

TEMPLON



Press release
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ANJU DODIYA
Tower of Slowness
1 April - 22 May 2021



Moonlight drive, 2021

After a five-year absence from Europe, Indian artist Anju Dodiya is unveiling *Tower of Slowness*, a new series watercolour paintings, at Galerie Templon in Brussels.

At the age of 57, Anju Dodiya is undeniably one of the most respected artists on the Indian art scene. For the last thirty years, her paintings have used the self-portrait as a starting point to explore the conflicts between inner life and external reality: the anguish of creation, the artist's frustrations with the violence of the world, the incommunicability between people. The pandemic marking this last year and the strict lockdown she endured in her Mumbai residence/studio naturally resonated particularly strongly with her own obsessions. The current situation acted as a catalyst for an artist whose work engages closely with questions of isolation and social masks. As she explains, "this past year has been unusual for all of us. We are suddenly sharing a common wound, a painful recognition of the precariousness of our lives."

Her response has been to create a group of padded canvases cut in geometric shapes. Welcoming but visibly uncomfortable, these incongruous "mattresses" cover the gallery walls with portraits combined with animal skin motifs both familiar and enigmatic. These powerfully poetic works, mixing charcoal and watercolour, provide a glimpse of brief intimate scenes, both reassuring and ambiguous. In the words of the artist: "As we lie down on our bed or sit on our chair, sharp, geometric shapes occupy our minds and cloud all our thoughts. Slowness, loneliness, and a heightened awareness of our body and mind set our emotional antenna shivering. These padded works are simply the fruit of those darkened rooms we inhabit."

In contrast, a series of watercolours depicts the theme of the mask, a long-standing favourite motif for Anju Dodiya, who has often depicted herself masked. Inspired by James Ensor for her Belgian exhibition, she has drawn faces that seem frozen, covered either with a wisp of "blue air", diamond veils or surgical masks. Drawn at dusk, at sunset, in the desert light or on the way home, these not-quite-faithful self-portraits are presented solely in their relationship to time and space, shot through with a solitude that, while oppressive, is also possibly redeeming.

Born in Mumbai in 1964 and a graduate of the Sir J.J. School of Art, Anju Dodiya lives and works in Mumbai. She is one of the best known contemporary artists in India today. After initially focusing on water colours, Anju Dodiya has moved towards working with acrylic and charcoal, on canvas and various textiles. The artist's practice centres on a reinterpretation of multiple historical sources as varied as medieval tapestries, Italian Renaissance painters, Japanese Ukiyo-e woodblock prints and newspaper photographs.

Her work has been shown extensively, including at the *Art in the World* exhibition in Paris in 2000, Chicago Cultural Center in 2007, Museum of Contemporary Art in Shanghai and 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009, 5th Beijing International Art Biennale in 2012, Pizzuti Collection in Ohio (USA) in 2017 and Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai in 2020.

It also features in a great many private and public collections, such as at the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi and Mumbai, Jehangir Nicholson Art Foundation, Mumbai, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, Burger Collection, Hong Kong, Art Institute of Chicago, Private Museum, Singapore and Zabłudowicz Collection, London.