



Boshudhara Mukherjee with her installation. Photo courtesy: Tarq

By Rahul Kumar

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Recently, one came across a news article on unsold clothing. A huge heap (the size of a hill) of apparel from 'fast-fashion' had piled up in Chile's Atacama Desert. The piece also stated that an estimated 39,000 tons of clothes that remained unsold in USA and Europe ended up in Chile, annually, occupying large stretch in its desert. Most of these were sent to landfills. What was equally important to note was that these clothes were being produced in China and Bangladesh. It is baffling to know that the merchandise travels across the globe in the name of fashion, with a large portion being discarded in a matter of

months as trends change.

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Fashion industry and the mindless dumping of apparel, which still has considerable life, has been at the centre of the recent conversations on climate change and ecology. And this has now become an area of reference for various creative practitioners. Artist Boshudhara Mukherjee, for one, uses found, discarded, and bought textile to make immersive installations.

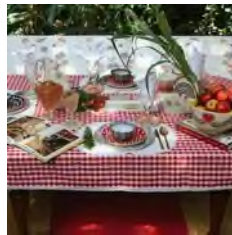
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With a formal training in painting, use of colour and the idea of perspective continue to inform her ongoing work. She started out with a need to break out of the confined frame of a 2-dimensional painted surface. Mukherjee abandoned the frame to allow the canvas to rule, decide, and create its own forms. Her web-like tapestry weaves painted and cut canvases of her own paintings along with strands of garments and yarn. “The source for found clothes is generally cupboards belonging to my family and friends, who have been instructed to ‘not throw anything’—from clothing to linens to tiny scraps of thread and wool. I use what I find around me” she says.

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'Adi' by Boshudhara Mukherjee. Photo courtesy: Tarq

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While for Mukherjee, the material, associated techniques and processes of cut, weave, crochet, patch, and knot remain at the core of her practice, a story and historical association of the garment always exists. She feels that stories are everywhere. Even something bought will often act as a reminder to the day, who you went shopping with and your experience of visiting the store. But used fabric has an added layer to it. “All these memories infuse themselves in the work by the material just being there”, she adds, describing her work, *Adi*, in which she used denim from discarded jeans that belonged to her partner. And then the stereotyping of objects—like lace that is supposed to be too ‘girly’ a thing—add

unique interpretations to her work.

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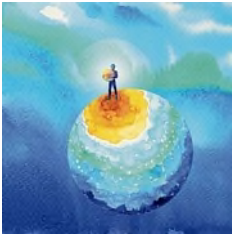
She confesses that most of her installations get created in an organic and spontaneous flow. She explains, “Most works start with something I see or feel and I know I want to use in a work—like a colour or a piece of fabric or a texture.”

Reflecting on the idea of fashion itself, she confesses that she had not realised the gravity of the issue until recently. The overwhelming need of fresh water to produce a garment, use of toxic dyes pose an urgent threat to environment. This conversation often tends to get overshadowed by the talk of plastic and tech waste. “The idea of simply throwing things out, especially in a world where so many have so little, is ironic”, she says. For her, fashion is wearing one’s own personality and not joining a rat-race powered by the media to benefit a few in our capitalistic framework. Traditionally in India, in-house stitching was common. Upcycling was almost taken for granted. For Mukherjee, it was a simple way of not adding to the carbon footprint, and also to carry along a personalised touch and memories. “It is the love and respect for material inherited from my family that shows through in my work, and life in general. I guess my work is more ‘personal’, it is about my love for fabric and reusing the same. Though, yes, if there is a commentary, it would be to spotlight the ordinary, hopefully

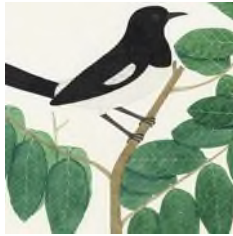
inspiring the viewer to look at their possession with fresh eyes,” she says.

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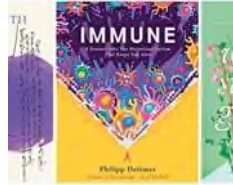
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