

SPECIAL FEATURE

The Void and its Dense Core

Aaditi Joshi



Aaditi Joshi. *Untitled (30).* Polypropylene bag, wood. 12" x 12" x 1" (h x l x w). 2020. Photograph by Anil Rane. Image courtesy of the artist and TARQ.

The last 18 months have disrupted life at various levels. During lockdowns when everything is shut, you begin your search for spaces *within* spaces. You ask yourself: how do I set my studio up in the living room? If I cannot visit the studio, can the studio *visit* me?

My work in the past few years has addressed this experience of absence – empty frames covered with polypropylene bags have captured the empty culture of consumerism all around and have also grappled with the environmental problem of plastic overload that is choking the 21st century.

I experienced severe bouts of anxiety during the lockdowns – I could not visit the works I had begun in the studio. I therefore decided to work on sketches that helped me reconnect with the impulses and inspirations behind the works. They served as maps that helped me revisit my conceptual ground and refresh my processes.

I use plastic bags to wrap frames, often infusing them with white cement, peeling off layers to reveal hidden images and very often the colours of the bags suggest the palette of the works. The empty space that they are framing often speaks to me. How do I find a sense of balance in this void? How do I carry forward my earlier explorations and launch new forays?

As I ask these questions, I gain some important insights. I realise that emptiness is not blankness. That emptiness is not darkness. That mindspace and physical space are closely inter-connected. That there is always something *within* that is opening out, sloughing off, revealing newer worlds.