

Ujjal Dey

Portfolio



Artist Ujjal Dey, born in Bihar, India, in 1992, resides and works in Santiniketan, West Bengal. Presently pursuing a PhD focused on diverse knowledge systems and sustainable methods of natural dye in contemporary art, Dey produces research-based art that is informed by a varied, multi-layered understanding of methods, materials and the history of textile traditions in South Asia.

His works largely explore the traditional relationship with nature, engaging with ideas of tradition, rituals, ecology and landscape. Stylistically, his semi-abstract works are mostly inspired by the ritualistic practice of making alpanas and lepas using khori mati/rice paste and other natural ingredients, Kanthas (quilted fabrics) with layers of old clothes and run stitches, which were used as bed/floor spreads. He perceives the repetitive actions and gestures as iterations of daily mundane activities, which are similar in nature, yet each one is slightly different from the others. The visual narrative in his work with basic forms and impressions of objects generate a dialogue with each other to re-imagine the lost memories associated with personal objects, natural landscapes, and the ritualistic practices of mark-making (lepa/alapana) he saw growing up with.

Watch the artist discuss his last solo

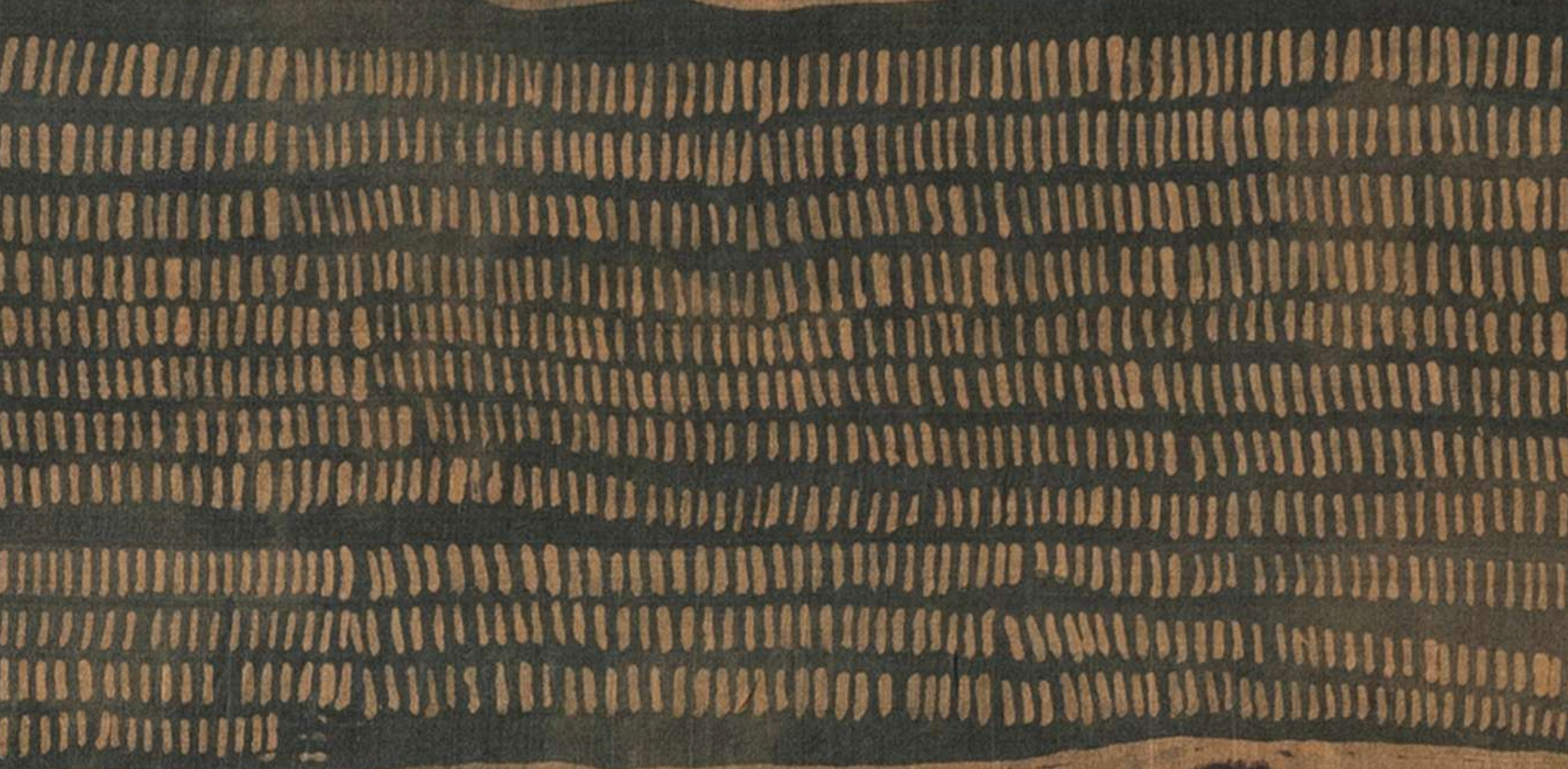




Dey is also an avid gardener with a comprehensive knowledge of indigenous plants. Other areas of his research thus include the extraction of raw materials from locally available natural resources, developing mordants, dyes and pigments from seeds, leaves, flowers, skins, and bark of different materials such as myrobalan, madder, marigolds, mango, pomegranate, palash, the flame of the forest (*Butea Monosperma*), onion, catechu, nanatto, indigo, tea, eucalyptus tree, and jackfruit tree bark. He also diligently experiments with traditional dyeing, block-printing methods, painting, and resist techniques on paper and fabric.

[Know more about Dey's practice](#)





The *Sunset in the Valley* series has two major elements – the arc and the stitch-like mark. The sweeping arcs in Dey’s works are reminiscent of the act of coating the walls of a rural Indian house with mud. The patterned impressions thus generated by repetitive physicality signify matriarchal labour. The stitch-like patterns are an extension of Dey’s memories of his grandmother making kanthas (quilts made by repurposing layers of soft cotton cloth).

Sunset in the Valley I, Myrobalan, kalamkari ink, pomegranate skin extracts, wax resist, and indigo on handwoven Tussar silk backed with plain mill cotton cloth dyed with pomegranate skin dye and stretched onto de-starched canvas with wooden frame, 69 1/2 x 44 1/2 in., 2025, Santiniketan

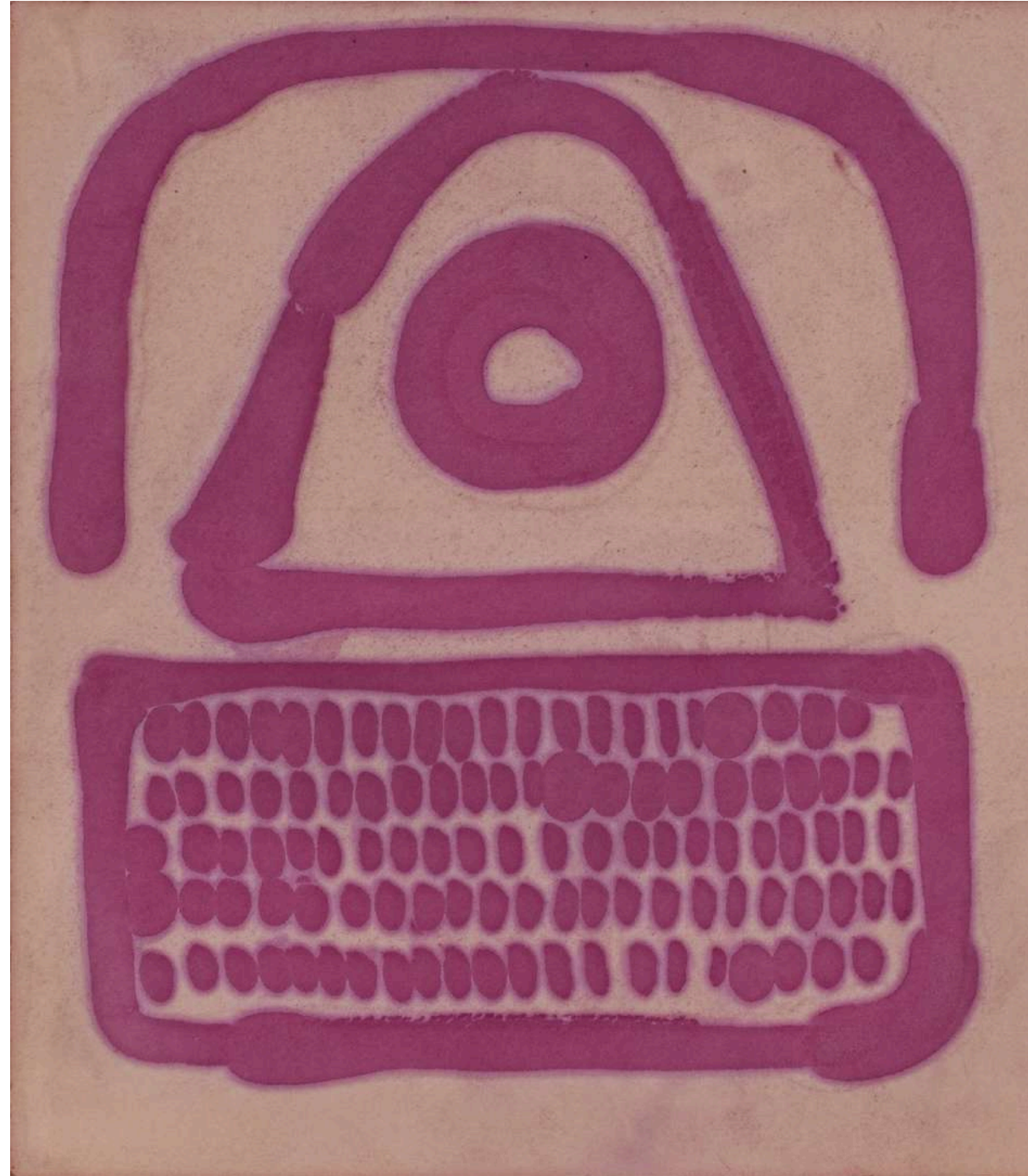




See Through
Kalamkari ink, myrobalan, sappan
wood, and alum on bamboo paper
13 x 9 1/2 in.
2025, Santiniketan

Dawn to Dusk VI
Myrobalan, kalamkari ink, and indigo on
handwoven Matka silk backed with cloth
plain mill cotton cloth and mounted on de-
starched canvas cloth
29 1/8 x 20 1/8 in. each
2025, Santiniketan





The *Daag: Where Past Meets Present* series is inspired by the repetitive mundaneness of a humble household. The motifs of the ordinary Kantha – run stitches translated by the artist into kalamkari (using kalam/bamboo pen) mark making, with natural dyes extracted from foraging of vernacular plant based and small-scale industrial materials. Repetitive action of hand and needle movements iterates the daily monotony and a psychological pattern and raises questions about the gendered labour flowing across generations of vernacular households. He uses the accidentality of the ink bloating into his court to reflect on the daag (marks/traces) on the motherly six yards, reminding us of the kitchen generated stains.

Daag: Where Past Meets Present VI
 Sappan wood and alum on bamboo paper
 10 5/8 x 9 1/2 in. each
 2025, Santiniketan

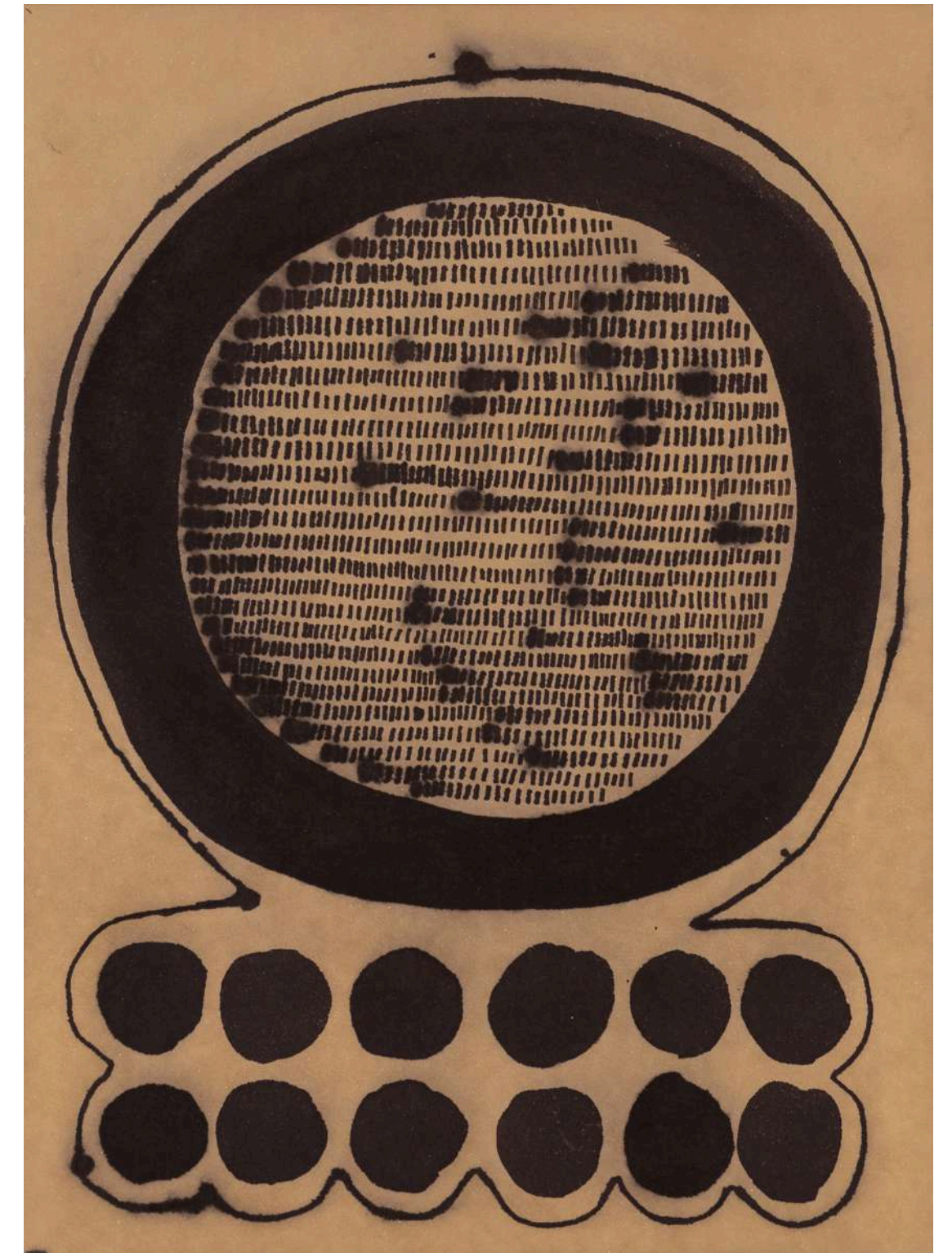
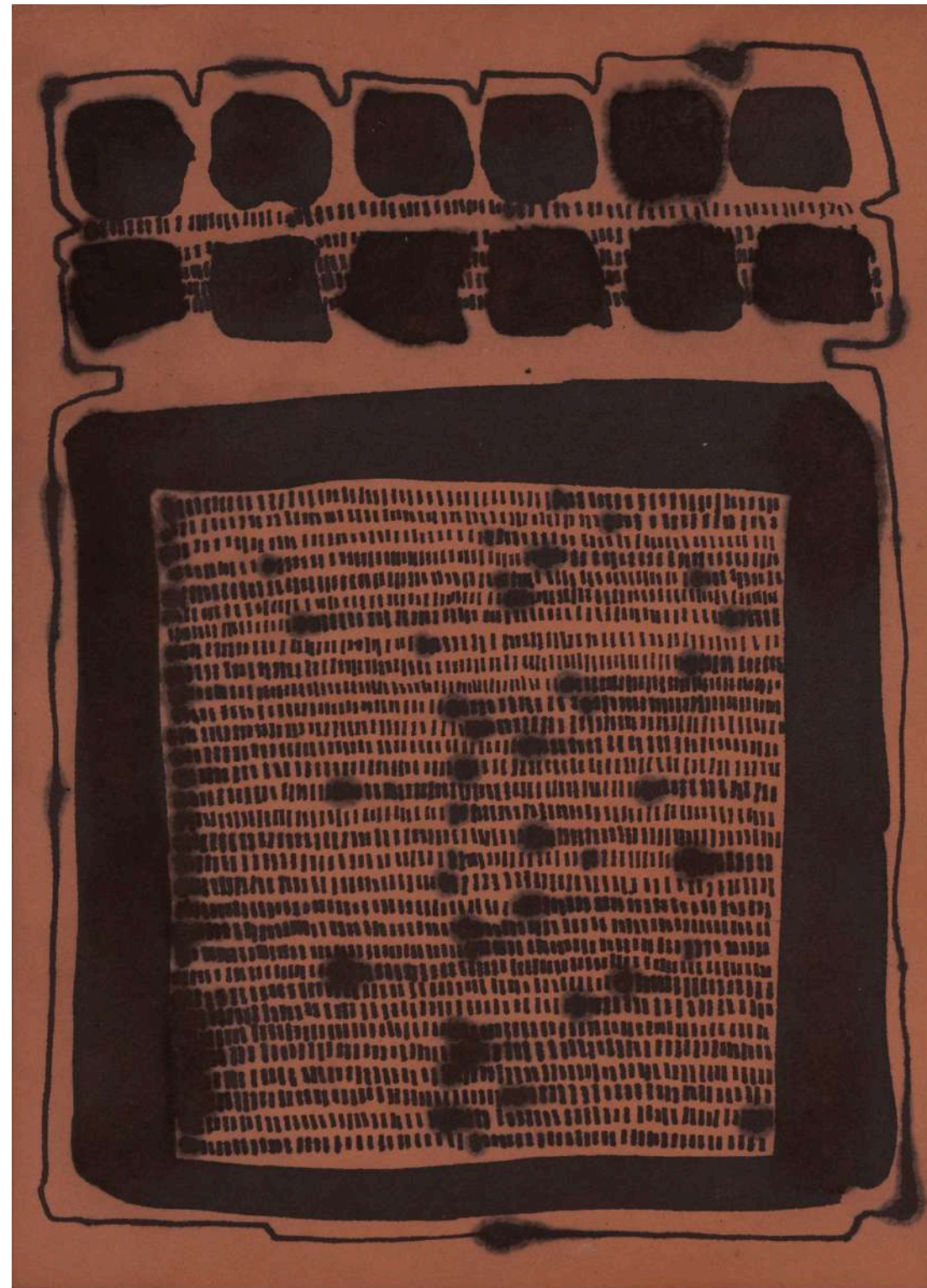
In this set of works, Ujjal Dey uses basic geometric shapes like the square and the circle to frame his depiction of rural agricultural landscape. The repetitive stitch-like marks are an extension of his memories of his grandmother making kanthas (quilts made by repurposing layers of soft cotton cloth).

Framing I

Kalamkari ink, myrobalan, pomegranate extract,
and catechu on bamboo paper

13 x 9 1/2 in. each

2025, Santiniketan





Detail
The Mound
 Kalamkari ink, myrobalan, catechu, pomegranate
 extract, and alum on bamboo paper
 13 x 9 1/2 in.
 2025, Santiniketan



Detail
Dawn 1
Myrobalan, madder, catechu, alum, potassium
dichromate, Kalamkari ink, beeswax on Matka silk
26.37 x 20.27 in.
2024, Santiniketan



Ujjal Dey's work on paper is deeply connected to childhood memories and objects, the domestic village craft, nature, and rituals. A noted textile artist with an international reputation, he prefers working with natural dyeing techniques, creating powerful imageries, forms, and color fields, oscillating between figuration and abstraction, representation, and design. He carries the rich legacies of the Santiniketan artists.

Daag: Where Past Meets Present III
Madder, clay resist, gum arabic and
alum on acid-free bamboo paper
10.62 x 9.44 in. each
2024, Santiniketan





Daag: Where Past Meets Present IV. Madder and alum on acid-free bamboo paper, 10.62 x 9.44 in. each, 2024, Santiniketan

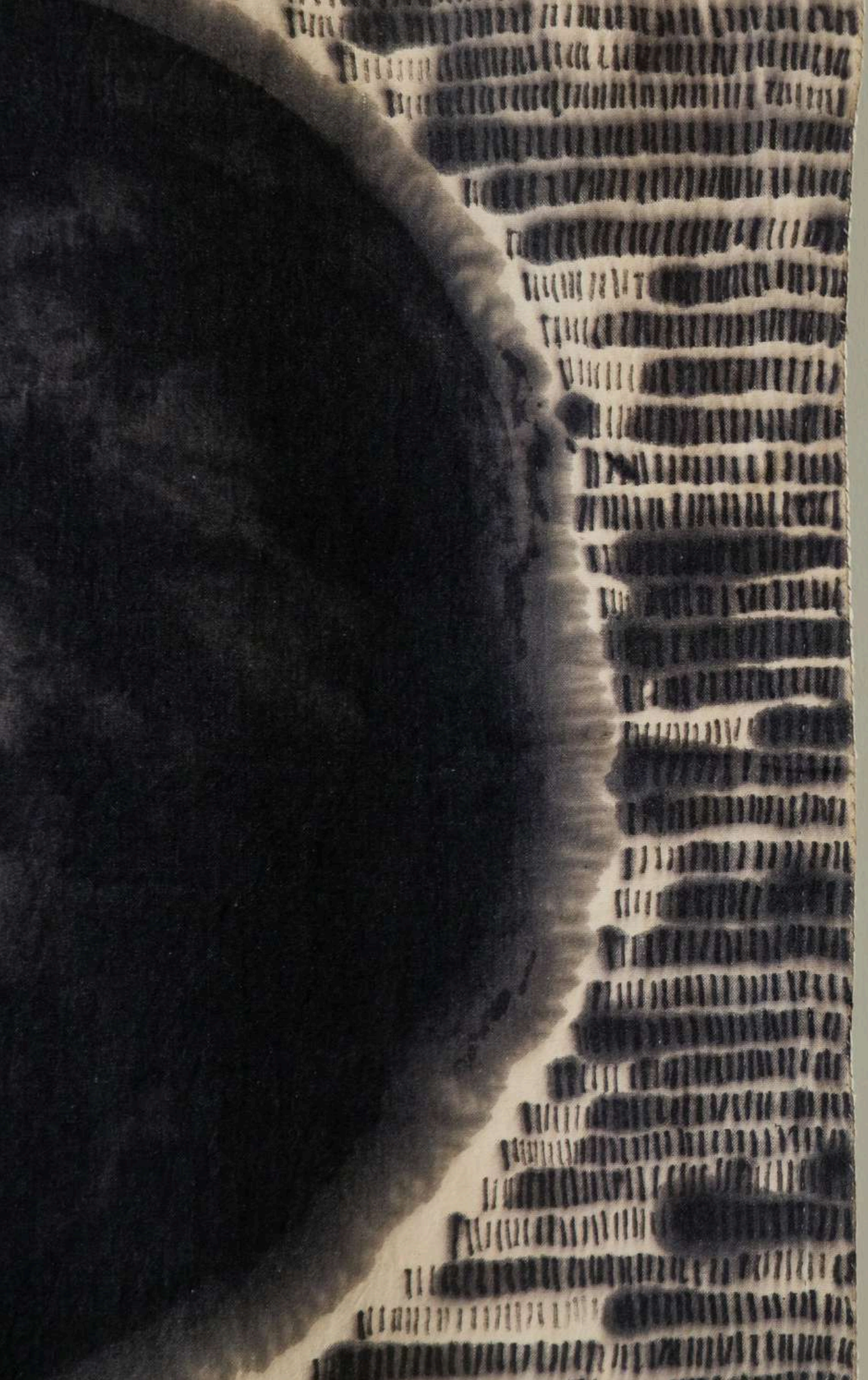


Daag: Where Past Meets Present II
Madder, kalamkari ink and alum on
acid-free bamboo paper
10.62 x 9.44 in. each
2024, Santiniketan



In this set of works, Ujjal Dey uses basic geometric shapes like the square and the circle to frame his depiction of rural agricultural landscape. The repetitive stitch-like marks are an extension of his memories of his grandmother making kanthas (quilts made by repurposing layers of soft cotton cloth).

Daag: Where Past Meets Present V
 Kalamkari ink, myrobalan, pomegranate
 marigold, clay resist, gum arabic and madder on
 acid free bamboo paper
 A, C- 10.62 x 9.44 in. each
 B, D- 9.44 x 10.62 in. each
 2024, Santiniketan



"Dey's processes and concepts highlight a profound and empathetic engagement with domesticity's physical, material, and symbolic dimensions while revealing a deep respect for preserving traditional practices within a contemporary artistic framework. Embracing repetition and chance, these works draw parallels on one hand to indigenous motifs and ancient hand-painted textiles like Andhra Pradesh's medieval Kalamkari art, and on the other to his grandmother's rhythmic hand and needle movements while making Kanthas (Bengal quilts made from repurposed soft cotton cloths). Dey relentlessly performs synonymous patterns to symbolise daily monotony and psychological patterns, drawing attention to notions of lineal gendered labour.

Focusing on and integrating household cooking rituals such as grinding, washing, soaking, and cutting with his methodological framework of foraging, dye-making, and mordanting, Dey's practice underscores the physicality of mundane domestic tasks. His artworks often bear imprints of common kitchen tools like the *Shil-Nora* (flat slab mortar & pestle) and *Bonthi* (traditional chopper), using pigments that he derives from these tools. This blend of culinary implements (historically crafted by men but primarily used by women) serving as both symbolic motif and technical medium, reflects ancestral knowledge of pigment extraction from South Asian bionetworks, while also demystifying societal oversight of unpaid household labour and celebrating women's contributions in conventional, rural social structures."

[excerpt from the curatorial note, *Dawn to Dusk: A Silent Symphony*, 2024]

The *Dawn to Dusk* series is a pivotal work attempted by Ujjal Dey. The visually stunning abstract colour field textile works translate the first Charprahar (4 clock cycles in ancient Indian Astronomy) through reflecting on the extreme time cycle, ecology and the eco-vision. Effortlessly, the works takes us through the silent toil of the women-led Indian households throughout Dawn to Morning to Noon to Afternoon, till Dusk. He uses variegated natural dyes and ancient South Asian textile crafting methods to execute the series.

Dawn to Dusk II
Myrobalan, Kalamkari ink, Wax resist, Catechu,
Indigo, Alum, and Madder on cotton cloth.
22.91 x 16.92 in. each approx.
2024, Santiniketan





Dawn to Dusk I
Myrobalan, Kalamkari ink, Wax resist, Indigo,
Catechu, Alum, and Madder on cotton cloth.
22.91 x 16.73 in. each approx.
2024, Santiniketan

Installation view
Dawn to Dusk: A Silent Symphony
Emami Art, Kolkata
2024



DAWN TO DUSK: A SILENT SYMPHONY

Ujjal Dey's recent works on textiles and paper are infused and permeated with meditations on themes of time, space, identity, and extensive research on the textile history of India, are a testament to his pre-occupation with traditional forms and socio-cultural context.

Dey's practice and concepts highlight a profound and sensitive engagement with identity's physical, material and symbolic dimensions while revealing a deep respect for preserving traditional practices. His contemporary artistic framework, exploring traditional practices, often works draw parallels on one hand to indigenous crafts, and on the other to his grandfather's rhythmic, traditional Indian art and craft-making. Another Dey's rhythmic, traditional Indian art and craft-making. Another Dey's rhythmic, traditional Indian art and craft-making. Another Dey's rhythmic, traditional Indian art and craft-making.

Focusing on and negotiating household (often) tasks such as cooking, washing, sewing, and cutting with his traditional forms, Dey's practice explores the physicality of mundane domestic tasks, the rhythms of daily life, and the physicality of household tasks. Dey's practice explores the physicality of mundane domestic tasks, the rhythms of daily life, and the physicality of household tasks. Dey's practice explores the physicality of mundane domestic tasks, the rhythms of daily life, and the physicality of household tasks.

Rooted in childhood memories from Ranchi, Jharkhand, his maps reveal a deep engagement with the physicality of daily life, and the physicality of household tasks. Dey's practice explores the physicality of mundane domestic tasks, the rhythms of daily life, and the physicality of household tasks. Dey's practice explores the physicality of mundane domestic tasks, the rhythms of daily life, and the physicality of household tasks.

Hence, the passage of time, the Sun, and the Moon are central to this exhibition. An important series, *Offering to Dusk*, focuses on the Indian tradition of *Arghya* (offering to the Sun) and *Arghya* (offering to the Moon). Dey's practice explores the physicality of mundane domestic tasks, the rhythms of daily life, and the physicality of household tasks. Dey's practice explores the physicality of mundane domestic tasks, the rhythms of daily life, and the physicality of household tasks.

Dey has been experimenting with indigenous, traditional forms and processes for more than two years, and this exhibition marks his first solo show. Dey's practice explores the physicality of mundane domestic tasks, the rhythms of daily life, and the physicality of household tasks. Dey's practice explores the physicality of mundane domestic tasks, the rhythms of daily life, and the physicality of household tasks.

Born into a Bengali family in Ranchi, Bihar, and currently based in Santhar, India, Ujjal Dey stands as both a contemporary artist and a dedicated researcher, weaving narratives that resonate with cultural heritage and personal experience.





The works of the *Offering to Surya* series, are substantially large hanging pieces which remind one of the hand-painted, printed and mordant-dyed calicoes and Palampores that were made in India during the late seventeenth and eighteenth century in India. However, unlike the royal textiles, Dey's approach to make these has been based in locale - highlighting the sheer yet, blanket banned artistry of the Thekua (sweet meat) mould makers. He uses these sweet meat moulds as the blocks along with his layered and meticulous resist-mordant-dye and mark making technique. Visually, the colour field gains familiarity with Indian temple architectures crafted with the artist's ritualistic textile based processes.

Offering to Surya II

Myrobalan, Kalamkari ink, lime resist, alum, turmeric, and madder on cotton cloth

91.3x47.24 in.

2024, Santiniketan

Offering to Surya I

Myrobalan, Kalamkari ink, Lime resist, Alum, Turmeric, Indigo, and Catechu on cotton cloth

85.43x47.63 in.

2024, Santiniketan



The *Material Memory* series uses the Bonti-s (traditional Indian Iron blade vegetable cutters) as blocks as his impression translating blocks. These works are inspired by his migrated Bengali household's matriarchal kitchen implements used for cutting and extracting vegetables. Dey uses variegated remedial and usual organic herbs and seeds to extract dyes that he uses for printing, dyeing and mark making. The patterned marks are drawn using the ancient Kalamkari technique – of which the patterns are inspired by his grandmother's humble Kanthas (Bengal quilts) and the technique is borrowed from the ancient traditional Artistry of Andra Pradesh, India.

Material Memory I

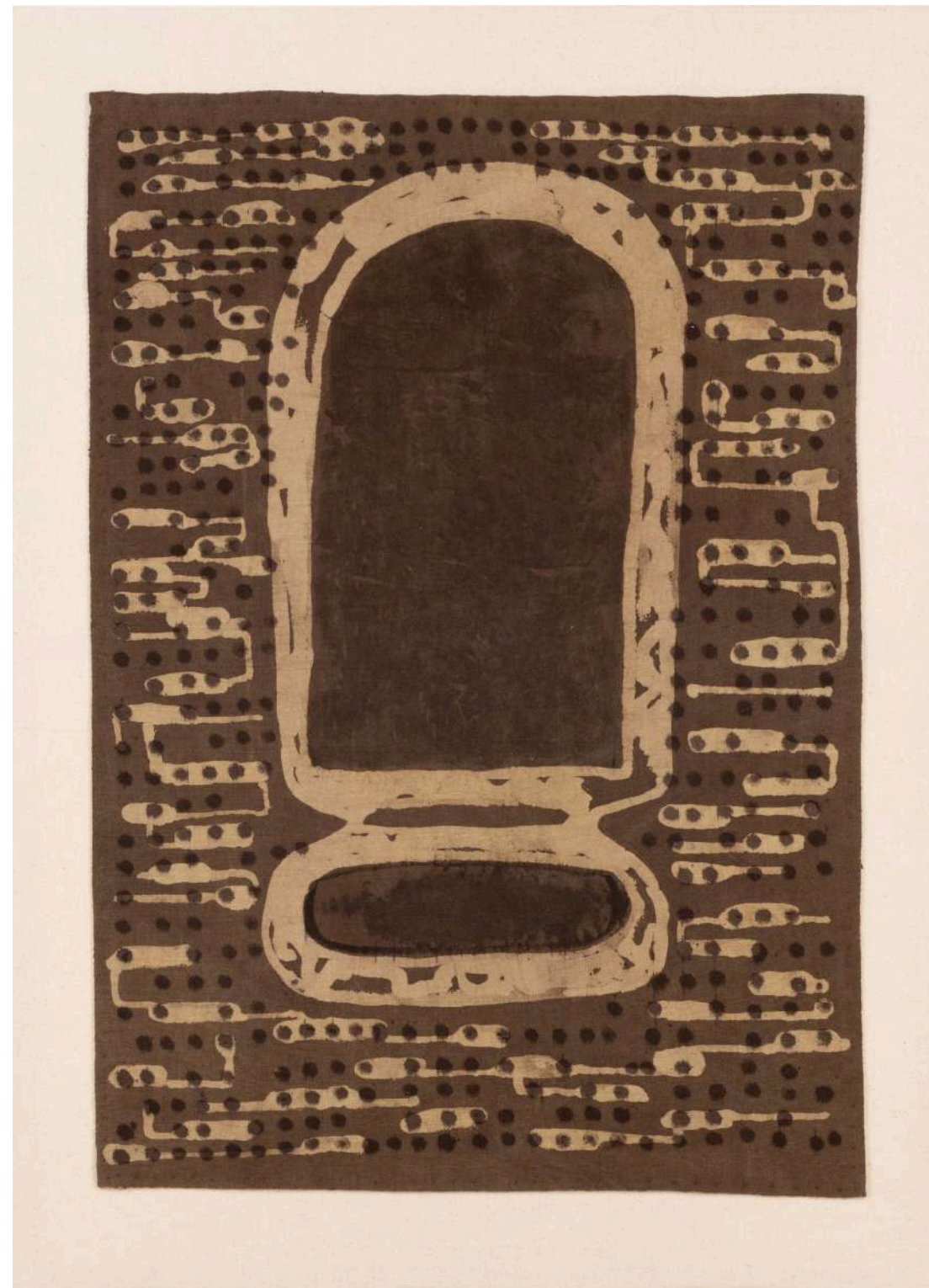
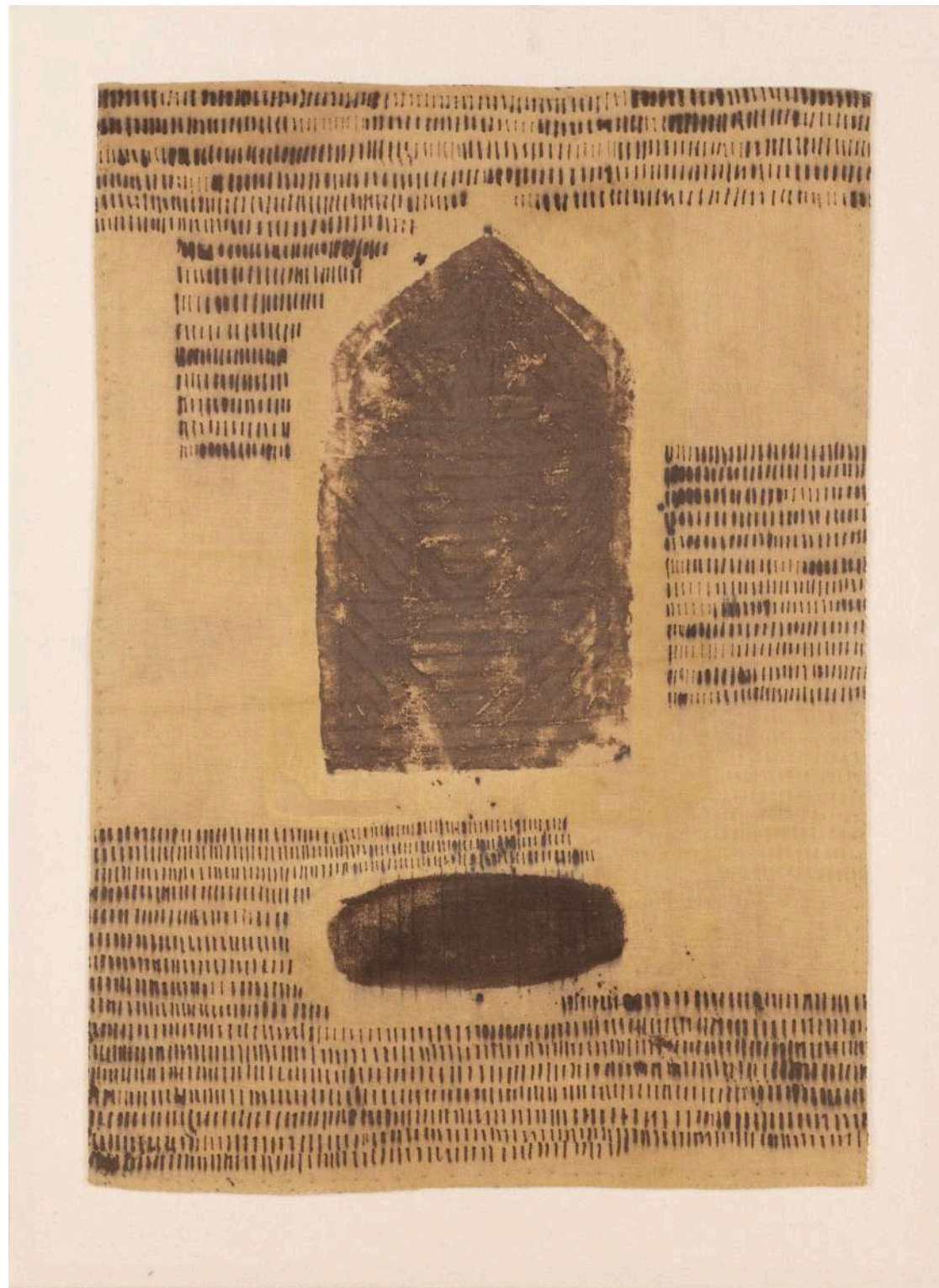
Myrobalan, Kalamkari ink, Wax, lime
resist, Alum, and Indigo on Khadi
Cotton Cloth

49.21 x 35.03 in.

2024, Santiniketan



Installation view | *Dawn to Dusk: A Silent Symphony*, Emami Art, Kolkata, 2024



Mother and Child, 28 x 19.5 in. approx each, 2024, Santiniketan



Mother and Child, 28 x 19.5 in. approx each, 2024, Santiniketan



"The passage of time, the Sun, and the Moon are central to this exhibition. An important series, *Offering to Surya*, focuses on the Chhath Puja traditions of Northern-Eastern India and pays homage to his roots, capturing the rituals through visual storytelling. The large hanging textiles also epitomise the artistry of the Thekua (sweetmeat) mould makers who intricately carve wooden blocks to shape this traditional sweet as an offering to the Sun God. By using these blocks as printing apparatus, Dey draws parallels between tradition, ritual, and replication – honouring cultural fidelity in rural households."

[excerpt from the curatorial note, *Dawn to Dusk: A Silent Symphony*, 2024]

Offering to Surya III
Myrobalan, Kalamkari ink, Wax and
lime resist, Alum, Madder and
Catechu on cotton cloth
82.67 x 46.06 in.
2024, Santiniketan



Installation view
Dawn to Dusk: A Silent Symphony
Emami Art, Kolkata
2024



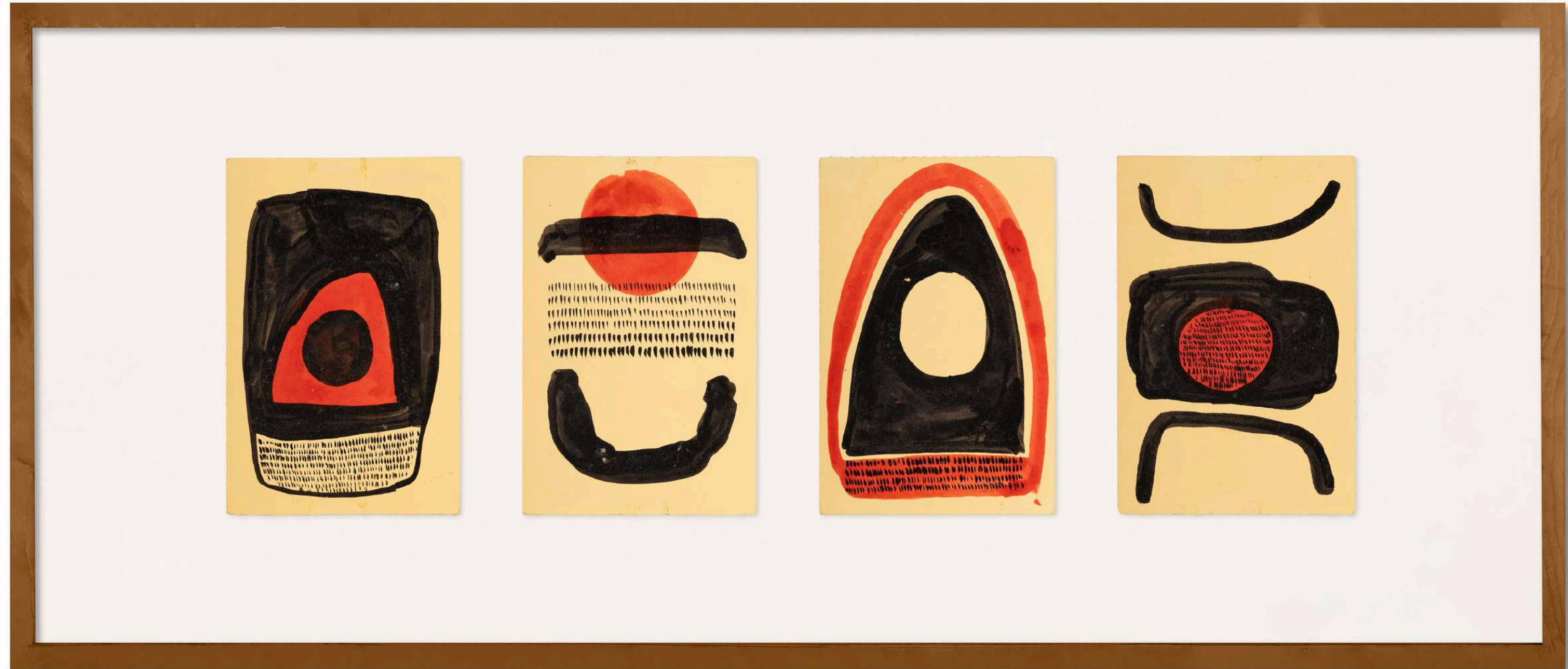
Material Memory II
Myrobalan, Kalamkari ink, Wax, resist,
on Khadi Cotton Cloth
44.48 x 35.03 in.
2024, Santiniketan

Root-map, Kalamkari ink, alum mordant, mud and lime resist, indigo, madder, and catechu on myrobalan-dyed cotton cloth, 33 x 22 in. approx. each, 2023, Santiniketan



Root-map is part of Ujjal Dey's ongoing project titled "Trade-root" which navigates the history of mercantile exchanges, South Asia's traditional dyeing techniques and block-print methods. Focusing primarily on the history of trade and the category of textiles known as 'trade textiles', Dey explores the story of materials used for making pigment and printing techniques tracing back to the early days of trade and transactions within and beyond the Indian Ocean world. He attempts to look at sustainability through eco-sensitive thinking, experimenting, and innovating widely used printing techniques across many South Asian regions since pre-industrial times. Searching through the syncretic tradition and entangled history, this work re-imagines the past and the burden of colonialism beyond binaries and bigotry.

Dawn to Dusk (Postcard drawings), Waterproof coloured ink on postcards, 5.7 x 3.8 in. each, 2023, Santiniketan



In the *Dawn to Dusk* series, the visually stunning abstract colour field textile works translate the first Charprahar (4 clock cycles in ancient Indian Astronomy) through reflecting on the extreme time cycle, ecology and the eco-vision. In these postcard drawings, Dey chronologically arranges the Charprahar using waterproof coloured ink on India Post postcards.



Details

Trade-winds I

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

83 x 45 in. approx.

2023, Santiniketan

The *Memory Scape* series by Ujjal Dey explores certain kinds of indigenous techniques and ritualistic practices which the artist witnessed while growing up in his ancestral home in Jharkhand and continues to observe in Santiniketan. By revisiting these memories of mark-making and other ritualistic practices, Dey 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 the other two series, *Lepa* and *Daag*.

Memory Scape I
Kalamkari ink, alum mordant painted, mud resist,
catechu, madder and indigo dye on myrobalan
dyed khadi cotton cloth
90.5 x 45 in. approx.
2023, Santiniketan





Zameen: The land in between 3
 Kalamkari ink, alum mordant painted and madder
 dye on myrobalan dyed cotton cloth
 68.5 x 43 in. approx.
 2023, Santiniketan



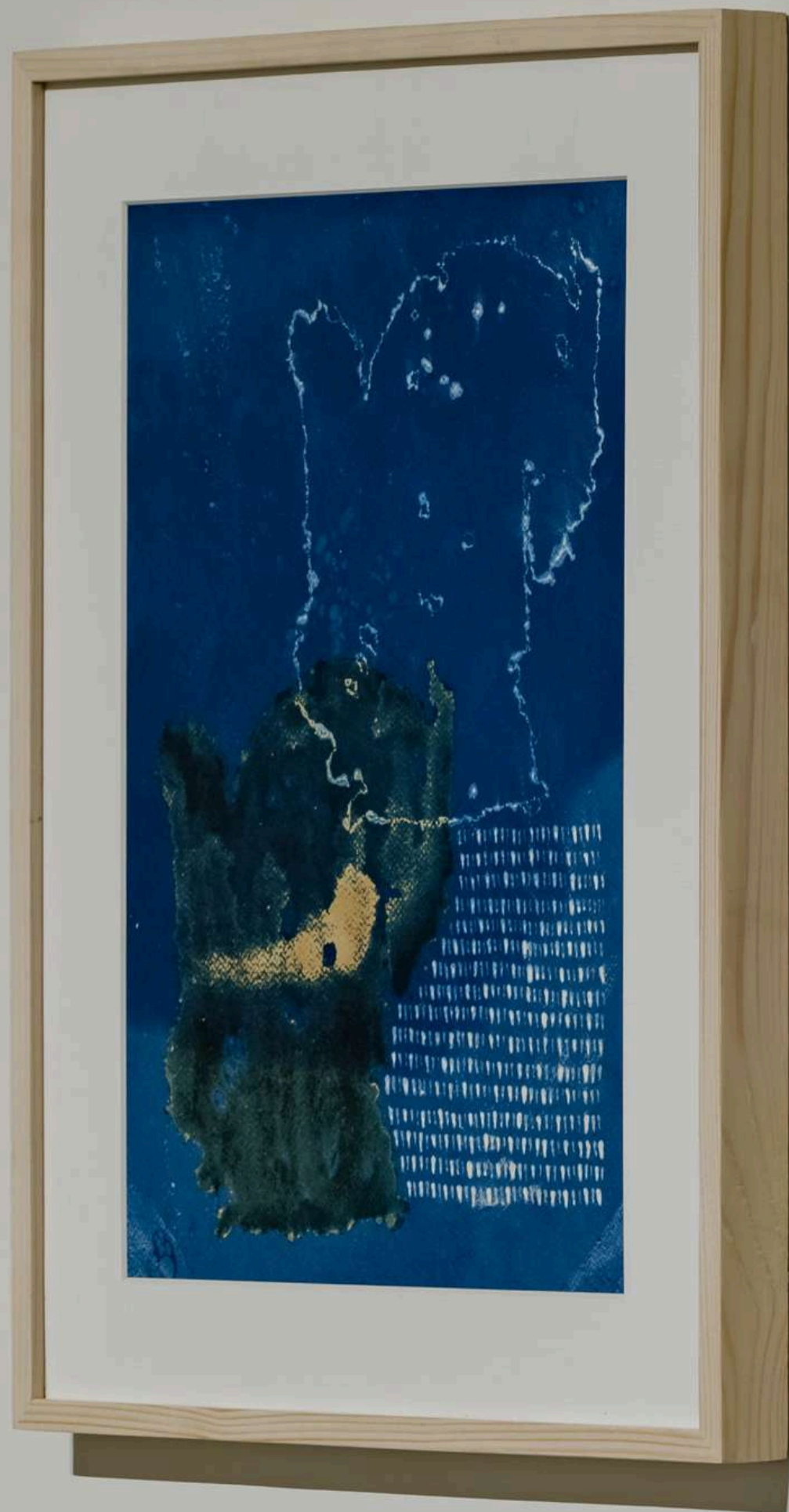
Installation view
Ancestral Futures
 Curated by Damian Christinger
 Gallery ESpace, New Delhi
 2024

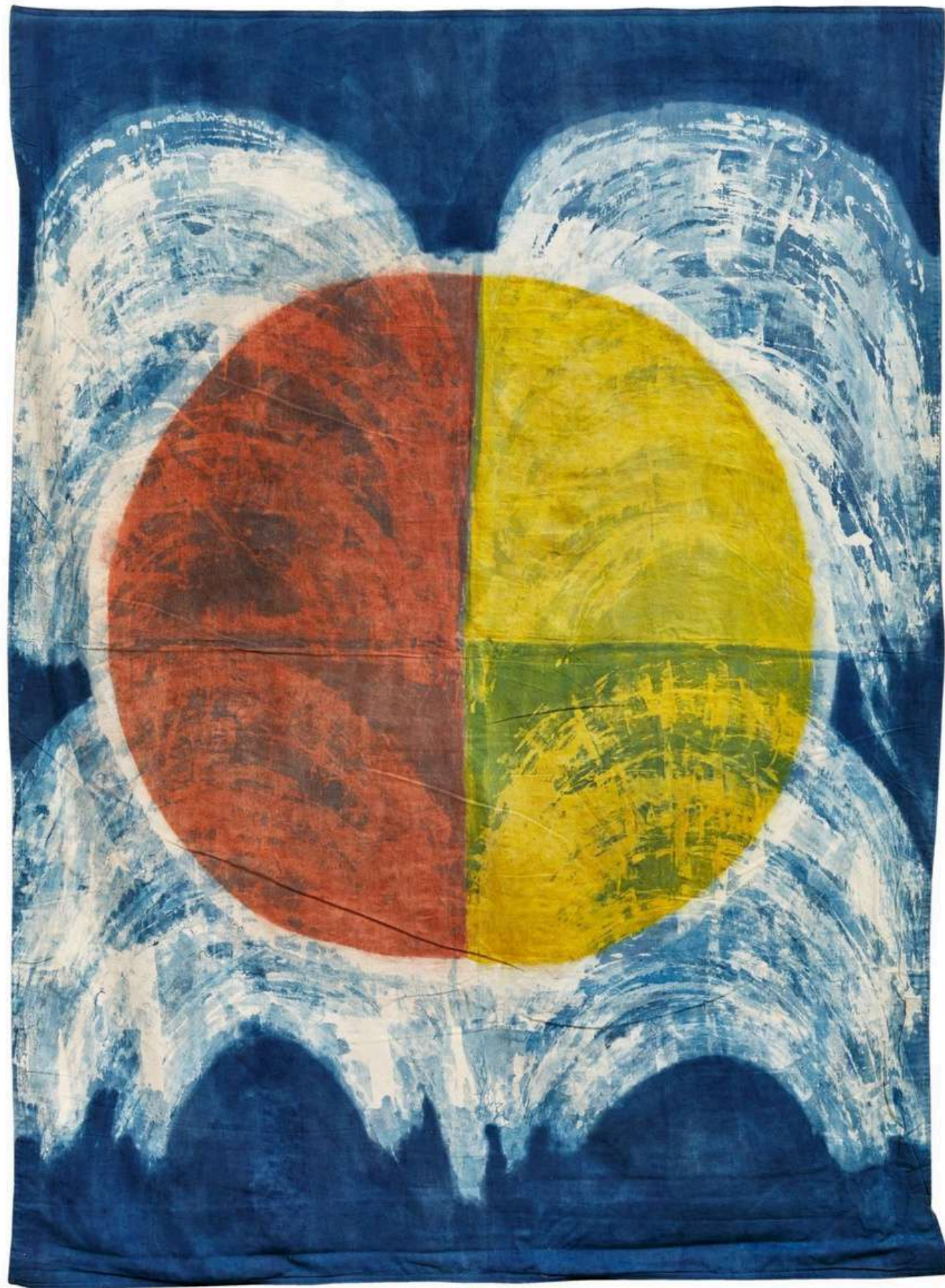
Mapping the Root II, Kalamkari ink, khori maati (white clay), lime and indigo on paper, 16.7 x 11.7 in. each, 2023, Santiniketan



Ujjal Dey contextualises this work amidst common Indian household practices of making Lepa (coating/smearing the floor with mud and cow dung) and Alpana (floor or wall painting). This essential/ritualistic act of mark-making has stayed with the artist as a memory. He looks at them in multiple ways: from a perspective of design making, an imagery of abstract narration and a very simple, minimal depiction of natural forms.

Installation view
Dawn to Dusk: A Silent Symphony
Emami Art, Kolkata
2024





"Works like the *Medoli* series depict the daily ritualistic, performative, and auspicious 'Sun marks'. An age-old daily ritualistic practice, Medoli involves smearing cow dung and clay every dawn on earthen house floors. Dey takes cues from the gestural swabbing motion of the arms and augments the context by adding local clay in the Kalamkari ink and white clay (Khorī maati) as a resist substance in the processes."

[excerpt from the curatorial note, *Dawn to Dusk: A Silent Symphony*, 2024]

Medoli-1

Myrobalan, mud resist hand painted with
indigo, madder and turmeric on cotton cloth
76.61 X 56.50 inches
2022, Santiniketan



Installation view
Material as Metaphors: A Dialogue of Art Forms
National Gallery of Modern Art, Kolkata
2025

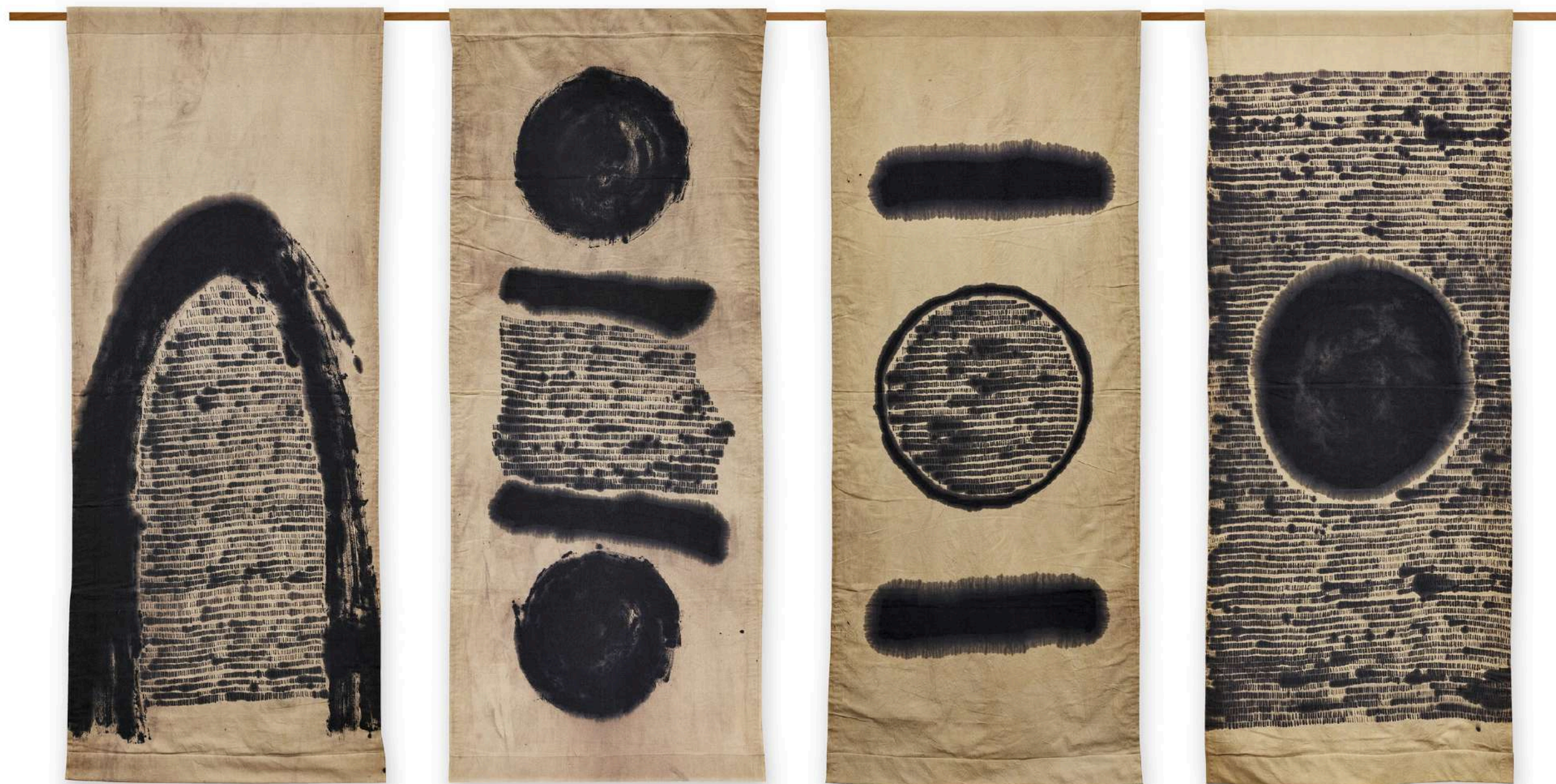


Medoli-2
Myrobalan, kalamkari ink, mud resist, hand
painted with indigo, madder on cotton cloth
72.8 x 57 in.
2022, Santiniketan

মন ভরে,
প্রাণ খুলে,
হাতে হাত ধরে
গান গাইবো
আমরা একদিন



Installation view
Fragments of Our Time
Curated by Uthra Rajgopal
British Textile Biennial, UK, 2023
Photo credit: Jack Bolton



The long history of forests all over the world being uprooted, mountains being blown apart to make way for civilisation, and rivers being fed toxic waste to fulfil the selfish needs of capitalist forces drives my work.

Daag: Where Past Meets Present
Kalamkari ink on cotton cloth dyed in myrobalan
79.33 X 136.02 in.
2021, Santiniketan



Installation view | *Dawn to Dusk: A Silent Symphony*, Emami Art, Kolkata, 2024

The long history of forests all over the world being uprooted, mountains being blown apart to make way for civilisation, and rivers being fed toxic waste to fulfil the selfish needs of capitalist forces drives my work.

Lepa-4
Kalamkari ink, mud resist, catechu,
myrobalan, natural dyed with indigo on
acid-free paper; Mounted on Lokta Paper
16.54 X 11.61 in. each
2020, Santiniketan





Installation view
Dawn to Dusk: A Silent Symphony
 Emami Art, Kolkata
 2024



Born in 1992 in Ranchi, India, Ujjal Dey is a contemporary textile artist pursuing a doctorate from Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan. He graduated from Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan, with a B.F.A. and an M.F.A. in textile and design in 2015 and 2017, respectively.

Dey's solo shows include *Dawn to Dusk: A Silent Symphony*, Emami Art, 2024; and a solo project held at the Cromwell Place, London, UK, in 2023. Notable group exhibitions include *Worlds Within Cloth: New Orders of Woven Making* curated by Sreyansi Singh at the National Crafts Museum, New Delhi, 2026; *Vichitra/विचित्र* organised by Emami Art and Kolkata Centre for Creativity in collaboration with Bihar Museum, Patna, 2026; *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; *Ancestral Futures*, a group show curated by Damian Christinger, Gallery ESpace, New Delhi, 2024; *ALL THAT IS HIDDEN: Mapping Departures in Landscape, Terrains and Geographies*, Emami Art, Kolkata, 2024; *Transforming Traditions*, InKo Centre, Chennai 2024; *Fragments of Our Time*, curated by Uthra Rajgopal at the British Textile Biennial, UK, 2023; International Fiber Arts of Time at Nandan Gallery, Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, 2022; *GOONJ: An Abstract Continuum*, curated by Jesal Thacker at Coomaraswamy Hall, CSMVS, Mumbai, 2022; *100 YUVA SAMBHAVA* by Raza Foundation, a show of 100 young artists of India curated by Akhilesh and Manish Pushkale, 2022; *Retinoblastoma: An Artistic Expression*, an online exhibition at L.V Prasad Eye Institute, 2021; *DEPARTURE* conceptualised by Prasanta Sahu at Ganges Art Gallery, Kolkata, 2020; Young Santiniketan Artist Exhibition at SSVAD, Santiniketan, 2019; the Annual Exhibition at Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata, 2018; and *The Shape of Things*, curated by Ushmita Sahu at Ganges Art Gallery, Kolkata, 2017; among many others. Dey's works have also been presented by Emami Art, Kolkata at Art Mumbai 2025, 2024; India Art Fair EDI+IONS Hyderabad 2025; Art Dusseldorf 2023 and India Art Fair 2025, 2024, 2023.

He was awarded the Certificate of Appreciation for Textile at the Young Santiniketan Artists' Exhibition, Santiniketan Society of Visual Art and Design in 2019 and is the recipient of the Junior Fellowship (2018-2019) and the National Scholarship (2016) by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

Ujjal Dey lives and works in Santiniketan, West Bengal.

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.

