

Furthermore, Gateja's works draw from vast narratives. The fantastical scenarios capture the broader conversations of ongoing self-reevaluation and environmental calibration in the past two years. *Old coffee tree* (all works 2021), for example, revisited themes from his earlier work: coffee and bark cloth. The flat style calls to mind icon paintings eschewing central perspective to serve as veils before the threshold to the divine, while swirling colorful beads are placed in patterns recalling the mallet stamps found on cloth made from the *mutuba*, a tree known to contribute to soil quality. Another towering work, *Change 2*, was placed at the center of the exhibition and could be apprehended by viewers as they moved from one room to the next. The approximately nine-by-ten-foot installation hung freely; it is transparent, and its draping of predominantly gray and blue lines running vertically from top to bottom could be examined from both sides. The paper materials for this work came from a Democratic field office in Chicago. They include posters, brochures, and leaflets from Barack Obama's 2008 CHANGE WE CAN BELIEVE IN campaign. The material was to be disposed of after the election but was passed on to the artist by an acquaintance who was familiar with his practice.

The rest of the works in "Radical Care" were wall based. In them, colorful flat flora and fauna forms were stitched over bark cloth, woven-rafia, and banana-fiber surfaces. *Biologica* showed a giant creature sprouting and firmly standing: an enlargement of a stained microscopic organism that could be in the air, the sea, or the earth. Turning us into active nurseries for nonhumans, these bacteria have the power to radically affect human cultures. Likewise, by scaling down his work, the artist invited viewers into a private and personal contemplation capable of altering our everyday mentality.

—Nantume Violet

MUMBAI

Sosa Joseph

GALERIE MIRCHANDANI + STEINRUECKE

Sosa Joseph has lived most of her life by the Pampa River in Kerala, India. The fourteen paintings in her exhibition "Where Do We Come From?" did not stray far from its paddy banks. Each was a flash of something Joseph has remembered, half recollections that have come to her in sudden bursts. In *A Viper in the Sugar Cane Field*, 2021, for instance, we saw a crowd walking down a towpath lined with tall sawtooth cane leaves. The scene is blurred, as though sliding away, caught only for a moment before it disappears; it is tinged with uncertainty. A figure in repose, head tilted back, is being carried to the choppy water. Behind them, a snake is wrapped around a slim pole and an almost-full moon blinks in the indigo.

In every painting, the water moved differently. The way Joseph uses oil emulates the fluidity and transparency of watercolor. In *Gift from the River I*, 2021, the water was wide and sweeping, gliding into sky. The landscape presses itself upon the figures that inhabit it; people and animals are mostly outlines, almost transparent. Children hold hands as they move their feet in the riverbed; a low-slung canoe drifts past a swimmer's bobbing head. The river is glassy, animated by shades of aquamarine and teal. A pineapple-yellow highlight errantly skates over the water: sunshine skimming the river's surface.

There is a Sosa Joseph color palette. She mixes her paints constantly as she works, and her canvases are animated by subtle shifts of tone that result. She does not plot out paintings or fill them with preparatory drawings; instead, she dapples color onto the canvas's surface, then wipes it all away to start again until she gets it right. Hers is a kind of automatic painting, one with a built-in system of editing. This improvisational

process gives her works their still-alive quality; the paintings seem to fluctuate like memory itself. *The Ferryman and His Jaundiced Child*, 2019, was perhaps the most personal and one of the largest on display. Nearly nine feet tall and five feet wide, it portrays Joseph's grandfather, who, like his father, was a ferryman. He stands on the beams of a curving wooden boat, which is handmade and slender, of the type used in Kerala for making short trips between river islands or the banks of backwaters. In the crook of one elbow he holds a baby, who pulls playfully at his mouth; with his other hand he steers the boat, using its long oar. Around the pair, the water is thickly canopied with a vivid mix of forest green, purple, and blue. The painting is a moody memorial; the baby, Joseph told me, is a depiction of herself.

Back in March 2014, at the very early start of the spring, one of India's national newspapers ran the headline AS PAMPA SHRINKS, LIFE EBBS AWAY. These conditions continue to worsen: The river is polluted and drying up. Joseph says, "I am thankful for the jacanas, the coots, and the coucals; the turtles by the mudflats, the frogs in the puddles. I am thankful for the moon over the sugarcane fields and the moorhens in the swamps. I am thankful for the trees and the creepers. I am thankful for the people by the river and their stories." The paintings pay tribute and carry an atmosphere that is unspoiled and vibrant—though the natural world remains dynamic, even chaotic. Her characters play out small dramas high and low. Joseph dips us into a brilliant but impermanent world.



Sosa Joseph, *The Ferryman and His Jaundiced Child*, 2019, oil on canvas, 107½ × 57¾".

—Skye Arundhati Thomas

HONG KONG

Wang Xin

DE SARTHE

"In the Flow of Becoming—An Awakening Art Log from a Fictional AI Artist" was a conceptually ambitious exhibition that was partially defeated by the glitches of digital technology—and by simple skepticism. The conceit had Wang Xin, a "human artist," cede the gallery to WX, an invented artist who is an artificial intelligence. This avatar, according to the artist's statement, was trying to achieve consciousness and required assistance in this mission from the public's performance of creative tasks. The resulting participatory experiences, the artist claimed, would produce digital data to feed back into other works and change the course of WX's journey to enlightenment. The result of this quest was an exhibition of hand- and machine-crafted sculptural objects, video projections, and sonic episodes that aimed to muddle the boundaries between the human and the posthuman.

It was not entirely clear how this threshold condition was meant to be achieved or whether Wang's bold claims about the effect of public participation on WX remained merely demonstrative. Take, for instance, *Together We Are a Sea, a Murmuring Wave of Sound and a Hive Soul*,