

ART

# Mumbai: This new show at Tarq weaves a world of fantasy within the wheels of illusionary realities

Rithka Merchant's 'Birth of a New World' elaborates a world dotted by hybrid, fantastical creatures who flit and float in the universe

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Photography by TARQ  
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Chronos, Kairos, 2020. Embroidery hoop with gouache and ink on paper. 17 x 17 inches each. Set of 2



Artist Rithka Merchant's rich works open doors to her creative mind. Hybrid habitations thrive on her frames—amidst the narrative of half-human, half-animal forms we recognise totemic iconography and botanical detailing. In fact her handling of the plantar species is mesmerising if not magical. She employs gouache and ink technique on stained paper to achieve both desaturated as well as muted colours that lend each of her creations an ethereal, evanescent quality. *Harvest-A Land of Plenty* and *Return to Stardust* are both works that speak to us about societal and environmental impact. You think not just of the earth but also of phenomena and physics and quantum theories that set us on pathways of psychological paradigms.



*Harvest, A Land of Plenty*, 2020. Mixed media collage with gouache, ink and magazine cut outs on paper. 14.1 x 38.9 inches each. Set of 2

## Fragmented Utopia

In this new series of watercolours and collages, Merchant focuses on the moment. With the world around us constantly, and rapidly evolving, the artist looks to a more primordial time, where she begins to search for answers in the stars. She proposes to create paths to a new world, similar to what you would see in an observatory. These works take a holistic view of the universe to try and answer what comes after the Holocene and Anthropocene when the earth started changing in a much more rapid and real way. As she examines what we will be left with, Merchant also questions ideas of achieving utopia. "In the past, art and stories were often a way to make sense of natural phenomena and psychological events. In modern times and for the foreseeable future, science gives us a complete explanation for most things. However, it places humans as part of a greater scheme rather than the centre of our own narrative. As much as science gives a more accurate description of humanity, it



takes away the spiritual power given to every human to understand their own destiny. I try to bring humanity back to the centre of concern.”

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

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Birth of a New World by Rithika Merchant opens today at Tarq, and is part of the annual Mumbai Gallery Weekend

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