

## FRESH EARTH

Exhibition: March 13 – April 17, 2021  
Press Preview & V.I.P. Reception: Saturday, March 13, 4:00pm – 7:00pm  
35 Great Jones St., New York NY 10012

**Rina Banerjee** (b. 1963, India)  
**Jayashree Chakravarty** (b. 1956, India)  
**Nadia Kaabi-Linke** (b. 1978, Tunisia)  
**Suchitra Mattai** (b. 1973, Guyana)



Jayashree Chakravarty, *Blooming Flowers*, 2020

Dry leaves, flowers, roots, jute, seeds, tea leaves, acrylic paint, cotton, fabric, Nepali paper, thin tissue paper, synthetic glue, 72.5 x 48.75 in.

Aicon Art is pleased to present *Fresh Earth*, an experiential group exhibition that considers artists from around the globe who employ organic materials in varied schema to offer parables of our complex socio-political histories and of the tenuous relationship with the world we inhabit.

Oscillating between tightly structured and uninhibitedly free-form, the works in this exhibition cite materials that help us unearth and examine the construction of our identities and the dissonance that seems inevitable to their construction. The residual and the symbolic are at the forefront of their concerns and through acts of collection, re-purposement, preservation and/or juxtaposition, **Rina Banerjee, Jayashree Chakravarty, Nadia Kaabi-Linke** and **Suchitra Mattai**, break earth. The resulting petrichor offers us a liminal space from which to take stock.

### Jayashree Chakravarty

In a career spanning over three decades Jayashree Chakravarty has placed environmentalism at the core of her concerns. Underscoring the grave risk that human encroachment and rapid urbanization pose to natural habitats, the artist draws from her lived experiences in the rapidly urbanizing suburb of Kolkata that she calls home. Chakravarty reminds us that the earth is continuously being pushed towards a precarious edge, where the threat of daily damage has taken on precipitous dimensions.

Like in much of her previous work, the current body offers us a repository of the artist's collection of twigs, leaves, flowers, seeds and other natural detritus. The work takes on an amber-

like quality when illuminated from behind – evincing a strategy of preservation and veneration as a way to combat the inevitable sense of loss that also lies within the work. The painstaking assembly of vegetal substances in dense layers of paper suggests perhaps the passage of time but equally stresses nature's regenerative potential. Through poetic evocations, she weaves into her personal vision the need for environmental healing and resurrection.

## Nadia Kaabi-Linke

Parsing the Anthropocene with a focus on themes of geopolitics, immigration, and transnational identities, Berlin-based Nadia Kaabi-Linke's works offer conceptual frameworks bolstered by powerful historical narratives. In a dynamic new work that directly responds to the gallery space, Kaabi-Linke reflects upon the last hundred years and the structures of power that thread colonialism and capitalism. Building on "Remont" a similar installation in Kiev that saw visitors walk unsteadily over un-fixed paving stones on the floor, Kaabi-Linke seeks to offer a cognitive reorientation by way of a sensory *disorientation*.

As curator Kateryna Filyuk has observed of this installation, *"Kaabi-Linke's work hints at the notion that instability and viral uncertainty is a new normal in our contemporary moment...The environmental effects of capitalism commodifying all aspects of human activity are well established, and yet there is still no seismic shift in socio-political understanding in sight. Kaabi-Linke's installation thus becomes a metaphor for this kind of collective indifference to any necessity of change."*

## Rina Banerjee

Amid a turn toward nativist politics in the United States, the work of Indian-born, New York-based artist Rina Banerjee seems particularly relevant, reflecting as it does the splintered experience of identity, tradition and culture prevalent in diasporic communities. Banerjee's fanciful sculptures are made from materials sourced throughout the world, paying homage to items caught between cultures. What results is a polemical taxonomy that mines the material effects of imperialism and capitalism.

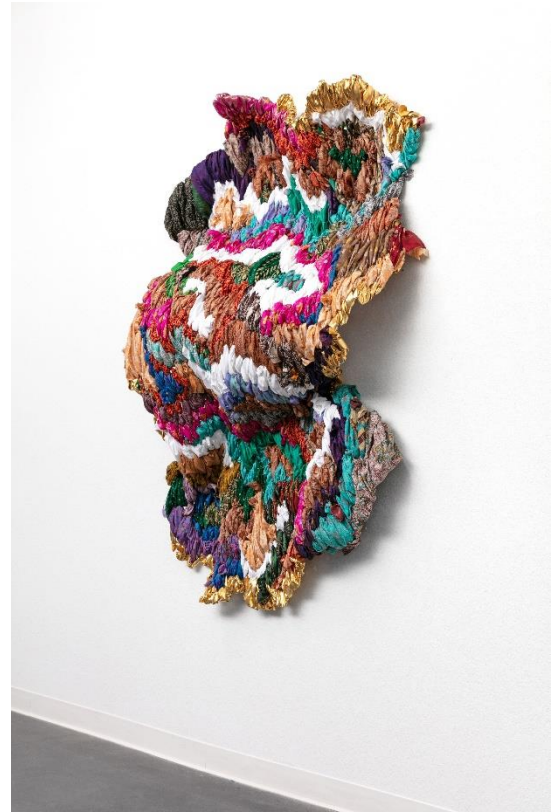
The current body of work comes directly from the artist's travelling retrospective 'Make Me A Summary of The World' and exemplifies Banerjee's use of material to not only recall past cultural legacies, but to reference the materials themselves and to open up their functionality in this way. As the artist reminds us, material and function are intertwined but the array of functions a material might take on, that remains to be seen. Banerjee's work simultaneously blends, notions of East and West, Global South and Global North, past and future to cathartic effect.

## Suchitra Mattai

The assemblage takes on new dimension in the inspired works of Denver-based artist Suchitra Mattai. Mattai's practice includes a wide range of materials and ideas, her primary focus is on the role of land and environment in the creation of identity. Often incorporating cultural artifacts in her works, the artist takes on the familiar format of landscape painting and subverts it – sometimes foregrounding the reference through the use of organic forms in three dimensions, in other instances flattening the landscape through the use of pattern and building up layers through collage elements. Thus, through painting, drawing, collage, installation, video, and sculpture, she weaves narratives of "an other," invoking fractured sites and reclaiming historically rich objects, many of which suggest a colonial past or domestic purpose.

It is an honor to present the work of this distinguished group of artists. Several of whom have been seen recently in major forums like the Venice Biennale (Rina Banerjee); Musée Guimet, Paris (Jayashree Chakravarty and Rina Banerjee); the Guggenheim Museum, New York (Nadia Kaabi-Linke); Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India (Nadia Kaabi-Linke and Rina Banerjee) and the Sharjah Biennial (Suchitra Mattai and Nadia Kaabi-Linke) to name a few.

Please contact Erica Kyung ([erica@aicongallery.com](mailto:erica@aicongallery.com)) for more information.



Suchitra Mattai, *Cloud 17064*, 2020  
Vintage saris, wire, fabric, dimensions variable