

# LATITUDE 28

presents

## MANJOT KAUR

Ecosystems are Love Stories

BAWWABA

Curated by Emiliano Valdés

Booth W-9

ART DUBAI  
28.2-3.3.2024

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
 A.R.M.  
HOLDING





Riding on the Clouds with My Beloved

Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
18.75 x 25.5 inches  
2024

Detail  
Riding on the Clouds with My Beloved  
Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
18.75 x 25.5 inches  
2024





The work narrates a story of a heroine, a tree and a horse who are running away with each other to a world of interspecies love.

The image of women embracing a tree while riding a horse is borrowed from a folio representing a folio from popular Indian subject, the love between Sultan Baz Bahadur and his courtesan Rupmati. Baz Bahadur (r. 1555-61) was the last king of Malwa before its absorption into the Mughal Empire who fell for the beautiful musician, dancer and poetess Rupmati after encountering her on a hunting trip. Rupmati was made Queen of Malwa, but the fantastic love story came to a tragic end in 1561, when the Mughal Emperor Akbar and his forces took the kingdom. Baz Bahadur fled without his beloved Rupmati, who then decided to commit suicide rather than submit to their conqueror.

To counter narrate this story, this time Rupmati chooses to love a tree and a horse in search for an everlasting companionship, therefore replacing the figure of man with a tree. Isolating the subjects from their background helps to create a new narrative. These works propose a post queer way of thinking fostering notions of care and love by extending it to other species.

Detail  
Riding on the Clouds with My Beloved  
Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
18.75 x 25.5 inches  
2024



I Wish I Could Love You More

Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
19.5 x 25.5 inches  
2024



Detail  
I Wish I Could Love  
You More  
Gouache and  
Watercolour on Paper  
19.5 x 25.5 inches  
2024



Detail  
I Wish I Could Love You More  
Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
19.5 x 25.5 inches  
2024

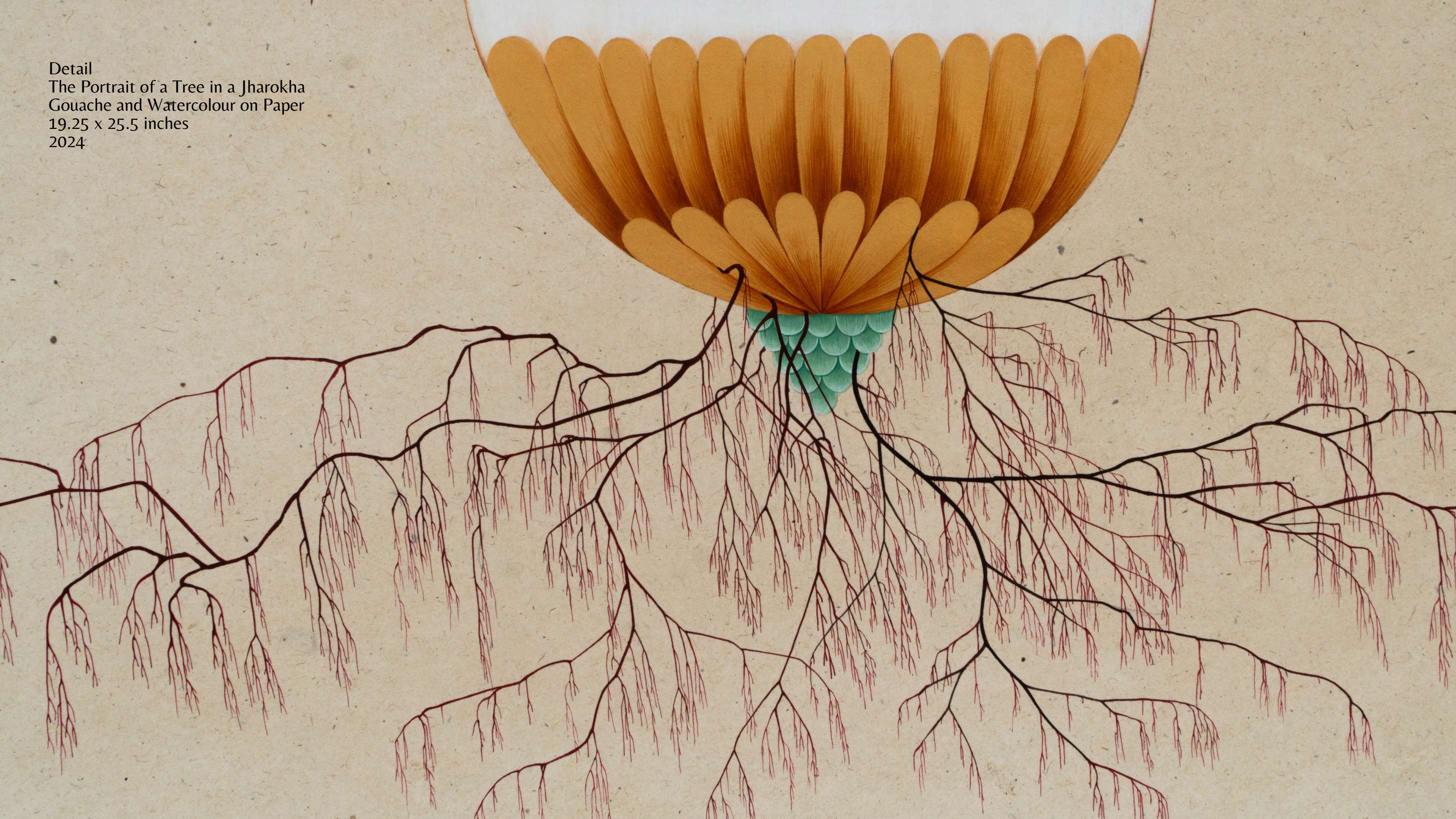


The Portrait of a Tree in a Jharokha

Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
19.25 x 25.5 inches  
2024



Detail  
The Portrait of a Tree in a Jharokha  
Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
19.25 x 25.5 inches  
2024



Detail  
The Portrait of a Tree in a Jharokha  
Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
19.25 x 25.5 inches  
2024

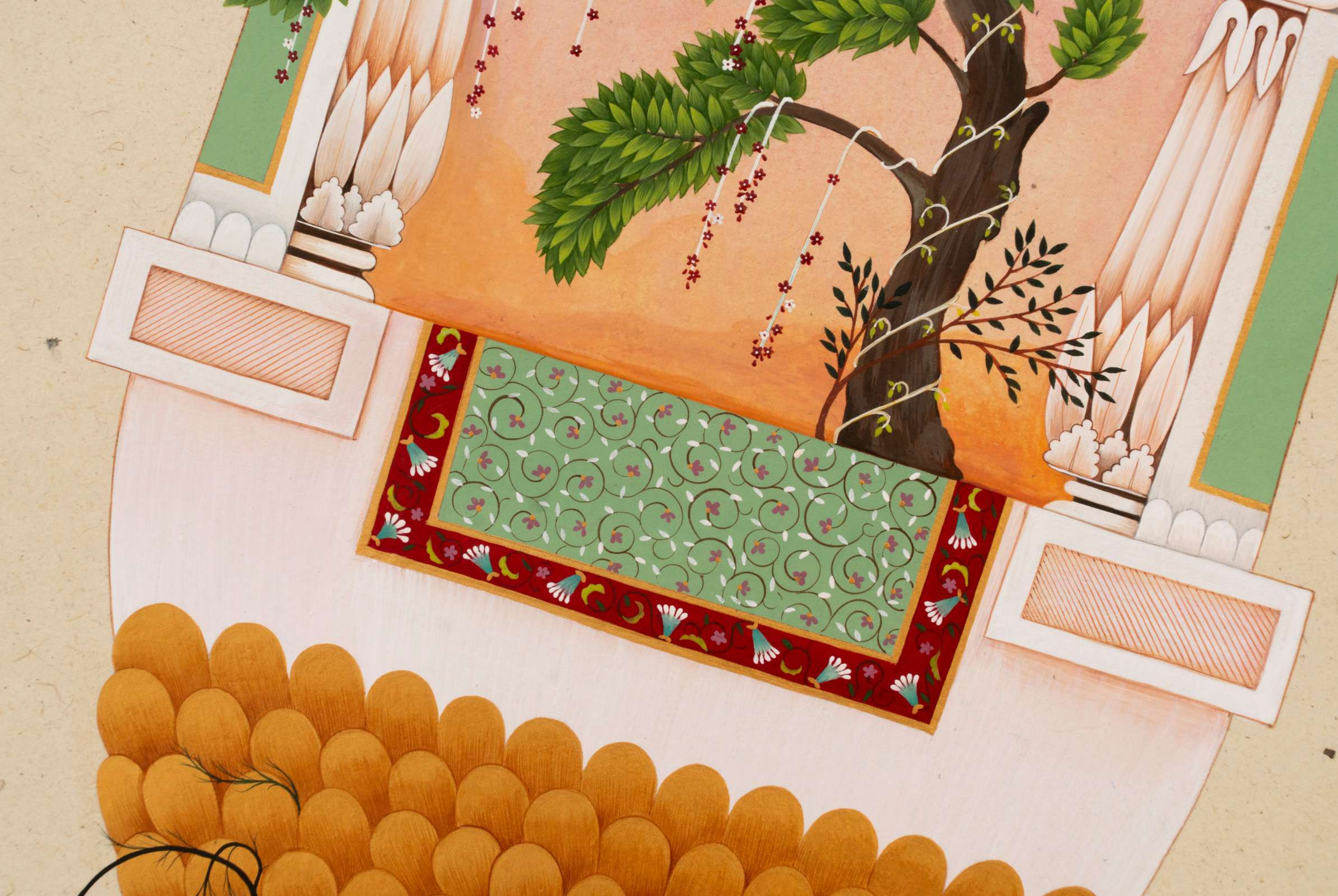
To cultivate the ability to envision flora as regal figures, this series seeks to champion the idea of granting personhood to the botanical world, challenging prevailing patriarchal attitude towards ecology. Through narrative construction, these works aim to establish a discourse emphasizing the sovereignty of ecology. By fostering a conceptual shift in perceiving living trees as kings, this series aspires to provoke reflection on the interconnectedness of nature and humanity. These paintings endeavor to subvert traditional attitudes that may have overlooked or marginalized the significance of ecological balance. These counter-narratives aim to create space for thriving again with ecology and enable experiences of wonder, awe, elegance, and affirmation in response to their violent destruction and mass extinction.





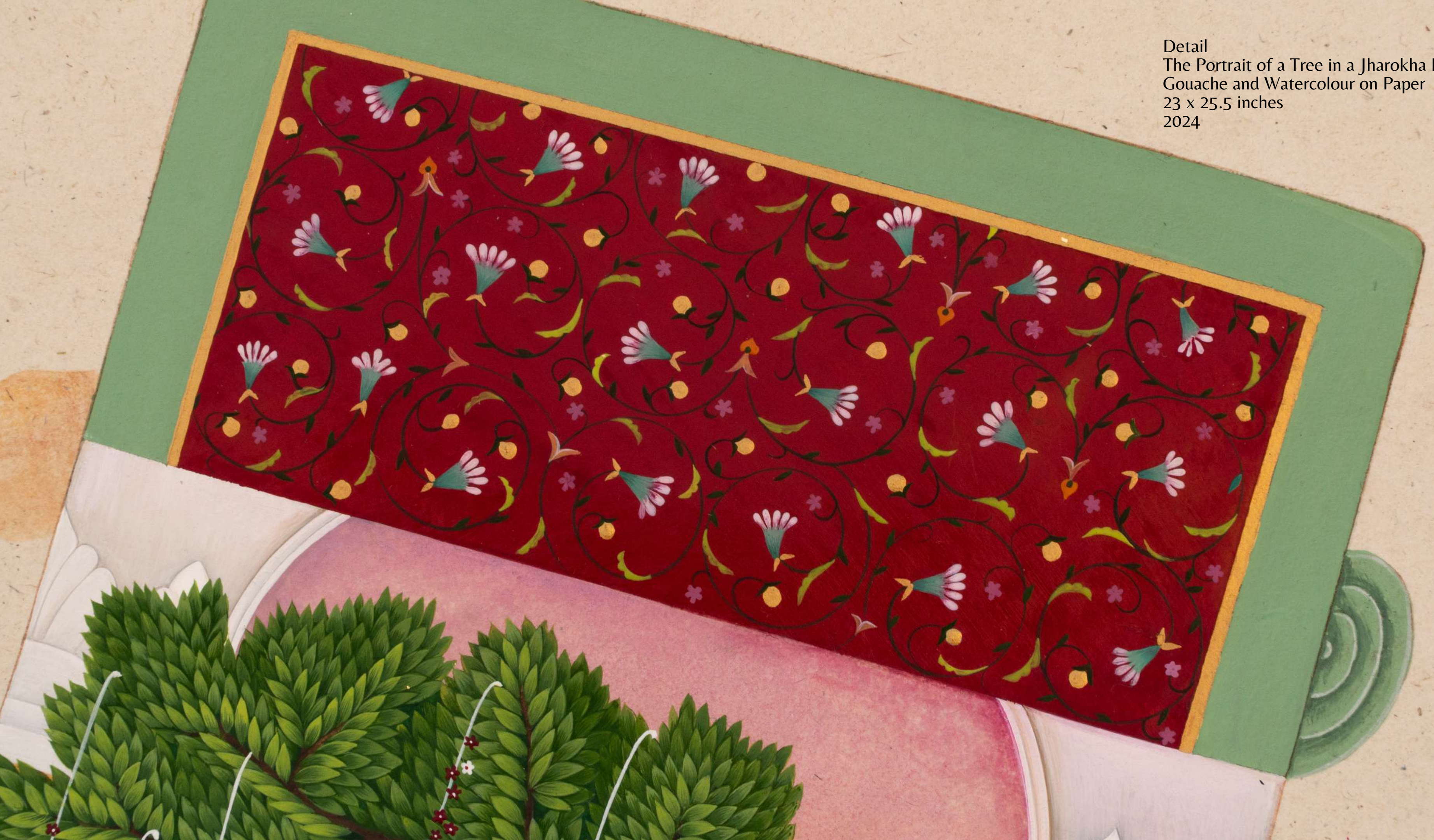
## The Portrait of a Tree in a Jharokha II

Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
23 x 25.5 inches  
2024



Detail  
The Portrait of a Tree  
in a Jharokha II  
Gouache and  
Watercolour on Paper  
23 x 25.5 inches  
2024

Detail  
The Portrait of a Tree in a Jharokha II  
Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
23 x 25.5 inches  
2024





## Trees Invoking Wadjet

Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
19.25 x 25.5 inches  
2024



Detail  
Trees Invoking Wadjet  
Gouache and  
Watercolour on Paper  
19.25 x 25.5 inches  
2024

Detail  
Trees Invoking Wadjet  
Gouache and  
Watercolour on Paper  
19.25 x 25.5 inches  
2024







Alluding to the ritual practices, where Mother Goddesses are invoked by communities for fertility and abundance, Manjot counter-narrates existing mythological motifs & attributes that allows opportunities for mythic re-imagination & revised critical reflection. Here then, trees convene to discuss their rights with goddess Wadjet, who is believed to be protecting the land and women in childbirth. Trees invoke her to reclaim her, seeking well-being and protection for themselves. This work propose alternative means to think about the notions of motherhood, care, symbiosis, and reciprocity as well as explore the interrelation between humans and non-humans.

Detail  
Trees Invoking Wadjet  
Gouache and  
Watercolour on Paper  
19.25 x 25.5 inches  
2024



## Entangled Relations

Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
17 x 21.75 inches  
2024



Detail  
Entangled Relations  
Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
17 x 21.75 inches  
2024



## Hold Me Close

Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
20 x 25.25 inches  
2024



Detail  
Hold Me Close  
Gouache and  
Watercolour on  
Paper  
20 x 25.25 inches  
2024



## Turmeric

Watercolour and Gouache on Paper  
18 x 25 inches  
2024



Your paragraph text

Detail  
Turmeric  
Watercolour and Gouache on Paper  
18 x 25 inches  
2024



Hybrid Being 11

Gouache and Watercolour on Paper  
20 x 23 inches  
2024





Detail  
Hybrid Being 11  
Gouache and  
Watercolour on Paper  
20 x 23 inches  
2024



'Hybrid Beings' series aims to decolonize women's bodies and the sovereignty of nature. To envision new ontological entanglements, it intersects boundaries of speculative fiction, archetypal allegories, and precarious ecologies. The situations and stories narrated in these works evoke imagination in the viewer's mind to remember the forgotten notions of care and symbiosis. To imagine forms of relationality and mutuality these paintings invoke romantic relationships between birds and women - selected heroines who belong to the Ashta-Nayika [Natyashastra, c. 2nd B.C]: a collective term for eight heroines, each of whom represents different states in relationship to her hero. In each painting the face of Nayika is metamorphosed with her lover's face resulting in hybrid beings.

Hybrid Beings postulate a queer ecology where the endangered bird becomes the hero, replacing the male figure from the context of Ashta-Nayika. They stitch together improbable collaborations in a multispecies world making way for kinship & responding to ecological grief and loneliness. Hybrid Beings generate hope and care to cultivate the capacity to reimagine a future for the marginalized and silenced. They speculate on near futures and rethink the notions of identity and interdependency. The hybrid beings become a window to peek into future and past animals (beings)(myths) that have gone extinct with evolution and those that are yet to evolve either naturally or with bio-geo-hacking of present-day technology. Hybrid Beings push back against the centering of the human and move toward a thinking that eradicates the hierarchy of being and challenges the human/non-human binary. They make way for an ontological pursuit of what it means to be human, what it means to be non-human, and where these categories rupture and collide. These hybrid beings open up possibilities for a post-queer and post-human world where species move towards an uncanny kind of becoming.

Detail  
Hybrid Being 11  
Gouache and  
Watercolour on Paper  
20 x 23 inches  
2024



## Polymorphous Seed 3

Watercolour and Gouache on Paper  
16.7 x 22.1 inches  
2023

In a world dominated by monocultures, Manjot imagines what if ecosystems could produce seeds! What would these seeds comprise and what would they look like? She envisions them having the genome of various entwined species (endangered and extinct), and a capacity to disperse and regenerate biodiverse ecosystems. Each individual seed would carry the potential of producing myriad unique ecosystems under different conditions, therefore making them polymorphous seeds. These polymorphous seeds comprise macro and micro details of assorted parts of various flowers, plants, pollinators, animals, and insects. The ecosystem - a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment becomes the protagonist in these works. Travelling and dispersing through time and space, these fictitious polymorphous seeds become time capsules of hybridity, plurality and diversity.

Detail  
Polymorphous Seed 3  
Watercolour and  
Gouache on Paper  
16.7 x 22.1 inches  
2023





Detail  
Polymorphous Seed 3  
Watercolour and Gouache  
on Paper  
16.7 x 22.1 inches  
2023



## Polymorphous Seed 4

Watercolour and Gouache on Paper  
14.7 x 19.6 inches  
2023



Detail  
Polymorphous Seed 4  
Watercolour and Gouache  
on Paper  
14.7 x 19.6 inches  
2023



## Polymorphous Seed 5

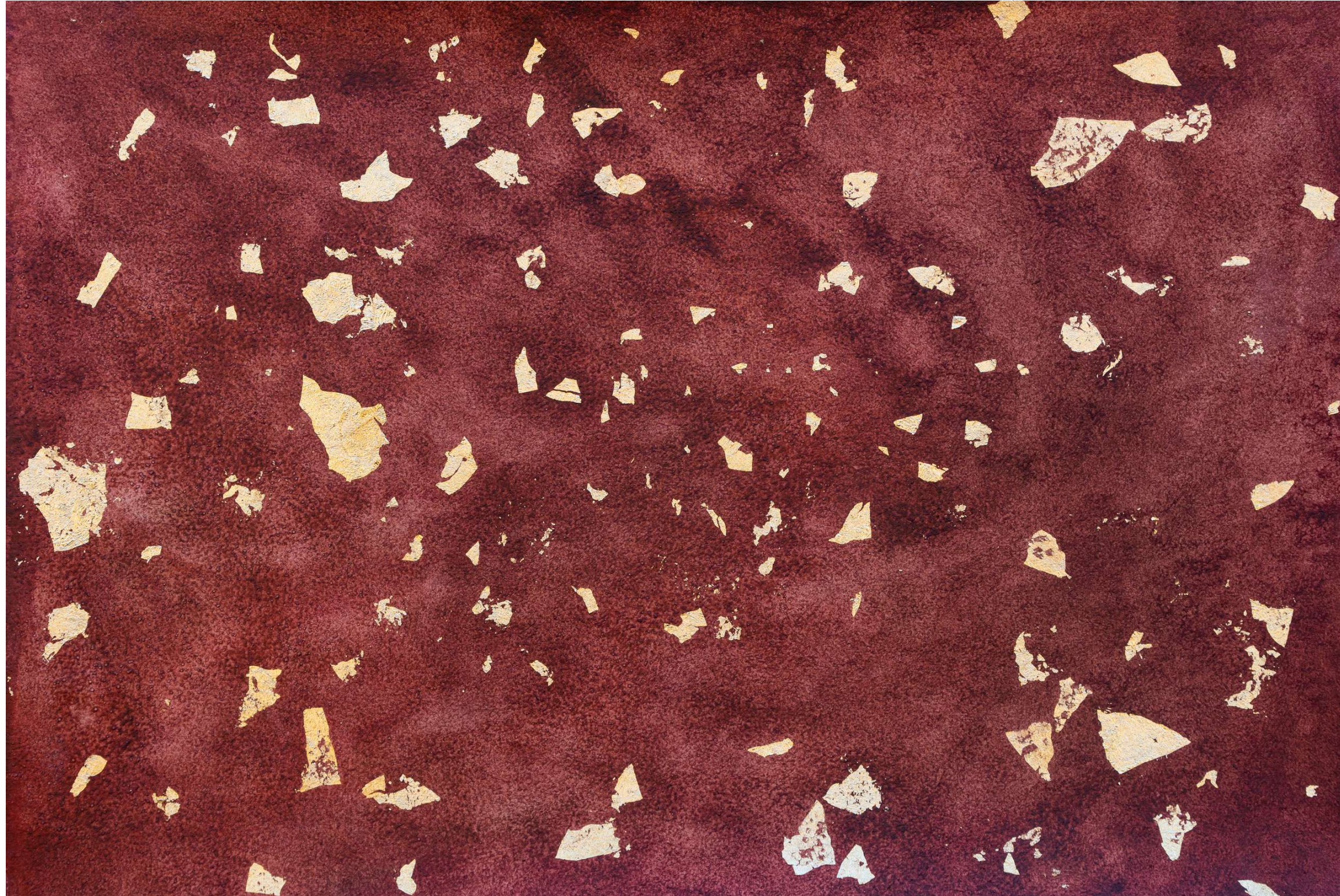
Watercolour and Gouache on Paper  
12 x 18 inches  
2023





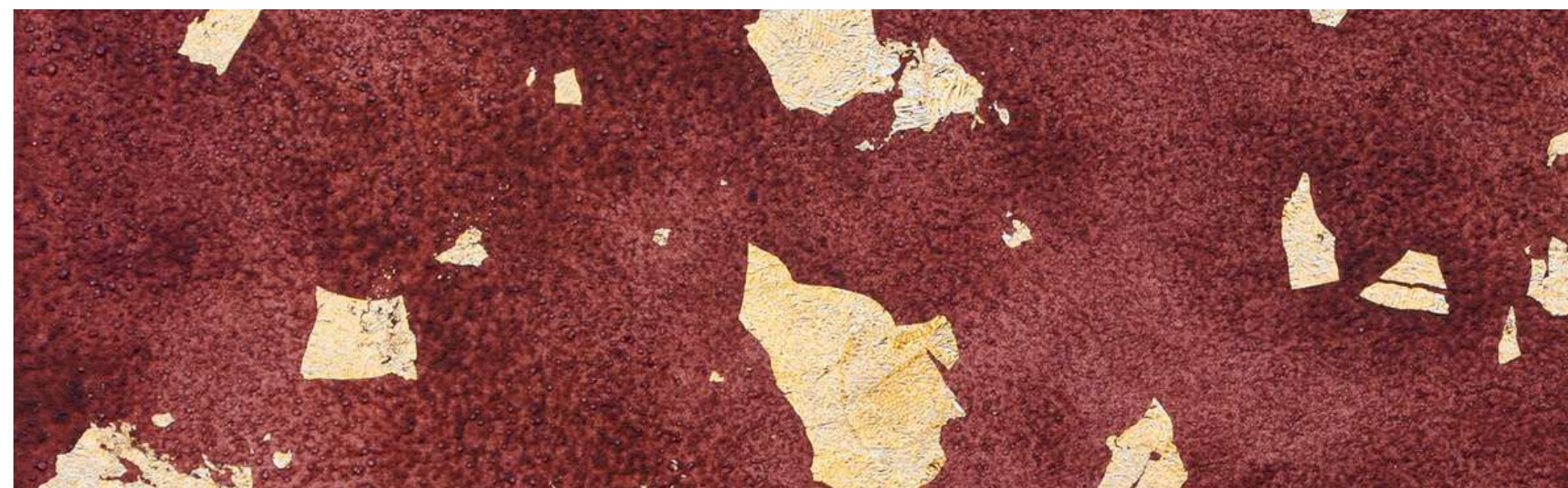
## Polymorphous Seed 6

Watercolour and Gouache on Paper  
12 x 18 inches  
2023



## Polymorphous Seed 7

Watercolour and Gouache on Paper  
12 x 18 inches  
2023



Detail  
Polymorphous Seed 5, 6, 7  
Watercolour and Gouache on Paper  
12 x 18 inches each  
2023

# Ecosystems are Love Stories

Manjot Kaur's art practice lies at the intersection of speculative fiction, archetypal allegories, and precarious ecologies that push back against the centering of the human as the protagonist while advocating for a way of thinking that eradicates the hierarchy of being. Her paintings explore what it means to be human, what it means to be non-human, and where these meanings rupture and collide. In this process, she opens up possibilities for a post-queer and post-human world where beings move towards an uncanny kind of becoming.

How can we make kin with other species? How do we undo the deep-rooted notion that humans are at the apex of all the species?

In an attempt to de-patriarch-ize the sovereignty of ecology, she cross-pollinates ancient mythologies and stories with fiction and speculation to create new visual stories in the form of miniature paintings. Inventing fiction from mythology and the natural world offers powerful tools to de-modernize the existing dualist constructs of nature and culture, raising questions on access to power and agency. Her narratives propose and encourage symbiotic cohabitation with the more-than-human species.

The current presentation of works titled 'Ecosystems are Love Stories' weaves new myths for contemporary times by referring to historical miniature paintings of various schools. These paintings delve deep into foundational questions concerning ecology and history. What happens when a living tree replaces a king? What happens when trees come together to invoke a mother goddess? What happens when women take over the identity of endangered species? What happens when a heroine runs away with a tree? What happens when ecosystems decide to produce seeds?

Kaur's works are intimate worlds encompassing the anthropology of wonder and awe, proposing narratives that imagine a multi-species future. While providing new meaning to the ancient narratives, fictionalisation and a critique of history takes center stage. This process then becomes a paradigm of change to create kinship that generates hope, love, and desperate desires for silent companionship with other species.

She believes that these new visual stories provide us with alternative routes to un-civilize from the masculine capitalist culture and carve a path to find means to cohabit and flourish in sync with nature. This model of ethical living will generate a sense of happiness that will not be based on the cost of other's well-being and the destruction of ecology. Threaded throughout these stories are revelations of sexuality, fecundity, kinship, and freedom to rethink the meaning of motherhood in present times. Here, storytelling reasserts the role of 'more than mere entertainment and instead captures the essence of symbiosis and reciprocity amongst interspecies relationships. The works reflect on the intertwining of naturecultures and break the dualist construct of nature and culture as entities existing in isolation, opening up multi-layered conversations between motherhood and ecology, nature and culture, care and symbiosis, post-queer and uncanny, human and non-human relations, power and agency.



## MANJOT KAUR

B. 1989, Ludhiana, Punjab, India

Manjot Kaur's drawings, paintings, and Time-based media attempt to de-patriarch-ize the sovereignty of ecology and women's bodies. She cross-pollinates ancient mythologies and histories to reflect on the relationship between humans and more than humans. Her works delve deep into intimate worlds encompassing the anthropology of wonder and awe, proposing narratives that imagine a multi-species future, by responding to ecological grief and loneliness through acts of care and kinship.

Manjot has received many prestigious grants and fellowships such as The Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute at Harvard University, Cambridge, USA in March - April 2023; Sustaina India Fellowship at CEEW (Council on Energy, Environment and Water) and Generator Art Production Fund grant from Experimenter Gallery, India in 2022. She has been an artist in residence at Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, Netherlands, 2020-21; 1 Shanthiroad, Bangalore, 2019; Unidee, Cittadellarte Fondazione Pistoletto, Italy 2018 funded by Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation, India; Peers - Khoj International Artists' Association, New Delhi, 2018 and Museo Casa Masaccio Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy – a cross-institutional program with Clark House Initiative, Mumbai, 2018.

Her recent participations include 'Green Snake - Women Centered Ecologies' curated by Kathryn Weir, at Tai Kwun, Hong Kong, 2023; Tomorrows/Today section at Investec Cape Town Art Fair curated by Mariella Franzoni, with Gallery Caroline O'Brien, Amsterdam; 'Becoming Earths', Gallery Caroline O'Brien, Amsterdam during Amsterdam Art Week, 2023; Art Mumbai with LATITUDE 28, Mumbai, 2023; Delhi Contemporary Art Week with LATITUDE 28, Bikaner House, New Delhi, 2023; 'Conjunction of the Spheres', curated by Girish Shahane, Delhi Contemporary Art Week, Bikaner House, New Delhi, 2023; India Art Fair with LATITUDE 28, New Delhi, 2023; 'Where Shall We Plant The Placenta' curated by Julia Geerlings at A Tale of A Tub, Rotterdam, 2022; 'Non-Fungible Speculations' curated by Srinivas Aditya Mopidevi, Nature Morte, New Delhi, 2022; 'The World Awaits You Like a Garden' with curatorial advice by Sugata Ray, LATITUDE 28, New Delhi, 2022; 'The Pool of Memories' curated by Suvi Bains, Surrey Art Gallery, Canada, 2022; 'Hurting and Healing - Let's Imagine a Different Heritage' curated by Charles Ecshe, Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm, 2022; 'Terrain Offline', Bikaner House, New Delhi, India, 2021 and 'Garden State' curated by Fadwa Naamna, Garage Rotterdam, Rotterdam, Netherlands, 2021 among others.

Her awards include State Award, Punjab Lalit Kala Akademi, Chandigarh, 2018; Sohan Qadri Fellowship, Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi, Chandigarh, 2017; State Award, Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi, Chandigarh, 2017 and 2012, and Scholarship to Young Artists, Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi, 2011. She was chosen by Hindustan Times as one of the Top 30-under-30 young achievers in 2017. Manjot Kaur is represented by LATITUDE 28.

# ABOUT LATITUDE 28

Since 2010, LATITUDE 28 has probed into a gallery practice that is lateral, disruptive and avant garde. Mentoring and nurturing emerging artists from South Asia, the gallery focuses on experimentation with medium and material fostering critical dialogue, perspective and practices by writers, critics and researchers alike. These maker-market relationships amongst collectors, art enthusiasts and art practitioners have grown through the gallery's interactive incubation space, where ideas have been generated through innovative curatorial projects located on the cusp of art history and socio-political context through site-specific artworks and artist talks. The gallery makes art accessible and inclusive with exhibitions located at the intersection of artists, institutions and art education. LATITUDE 28's vision is shaped by its Founder/Director, Bhavna Kakar, who is also the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of TAKE on Art - South Asia's leading contemporary art publication.

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