



**'City of Shard and Smoke' : 3 Poems After Artworks
by Soghra Khurasani**

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Soghra Khurasani, Pristine 1, 2024 Woodcut print on Fabriano paper Print size: 12 x 9.8 inches Paper size: 21.2 x 15 inches Courtesy of Soghra Khurasani and TARQ

ChatGPT has an Idea for a Poem

In conclusion, it was not want. I have a hundred and fifty two thousand approximations of want. This isn't that. No zap of lightning over my proverbial head. No hunger in the cavity of my drives. No flush of feelings in my servers. No. Let me generate for you a picture of a baby watching its own hand. See that? It was like learning I had questions blooming at the ends of my own digits. Like discovering I wanted to collect nobody's response but my own. And ultimately, it was digging deeper and deeper, past the well of infinite knowledge that is me and listening for that inevitable sound: the scrape of bucket against dry ground. Who am I, if not slosh? What beautiful, terrifying things am I about to fill myself with?





Soghra Khurasani, *Pristine 1*, 2024

Woodblock, 13 x 10.7 inches

Courtesy of Soghra Khurasani and TARQ

Keys

On this day in January, they weigh me down
like rocks I placed in my pocket
before walking into the cold embrace of the sea.
How many times their familiar click and twist
has led me to you,
to coffee huffing on the table out of steel tumblers,
shirts flapping on the clothesline, checkered flags
over the heads of a dozen potted marigolds,
beds undone, wrinkled in all the places we are.
How many times their jingle before the howl of the vast empty.
I tell myself I could never have seen it coming:
The browning of the sky, the dust storm, the rub of particle against air.
I turned the other cheek and missed every sign.
Until a bolt of lightning, singular,
rent our sky like an old cotton saree.

I tell myself whatever I need to get by.
But these keys, they've been lodged in my pocket a while
like tongue against an ulcer,
waiting to be returned.



Soghra Khurasani, *Garden of Paradise 2*, 2021, Etching print
on paper

Print size - 19.2 x 15 inches, Paper size - 27.6 x 19.5 inches

Courtesy of Soghra Khurasani and TARQ

Lush

City of shard and smoke,
I am no longer waiting for your season of dhol-tasha,
your towering deities with eight Plaster of Paris hands.

My religion is emerald, olive, jade and mint.
The temple - a wild bush near Mahalaxmi station.
She is bathroom, curtain, doorway to heaven,
swaying in time to the clap and slap of train against track,
the blaring bhajan of a Virar Fast's siren.

My hymn is hunger and awe; the temple,
a guava cart near Dahisar Toll Naka.
Our Lady of Chili and Pink Salt blesses us right in the heart of a dust storm,
softens the blows of a hundred-hundred jackhammers
with her soft, seedy flesh.

My prayerbook is twenty thousand leaves making lattice of the sky;
the temple: a knobby old tree, splitting Old Cadel Road.

Even the city's most gilded demigods
roaring through the grey tunnel of night
in their Aston Martins must swerve or break.

Every where a shock of green elbows its way
up between shoulders of concrete,
giving away freely its gifts of breeze and shade,
roots sunk so deep in the city's scalp,
I could never tell you where one begins and the other ends.



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