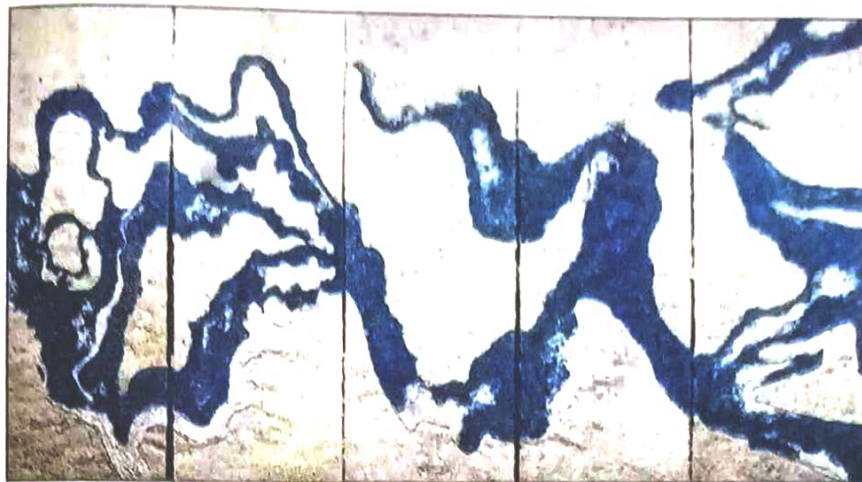




# Textured tales

## VISUAL ARTS

SIDDHARTH  
SIVAKUMAR

**T**he clouds in Ruma Choudhury's works are unlike the abbreviated clouds of landscape painting. They do not spread horizontally across a distant sky; they rise, accumulate and build vertically. They look less like clouds glimpsed at a distance in a landscape than clouds watched closely enough for their formations to become familiar. It suggests something about how Choudhury looks: sustained observation becomes a way of discovering possibilities. At Emami Art, Choudhury's solo exhibition, *Elemental Encounters: Practice as Ecological Archive*, is on view until September 18.

Rain enters Choudhury's vocabulary differently. It is not simply depicted; it can participate in making the work, leaving marks on the paper itself. What she observes in the natural world can thus become a condition of the work's formation.

This is consistent with the remarkable patience she has brought to paper-making since her years at Kala Bhavana. Her research into fibres has been exten-

sive and practical: understanding what gives a fibre strength, what weakens it, how it responds to soaking, beating, drying and combination. Such knowledge gives her a greater command of its possibilities. Different fibres can be combined, layered, strengthened, loosened and altered, producing variations in density, texture and edge that become part of the work's construction.

The resulting works occupy an unsettled space between painting and object. Their forms may suggest clouds, rain, water or terrain but the image is never separable from the substance of the sheet. Fibres remain visible; surfaces vary in density; edges buckle and break. *Tussar* waste, plant fibres, cotton and charcoal retain traces of their material identities even as they are made to serve an image.

The gold in some works introduces another register. Materials that might otherwise be discarded acquire an almost ceremonial presence without erasing their roughness or history. Choudhury has spent years making paper. What this exhibition makes clear is that, somewhere along the way, she stopped making paper for art and began making art through the possibilities of paper itself.