

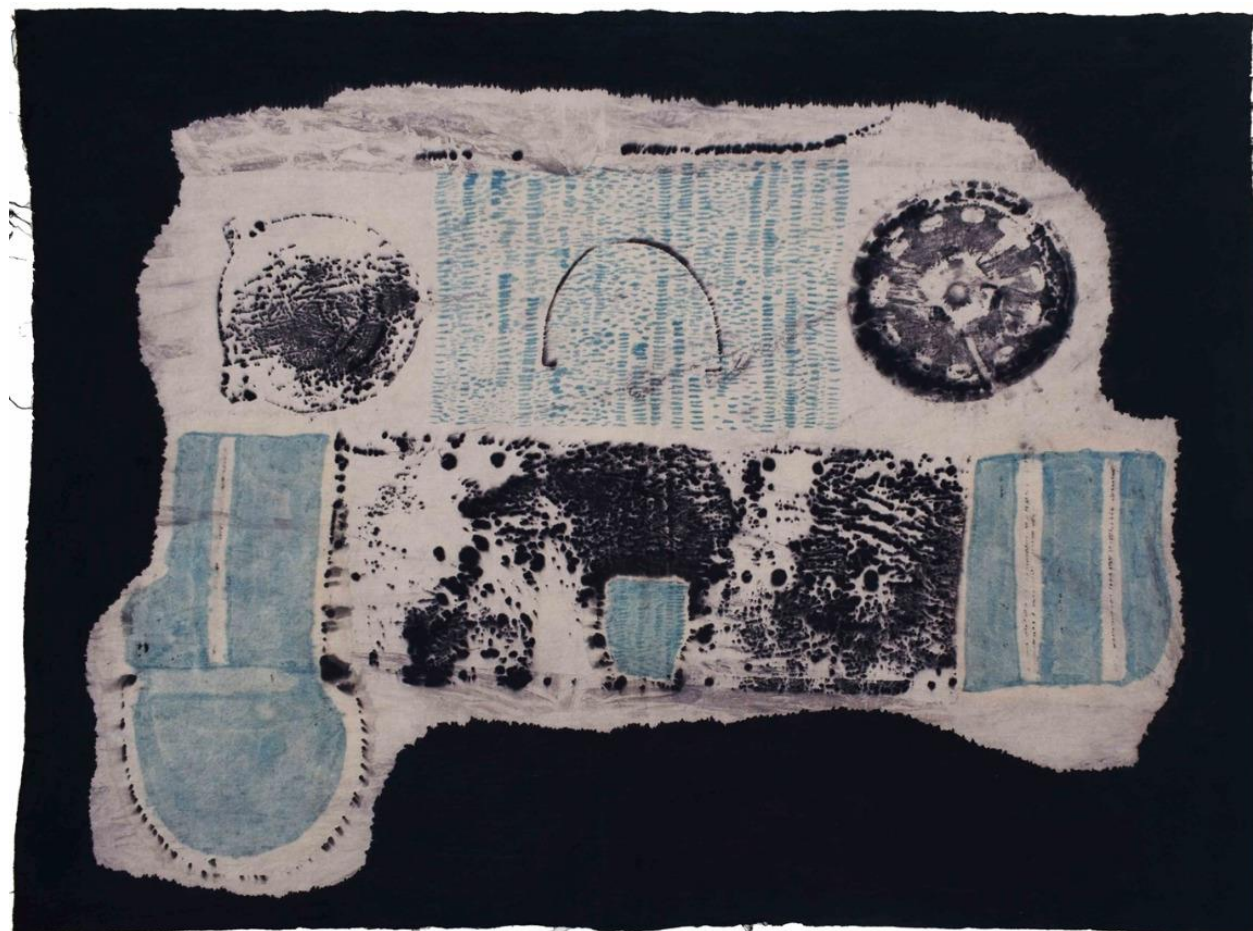
**Ujjal Dey**

Portfolio of selected works from  
2020 - 23

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- Natural dyes on textile
- Drawings on paper

*Sight of a memory-site*  
Kalamkari ink and Indigo dye on  
myrobalan dyed cotton cloth  
55 x 41.5 in.  
2020

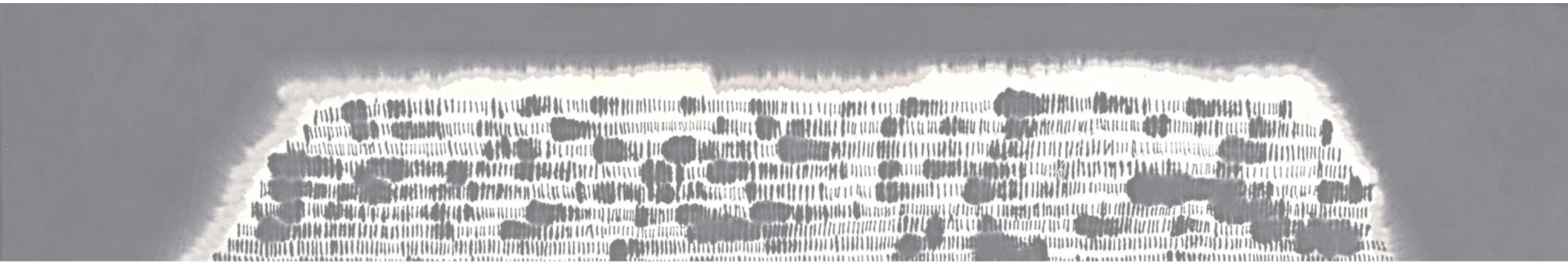


## Brief Description

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Ujjal Dey specializes in textile arts. His semi-abstract works, which explore the ideas of tradition, rituals, ecology and landscape, are inspired by several traditional techniques and practices like *alpana* (floor decoration), *lepas* (smear) and quilt or *Kantha* (stitched fabrics). He perceives traditional methods and their repetitive engagement as similar to the work of nature, where there is a slight difference in every iteration. His practice involves extensive research and extracts materials from locally available natural resources. He prepares dyes and pigments, using hand-paint, dyeing and resist techniques onto fabric to create artwork. The colour-making process is integral to his practice.

Memories associated with personal objects, landscapes and ritualistic practices constitute the narratives of the work, where the specific references are reduced to primary, semi-abstract forms. A sense of loss and anxiety prevails throughout Dey's works, provoked by the more significant ecological shifts and cultural amnesia. His artistic practice becomes a ritualistic reclaiming of the broken relationship between nature and culture.



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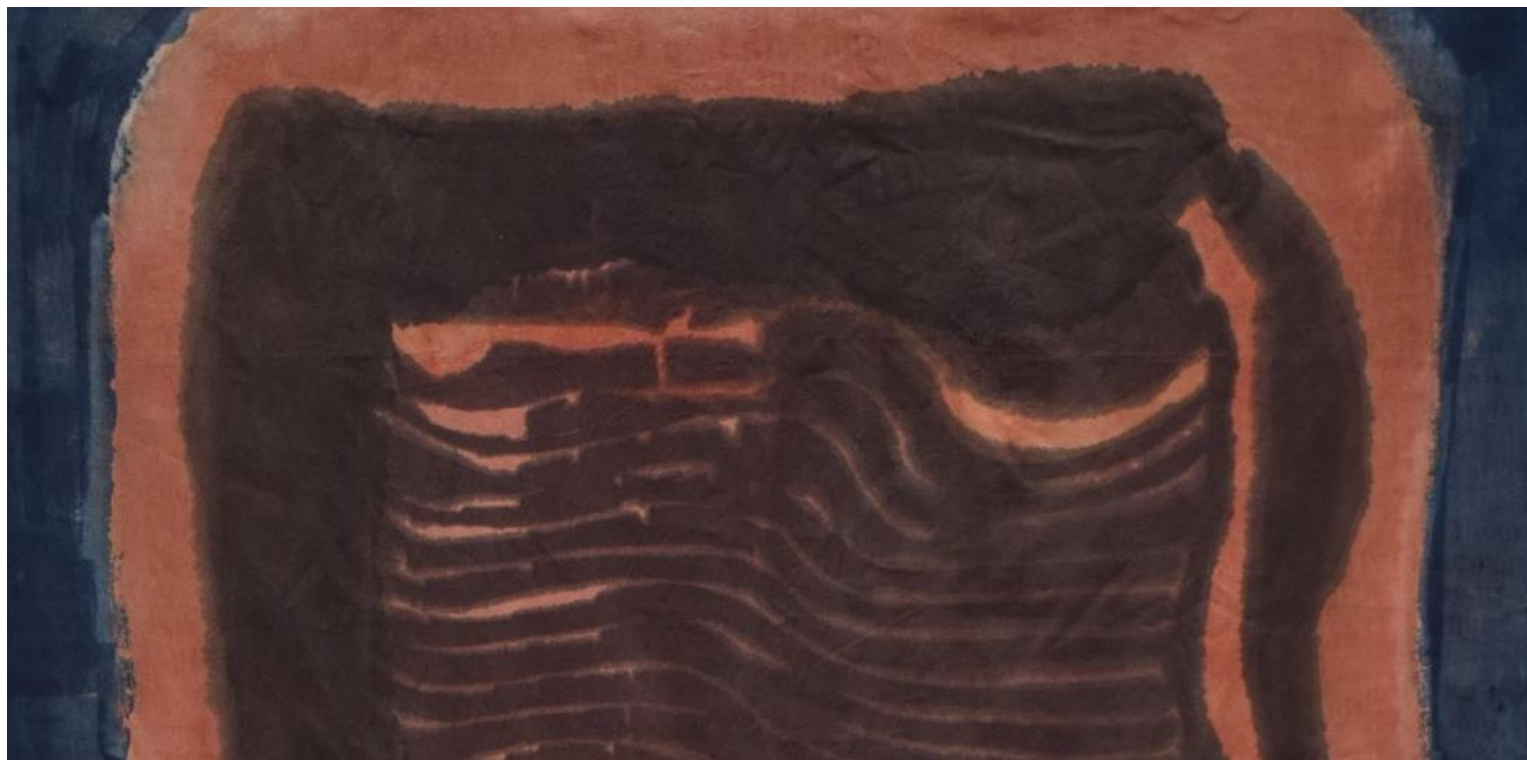
***Zameen: The land in between 3***

Kalamkari ink, alum mordant painted and madder dye on  
myrobalan dyed cotton cloth

68 x 42.5 in. (175 x 109 cm.)

2023

Santiniketan



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***Memory Scape I***

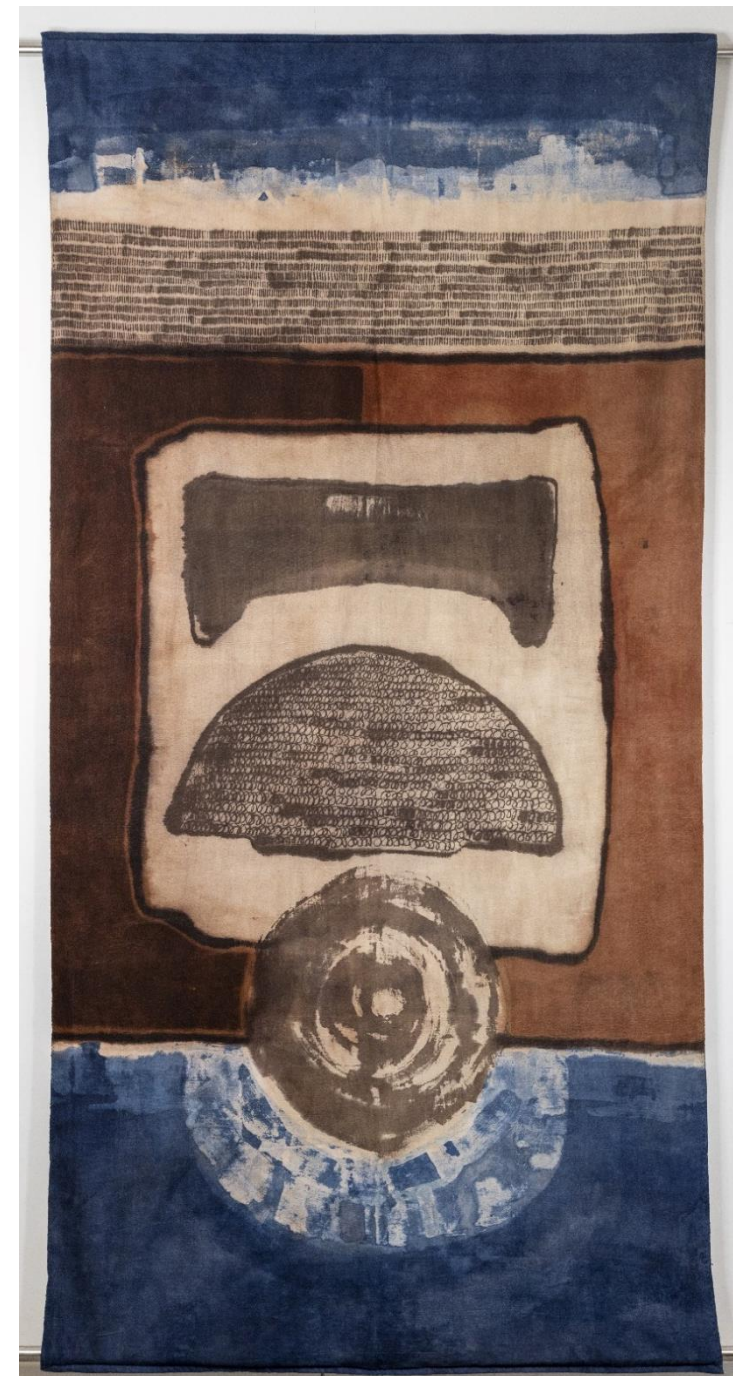
Kalamkari ink, alum mordant painted, mud and lime resist, catechu, madder and indigo dye on myrobalan dyed khadi cotton cloth

90.5 x 45 in. (230 x 114 cm.)

2023

Santiniketan

*Memory Scape* is a series that explores certain kinds of indigenous techniques and ritualistic practices which the artist saw while growing up in the village. By revisiting his memories of mark-making and other ritualistic practices, he tries to connect the spots of memories with the current reality of disappearing land, water, air, and nature and the physical and spiritual connection with nature in a broader sense. *Memory scape* is an ongoing extension of his other two series, *Lepa* and *Daag*.



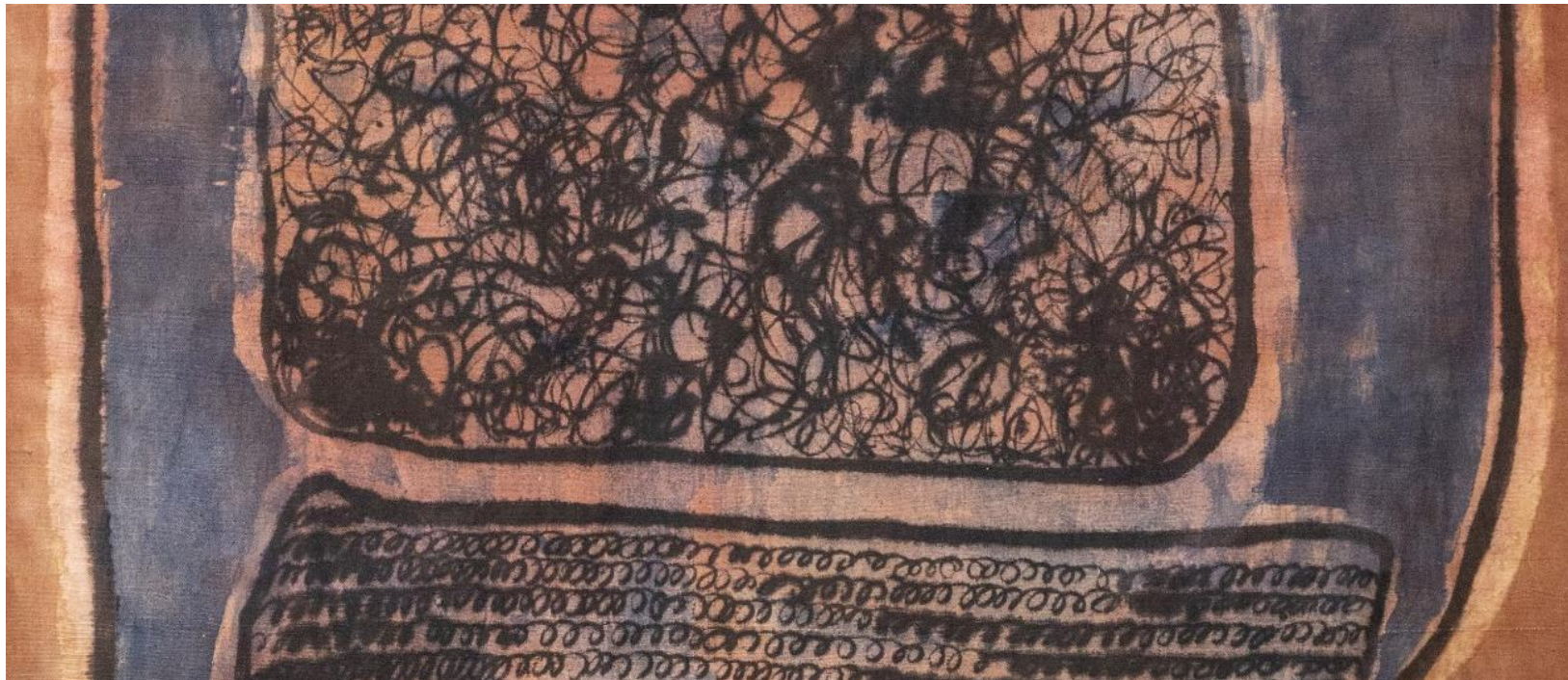
***Memory Scape II***

Kalamkari ink, alum mordant painted, mud and lime resist, catechu, madder and indigo dye on myrobalan dyed khadi cotton cloth

89.5 x 45 in. (227.5 x 114.5 cm.)

2023

Santiniketan



***Untitled***

Myrobalan, kalamkari ink, wax resist,  
indigo, catechu, hand embroidery  
with myrobalan dyed yarn on cotton  
cloth and needle.

56 x 56 in. (142 x 142 cm.)

2022

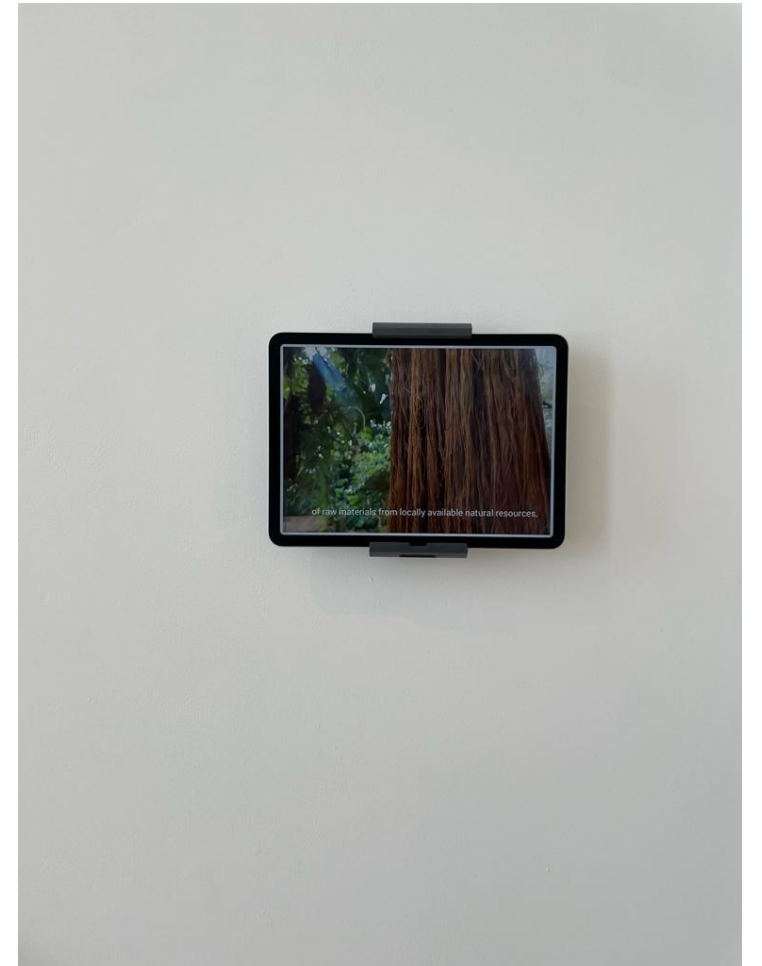
Santiniketan



Installation shots from the solo exhibition at Cromwell Place, UK, 2023

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The exhibition showcased some of his recent artworks and a detailed video essay of the unique process of making his textile works



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**Medoli-1**

Myrobalan, mud resist hand paint with  
indigo, madder and turmeric on mill cotton  
cloth

75 x 56.5 in. (194.6 x 143.5 cm.)

2022

Santiniketan

*Medoli (in the regional Bengali dialect) is a circular pattern of mud and cow dung often smeared with dabbed cloth/broom on the gateways/doorstep/courtyard of houses mostly in rural Bengal. This keeps the area moist, and insect and germs resistant.*

*From childhood, I grew up looking at my grandmother and mother practising every day just like in any typical Indian household, the practice of mark-making, Lepa (Bengali term for coating/smearing the floor with mud and cow dung). This process of (lepa) preparing the floor every day and on special occasions is an essential/ritualistic act of mark making has stayed with me as a memory mark. With the rapid in urbanisation and metropolitan lifestyle, these practices started vanishing from our culture.*

*Here in Saniniketan, the Santhal house mud walls began to refresh my memory and I began exploring these unknown marks. The coloured narratives of walls and floor, their simplistic nature, character and indigenous approach never retards back to look at them in multiple ways: from a perspective of design making, an imagery of abstract narration or a very simple and minimal depiction of natural forms.*



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***Sakāla (Morning)***

Iron rust transfer, drawing with kalamkari ink,  
mud resist, hand-painted  
with indigo and turmeric on myrobalan dyed  
cotton cloth  
62 x 42.5 in.  
2022

Ujjal's works largely explore the traditional relationship with the nature engaging with ideas like tradition, rituals, ecology and landscape. His semi abstract works are mostly inspired from ritualistic practice of making *alapanas* and *lepas* using khori mati/rice paste and other natural ingredients



Natural dyes on textile

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***Sakāla (Morning)***

Detail



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***Sandhyā (Evening)***

Iron rust transfer, drawing  
with kalamkari ink, hand-  
painted with catechu and  
madder on myrobalan dyed  
cotton cloth  
62 x 42.5 in.  
2022

The word *Sandhyā* means evening in Hindi and Bengali. The work done through the process of iron rust transfer, hand-painted using natural dyes (madder and catechu), depicts the evening time of preparing the *chulha* (earthen oven) for cooking. The basic forms, impressions and lines derived from different parts of *chulha* generate the idea of repetitiveness resonating with mundane scenes in Indian households. Here, the impressions of the object and painted layers generate a dialogue with each other to re-evaluate the lost memories associated with objects seen in Indian houses.



Natural dyes on textile

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*Sandhyā (Evening)*

Detail

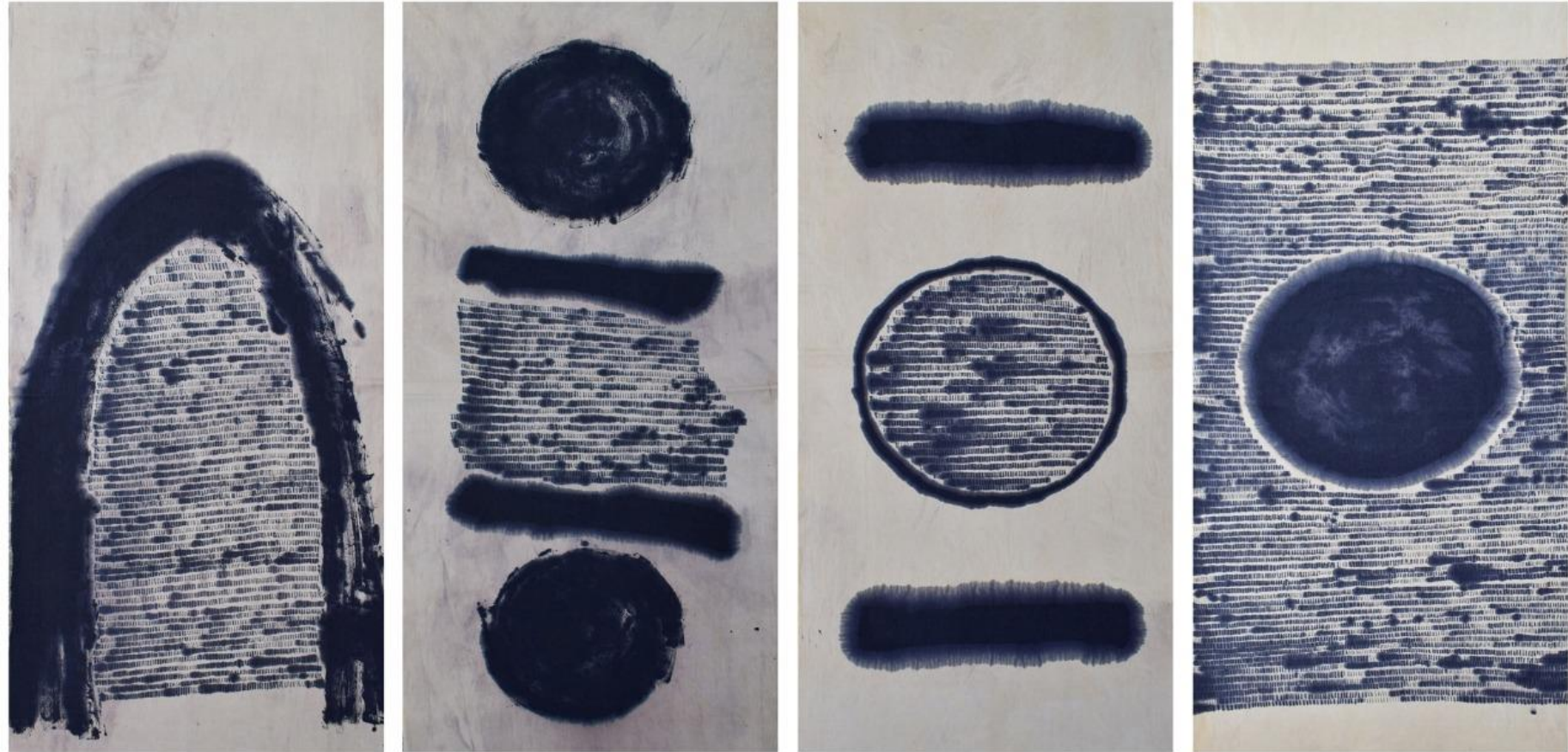


***Daag: where past meets present***

Kalamkari ink on cotton cloth dyed in  
myrobalan

Each panel 36 x 72 in.

2021



Daag (Hindi term for mark) for me is a situational, accidental, intentional gesture of creating a meeting point of memories and physicality. It is the intersecting point where past and present experiences or memories collide. I constantly try to visit and revisit this state to encounter those memories of childhood which stayed like an old stain. By revisiting I try to connect these spots of memories with my current realisations and experiences of the disappearing land, water, air, nature and our physical and spiritual connection with them. Daag is not a negative term for me. I consider it as a momentary capture, and by visiting them time and again, I try to keep them alive.

Natural dyes on textile

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***Daag:*** where past meets present  
Detail



## Natural dyes on textile

### *Daag: where past meets present* Process



My practice involves research and extraction of raw materials from locally available natural resources, developing dyes and pigments, using hand-paint, print, dyeing and resist techniques onto fabric. The process of making colour from my surroundings is an integral part of my practice, and I try to translate and resonate these processes as multiple layers of narrations and experiences of different situations and context.

## Glimpses from the process

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- The process includes various stages starting from primary research to drying and stitching.
- Primarily extensive research on locally available raw materials, from which he makes his own pigments and dyes. This includes materials like various seeds, flowers, tree bark (*Myrobalan*), leaves, and various components of Mango, Marigolds, Pomegranate, Onion, Indigo, Tea, Jackfruit and Eucalyptus. Inspired by traditional methods, such as *kalamkari* techniques, *Ajrakh* prints etc.
- The cotton clothes used are made starch free before applying pigments and dyes. The black ink (iron dust and *jaggery* fermented) is used for drawing on the cotton, the ink is thickened using natural Arabic/ tamarind seed gum.
- The cloth is kept under sunlight for some days and washed in running water to remove the excess ink, usually from the local river in Santiniketan.
- The brown areas are painted with catechu dye. The blue is either dyed/painted with indigo. Yellow is obtained from turmeric / marigold petals/pomegranate skin/onion skin.
- For drawing, he makes traditional *kalam* used in *Kalamkari* (sharpened bamboo pen with thick cotton at the front to hold dye/ pigments). Additionally, different resists such as wax, mud/ lime is used as per the need of the work. The idea of drawing comes from the traditional techniques of *Lepa* and *Alapanas*.

## Process video

<https://www.emamiart.com/artists/46-ujjal-dey/video/>



Glimpses from the process

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***Zameen : The land in between - 2***

Iron rust transfer, drawing and hand-paint with natural dyes on myrobalan dyed cotton cloth

3 panels of 34 x 33 in. each

2020

The series of works are developed from my abstract idea of landscape in today's climate, environmental, social and political changes. Experimenting with the positive and negative space, I try to contextualise the prevailing situations in my work. The rusted part of different objects is taken as print impressions to emphasize it as a piece of agricultural land, forest, public space or different community spaces affected/modified through the changes.

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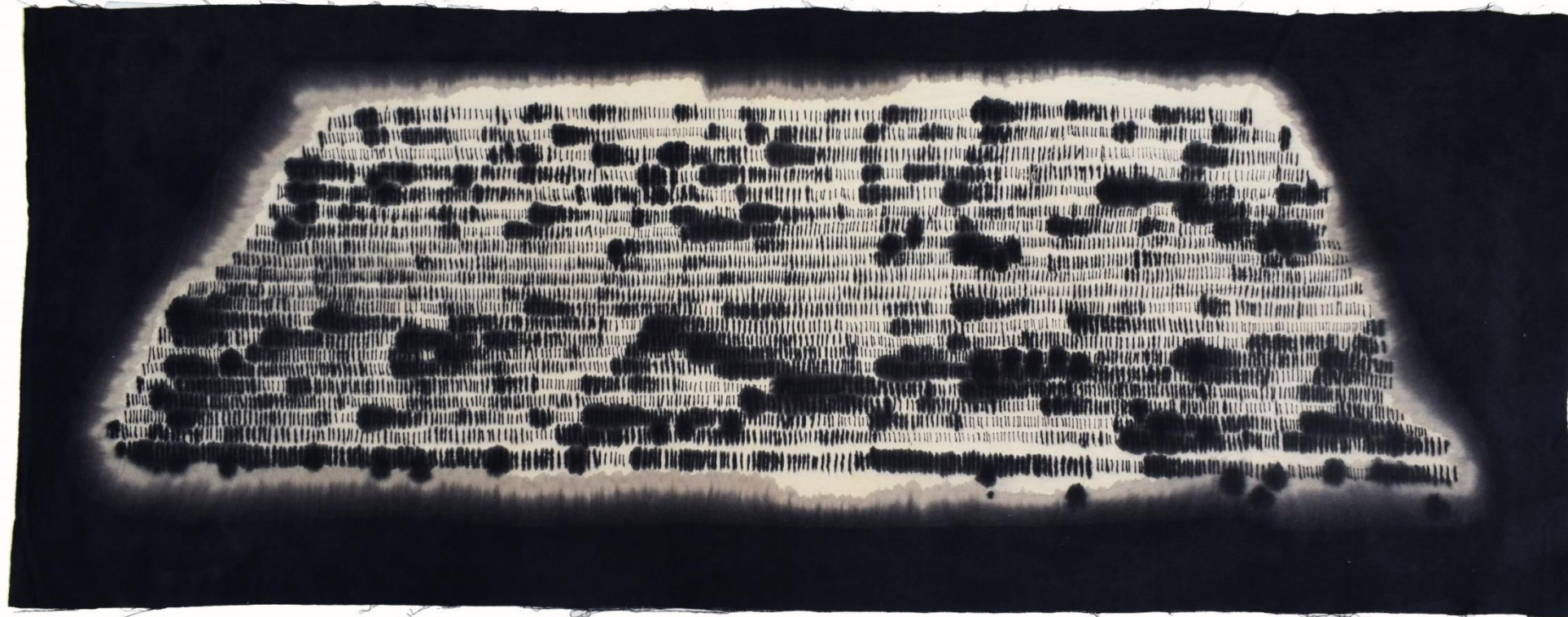
***Zameen 1***

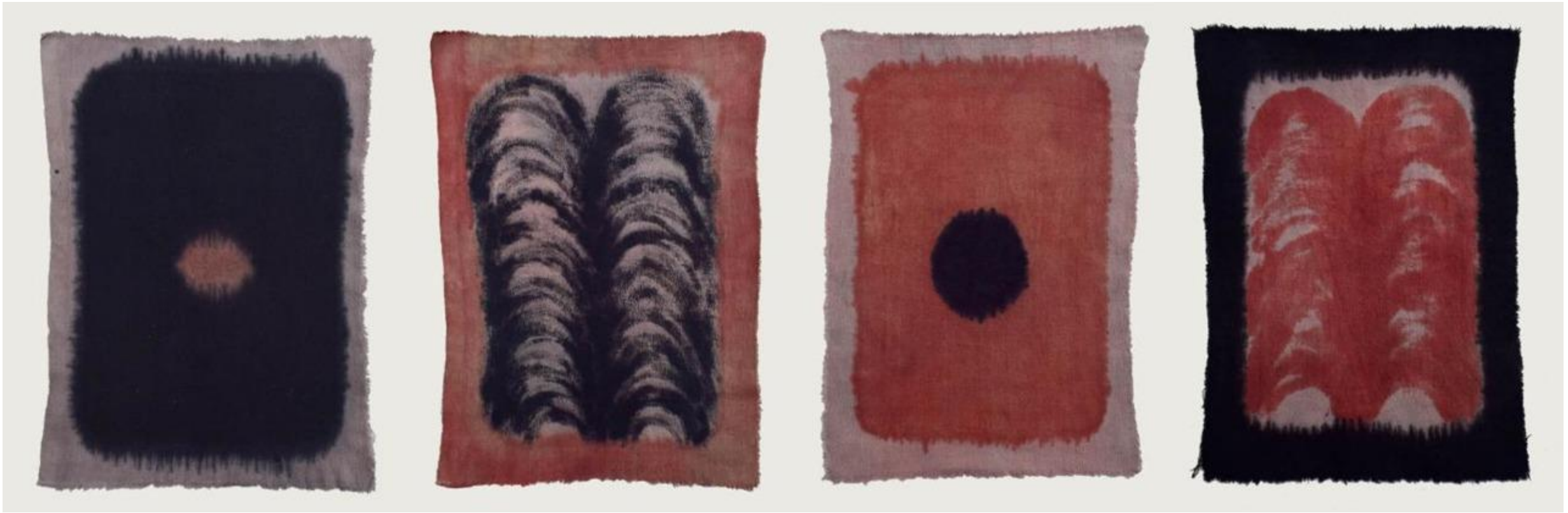
Kalamkari ink on myrobalan-dyed cotton  
cloth

36 x 56 in. (91.5 x 142 cm.)

2020

Ranchi





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***Lepa - 3***

Myrobalan, kalamkari ink, madder  
and alum as mordant on khadi  
cotton  
11.5"x 18 in. each  
2020

Natural dyes on textile

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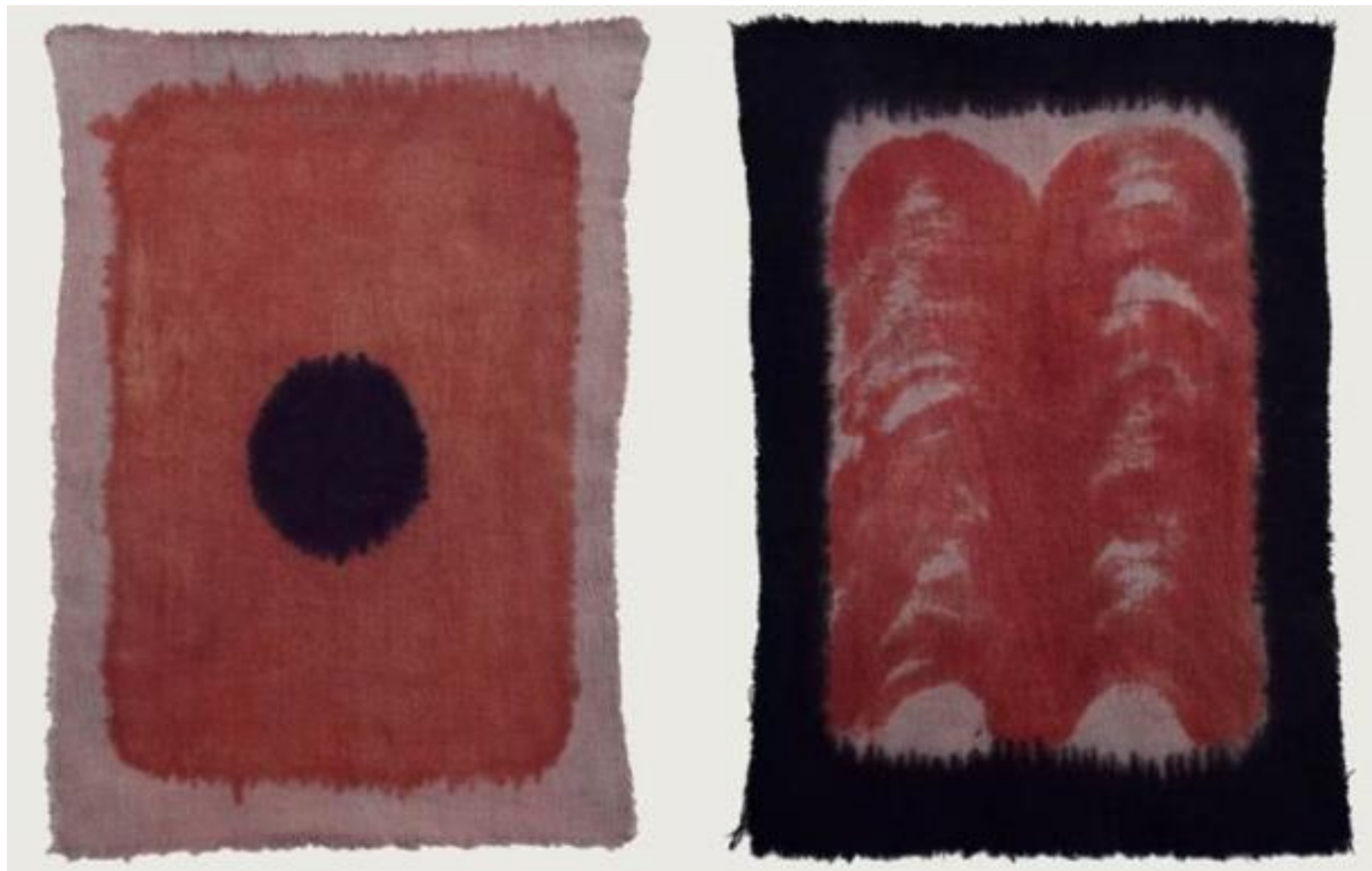
***Lepa - 3***  
Detail



Natural dyes on textile

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***Lepa - 3***  
Detail



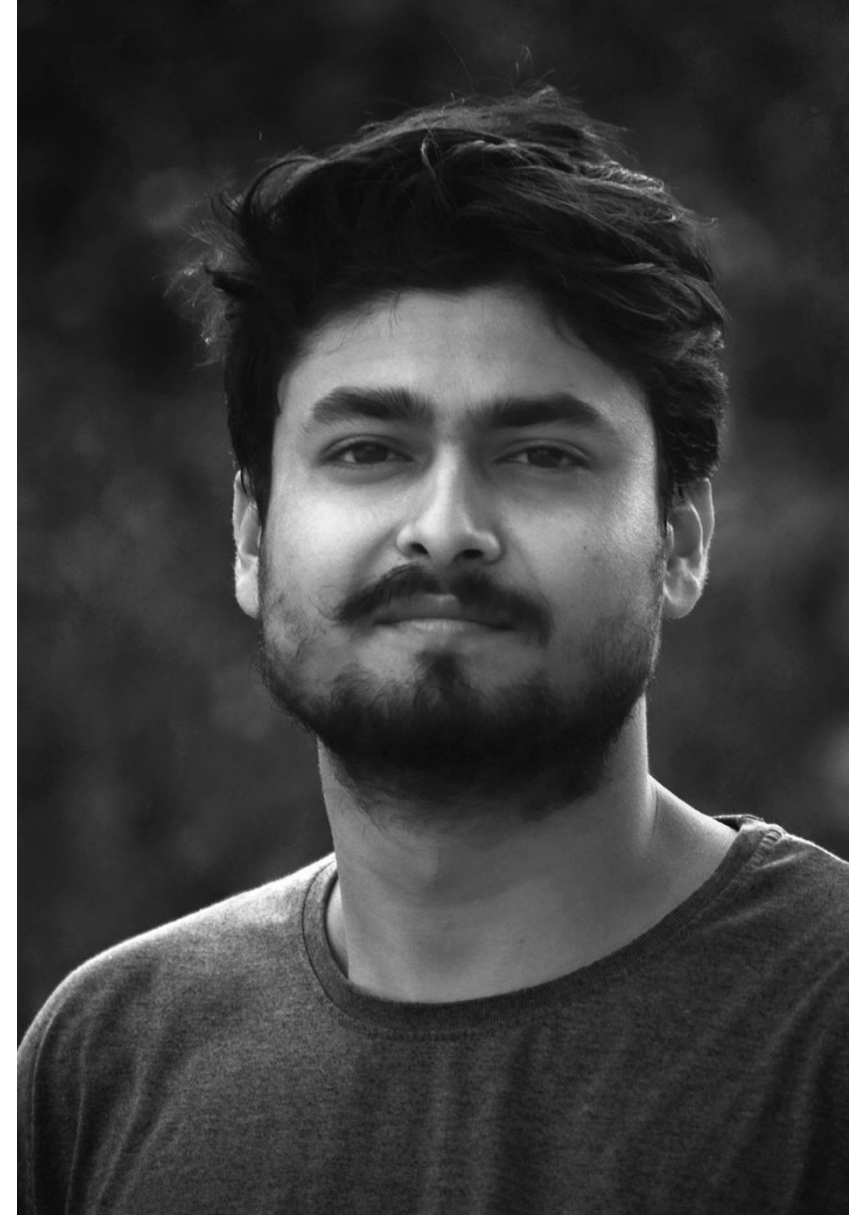
## Brief Bio

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Born in 1992 in Ranchi, India, Ujjal Dey is a contemporary artist pursuing a doctorate from Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan. He studied textile and design at Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan, graduating in 2017. His semi-abstract works, which explore the ideas of tradition, rituals, ecology and landscape, are inspired by several traditional techniques and practices like *Alpana* (floor decoration), *lepas* (smear) and quilt or *Kantha* (stitched fabrics). His doctoral research focuses on the indigenous traditions and sustainable techniques of printing and dyeing.

Ujjal Dey has been selected for the British Textile Biennial 2023. His notable exhibitions include a solo exhibition at Cromwell Place, UK, 2023; the Art Dusseldorf 2023; India Art Fair, 2023; *GOONJ*: An Abstract Continuum curated by Jesal Thacker at the Coomaraswamy Hall, CSMVS Museum, Mumbai; Raza Foundation's 100 Yuva Sambhava (Delhi, 2022); International Fiber Arts of Time Exhibition, Nandan Gallery, Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati University (2021); Departure at Ganges Art Gallery (Kolkata, 2020); Pentamorous at Art Exposure (Kolkata, 2018); The Shape of Things at Ganges Art Gallery (Kolkata, 2017); and several other significant exhibitions in India. In addition, Ujjal has participated in many international workshops, art camps and seminars on textiles. He is the recipient of the Junior Fellowship (2018-2019) and National Scholarship (2016) by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

Ujjal Dey lives and works in Santiniketan, West Bengal.



## CV and Personal details

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Date of birth: 14.07.1992

Gender: Male

Place of birth: Ranchi

Contact details:

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Email: [ujjalnew07@gmail.com](mailto:ujjalnew07@gmail.com)

Emami Art Website:

<https://www.emamiart.com/artists/46-ujjal-dey/overview/>

## Academic Qualifications

- Currently pursuing PhD from Department of Design, Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati University.
- Masters in Fine Arts - Design Textile, Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati University, 2017
- Bachelors in Fine Arts - Design Textile, Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati University, 2015
- AISSCE- Surendranath Centenary School, CBSE, 2010
- AISSE- Surendranath Centenary School, CBSE, 2008

## Awards & Scholarships

- Qualified UGC-NET (Assisitant Professor) for December 2020 and June 2021 (merged session) in Visual Arts.
- Awarded “Certificate of Aappreciation for Textile” – Young Santiniketan Artists’ Exhibition 2019, Santiniketan Society of Visual Art and Design.
- Junior Fellowship - “Visual Art, Sub-Field Others - 2018-2019” CCRT, Ministry of Culture, Government of India.
- National Scholarship - “Visual Art (Others) - 2016” Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

## Exhibitions

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### 2023

Solo show: Cromwell Place, London UK  
Art Dusseldorf 2023, Dusseldorf, Germany  
India Art Fair 2023, New Delhi

### 2022

International Fiber Arts of Time, Nandan Gallery, Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati University.

GOONJ: An Abstract Continuum Curated by Jesal Thacker, Coomaraswamy Hall, CSMVS Museum, Mumbai.

100 YUVA SAMBHAVA - Raza Foundation, A show of 100 young artists of India curated by Akhilesh and Manish Pushkale chosen through the critical advice of Jesal Thacker, Ushmita Sahu, Meera Menezes and Gita Hudson.

### 2021

Retinoblastoma: An Artistic Expression to create awareness about Retinoblastoma in children - online exhibition - L.V Prasad Eye Institute.

### 2020

AMI Art Festival, Emami Art Gallery, Kolkata.  
DEPARTURE, Conceptualized by - Prasanta Sahu, Ganges Art Gallery, Kolkata.

### 2019

Young Santiniketan Artist Exhibition, SSVAD, Santiniketan.

### 2018

Annual Exhibition, Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata.  
Pentamorous, Art Exposure, Kolkata.

### 2017

The shape of things, Curated by Ushmita Sahu, Ganges Art Gallery, Kolkata

# EMAMI ART

KOLKATA, INDIA

Emami Art, Kolkata, is one of India's most significant art galleries and a critical space for cultural production. The gallery focuses on a future-forward, complex, multi-dimensional approach. It is steadfast in advocating for emerging, mid-career and established artists and engaging with contemporary and historical material. The gallery also aims to create dynamic, wide-ranging registers of exhibition-making and viewing.

In addition to hosting exhibitions and participating in national and international events and fairs, Emami Art has diverse parallel programming. Emami Art has launched the **EA Locus in Focus** to provide a voice to local and regional communities through ongoing short and long-term projects. **EA Incubator & Learning** integrates both the physical and virtual interfaces. It helps the arts community free access to regular mentorship programs, workshops, residency opportunities and innovative educational activities that facilitate artistic development, help build collaborative networks and provides a supportive environment for emerging talent. As a centre of excellence, Emami Art identifies as a platform rather than just a facility.

Critical discourses, interactions, documentation and exchange are also essential to our mandate. Under the umbrella of **EA Discourse**, we develop and produce original writing, periodicals and catalogues that focus on artistic, creative and pedagogical materials. As part of our knowledge-making and archiving process, our regular lineup of talks, seminars, panel discussions and conversations with artists, curators and key partners is helping to establish a safe space for critical engagement.

Emami Art has adopted the inclusive, symbiotic framework, where profitability supports sustainable resource regeneration and public service. The gallery is a green building and strictly maintains free access to all policy.

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 a catalyst of change, research, innovation and inclusivity.

