

## Birth of a New World

Rithika Merchant ponders the state of our world and imagines other possible ones



**Hyperlife** 2020  
Gouache, watercolour  
and ink on paper  
25.5 x 19.6 inches

**T**HIS SERIES OF WATERCOLOURS and collages focuses on the contemporary moment. With the world around us constantly and rapidly evolving, this is an attempt to look to a more primordial time, where one searches for answers in the stars. This body of work is thus also an attempt to create paths to a new world, similar to what one can see in an observatory.

The works take a holistic view of the universe to try and explore what comes after the Holocene and Anthropocene epochs, when the earth started changing in a much more rapid and real way. The combination of watercolour, gouache, ink, collage elements, and use of organic shapes and colours looks to our collective archive, seeking to understand where we find ourselves right now, searching for balance and harmony in this modern world.

This is an invitation to ponder age-old questions: What will we be left with? What is worthy of saving? How do we strike a balance? Is there a possibility of a utopia or are we chasing the unattainable? What will we take with us and what will get left behind?

*The exhibition Birth of a New World was held at TARQ, Mumbai from January 14 to February 27, 2021.*



**Water Witcher** 2020  
Gouache, watercolour  
and ink on paper  
41.3 x 29.9 inches

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**Heartliners** 2020 (above)  
Gouache, watercolour and ink on paper  
24.4 x 19.6 inches

**Forefathers** 2020  
Gouache, watercolour, ink and found images of crows on paper  
19.6 x 27.5 inches



**Chronos | Kairos** 2020  
Embroidery hoop with gouache and ink on paper  
17 x 17 inches each (Set of 2)



**Circadian Rhythm** 2020  
Embroidery hoop with gouache and ink on paper  
17 X 17 inches



**Birth of a New World** 2020 (above)  
Gouache, watercolour and ink on paper  
27.9 x 19.6 inches



**Apparitions** 2020  
Collage with gouache, ink, graphite and marker on paper  
27.5 x 40 inches



**Summit** 2020  
Gouache, watercolour and ink on paper  
27.5 x 19.6 inches



**Arcadia** 2020  
Gouache, watercolour and ink on paper  
70 x 47.2 inches

## Contributors

**Ashwani Kumar** is a poet, writer and professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. His books include two poetry collections, *My Grandfather's Imaginary Typewriter* and *Bananas and the Other*. A selection of his poems has been translated for a special volume titled *Architecture of Alphabets* in Hungarian. Recently, he co-edited *Migrants, Mobility and Citizenship in India* (Routledge 2021). He is also one of the chief editors of Global Civil Society at London School of Economics and writes a regular books column in the *Financial Express*.

**Rithika Merchant's** most recent solo exhibitions include *Mirror of the Mind* at Galerie L.J, Paris, France (2019), *Where the Water Takes Us* at TARQ, Mumbai (2017) and *Ancestral Home* at Galeria Bien Cuadrado, Barcelona (2017). She has also collaborated with French fashion house Chloé and received awards for her work. She divides her time between Mumbai and Barcelona.

**Ipshita Mitra** was senior editor with Om Books International. After working as a lifestyle correspondent and editor with *The Times of India* and later with *The Quint*, she joined the TERI Press, New Delhi, as editor. Her writing appears in *Scroll*, *The Wire*, *The Hindu*, *The Quint*, and *Firstpost* among others.

**Kunjana Parashar's** poems appear in *Poetry Northwest*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *SWWIM Every Day*, *The Bombay Literary Magazine*, *What Are Birds*, and elsewhere. Her work has been anthologised in *Watch Your Head: Writers and Artists Respond to the Climate Crisis* (Coach House) and *The Familiar Wild: On Dogs & Poetry* (Sundress), among others. She is the recipient of the Toto Funds the Arts prize for poetry, 2021, and lives in Mumbai.

**Parikshit Rao** is an editorial and commercial photographer and writer based in the Himalaya. His visual work on travel, food, people and culture has been featured in a wide range of magazines and online publications.

**Fatima Rizvi** is associate professor in the department of English and Modern European Languages at the University of Lucknow. Her areas of interest include postcolonial literature and literature in translation and adaptation. She was awarded the Meenakshi Mukherjee Memorial Prize by IACLALS in 2018 and the Jawad Memorial Prize for Urdu-English translation in 2019. *Shadows on the Wall: Pen Portraits*, a collection of Javed Siddiqi's translated essays, is forthcoming.

**Kate Sarah** is the pen name of a middle school teacher in Darjeeling who occasionally

writes short stories. She is also an active podcaster on Spotify. She is the author of *This One's for You: A Collection of Short Stories* (2016).

**Arshia Sattar** has a PhD in South Asian Languages and Civilisations from the University of Chicago. She works with the Hindu epics and the story traditions of the sub-continent. She has translated the Valmiki Ramayana as well as the Kathasaritsagara and written three books of essays on how to read the epic in our times. She also writes for children. Her most recent publications include *Maryada: Searching for Dharma in the Ramayana* (HarperCollins India, 2020) and *The Mahabharata for Children* (Juggernaut Books, 2020).

**Tanaya Sharma** is a contemporary surrealist digital artist, originally from Assam and now based in Mumbai.

**Saumya Sinha** is a Mumbai-based freelance writer. She writes about fashion with a focus on sustainability. Sinha has also written features around the Indian fashion covering business, brand culture and design challenges.

**Apoorva Tadepalli** is a fact-checker, editor and freelance writer. Her writing has appeared in *n+1*, *Bookforum*, *The Hindu*, the *LA Review of Books*, and elsewhere.

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