of pulp is used to preserve the natural objects.

Wrapped Bodies

**Straw, sugarcane, ramie fiber, cane of kans grees,
found objects**

12 x 8 in.

2022, Santiniketan



Wrapped Bodies I
Ramie fibre, found objects, and natural colour
18.5 x 24.5 x 4.3 in.
2022, Santiniketan



Wrapped Bodies II | Ramie fiber, cane of kans grass, found objects, and natural colour, 8 x 8 inch each, set of 9 works, 2022, Santiniketan

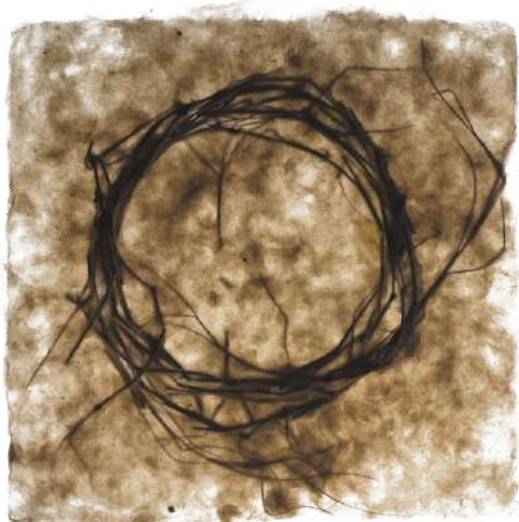


Wrapped Bodies

Straw, sugarcane, ramie fiber, cane of kans grass, found objects

8 x 18 inch

2022, Santiniketan



Wrapped Bodies II
Ramie fibre, cane of kans grass, found objects, and natural colour
8 x 8 in. each
Set of 9 works
2022, Santiniketan



Born in 1990 in Birbhum, West Bengal, **Ruma Choudhury** completed her BFA and MFA in Painting from Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, in 2014 and 2016 respectively.

Her debut solo is *Elemental Encounters: Practice as Ecological Archive* presented by Emami Art, Kolkata in 2026. She has been part of several exhibitions including *Convergences: A Shared Ground — Lineages, Practices, Futures*, Emami Art, Kolkata, 2026; *Material as Metaphors: A Dialogue of Art Forms*, National Gallery of Modern Art, Kolkata, 2025; *There are Tides in the Body: Indo-Swiss Group Exhibition*, Emami Art, Kolkata, 2024; *All That is Hidden: Mapping Departures in Landscape, Terrains and Geographies*, Emami Art, Kolkata, 2024; *Departure*, Ganges Art Gallery, Kolkata, 2020; Kolkata Festival, Calcutta Pavlov Hospital in collaboration with CIMA Art Awards 2019; *Inside the Fibre*, Artsacre Foundation, Kolkata, 2019; *Raconteur*, A.M. (Art Multi-disciplines) Studio, Kolkata, 2018; *Images and Impressions: Profile and Persona of Pranab Mukherjee*, Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, 2017; *I am*, A.M. Studio, Kolkata, 2017. Her featured solo performances include *h-airy strokes* at Gallery Onkaf, New Delhi and *Multi Hues* at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 2018.

Ruma Choudhury was selected for the Arthshila x Anant Foundation for the Arts Residency at Parivartan, Siwan, 2025. She is the recipient of JK Paper Award for the Arts: Propositions in Paper – Honourable Mention presented by Anant Foundation for the Arts in partnership with JK Paper and Arthshila Trust, 2025; the India Artist Relief Fund, MAP in partnership with 1 Santhiroad, 2021; Musui Art Foundation scholarship, 2020; Best Painting Award, Academy of Fine Arts Award, Kolkata, 2016; and the National Scholarship, Government of India, 2015-16.

She is currently working as an independent researcher and has conducted paper-making workshops with Suchana Foundation in 2020 and Arts Acre Foundation, Kolkata in 2019. She was also a part of Barbil Art Project III organized by Utsha and Arys, Odisha and has conducted a paper-making workshop in the project curated by Ushmita Sahu in 2017.

Ruma Choudhury currently lives and works in Santiniketan.

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.

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.

