

RED DOT INTERVIEW – LATA GEDALA, *SECTION*
INTERVIEWED BY ÁNGELA GARCÍA ON JULY 15, 2020



Lata Gedala,
Section, 2019,
Handmade Paper
48 x 38 1/2 x 2 1/2"
Courtesy of the artist.

AG: Can you tell me a little more about the work you submitted for Red Dot this year?

LG: The title is called *Section*. It depicts the cell structure of plants that exists well beyond what can be perceived by the naked eye. The work references the section cut of a plant, as viewed through the microscope.

AG: What's the process of making these sheets?

LG: It's a lengthy and laborious process and there's a lot of preparation and planning involved. *Section* is made with a fiber called kozo (mulberry). In order to make sheets of paper the fiber is

soaked, cooked, cleaned, pounded with hands for 4-5hrs and then formed into sheets and finally dried. All these steps in aggregate takes over 24hrs. I call this, a true labor of love process.

AG: It seems like there's a lot of hands-on, tactile steps to making these works of art.

What do you think is the experience or the benefit of having that sort of approach?

LG: The process of handmade papermaking is a bit like cooking, in that, there are ingredients, and you put them together to create something that is more than the sum of its parts. It creates an artistic means of expression in my work.

AG: Do you feel that your childhood shaped the art that you make today?

LG: I was born in India where I spent my formative years in places that were surrounded by mountains and greenery. Since a little girl, I was always drawn to plants. As I grew my interest in plants, evolved into appreciation for nature which led me to study botany in college. I was fortunate enough that the Southwest School of Art had a papermaking studio that helped combine my interests in art and plants.

AG: Do you think that living in San Antonio has shaped the art that you make today?

LG: Personally, living in San Antonio does not change how I think or feel, since we all have unique experiences. For me, I think one of the biggest things is [that] my approach is very wholistic. I don't contain myself [and think] "Oh, I'm from India and I need to act or think in a certain way" or "I am now in San Antonio, this is how I need to be." I don't like to put myself in a mold. I enjoy that because I don't want to contain my ideas in a box. My work is very open, and it is my way of responding to the environmental issue by using natural materials. When I was in India, I was relocating every two to three years due to my father's job. Even though I'm from the southern part of India, I grew up in so many different regions in India. The languages, the food, the culture differed from place to place. This exposure helped me not to restrict myself to a certain identity. I have been living in San Antonio for past 15 years. I very much feel a part of this community. San Antonio is home for me now.

AG: Why do you think your work commits itself to themes of nature and plants?

LG: I fret about how, our environment is constantly being exploited for economic benefits at the expense of future generations. As an artist, I feel the responsibility to address this issue in my work, to raise consciousness and arouse admiration for beauty in nature.

AG: Have you had an experience with art that's changed your life?

LG: We were in New York in 2002, and my husband at that time was doing his residency. I was new to the country and was mostly at home. I decided to go back to school. I joined the community college to study art. It was completely a new subject for me. I didn't know much about art or artists then. During the end of the first semester I attended a student show and there was this beautiful painting a student made of Georgia O'Keeffe's Red Canna. It caught my attention. There was this instant attraction and I loved the colors and the shapes. When I learnt about the artist I visited her museum in Santa Fe a few years later. She is one of my favorite artists. The way she looks at flowers is so different from anything else. Another artist whose work I admire is Andy Goldsworthy.

AG: What's the experience of having your artwork purchased for a private collection like?

LG: It's a very nice feeling, and an encouraging one. When I make work, I put a lot of my energy, time and effort into it. The way I look at it is: I'm working in these [roles as] a mother, a wife, a student, and now as an artist, so I have to balance all these roles. My time in the studio is very crucial for me, so I make good use of every minute. When someone buys the work you know that work is being appreciated. It means a lot.

AG: Do you maintain a relationship with your collectors?

LG: I do. I like to maintain a very professional relationship. I send them cards made with handmade paper for showing their support and appreciation.

AG: I feel like your work puts a lot of emphasis on conserving, reusing, and giving new life to different things. What's your motives in having that ecological outlook?

LG: It gives me joy. It gives me purpose when I don't destroy. We often say 'Oh, nobody's taking care of the environment or nobody's taking care of pollution.' I personally feel that when it comes to me as an individual, I can do something. This is my profession, and I'd rather take this approach where there's less destruction in creating. On my end I'm doing my part. I feel this is very important as it helps me when I talk to my children about environment. I have to practice what I preach. My children are the next generation. I need to keep [the environment] safe so that they also enjoy the life we are enjoying. I'm very conscious about it.

AG: Where is the best place to follow you for updates?

LG: My website latagedala.com and my Instagram handle is latagedala.

AG: Is there anything else you'd like to ask or share?

LG: I'm thankful to Blue Star Contemporary for giving me an opportunity to be a part of Red Dot. This is the first time I'm participating [in Red Dot]. I think fundraisers are a wonderful platform for collectors to see the works of [both] upcoming and seasoned artists.

ABOUT LATA GEDALA

Lata Gedala is a visual artist and a hand papermaker. Her concern for the environment encourages her to practice sustainable form of art making. This includes using plant materials for making paper and adopting non-toxic printmaking methods.

She was born and raised in India, where traveling was a big part of her formative years. Most of her childhood she lived amidst nature. This influenced her admiration and appreciation towards environment.

She has a Bachelor's in Science with an emphasis in Botany & Zoology. Emigrating to the US opened the doors for her in the field of Arts. She earned an Associate's Degree in Visual Arts with highest honors at Westchester Community College, New York. Raised in a culture where art is considered only a hobby, her intent is to make art with a sense of purpose.

Lata's work is represented in private collections and has been exhibited in juried shows in New York, Philadelphia, San Antonio and Florence, Italy. She is a member of the International Association of Hand Papermakers and Paper Artists (IAPMA) and North American Hand Papermakers. She completed BFA with highest honors at Southwest School of Art with an emphasis in hand papermaking, photography and printmaking. More at www.latagedala.com.

ABOUT ÁNGELA GARCÍA

Ángela García is Blue Star Contemporary's Arts, Letters, and Enterprise summer intern from McAllen, TX. She is pursuing a BA in Art History at Trinity University, and plans to study architecture after receiving her undergraduate degree. García has also worked as a studio intern for Artpace San Antonio, a radio host for KRTU 91.7FM, and has done volunteer work at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, TX. She works in digital and film photography and analog collage.