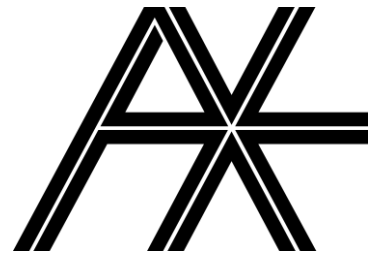


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## Ishita Chakraborty 2024 Manor Art Prize Aarau

Press Release  
Aarau, March 2025

**Ishita Chakraborty (\*1989) is the recipient of the 2024 Manor Art Prize Aarau, which is awarded every two years to support young artists in Switzerland. The recipient is awarded the opportunity for an individual exhibition with publication at the Aargauer Kunsthaus. In three new works, the artist and poetess links ecological and socio-political questions: Songs of resistance, barricades made from glass, an installation of hundreds of barbed wires made from porcelain, and a room-size wall drawing on the tropics conjoin to form a holistic view of the current state of the world and the environment.**

“These hard nights will not end,” the Iranian musician Hura Mirshekari sings with her deep and rich voice. Upon invitation from Ishita Chakraborty, the singer, who lives in exile in Paris, wrote a song in her native language Sistani, a Persian dialect very rarely spoken today. In doing so, she continues a singing tradition that is reserved for men in her culture. During the course of the song, we also hear the voices of two Bulgarian singers that unite with Mirshekari’s voice to create a song full of hope and power: “Life goes on.” The political song project, *Protest Song I: Winds of Change (2025)*, facilitates the remote encounter of two languages and cultures. From megaphones, like the ones we know from protest marches in the streets, the song can be heard throughout the entire exhibition space.

Forms of collaboration like this one are typical for Chakraborty. The artist and poetess, born in Bengal (India) in 1989, uses different media—from installations to murals to sound works and poetry—to address the politically charged topics of our times: issues regarding migration, of colonial entanglements, marginalisation processes, and current climate crisis. In her new productions, she continues this examination for the Manor Art Prize exhibition, addressing political systems and power structures, government regulation efforts, the meaning of borders, and the exploitation of natural resources.

Right at the beginning of the exhibition route, a fragile barricade blocks the path. The work is inspired by the 2.5-metres-long crowd control barrier that is usually erected for big events or road blocks. Chakraborty, however, makes the artwork from glass, though the shape reflects the steel original. The artist follows a similar approach in her wall installation of barbed wires,

which she creates from porcelain. Here, too, she has opted for a fragile material. The many hundreds of wires installed along the wall evoke different associations: They remind us of wall texts, Braille lettering for the visually impaired, or even military flight formations in the sky. Chakraborty goes beyond the customary symbolism of her objects and uses them to question government control mechanisms, inviting us to break away from our notions and to reflect upon the changing meaning of the term "border". Are the boundaries that separate us actually brittle and fragile, rather than rigid and unwavering?

Borders are also symbolically represented by the lines in the third new piece, a room-size wall installation. Here, Chakraborty combines pencil lines with various types of images: tropically inspired wallpaper patterns found online, archive material from South-African cocoa plantations, as well as photographs from her artistic residency in the Brazilian Amazon last year. Chakraborty's work highlights the juxtaposition between the utopia and the reality of romanticised tropical landscapes.

With her eco-feminist approach, addressing social and ecological issues jointly, Chakraborty shows global interconnections and historical contexts in her work, always striving towards creating a more holistic picture of the current state of the world and the environment.

#### Publication

On occasion of the exhibition, Chakraborty's first monograph is published. Three texts examine Ishita Chakraborty's way of working from different perspectives. The French political-scientist, historian, and activist Françoise Vergès places Chakraborty's works in the post-colonial debate, while the Indian poet, art critic, and freelance curator Ranjit Hoskote examines the role of language and text in her oeuvre. Anouchka Panchard, research associate collectionat the Aargauer Kunsthaus and curator of the 2024 Manor Art Prize Aarau, discusses important works from the last eight years and positions them within the context of Switzerland, where Chakraborty has lived since 2017. In addition, the richly illustrated publication contains a selection of poems by the artist, since they constitute another important part of her artistic endeavours alongside her installation work.

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#### A Commitment for the Young Swiss Art Scene

The Manor Kunstpreis, which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2022, is one of the leading prizes for the advancement of contemporary art in Switzerland. It was established in 1982 by Philippe Nordmann to provide young Swiss artists with a platform. It is awarded annually by an expert jury and alternates between the cities of Aarau, Basel, Biel, Chur, Geneva, Lausanne, Lucerne (for Central Switzerland), Lugano, Schaffhausen, Sitten, St. Gallen, and Winterthur. A glance at the list of recipients shows that the Manor Kunstpreis paved the way to international recognition for a large number of artists. The Manor committee cordially congratulates the winners of the Cultural Prize and wishes them much success in their future artistic endeavours.

[www.manor.ch/de/u/kunstpreis](http://www.manor.ch/de/u/kunstpreis)

The prize will be awarded to Ishita Chakraborty on the opening night of her exhibition on Friday, May 23, 2025.

Ishita Chakraborty

Ishita Chakraborty was born in 1989 in West Bengal (India). She studied Visual Arts at the Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata as well as at the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste (ZHdK, Zürich University of the Arts). Today she lives in Möriken and works in Schönenwerd, Aargau.

Individual exhibitions: *Sleeping in the Bed of Salt*, Gallery Espace, New Delhi (2023); *In Other Words*, Vitrine Galerie, Basel (2023); *The Scent of Rice*, Kulturfolger, Zürich (2023); *The Songs of Resistance*, KEINRAUM, Lucerne (2021); *Lyrics of Loss and Longing*, Prameya Art Foundation, New Delhi (2020).

Group exhibitions (selection): *Apropos Hodler*, Kunsthaus Zürich (2024); *Auswahl 24*, Aargauer Kunsthaus (2024); *Seeds and Souls*, Kunsthalle Charlottenborg, Kopenhagen (2023-24); *Common Ground*, Weiertal Biennale, Winterthur (2023); *Stranger in the Village*, Aargauer Kunsthaus (2023); *Serendipity*, Art Festival Goa (2023); *The Mouth Is For Speaking*, We ARE AIA, Löwenbräu, Zürich (2022), *Mother Earth Calling*, Atelier Mondial, Basel (2021).

Prizes and grants (selection): Nomination Prix Mobilère (2024); Aargauer Kuratorium Werkbeitrag (2024); Residency in the Amazon, Pro Helvetia (2023-24); Visiting Artist Fellowship, Lakshmi Mittal SAI, Harvard University (2020-21); CS Förderpreis (2021); Jurypreis *Auswahl 21*, Aargauer Kunsthaus (2021); Grant, Avina Stiftung (2020); Residency, Gästetelier Krone, Aarau (2017); Residency, Piramal Museum of Art, Mumbai (2016).

#### Additional Information

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