

## Debashish Paul

Portfolio of selected works  
2020-2024

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- Durational Performance : Videos & Photographs
- Drawings
- Wearable Sculpture
- Performative/Staged photography
- Observational Photography

*Body as a landscape;*  
*Body in a Landscape*  
Performance still  
2021-22



## Artist Statement

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My artistic journey is deeply rooted in the exploration of identity, particularly through the lens of queer narratives and expressions. Growing up in a society that often marginalizes and misunderstands queer identities, I found solace and power in art. My practice is a means to unveil the body, challenge societal norms, and create new references for queer identities. Working primarily with performance, sculptural costumes, and multimedia art, I seek to express the complex layers of identity, emotion, and desire. My performances often involve elaborately designed costumes that act as a second skin, revealing an internal landscape that negotiates identity within a heteronormative framework. These costumes are not just adornments but integral parts of my narrative, each piece crafted to tell a story of transformation, struggle, and freedom.

Varanasi, where I have been based for the past five years, has profoundly influenced my work. The river Ganga, the rituals, and the vibrant life along the ghats have provided a rich tapestry of inspiration. Here, my performances interact with the sacred and the mundane, creating a dialogue between tradition and contemporary queer experiences.

I am also deeply influenced by nature and the landscape. The natural world, with its beauty and resilience, mirrors the themes of transformation and fluidity that are central to my work. Whether it's the flowing river, the changing seasons, or the vastness of the sky, nature provides a constant source of inspiration and a backdrop for my exploration of identity and freedom. Through my art, I aim to capture the interplay between the human body and the natural environment, highlighting the connection between our inner landscapes and the world around us.





### Brief Bio

**Debashish Paul** (b. 1994) a multidisciplinary artist, 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 exhibited and performed nationally and internationally including ‘Samudra Manthan or The Stir of the Milk Ocean’ at Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, Ternife, Spain, 2024 as part of a residency; ‘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, 2023; Performance program with HH Art Space, supported by Pro Helvetia’s “To-gather” International Collaboration, 2023; Cite internationale des arts, Institut Francais 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 in Kochi, 2021; ‘Of Liminal Beings and Other Spaces’ at Emami Art, Kolkata, 2021; ‘Beyond Binaries: Sensing Art through Queer Lensing’ at KCC, Kolkata, 2021; and ‘Emami Art Open Call Exhibition’ at Emami Art, Kolkata in 2020.

Emami Art has shown his works at various art fairs, including Art Dubai 2024 in the ‘Bawwaba’ section as a solo project curated by Emiliano Valdez; India Art Fair 2023 in New Delhi, where he was also the India Art Fair Artist in Residence; and Art Dusseldorf, Germany, in 2023. 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 1Shanthiroad Studio/Gallery.

Debashish Paul lives and works in Varanasi and Nadia, West Bengal.

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**BENGALURU KALA HUBBA 2026**, artistic director Kamini Sawhney

Photography credit: Shankharupa Bose & Emami Art

Credit Line: The costume/sculptural dress for the performance NastaNir 2026 were commissioned by Bengaluru Hubba 2026

***Broken Nest*** series is a nod to নষ্টনীড় (Nastanirh), a novella by Rabindranath Tagore that speaks of neglected love and the fragility of a home without intimacy. The image of nature claiming an abandoned house in the story becomes a metaphor for queer life—how emotions, silences, and desires take root within neglected spaces, growing quietly until they transform into something alive. This work, a soft sculpture in vibrant colours created in canvas with beads, cowry shells, and threads handstitched along the edges, Paul re-imagines the broken nest through the lens of queer existence in India, where love often grows in silence, hidden from society's gaze.



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***A Thousand Years of Dreaming***

Is part of my recent solo

Curated by **Mario D'Souza**

Date: September 6 – October 26, 2024

Emami Art: Gallery 2 & 3

Film, performance, Photo Performance, sculptural costume

**Thousand Years Of Dreaming an excerpt**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nF4RHFznMQ>

***Thousand Years of Dreams*** is a performance-based film created and performed with my boyfriend, exploring the collective dreams of queer men in India across generations. Set in the sacred city of Varanasi, it reflects the longing for love, marriage, and societal acceptance, cherished by queer individuals for centuries. Through rituals, sculptural costumes, and surreal visuals, the film symbolizes a shared queer journey, blending themes of pain, identity, and liberation. The use of heavy masks and latex costumes highlights the burdens of societal norms, while the river Ganga becomes a metaphor for purification and rebirth, celebrating queer existence and unity.



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Emami Art: Gallery 2 & 3

Curator note- [A Thousand Years of Dreaming - A Solo by Debashish Paul | 6 September - 26 October 2024 - Overview | Emami Art](#)

Exhibition walkthrough by the curator - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcvCLE17ZIA>

*The Skin of Dreams 1*

Latex rubber, plastic and crystal beads, cotton, threads, cowries shell, fabric, and plastic helmet

75.1 x 31.8 x 19.2 in.

2024, Varanasi

*Shells of Past Life 1*

Latex rubber, plastic and crystal beads, threads, and cowries shell

72 x 18.1 x 10 in.

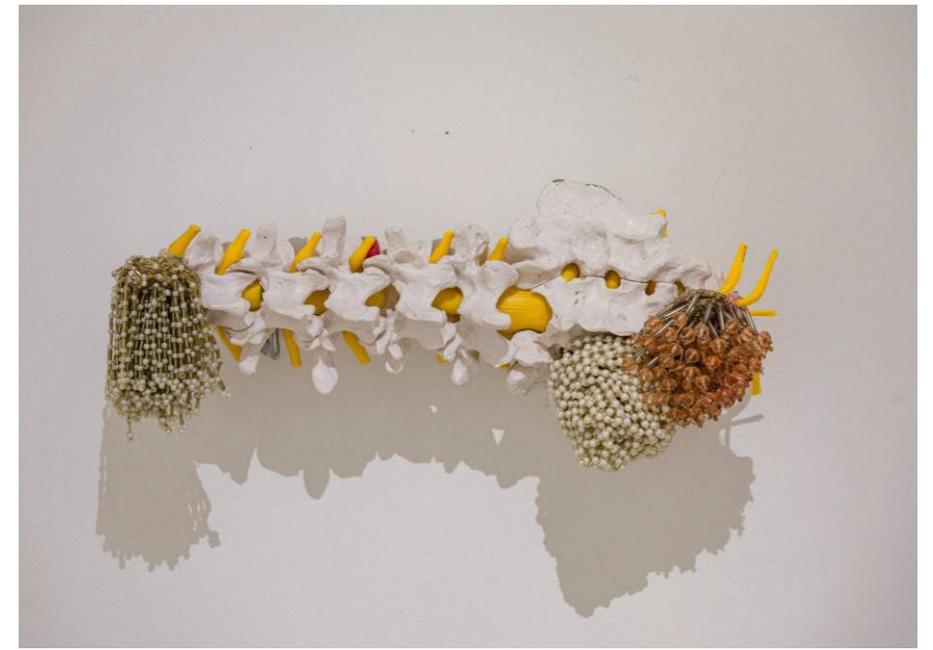
2024, Varanasi





Live Performance by Debashish Paul : *A Thousand Years of Dreaming* A Solo by **Debashish Paul**, Curated by **Mario D'Souza**, September 6 – October 26, 2024 , Emami Art: Gallery 2 & 3

Courtesy: Emami Art



Remnants of the Dream Synthetic resin, fibre, plastic, thread, glass, silicone and metal 3.93 x 3.93 x 3.54 in. Set of 3 works 2024, Varanasi

Courtesy: Emami Art



## Samudra Manthana or The Stir of the Milk Ocean

Durational performance, video, and photographs

Sculptural costume

Performance time: 45 min

In Live Arts Program POR ASALTO at TEA(Tenerife Espacio de las Artes), Cannery island, Spain

Curated by Javier Arozena

Year- 2024

Courtesy: Tenerife Espacio de las Artes

To view - <https://youtu.be/EyCXdV7d0Rs>

"Samudra Manthana," I draw profound inspiration from the Mahabharata, particularly the mythological tale of the churning of the ocean. This performance encapsulates the cosmic struggle and the quest for eternal truths that lie beneath the surface of our existence.

The Samudra Manthana, or the churning of the ocean, is a pivotal episode in Hindu mythology, narrated in the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana. According to the legend, the Devas (gods) and the Asuras (demons) sought the elixir of immortality, Amrita, which was hidden in the depths of the cosmic ocean. To retrieve it, they decided to work together, using Mount Mandara as the churning rod and the serpent Vasuki as the rope. The Devas held the tail of the serpent, while the Asuras held its head.

As they churned, various treasures and beings emerged from the ocean, including Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, and Dhanvantari, the divine physician carrying the pot of Amrita. The churning also brought forth numerous challenges, such as the deadly poison Halahala, which threatened to destroy all of creation. Lord Shiva consumed the poison, saving the world but turning his throat blue in the process, earning him the name Neelkanth.



## Samudra Manthana or The Stir of the Milk Ocean

Durational performance, video, and photographs  
Sculptural costume

In "Samudra Manthana," I draw a parallel between this cosmic churning and the inner turmoil of the human soul. Just as the ocean was churned to reveal hidden treasures and potential dangers, the human soul undergoes a continuous process of introspection and transformation. The performance highlights the struggle to balance opposing forces within oneself—creation and destruction, order and chaos, light and darkness.

Through my elaborate costume and expressive movements, I embody the essence of this inner churning. The traditional motifs in my attire symbolize the ancient wisdom and cultural heritage, while the contemporary elements reflect the evolving nature of identity and self-discovery. My performance becomes a mirror to the audience's own experiences, encouraging them to confront their inner conflicts and seek harmony within themselves.

"Samudra Manthana" ultimately serves as a reminder that the quest for truth and enlightenment is an ongoing journey. By embracing the turbulence within, we can uncover the hidden treasures of our soul and achieve a deeper understanding of our place in the universe. This performance not only brings to life the grandeur of ancient mythology but also resonates with the universal themes of identity, transformation, and the interconnectedness of all beings.

This performance idea came to me during my time in Tenerife, in the Canary Islands, where the presence of the ocean is an ever-present force. Surrounded by the vast, ever-changing sea, I was inspired by the powerful natural beauty and the sense of profound connection to the cosmos. The endless rhythm of the waves against the shores of Tenerife provided a perfect metaphor for the continuous churning and transformation that "Samudra Manthana" seeks to embody. The island's unique blend of ancient and modern influences, coupled with its rich cultural tapestry, deeply influenced the visual and thematic elements of my performance, making it a true reflection of the eternal dance between the old and the new, the internal and the external.



**Samudra Manthana or The Stir of the Milk Ocean**

Durational performance, video, and photographs  
Sculptural costume



**Performance Workshop- Samudra Manthana** In Live Arts Program POR ASALTO at TEA(Tenerife Espacio de las Artes), Cannery Island, Spain.

Inspired by the Mahabharata's tale of *Samudra Manthana*—the churning of the ocean—this performance workshop explored the profound cosmic struggle between light and darkness, good and evil, and the eternal quest for truth hidden beneath our existence. In mythology, the gods and demons churned the ocean using Mount Mandara as the rod and the serpent Vasuki as the rope to retrieve *Amrita*, the elixir of immortality. From this process emerged treasures, challenges, and lessons, symbolizing the dualities we navigate within our souls.

In the workshop, *Samudra Manthana* became a metaphor for the churning of the soul. Ritual music, traditional objects, and guided meditation were used to forge a deep connection between body and spirit. Participants from diverse backgrounds—dancers, musicians, scientists, mathematicians, and more—came together to transcend barriers of caste, gender, race, and body color, forming a unified landscape of shared humanity.



Through meditation and sound exploration, participants attuned themselves to the internal ocean within, expressing how their "inner sea" responds. The workshop culminated in a collective creation of sound, each voice echoing the rhythm of the ocean and the soul's journey. It was a transformative exchange of learning, breaking barriers and blending differences into harmony.

Courtesy: Tenerife Espacio de las Artes



### ***Scent of the Celestial Garden***

The performance Commissioned by Art Dubai , Curated by Emiliano Valdes, Dubai

Sculptural dress, durational performance

Performance Duration – Total 2 hours

Sculptural dress – Rice paper, cloth, charcoal, Dry Pastel, Acrylic, Acrylic Ink  
2024

Sound design in collaboration with Haniya

Photo Courtesy: Art Dubai

My live performance, *Scent of the Celestial Garden*, celebrates happiness and rejuvenation. To me, a garden is a speculative space where aspirations, hopes, and desires intertwine. The concept of scent reminds me that within the depths of my internal existence, there is a source of inspiration and a connection to something greater.

My internal landscape transforms with each passing season. As the grip of winter relinquishes its clasp, nature bursts into colors. Blossoming flowers, mingling with the earthy scent of freshly turned soil, orchestrate a grand overture to herald the arrival of spring. The appearance of spring is not just a change of season; it's a cosmic celebration. In this season of rebirth, amidst the chaos of life, nature reaches the zenith of its fecundity. The notion of a garden where no earthly pain exists, but is full of endless, divine love, is inspired by Nandan Kanan (the garden of heaven) from Indian mythology.





I picture a garden suspended between reality and dreams, a sanctuary where the flowers emit visual beauty and a scent that resonates with the divine. With each breath, I feel closer to a sense of tranquility and connection to the universe. In my dream world, this scent becomes a key to navigating the landscapes of my subconscious, the fragrance guiding me through meadows of imagination and orchards of inspiration—the olfactory manifestation of the boundless creativity and endless possibilities unfolding in the tapestry of my dreams.

***Scent of the Celestial Garden***

The performance Commissioned by Art Dubai, Curated by Emiliano Valdes, Dubai  
Sculptural dress, durational

In *Scent of the Celestial Garden*, I wish to equate the walk on the circumambulatory pathway with a journey of love and empathy. Through the sculptural attire made of paper cloth and decorated with drawings, body movements, sounds, and scent (attar), I will channel the essence of spring, fertility, and prosperity, symbolizing the cyclical character of existence and nature. The headgear adorned with colorful balloons invokes a sense of joy.



***Scent of the Celestial Garden***

The performance Commissioned  
by Art Dubai , Curated by  
Emiliano Valdes, Dubai  
Sculptural dress, durational

These symbolic images foster a collective aspiration for the higher realms of existence—utopic and ecstatic. Through the amalgamation of the natural and heavenly, and with my mastery of form and movement, I beckon my surroundings into a liminal space where the terrestrial and ethereal converge



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## "There's an Ocean Inside of Me"

Duration- 1 hour

Durational Performance

Place- HH Art Spaces, Goa

Year 2023

The performance part of howtolivetogether a live performances at HH Art Spaces, Aldona, Goa, supported by Prohelvetia's "To-gather" grant

"There's an Ocean Inside of Me" serves as a metaphor for the vast and complex ecosystem of my queer identity. Just as the ocean contains a multitude of life forms, each with its own unique essence and interconnectedness, my queer ecology encompasses diverse experiences, emotions, and relationships. Within this internal ocean, there exists a rich tapestry of fluidity, resilience, and interconnectedness, reflecting the dynamic nature of queer existence. Like the ebb and flow of the tides, my identity shifts and evolves, embracing the spectrum of gender, sexuality, and expression. Through this metaphor, I invite exploration and reverence for the depths of my queer ecology, celebrating the beauty and complexity of my inner seascape.



**"There's an Ocean Inside of Me"**

Duration- 1 hour

Durational Performance

Place- HH Art Spaces, Goa

Year 2023



**"There's an Ocean Inside of Me"**

Duration- 1 hour

Durational Performance

Place- HH Art Spaces, Goa

Year 2023



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## The Song for Peace

### Durational Performance , Video , Photography

Duration - 03:40 minutes

Year - 2023

The performance part of howtolivetogether a live performances at HH Art Spaces, Aldona, Goa, supported by Prohelvetia's "To-gather" grant

To view- <https://youtu.be/qtDgt6oisAM>

"The Song for Peace " calls for a world without borders, religions, or possessions, envisioning a peaceful coexistence. The meditation bowl song's message is powerful and continues to inspire generations to strive for peace and unity. And here, I perform in nature, with a meditation bowl just to see how we can live with nature with harmony. Creating a piece that harmonizes nature with the human experience can evoke a sense of interconnectedness and unity. Through the performance I want to depict a picture of the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature, highlighting the need for understanding, respect, and preservation. Imagery of the elements - earth, water, air, and fire are intertwined with human emotions and actions could be quite impactful. Musically, incorporating natural sounds like flowing water, rustling leaves, or bird songs into the melody further emphasizes on the theme of unity between humanity and the environment.



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**The Song for Peace**

**Durational Performance , Video , Photography**

Duration - 03:40 minutes

Year - 2023



### ***My Body Becomes You***

A performance/exhibition designed around Debashish Paul's residency project - '*Kaś*'— *To Shine / Enlightenment*', at the Cite' Internationale des Arts, Paris.

Paul is winner of the PAIR Residency 2023 in collaboration with eth French Institute of India. He is in Paris from July 10 to October 4, 2023.

Open Studio:

Date: 20th September Wednesday

Time: 6 PM to 9 PM

Studio no: 8421, 4th floor main building

Performance: *My Body Becomes You*

40 minutes

Date: 20th September Wednesday

Time: 6.20 PM

At Annexe Courtyard.

Cite' Internationale des Arts, Paris

Credits:

Photography: @alouliiii

Music score: @marhanlu

Copyright with artist

20 SEPTEMBER, '23

Cite' Internationale  
des Arts, Paris



OPEN STUDIO

6 PM to 9 PM

Studio no: 8421,  
4th floor main building

PERFORMANCE

40 mins

6.20 PM onwards

at Annexe Courtyard

*My Body  
Becomes You*

By Debashish Paul

INSTITUT  
FRANÇAIS



OPEN DAY @STUDIO & PERFORMANCE

Cite' Internationale des Arts,  
18 Rue de l'Hotel de ville, 75004, Paris

## ***My Body Becomes You***

Is a new beginning, a part of my larger exploration 'Kaś' (to shine)

Here, 'You' has a vast meaning like, You, are a field, a space, a realm, a space where My body exists, My body comes into being, a sense of aliveness.

You are a city. You are a river.

You are everything I imagine/experience, air, people, feelings, anticipations.

*Sometimes You also exist inside Me, as something beyond physical, a state beyond the earthly body.*

After arriving here, I have felt my internal body slowly changing, transforming through the impressions of my experiences in this city. My costume here is a bird, I used a mask that depicts the face of a bird, which I found in Paris, it is like flying from one city to another city, this is the furthest I have ever travelled, with my work, in terms of distance. This bird for me symbolizes my internal body, my inner world, it always wants to take flight, towards the light.

I brought some materials for my costume from India, and the first weeks of my stay in Paris, I started to roam the streets, till late into the night, I walked in the streets of the outskirts, and found many materials that inspired me and allowed me to imagine the being that is the transformation of my inner self. When I walk the streets the movement of the people and animals the dogs that accompany the people, the sound of the street, the trees the movement of the rivers, inspired me more and more and my internal body's movement was slowly changing, the colour of the dresses of people the colour of the space, the colour of the light, the changing colours of the leaves as we enter autumn, the markets, make up the ever changing hues of my inner body and in this way, the movement for my performances, were organically becoming. I started to draw on the surfaces of paper, leather and white cloth, all drawing comes very spontaneously, they reveal memories of the two cities which I am presently deeply influenced by. This costume, when worn out in public, it sometimes invokes strange reactions from people, perhaps they feel uncomfortable, this fearsome, strange form, this is the fear and the darkness that is a part of my inner landscape that I accept, and that I want to share with others, this is the first time I have stepped on a land other than mine. The problem of language and the fear of being misunderstood, made me feel fear and timidity and this fear is also mine, is another aspect of myself, that needs to be nurtured and creatively expressed out in the streets.

*Day by day when I transform Myself to You the fear that I once experienced slowly dissolves.*

After a few days of being in Paris, I soon realized that Cite des Arts is a small world without borders where people of different countries thrive in their art practice bringing stories, languages and dreams from different corners, these influences and expands my inner world greatly. For this project I invited my fellow resident of Cite des Arts. The Egyptian photographer Ali Zaray documented the process of my project on film and photography. For the soundtrack of my performance, Sri Lankan composer Hania Luthufi worked with musicians Dominic Rothlisberger, (Cello, Nyckleharpa) Peppe Formisano (Cretan lyra) and Rohit Gupta (mixing mastering) I am thankful for the sense of community of this very special place and for the wonderful support and contribution of my fellow artists.

I feel collecting memories and shaping new hybrid bodies helps me to interact with the spaces I walk through is a strong part of my art practice. In this period, my bodies are starting to change but I don't know what form it will take yet, it is a process of becoming, and with time these forms will unfold and reveal themselves to me and I await to meet them with great anticipation.



**PAIR Residency 2023 A Proposal by Debashish Paul**  
**'Kaś' — To Shine / Enlightenment**

**The basic premise of my proposal is based around two cities – Varanasi and Paris, two rivers – the Ganges and the Seine, and the concept of *Light*.**

For some time, my practice has revolved around the search for my identity. The search for the gendered self is also a search for the truth of my internal body or self. I cannot split this search into physical or metaphysical. For me, both exist together, and exploring the inner body is the process of knowing myself in more profound ways. For three years, I have been living and working in Varanasi, and this space has been pivotal in my search for the answer to the essential question: *Who am I?* While here in Varanasi, I have felt my body being moulded into the city and its ancient pathways. I started my new series of work reflecting on my identity from here. The ancient city and its knowledge, rituals, and beliefs and the river Ganges help me to search for myself. The fluidity and freedom of the river Ganges grant me fluidity and inspire me to be free, something that I could not find in my previous life in my village.

Deeply inspired by philosophical reflections, my search for inner truth is guided by the idea of **enlightenment**. Historically Varanasi is considered the space for Hindu pilgrimage and ultimate salvation, with the belief that anyone who breathes their last in this city attains salvation and freedom from the cycle of life and rebirth, and the river Ganges is believed to wash away all mortal sin. Hence the city itself is considered a pathway to light. Kāshi, the ancient name of Varanasi, which even appears in the epic Mahabharata, is derived from the Sanskrit '*kaś*' — to shine — and this city is metaphorically known as the city of light (enlightenment). The Sanskrit phrase *moksha-prakshika Kashi* means the city ( Kashi) that lights the way to deliverance.

While researching my proposal for the PAIR 2023 Residency, I saw several points of connection. Paris is also known as the 'The City of Light'. Although this nickname for the city may have arisen from the measures to adopt street lighting as far back as the 17th century, the age of enlightenment and the French revolution made Paris the centre of education, thought, philosophy, poetry and the arts. It is also vital that Paris, like Varanasi, is also situated on the bank of a river, and both have rich cultural and philosophical heritage. Both cities can be linked to the ideas of freedom and **Enlightenment**. French philosophers

For me, the discovery of this connection is almost like a reflection of following the path of light. The internal body is a reflection of the soul's Light. The inner body is fluid, it has no specific shape or gender orientation, and it transforms according to space, feelings, emotions, and desires. The body has no limitations, and I feel my visual and imaginative worlds are part of my body (the whole universe is a part of my body).

If granted the opportunity, during the residency period, I propose to explore Paris by connecting the past and the present between the two cities and the rivers. Furthermore, I want to trace the emotional bond between the cities with a series of questions I pose myself.

*How does the body mould the new city?*

*How do memories of the Ganges interact with the presence of the Seine?*

*How does the body retain its ancient historical memory while engaging with the present body?*

I hope to engage with Paris and make a series of sculptural costumes that will translate into a new site-specific performance, video, photo performances and drawings.



***My Body Becomes You***

A performance/exhibition designed around Debashish Paul's residency project - '*Kaś'— To Shine / Enlightenment*', at the Cite' Internationale des Arts, Paris.

Video Duration: 06 min 02 sec

Year: 2023, Paris

Credits:

Photography: @alouliiii

Music score: @marhanlu

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2p2JYbbhJQ>

Copyright with artist



***My Body Becomes You***

A performance/exhibition designed around Debashish Paul's residency project - *'Kaś'— To Shine / Enlightenment'*, at the Cite' Internationale des Arts, Paris.

Live performance Duration: 40 min

Credits:

Photography: Aniruddha Biswas

Music score: @marhanlu

Copyright with artist



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### ***Me with My Pets***

Sculptural Dress, Sculptural Pet

Durational performance, video, and photographs

Project time : 2 months

Performance time: 2 days

Video Duration – Video editing in progress

Sculptural Dress human- - Nepali handmade paper, cloth, acrylic, charcoal, thread, synthetic hair.

Sculptural Dress non-human- Nepali handmade paper, cloth, charcoal, Ink, thread, wood

2022 November

Courtesy: Saurabh Singh, Suraj Gupta, Anil Kushwaha and Kumar Ashwani

for videography and photography

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJHfvjvWcuc&feature=youtu.be>

Details of Photographs

### ***Me with My Pet***

Photograph of performance still

Size: Variable

Edition: 1/10

Artists Proof : 5

Year: 2022-23

Copyright with artist



## Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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### *Me with My Pets*

About the performance

Metaphorically a pet or Imaginary friend is my memory whom I always carrying with me. In my lonely fantastic world, I am continually having conversations with them. In a way, pets are my other internal self. This Idea arises from the distance that is created in personal relationships. In this work, I want to understand how someone's memories internally create a form and love it like a pet, and a new story of life is created.

In this project, the sculptural dresses as well as free-standing sculptures, represent my internal body and various imagined non-human forms. The dresses were made in Varanasi and the durational live performance was executed in Khanta village in Sonbhadra district and Jargo village near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, India. In the resulting video, I wished to create a cinematic and dramatic which represents the dreamlike imaginative space.



Details of Photo performance

***Me with My Pets***

Sculptural Dress, Sculptural Pet

Durational performance

India Art Fair 2023

Feb 2023

Copyright with artist



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Details of Photo performance

***Me with My Pets***

Sculptural Dress, Sculptural Pet

Durational performance

French Institute of India, Delhi

Feb 2023

Copyright with artist



Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

### The River Meets the Sea

Sculptural dress, durational performance, video and photographs

Project duration: 25 days ( 26<sup>th</sup> Nov – 15<sup>th</sup> Dec 2022)

Performance Duration – Total 2 hours

(One hour each on 13<sup>th</sup> December + 15<sup>th</sup> December )

Sculptural dress – Rice paper, cloth, charcoal  
2022

Sound design in collaboration with Sara Naqvi

Photo Courtesy: Saurabh Singh, Sayanth RS and Emami Art

**This project was realised as part of the Residency & Performance Programme curated by Nikhil Chopra and HH Art Space Foundation in collaboration with Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022-23, at the Dutch Warehouse, Kochi, India**

Video excerpt

[https://www.instagram.com/tv/CmHGfKnpZUR/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/tv/CmHGfKnpZUR/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)



Day 1 (13<sup>th</sup> December 2022), Dutch Warehouse, Kochi

### The River Meets the Sea

Through his work, Debashish Paul navigates landscapes as he perceives them as queer ecologies. What he finds in himself around nature reflects the complexities that lie within, he describes them as conversational exchanges. The river has been his companion since childhood, always forming the periphery of his home. Now based in Varanasi, the cultural significance and knowledge of the river Ganga has become very closely tied to his practice. The artist believes that his body is not separate from this river and is carried within him on every journey he's undertaken.

On his arrival to Kochi, he found himself drawn to the water bodies surrounding the small island. A meeting of the river he holds within and the sea that has called for his presence. The vastness of this meeting, of river and sea, has spiritual ties. The artist draws parallels to the nature of our bodies, what we are capable of feeling, to the subliminal nature of the sea.

In this performance, Paul created two costumes representing the river and the sea. On each panel of these garments, he has intricately drawn out narratives that describe his personal experiences against the landscapes they are presented in. Debashish's stylistic visual language is influenced by his past and present, bound by his care for nature.



Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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### The River Meets the Sea

Day 1 (13<sup>th</sup> December 2022), Dutch Warehouse, Kochi

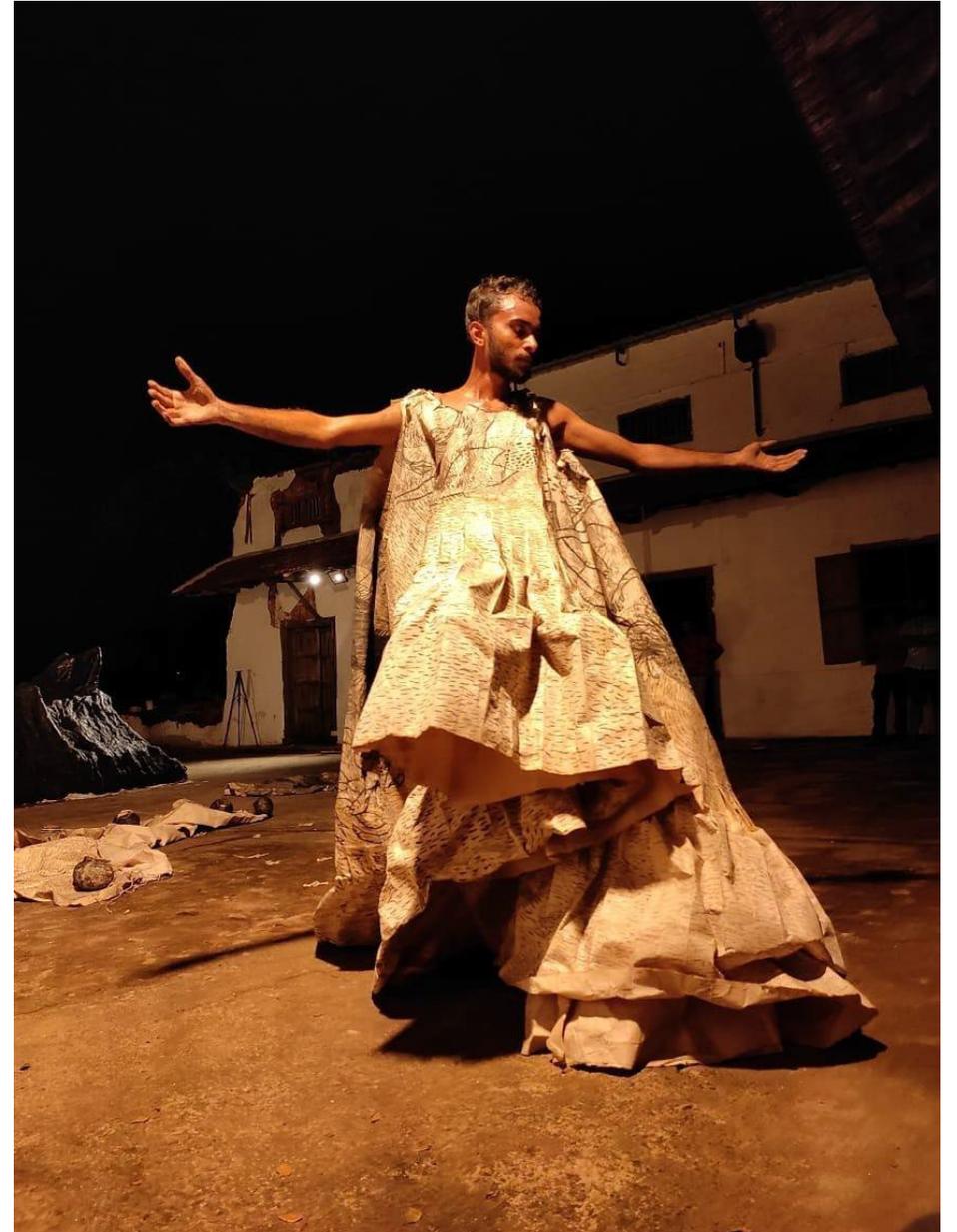


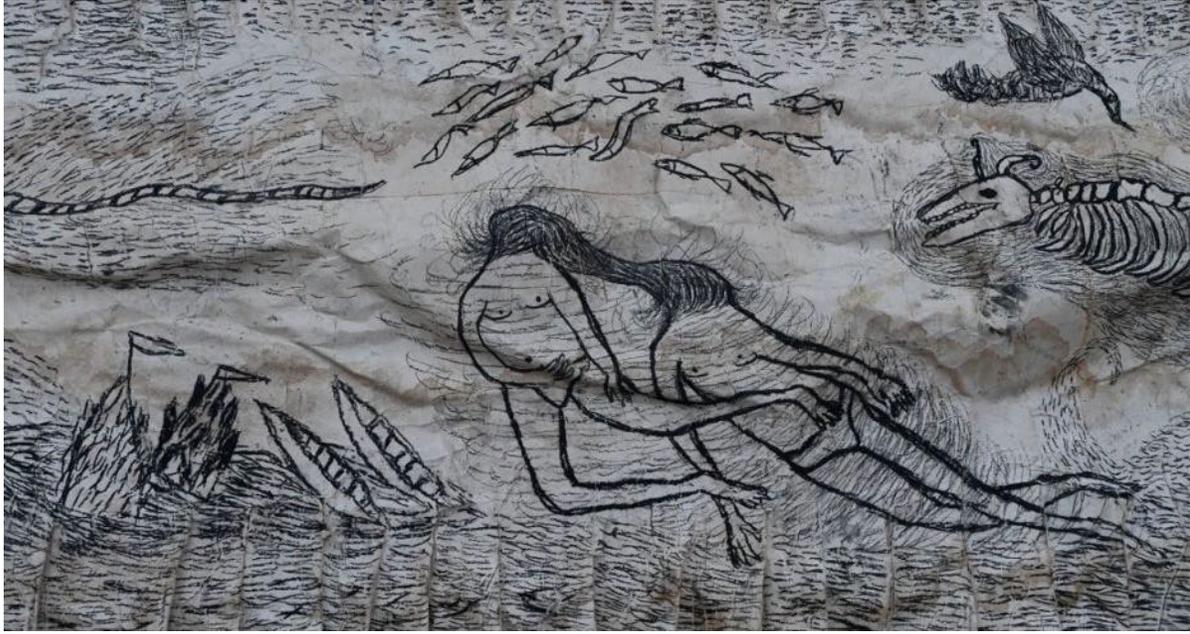
Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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**The River Meets the Sea**

Day 2 (15<sup>th</sup> December 2022), Dutch Warehouse, Kochi





Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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**The River Meets the Sea**

Display at Dutch Warehouse, Kochi



Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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**Body as a landscape;**

**Body in a Landscape**

Medium- Sculptural dress, performance, photo documentation,  
video Sculptural dress medium- Nepali handmade paper, charcoal, collected natural material

Performance duration: 45 days

Video duration- Video editing in progress

**Courtesy to Saurabh Singh for videography and photography**

To view excerpt <https://youtu.be/Cvisw5b2DEM>

Supported by Indian Artist Relief Fund-2021  
(MAP in partnership with 1Shanthiroad Studio/Gallery)

*“This project was a 45-day durational performance in Jārgo, a sparsely populated hilly area, isolated from the urban world located near Banaras. I went there to create a performance piece as a soliloquy with the self. To understand and relate to the space, I documented it every day through photos, videos, drawings, and collecting objects and materials that surrounded me in the landscape. Since I lived alone and nature was only my companion, I felt the landscape become a part of my body. I practiced performing to the sound of nature, my body reflecting and responding to its surroundings. I worked on the sculptural dress for about 40 days, I did not follow any fixed ideas or patterns while making the dress, rather it was a spontaneous interaction with the lived present and its everyday scenes and old memories. I wanted the dress to reflect the landscape and my personal hidden stories. My drawings on the sheets of paper encompassed the landscape around me, its flora & fauna, rivers, mountains, etc. I also added natural materials like flowers, roots, dry grass, and leaves that I collected from around me. This process is my way of negotiating with an understanding of how the human body tends to be molded by and within a space and its transformation into a new body. Most of the time my body, I felt, reacted like a fluid form and I did not wish to fix its shape. As the landscape changes with each season, the body also changes like a landscape with different emotions and feelings.*

*After making the dress, I performed with the dress for three days in the hilly landscape of Jārgo. The Video and photo documentation which is an intrinsic part of my process are done by my long-time collaborator Sourabh Singh. When I wear the dress like a second skin and perform with it, I become part of the landscape and I feel that I enfold the landscape within me. Having been alone here for 45 days and through my performances, I have realized that the body is always looking for proof of its existence or asserting its existence and always looking for a safe place (home) and its mate according to the laws of nature. As part of the work, I also made some house-like forms using Nepali handmade paper and hung them on a stick, and carried them around with me, like an itinerant mendicant, for the whole duration of the performance. Some of these houses fell down in the open at different points of the landscape. I did not retrieve them. In the end, I floated the remaining houses in the Jargo River. This act expresses the fragile emotion of distance in a relationship, shattered dreams, and the need to migrate again and again to build anew a home that one calls one’s own.”*

Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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**Body as a landscape;**  
**Body in a Landscape**  
Performance still

*My speculative, genderless figures are in always in flux, undergoing emotional transformation within a given time and space. For me a work is never really finished, it simply undergoes a change of being.*



Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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**Body as a landscape;**  
**Body in a Landscape**  
Performance stills



## Process

*I collect materials physically and also visually which adding or pasting in my work. Visual materials add to my works sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously.*

*This process of collecting, pasting, cutting, and making many layers is the concept of the transforming process of the body. I treat it like an unfolding body, like landscape mood, the landscape makes curiosity I feel body also like this. And processing is like a big conversation, where I want to understand my body through this process.*



Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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**Beyond The Body and Gender II**

Sculptural Dress, Performance Based Video

Performance time: 3 months

Video Duration-6min 58sec

Sculptural Dress Medium- Woven shells

Year-2021

Courtesy to Saurabh Singh ,Amit Verma ,  
Srabani Naskar for videography and photography

To view video [https://youtu.be/if9tJphd\\_E0](https://youtu.be/if9tJphd_E0)

*The costumes for **Beyond the Body and Gender II** were made from shells. One day, while walking along the banks of the river Ganges with my friends, I started collecting shells, which inspired me for this project. Their main aim is to protect the body, so I used them as a medium to create my costume, to protect my body from discomfort. In this work, I shaved my head after bathing in the river Ganges. It was an act inspired by the Hindu practice of sanyāās or renunciation (I witnessed my brother taking sanyāās in the past). Once you take sanyāās, according to Hindu tradition, it's like you're reborn, and your old life is dead. I tried to capture that in my performance. I was reborn and let go of my past life.*



Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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**Beyond The Body and Gender II**  
Performance still



*The pain of my own identity or lack thereof is a constant motivation. I am also inspired by landscapes, rituals and Indian mythology. Art and other artistic practices also inspire me to search for deeper ways of connecting with the self.*



Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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**Beyond The Body and Gender II**  
Performance still



## Process



*Over the period of a month or so, I collected thousands of shells and strung them together to make the dress. Collecting the shells from the riverbanks felt like gathering the fragmented parts of my own body together, and the process of weaving them felt like I was weaving my dreams to make my desired body.*



Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

### **Beyond The Body and Gender I**

Sculptural dress, durational performance, video and photographs

Performance time: 2 months

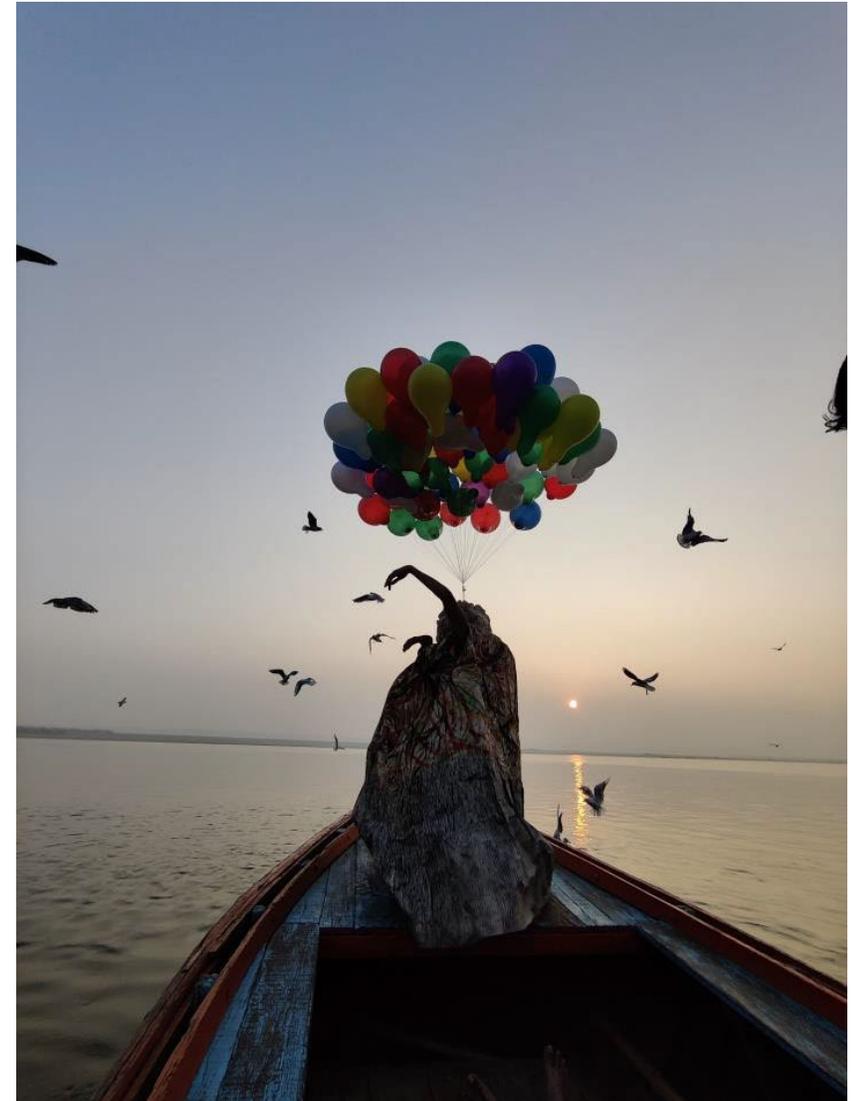
Video Duration – 6min 56sec

Sculptural dress - Nepali handmade paper, cloth, watercolor , charcoal  
2021

Courtesy: Saurabh Singh and Suraj Gupta  
for videography and photography

To view video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sxcfPCzm\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sxcfPCzm_I)

*The costume for **Beyond the Body and Gender I** is the transformation of my inner body after a six-month stay in Banaras. It contains silent love, personal relationship experiences, fragmented emotion and visual experiences of the place. On my first evening in Banaras, I went to see the evening Ganga Aarti at Banaras Ghat (Banaras is a sacred and one of the oldest cities of the world, located on the banks of the holy river Ganges, where Gange Aarti is performed every evening by a group of priests at the Ghat.) There were seven young priests there, one of whom I liked very much. They are considered God's messengers or sages, so I felt guilty imagining him as my lover. But I sat in front of him every day for six months. I watched the Aarti, but I was afraid to talk to him. His spirituality, his movements during the Aarti, affected and overwhelmed me I copied his movements and felt like I was mingling with him, like my body was slowly transforming into his. His body movements reflect on my performance. a*



Durational Performance : Videos & Photography

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**Beyond The Body and Gender I**

Performance still

*My body is the core around which I weave alternate visions of the self, unbound by gender or identity. Varanasi, where I currently reside, its ghats, burning grounds, markets, sounds and smells of everyday life, and rituals that flow through me. This ancient city acts as a doorway to an ancient past and a speculative future*



Wearable sculpture

**Eyes I dare not meet in dreams - 2**

Performative photograph and sculptural dress

Sculptural dress Medium – Nepali handmade

paper, cloth, watercolor, ink, charcoal

Size – 3.8' x 3' x 2.5'

2020



*I made this during the first lockdown when I returned home from Banaras. In my village there is a Radha Krishna temple where an unmarried handicapped woman sat every day wearing a frock. Every day I saw her, she was sitting very meditatively in front of Radha Krishna. I saw her every day and felt empathy for her, and could relate my internal loneliness with hers. This inspired me to create the form of a woman where my body transforms to feel another's pain.*

Wearable sculpture

**Let me be no nearer in death's dream  
kingdom Let me also wear such deliberate  
disguises. Rat's coat**

Performative photograph and sculptural dress  
Sculptural dress – Tissue paper, Ink, twine  
5.5 x 2 x 1 ft  
2020

*I made a sculptural dress of a male figure  
using many layers of tissue papers. The  
resulting dress is very lightweight and  
fragile. In the medical lab of Banaras  
Hindu University I had seen a dead, nude  
male figure. It was a horrible and  
traumatic experience. To me it appeared  
to be an empty shell.*

*From my childhood people in my village  
teased me calling me 'girlish', this made  
me copy masculine characteristics. So,  
when I made and wore the shell of a male  
body on my own living, warm and fluid  
body, it was a very painful experience for  
me. I felt my body's fragility and realised  
that this is not my own Identity.*

*The title for both the works are taken  
from lines of T S Eliot's poem The Hollow  
Men. The despair and hopelessness of the  
lines have always spoken to me.*



## [Artists' Monograph](#)

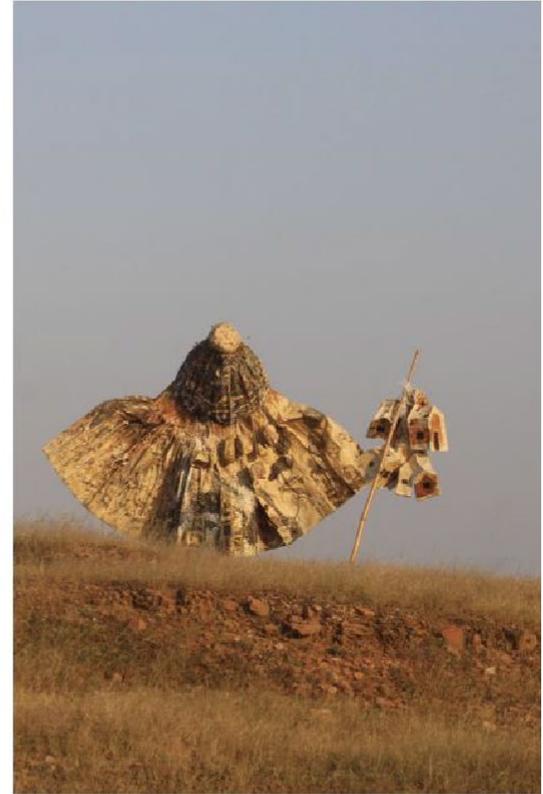
Published by Emami Art  
2024

*'The search for the gendered self is also a search for the truth of my internal body or self. I cannot split this search into physical or metaphysical. For me, both exist together; exploring the body is the process of knowing myself in more profound ways. I have been living and working in Varanasi for more than three years now, and it has been pivotal in my search for the answer to the essential question: Who am I? I have felt my body being moulded into the city and its ancient pathways. The ancient city and its knowledge, rituals, and beliefs and the river Ganges help me to search for myself. The fluidity and freedom of Ganges grants me fluidity and inspires me to be free, something that I could not find in my previous life in my village.'*

(Excerpt from the Monograph)

Courtesy: Emami Art

EMAMI ART



**Debashish Paul**

## CV & Personal Details

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Phone no- +91 9091789177

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Born in 1994 in Nadia, based in Varanasi, UP and Nadia, WB,

## Education

### 2015-2019

BFA from The Indian College of Art and Draftsmanship in Sculpture, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata

### 2019-2021

MFA in sculpture from Banaras Hindu University, Faculty of Visual Arts, Department of Plastic Arts, Varanasi.

## Awards:

**2023-** Second Place Winner MASH Young Artist Awards, India

**2023-** Kalanad Scholarship from from the Prafulla Dahanukar Art Foundation

**2022-** Kalanad Scholarship from from the Prafulla Dahanukar Art Foundation

**2022** - Prince Claus Seed Award, Prince Claus Fund, Netherlands.

**2022-** Inlaks Fine Art Award, Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation , India

**2021-** Allegro 1st prize 2021, Contemporary LYNX, Poland

**2021-** Indian Artist Relief Fund-2021 (MAP in partnership with 1Shanthiroad Studio/Gallery) , India

### **Residencies:**

- 2026-2027- Selected for Rijksakadamy Residency, Amsterdam, Netherlands ,
- 2024 Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, Tenerife, Spain
- 2023 **Cité Internationale des Arts**, Paris (Collaboration with Pramaya Art Foundation, Cité internationale des arts, Institut français Paris and the French Institute in India
- 2023 HH Art Spaces, Goa, India
- 2023 India Art Fair 2023 Artist in Residence, New Delhi
- 2022-23 Kochi-Muziris Biennale Performance Residency in collaboration with HH Art Space and Nikhil Chopra, 2022
- 2022 Inlaks Fine Art Awards 2022 Residency at 1 Shanti Road Studio/ Gallery, Bengaluru

### **Solo Performances:**

- 2024-** Samudra Manthan or The Stir of the Milk Ocean, at Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, POR ASALTO - Live arts public program curated by Javier Arozena, Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain
- 2024-** Scent of the Celestial Garden at Art Dubai 2024, Commissioned by Art Dubai , Curated by Emiliano Valdes, Dubai.
- 2023-** “ There’s an Ocean Inside of Me”, at HH Art Spaces, ‘Howtolivetogether’ performances program is supported by Por Helvetia’s “To-gather” international Collaboration, Goa , India
- 2023-** Me with My Pet , at The Prince Claus Fund Biennial Symposium—Legacies of Care, Failures and Emerging Solidarities, in collaboration with Geoffrey Bawa Trust and co-curated by artistic director Keng Sen Ong, Sri Lanka.
- 2023-** *My Body Becomes You* Cite' Internationale des Arts, Paris. 2023
- 2023-** Me with My Pets Durational performance French Institute of India, Delhi
- 2023-** Me with My Durational performance India Art Fair 2023, Delhi
- 2023-** Metamorphosis, at Inlaks Fine Arts awards program, , Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation , Mumbai
- 2022-** The River Meets the Sea, at Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022-23 , This project was realised as part of the Residency & Performance Programme curated by Nikhil Chopra and HH Art Space Foundation in collaboration with Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022-23, at the Dutch Warehouse, Kochi, India

### **Solo Exhibition**

- 2024-** *A Thousand Years of Dreaming* Curated by **Mario D’Souza** , Emami Art , Kolkata,India.
- 2024-** Mystic Garden, at Art Dubai 2024, BAWWABA section, , Curated by Emiliano Valdes. Dubai

#### Exhibition:

- 2024-** Verukal, Curated by Tak Contemporary
- 2024-** All that is Hidden, at Emami Art, Kolkata
- 2023-24** *The Magic of the Silver Swan* at the **Bowes Museum, Bernard Castle, UK** , curated by Kinnari Sariya.
- 2023** Art Dusseldorf, Dusseldorf, Germany
- 2023** India Art Fair 2023, New Delhi
- 2022** Dhoomimal annual show at Dhoomimal Gallery , Delhi , India
- 2021** Of Liminal Beings and Other Spaces -2021, Emami Art, Kolkata
- 2021** Student's Biennale -2021, Kochi
- 2021** Beyond Binaries: Sensing Art through Queer Lensing-2021 at KCC, Kolkata
- 2020** Emami Art Open Call Exhibition -2020, Kolkata.

#### Talks | Presentations | Workshops | Screenings:

**2024-** Performance Workshop at Porasalto performance art program curated by Javier Arozena, at Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, Cannery Island , Spain

**2024- Ways of Landscape: Artist's Perspectives** ~ A panel discussion as a marker of the closing of group show, 'All That is Hidden: Mapping Departures in Landscape, Terrains and Geographies' on 23 March, 2024, The speakers of the panel- Debashish Paul, Jayashree Chakravarty, Nobina Gupta, Emami Art , Kolkata

**2023-** Peers Share, Khoj Studios, Delhi

**2023-** The Power of Art, Speakers- Lakshmi Madhavan, Vayeda Brothers, Debashish Paul, moderated by Prateek Raja, at India Art Fair, Align & Disrupt', the talks programme curated by independent curator and educator Shaleen Wadhvana, and supported by Shiv Nadar – Institution Of Eminence. India Art Fair Delhi.

**2023-** Body as a Landscape, The Rediscovery workshops are curated by the arts education organisation LAND (Learning through Arts, Narrative and Discourse) and supported by ArtBuzz, at India Art Fair, Delhi , India

**2023-** Beyond the Body and Gender I and Beyond the Body and Gender II screened at Young Collectors Hub at Bikaner House, as a part of India Art Fair (IFA), Delhi, IND

2023- Me with My Pet Sunday screened at cite internationale des arts, Paris.