

SOMA DAS (b.1979)

Soma Das was born in Kolkata, West Bengal, in 1979. She completed her master's from Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, in 2009.

Her delicate, chromatic canvases draw from the exuberant miniature tradition, but instead of royalty or divinity, the paintings sing the praise of ordinary humans. Growing up in the lower-income suburbs of Calcutta, the visual discourse of her painting cultivates identity in a local context and its emancipatory struggles. In her works, the unambiguous proclamation of one's roots in the global artistic discourses seamlessly merges the political, economic, social, religious, and personal -asserting cultural identity. A meticulous observer, Das's way of seeing resembles a kind of anthropological holism - unearthing raw sentiments, nostalgia, dreams struggles of the subaltern.

Growing up amongst women, in a strictly patriarchal society, female protagonists severely dominate Das's paintings. They are drawn singular or in a group, reflecting the life of the ordinary women, revealing a separate world that is cultivated amidst the collective chaos. The paintings speak of a unique practice of psychological detachment, signified by the expanse of uninhabited space with the background filled with a singular opaque colour. Sometimes it's filled with soft lyrical motifs and patterns or simply a dense blackness that surrounds her female figures in a private moment. *Andar Mahal (inner apartment)*, and *The morning in my neighbour's garden (2021)* are such paintings that communicate a profound inertia within the familiar facets of womanhood. Through the extreme centralisation of her subjects shown in alienation, Das turns the common woman into a protagonist through her works.

Simultaneously *The rooftop party*, *Dupurer Pheriwala (hawkers of the afternoon (2021))*, are paintings that showcase a communitarian spirit. Visually, the two-dimensional pictorial space is split between multiple viewpoints, effortlessly merging the spatial fragments into a singular narrative. Paintings like *The Bed (2011)* possess a subverted satirical quality beneath an 'acceptance' of the situation. Instead of illustrating an external narrative, her paintings are responsible for their own narration, depicting the fragments of ordinary life unfolding through nostalgia, wit and satire.