



Mumbai, Mumbai


Pillars of Fruit and Bone

Rithika Merchant



 Apr 10, 2025 - May 31, 2025

 Tuesday - Saturday, 11:00 am to 6:30 pm

 Mumbai
39B AK Nayak Marg
Mumbai
India

Rithika Merchant, Exoskeleton, 2024

About the Exhibition

TARQ is elated to announce the forthcoming solo exhibition *Pillars of Fruit and Bone* by Rithika Merchant. Building on the work from her *Terraformation* series, shown at the Eleventh Asia Pacific Triennial, the fifteen paintings in this show explore ideas of building a sustainable utopia, away from the Earth.

According to Dr. Cleo Roberts-Komireddi, who writes about the show, “Merchant’s conjuring of this beguiling world and all its minutiae is rigorous. She describes her creative immersion as an “act of self-

soothing” and a way to allay her climate anxiety. As part of this process, she writes alongside her painting practice, making notes on the many structures, taken from built environments of the past, from fiction and the natural world, that inform her creature’s habitats. Whilst the images she creates are ones of novelty, there is a nostalgia that weaves through this universe.”

As usual, Merchant uses “beings” or characters that are posed as proxies of humans in *Pillars of Fruit and Bone*, this time, to connect with the concept of abiogenesis—life emerging from non-living matter billions of years ago. On her style, Roberts-Komireddi says, “...Merchant paints in a way that attempts to find and reflect on our place in the universe...”

While earlier series like *Birth of a New World* and *Terraformation* examined the departure and initial settlement, *Pillars of Fruit and Bone* contemplates sustainability and growth. Roberts-Komireddi goes further to say, “In Merchant’s symbolically rich images she elides diverse cosmological references and ecosystems to give an impression of what life may look like in future worlds.” The title evokes an image, perhaps symbolic of the delicate balance between life and death, growth and strength. Merchant’s environments or entities rebuild from first principles when given the opportunity to start anew, unburdened by our current world’s mistakes.

About the Artist

Rithika Merchant is a visual artist from Mumbai, India. Her work explores comparative mythology, science and speculative fiction, featuring creatures and symbolism that form her personal visual vocabulary. She creates bodies of work that visually link to our collective past and imagine potential new worlds.

Nature plays a pivotal role in her work and is emphasised by the use of organic shapes and non-saturated colours. Her paintings and collages

combine watercolour and cut paper elements, drawing on 17th century botanical prints and folk art.

Merchant received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Parsons School of Design, New York. Her solo shows include *Terraformation*, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London (2023); *Festival of the Phoenix Sun*, Galerie LJ, Paris (2022); *Birth of a New World*, TARQ, Mumbai (2021); *Mirror of the Mind*, Galerie LJ, Paris (2019); *Where the Water Takes Us*, TARQ, Mumbai (2017); and *Ancestral Home*, Galeria Bien Cuadrado, Barcelona (2017).

She recently presented *The Flowers We Grew* (2025) at the Musée Rodin in Paris, featuring nine paintings transformed into a monumental installation with textile panels by The Chanakya School of Craft. Commissioned by Maria Grazia Chiuri, it was part of the Dior SS25 haute couture show scenography.

Her works were also shown at The 11th Asia Pacific Triennale of Contemporary Art (2024) at The Queensland Art Gallery & Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane, Australia, including an interactive project *If the Seeds Chose Where to Grow* for the Asia Pacific Triennale Kids at QAGOMA's Children's Art Center.

Her most recent group exhibitions include *Ecospheres*, Joburg Contemporary Art Foundation, Johannesburg (2024); *The Bunker Artspace 23/24 Season*, The Bunker Artspace, West Palm Beach (2023); *Bonna* curated by Diana Campbell Betancourt, The Dhaka Art Summit (2023); *Mentors* curated by Sandra Weil, CFHILL, Stockholm (2021).

Merchant's awards include the Sovereign Asian Art Prize 2021 - Vogue Hong Kong Women's Art Prize and Le Prix DDessin Paris '21. Her work is held in public and private collections including the Chloé Archive, Christian Dior Archive, Collection de Bueil & Ract-Madoux, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, QAGOMA,

Reliance Foundation, Samdani Arts Foundation, Sarmaya Arts Foundation and The Bunker Artspace, Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody.