

Najmun Nahar Keya: *A Tale of One City*

Aicon Contemporary New York is proud to present *A Tale of One City* the first U.S. solo exhibition of **Najmun Nahar Keya**

Najmun Nahar Keya spent five years in Tokyo, on the prestigious Monbukagakusho Japanese government scholarship, awarded to one emerging Bangladeshi artist every year. These five years have had a disproportionately high impact on her art, and on her person. An immigrant in a country not known to welcome immigrants, brought out in her a very a talent of finding beauty; even when it is buried deep. Her art, too, embraced Japanese art in nuanced ways.



Coming back to Bangladesh was not easy either. In Dhaka, the city where she had grown up and lived her entire life, before leaving for Tokyo, had grown bewilderingly in the five years that she was away. Population had surged, unchecked commercialization had widened the chasm between haves and have nots, and unplanned development choked the city. This development also claimed as its victims, the last remaining buildings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Buildings that bore witness a less teeming, more genteel Dhaka.

Keya brings these two currents together in her new work *A Tale of One City*, using the techniques and concept of *wabi-sabi*, and *kin-sugi*. Like many things Japanese, there is a certain protocol to taking care of broken pottery. *Kin-sugi* dictates that it is not only glued back, but also gilded along the cracks - as if the calamity which befell the pottery, makes it even more valuable. This concept, finds recall in an aging, aesthetically inclined nation. *Wabi-sabi*, likewise, is a world view centered on the acceptance of transience and imperfection. Beauty is thought of as imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. Keya, with a *wabi-sabi* mindset, goes back to old Dhaka, where she grew up and which is falling fast into decrepitude; and documents old buildings at risk of collapsing on their own or falling victim to development, and then gives them a new life, even if only on paper. In *A Tale of One City*, Keya re-interprets gilding in many forms. She used Japanese gilt delicately embossed on sepia prints, brass wires to recreate architectural elements, and a myriad of other visual techniques. The overall effect is utterly mesmerizing.

Najmun Nahar Keya was awarded the **Charles Wallace Fellowship** to the UK in 2018. In 2012 she received the a **Monbukagakusho** scholarship to study in Japan. Prior to that she has received awards, has been selected for residencies, and exhibited in Bangladesh, India, Japan, the Netherlands, France and other countries.

The artist lives and works in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Please contact Aicon Contemporary (sam@aicongallery.com) for more information.