

**Every Year the Flood Comes
Recent Works by Sudipta Das**

Every Year the Flood Comes is an exhibition of new works by Baroda-based artist Sudipta Das. Referring both to the physical and emotional losses caused by seasonal floods that devastate the artist's home town of Silchar, Assam, *Every Year the Flood Comes* considers the precarious position of human lives in flux.

Through collections and assemblages of her now-iconic doll-like paper sculptures, Das dives into personal history and family narratives to explore themes of exile, refuge and temporariness of life. Meticulously crafted from layers and layers of handmade Hanji paper, her chosen medium is fragile, yet resistant. A quality that reflects the tenacity of the unnamed people whose stories she seeks to tell. An unsuspecting medium, paper has long been a hidden protagonist in the narratives of placelessness. Without paper, one has no form of identification. Without identification, one loses the freedom to move from place to place. One loses their proof of belonging.

Before rendering her work into human-like figures, Das's interest in paper was made explicit in her work with archival material and found photographs. In particular, she sought images and references from Partition which evidenced the formation of Bangladesh and the idea of Bangladeshi identity. These photographs were then torn, cut, painted and collaged. With this action, the artist 'pieces together a remembrance through storytelling and memory'. The photographs become a key to unlock a personal history and a lens through which to address her familial experience of identity loss as a micro-minority community. While the work starts out thinking about the historical significance of placelessness and belonging post-1971, it takes on a new meaning of precarity for the people of Assam following the recently released National Register of Citizens.

Inspired by the dakjee doll making technique learned while on residency in Korea in 2017, Das's interpretation updates these small human-like figures from something innocent, delicate and collectable to an eerie, exaggerated facsimile of the characters and personalities she seeks to communicate. Rendered in incredible detail, with delicately crafted handmade outfits and accessories, the paper sculptures have previously been installed in ways that leave their tiny bodies hanging off the ground or precariously suspended from the walls. Positions that further suggest their life in limbo. For *Every Year the Flood Comes*, Das creates a new installation which forces viewers to navigate between the sea of nameless figures. The arrangement reinforces the idea of mass populations who have to cross over impermanent thresholds into uncertain futures, while the act of the viewer passing through reminds us of our complicity as silent bystanders to these incidents of forced mass exile.

Text by Sitara Chowfla