

## NOTICEBOARD

Pieces of Home: In conversation with Tanmoy Samanta

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**1. You have recently moved from Delhi to Santiniketan. This seems to represent a return to your roots, to the institution where you studied, but also to nature, a Tagorean and romantic vision of the creative individual seeking refuge in a simpler state of being. What has the experience been like and how has this shift affected your practice?**

In 2019-2020, I moved back to Santiniketan temporarily to manage a family situation. Soon after that, the pandemic struck, and like most others, I was thrown into a new set of circumstances. People perceived this change in more ways than one. Confined within our habitats, we began to see our homes differently. In our daily lives, we encountered various mixed emotions and undefined anxieties. I welcomed this feeling of suddenly being rendered insignificant and helpless within an overwhelming universal scheme of events. In Santiniketan, I usually live and work according to my own ways: the institution serves as a backdrop while I soak in whatever remains of nature here in my solitary way. But Santiniketan is no longer a place where one can live simply and refuge can be sought within nature. Like any other place, here too there have been changes and everything is now pursued for lucrative possibilities.

**2. In your latest artworks I was struck by the synoptic view that you assume, of the gaze from an otherworldly position as it were, of looking at earth-shaped forms visualized in different ways. You have called the series *The Shape of Home* and the works appear to be overcast by shadow, fragmented, bearing marks of collaged elements. Can you describe how this series came about?**

I have been working on the idea of "home" for a while now. In a strange coincidence, the pandemic allowed me to carry on with that journey of exploration. It confined us within our homes, challenged our habitual notions and brought out new facets of the relationship between these domestic spaces and the world. In this series, I have focused on the material and imaginative aspects of home. The idea of home being both contradictory and complimentary at the same time. That is how the pairing of the works came about. I have used my main medium pigment and rice paper slightly differently. The base of the paintings are paperboards cut into different shapes and painted upon. There are collages of paintings that have been worked on separately. This assemblage made the paintings synoptic: they resemble earthly elements in their shapes which tilt towards otherworldly positions.

**3. In most of your paintings, the idea of home itself is conveyed as utterly fragile, as if it was stitched or pinned on the surface of the earth, or supporting the earth with precarious balance. Very often the form is just linear, lending it the quality of paper. Can you speak more about this?**

Yes, I wanted to convey the fragility in our concept of home. The sense of belonging that comes with the idea of home is fluid. It is layered with textures of history and the memory of displacement and destruction-both physical and emotional. Moreover, our ongoing existence and futures on earth are imperiled by the menaces we have created. Hence, we've been rendered living ruins floating on the surface of this planet with precarious balance.

**4. Your earlier works were imbued with a close observation of the object world-tea pots, scissors, sewing machines, bird forms, small vessels and implements, even aeroplanes. You made them conjoin in very unexpected ways, which**

**disrupted their domestic function, lending them a surreal dimension. Compared to the earth forms in the present body of works, that was a series of contemplations on domestic objects. Can you talk about the evolution of this imagery?**

In the past two years, having spent more time within domestic spaces, I felt the urge to create a space within myself and break the monotony of these familiar scenes. It was also a time to introspect, review and organize the old works and explore new possibilities by diving into virtual spaces. While reorganizing the workspace and discarding some old and rejected material, I tore and kept aside some parts which I wanted to preserve. The torn shapes later caught my attention and I began to arrange them in various ways, joining them, pasting them one upon another, adding new shapes and forms, and then letting it evolve from there. The objects and images exist, but as shadows of the memories of what they once were, and the story plots and structures move away from rectangular shapes to occupy their own space of solitude and oblivion.