

Press Release

RANJANI SHETTAR

Summer garden and rain clouds

April 27 – September 24, 2022

Talwar Gallery, New Delhi is pleased to present *Summer garden and rain clouds*, an exhibition of new work by Ranjani Shettar. The exhibition will open to the public April 27 and will be on view until September 24, 2022.

The body of work featured in *Summer garden and rain clouds*, which includes sculptural and installation works as well as new works on paper, dates from the last three years—a period that witnessed an intensification of the artist's already distinctly purposeful practice. Emerging from the artist's close attention to the earth's cyclical rhythms, the works feel at moments full of a certain gravity—poignant reminders of the phases of darkness and dormancy that are necessary parts of any life. Balanced with this weightiness, however, is an irrepressible buoyancy - sparks of life that emerge, like the tiny buds of *Takeover*, where they are least expected. In *Summer garden and rain clouds*, in other words, we are confronted—directly, although not without humor—with the lessons of nature: the continuity between loss and rebirth, the constancy of both decay and growth, the inevitability of death, but also the resilience, persistence, and tenderness of life. These are revelations made possible by the artist's deep communion with her materials—her desire to make their reality visible, rather than to stamp a fixed and predetermined vision onto their surface.

Summer garden and rain clouds sees her continued engagement with the expressive possibilities of wood, as well as her ability to extract the life latent within each piece she creates: the gentle curve of *Elegy*, poignant as a pieta, or the natural texture created by the knots, grain, even the cracks of *Morning glory* or *Under the hood*. Always interested in the beauty of the unexpected and the flawed, Ranjani is equally invested in acknowledging the areas of her own intervention, often making the joints that hold her teak and rosewood sculptures together a critical formal element in their composition—exposing the imperfections within the materials, as well as the care with which they have been attended to. *Rock me to sleep tonight* expands this practice into new territory: matching two different kinds of wood together, it points to the aesthetic resonances hidden within their grains—and opens the possibility that their grafting together might be as organic, and beautiful, a process as their natural growth.

Ranjani brings this intense engagement with wood to bear on her two-dimensional works, as well, including several singular new works on paper. In one woodcut printed from the sides, tread, and keystone of a reclaimed temple chariot wheel, the pocks and dents in the wheel's surfaces are what give form to an image—a landscape worn into the wood by hundreds of years of travel. The woodcuts of *Postcards from my hometown* strike a similarly reflective tone—their dark, faded monochrome calling up an acute longing, even if the homeplace they represent is abstracted and multiple. The artist's recent series of wood-grain prints, meanwhile, balance this gravitas with playful lightness; some printed in bright, spirited hues, they surface the surprising expressivity of each piece of wood's particular grain, inimitable as a human face. While in some their unique shape seems to cast its own glow, as if dancing on top of the paper they are printed on—in much the same way that the wood forms of *Rock me to sleep tonight* reflect their own light on the wall behind them, as if alive with their own, luminous presence.

Ranjani's practice takes its rhythm from nature, while many of its methods are drawn from India's centuries-old craft traditions. The works in *Summer garden and rain clouds* bear the imprint of both influences, even as they testify to the artist's striking contemporaneity. In *Turn Over*, large, human-scale ribbons of deep-black metal peel up and off the wall, like a minimalist sculpture come undone. Their undersides reveal organic, sinuous lines in a glimmering silver--created using bidri, an inlay process traditional in the artist's home state of Karnataka. Both flat and dimensional, commanding and delicate, *Turn Over* invites viewers to look in more than one way--to turn over their initial impressions in order to reveal what awaits on the other side. *In another time* solicits a bolder kind of attention, allowing something like the cadence of nature to emerge; in it, naturally-dyed cloths, wrapped around steel armatures, seem like floating notes of a symphony, earthly and celestial.

Over the past two decades, Ranjani has developed a practice both highly intentional and open to improvisation. Taking the specificity of her materials as her springboard, Shettar's oeuvre imbues a sensitive dialogue with the spaces they inhabit, her works take on new shape and tenor in different environments. Rejecting the staticness of traditional sculpture, her works often hang free, float, or span the space between walls and ceiling, inviting the activation of the viewer's full-body engagement and challenging an attitude of passive contemplation. Folding the viewer into a larger and always dynamic relationship between matter, space, and human actors, Ranjani's works encourage a kind of ecological awareness of the material, the people, and the world around us.

Ranjani Shettar's works are in many prestigious museum collections and have been the subject of several solo presentations including at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (The MET) (2018), The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC (2019), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2011), The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) (2009), The Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX (2008-9) and The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Boston, MA (2008). Ranjani's works have also been featured in exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), NY; Kiran Nadar Museum, New Delhi; 5th Moscow Biennale; 10th Liverpool Biennial, UK; 55th Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, PA; 9th Lyon Biennial, France; 8th Sharjah Biennial, UAE; 15th Sydney Biennale, Australia; Art Tower Mito, Japan, Artpace, Texas; Cartier Fondation, Paris; Sainsbury Center, UK; Hermes Fondation, Singapore; Wexner Center, OH; The Walker Art Center, MN; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Torino, Italy and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York. In collaboration with The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York Shettar created a limited-edition project, *Varsha* and more recently was invited to create a special print for the MET 150, to commemorate The Metropolitan Museum of Art's 150th anniversary.

Ranjani Shettar (b. 1977 Bangalore, India) lives and works in Karnataka, India.

For further information please contact the gallery at tg@talwargallery.com or (011) 4605-0307