

THE FAMILIAL FIX

Aparna Varma 26th Mar, 2021



In conversation with the artist whose work leaves you spellbound with their life-sized weaves made out of shredded canvas and more.

Boshudhara's work, as she calls it, is her alter ego. Repurposing canvas and other materials to further weave them into an art piece, she gives a new life to something that has been definite. Having presented in India and abroad, her 5th show titled, 'Familiars' is on display at [TARQ Mumbai](#) until 24th of April.

The artist grew up watching the women in her family working with similar craft. She tells me how women would just get together for a chat in the evenings and pull out something or the other to knit or weave. At

“I did go to an art school and started off with painting but the craft side of me has been very very strong and here we are...”

‘Familiars’ is inspired by the lives around Boshudhara. Also being akin to the Wicca legend of ‘spirit guides’, it has brought the artist to experiment with new textures and weaving techniques. Eight of her recent works are on display, all of which have a distinct style and sentiment attached to them.



Familiars on display at TARQ, Mumbai. Picture courtesy: TARQ

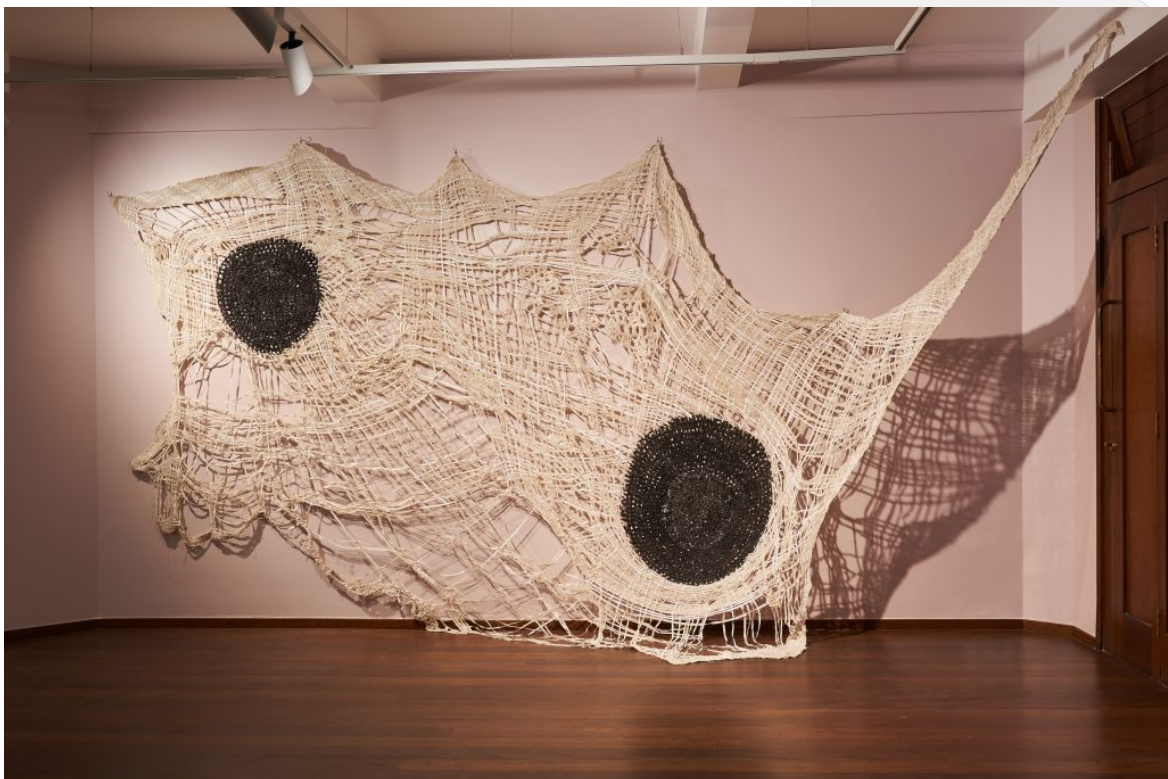
You use recycled canvas for the weaving, how did it occur to you that canvas could be repurposed like this?

I believe nothing has a final form, so I can always create something out of an older art piece except now I know that it will only be better because

relook at something that we have had for a while. I think it comes from that training or mentality in a way...

The show is called 'Familiars' inspired by the Wicca tradition wherein the spirit guides take the form of animals or human guides. However, your work is intricate weaves that have taken a formless form of its own.

I don't plan my work, there is no drawing, it is the starting point that leads you to the whole work. For example, with the work 'Bibi' I draw inspiration from the colour and the dots of my 16 yr old cat. So, it is these things which become a starting point and then the work has a mind of its own. That is the most important – the first spark. This (the show on display) came to me from the things that were around me for a change instead of just me thinking of me.



'Bibi' by Boshudhara. Picture courtesy: TARQ

thus the connotation here which is that of a guiding spirit has been around me and thus in this show.

How did you take to weaving?

I grew up in a family where in the evening women would pull out something to knit or weave while you're chatting. Like, I remember when you are small they first make you roll the wool and then you move to design making. Sometimes if you roll it too tightly, you get a scolding and then you loosen it up again. So, material and touching material has always been a part of my life.

This came very naturally to me. I went to art school but eventually the craft side in me has been very very strong so I started off with proper painting and then cutting it up or scratching it. It's just the most natural way for me to do it.



The artist interacting with her work. Picture courtesy: TARQ

Did you have a routine fixed while the work was in the making?

I can't work out a studio. I tried but it didn't work. I end up working in the middle of the hall and life goes around it. So you get up, you do your

the work in a specific space at a specific time. This makes it very much a part of my daily routine and I think that slips into my work as well.

“Like you do everything else, you also do this.”

You’ve received the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 2013 and Nasreen Mohammadi Foundation Scholarship for 2005-06. Tell us more about how these help and your thoughts on the concept of the same.

We need a lot more scholarships and grants. More than anything else, it gives you confidence. For most artists, especially when you’re younger, you may not be sure whether whatever you’re doing makes sense. Especially when you are trying to do something different but are confused if you should do that or should you just stick to what is selling.

“A scholarship or a grant then, gives you that confidence to say that what you’re doing is right or where you’re at is the right path to be on.”

So in this sense grants help but you also need someone telling you to go ahead and think ‘this’ or do ‘this’ instead of mainstream stuff.



'Ubu' by Boshudhara at TARQ. Picture courtesy: TARQ

What are the essentials of an artist?

Exactly what everybody else needs. Still need to pay bills and do daily chores but I think having a support system is essential.

What do you do while on a break?

I cook and read, the daily chores are also there. I do like to travel. Sometimes, I might take up some project where I need to make a quilt or something for a friend or a niece. Such purely craft projects become my idea of a break. I can't sit with my hands still for a long time.

Your other options apart from being an artist were Anthropology and mythology...what are you reading lately? What is your favourite mythology story?

of this Goddess of a temple in Nepal, who is a combination of Goddess Laxmi and Saraswati. But once I was reading this book about Goddesses from the pre-hindu period in India and then the Hindu goddesses when I came across my name. In this book, Boshudhara is a village Goddess who eats children. She eats children between the age of birth till the age of 3. The image of this Goddess is very different from the 'Boshudhara' you see in that temple. I'm constantly telling people that it also means this and there's such a contrast between the two and it's become a joke amongst my friends that, that's why the work gets cut out.

What is your idea of a good gallery space?

I personify my work sometimes. When I present my work, the terms I use are very human terms. It's like having children and watching them grow. Once out and about they do what they need to. But because there's such dependency of how the work will present itself in the space, I don't think there is or can be one preferred space.

What do you listen to while working?

Some days I'm watching TV but it is like radio because I don't end up looking at the screen at all. There have been series that I have followed but didn't know what the characters looked like. It's also music, the voices of people in the house and screaming at my cats who are interrupting my work. My work space is rarely silent but it is ambient.



'Egg' by Boshudhara. Picture courtesy: TARQ

As an art teacher, how do you define art and good art to your students?

How does one define Art, especially in the present times when the possibilities are endless.

“Since I teach college students they already come with preconceived notions of what they consider Art, my job is to help them open their minds to the multiple possibilities that actually exist. So the classroom is more a space to “Un-define” Art.”

Art is a personal experience, everyone connects to it differently. It is difficult to categorise it as good or bad especially while teaching as one tries to be as neutral as possible and to leave one's prejudices and preferences outside the classroom. I think understanding a piece of art in its historical/social/political context is more important. One may not 'like' a work but would still have to view it as important in the historical sense and thus respect it.

There are a lot of artists whose work I see and like and think that I would love to cut up. I highly doubt any of them would be very happy about me shredding their work into fine strips. So far the only artist who has allowed me to cut up a painting of theirs and rework it is my very indulgent mother.

The challenge of reworking an existing piece created by someone else, who feels and thinks differently from myself, is an exciting idea.

What are your thoughts on having a live audience interaction and digital museums?

For anything that is more tactile, material and large, when it is online, you don't get that sense of scale or the depth of it. You also can't engage well with very fine work. So communicating with the space, standing in a gallery is a different feeling altogether. The vision of the work also changes.

I wouldn't say that my favourite part of a gallery show is engaging with the audience. However, in general, I think and like meeting people and knowing their perspective on the art.

Is there any art piece that you would purchase if you could?

There are so many! However, I would say, [Birch Forest by Gustav Klimt from 1903](#).

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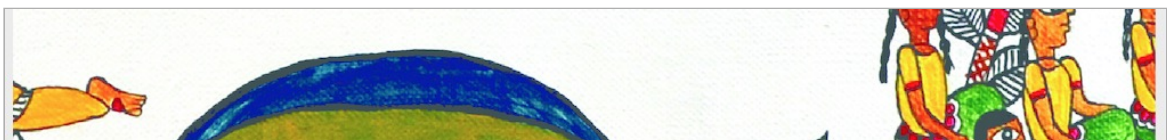
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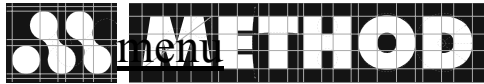


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