

# DETAILS:

## Climate Pledge Workshop and Artist Talk:

Wednesday, September 15, 4:30pm  
outside Gibson @ Kohl Gallery

## Gallery visits by appointment:

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 1:30-5pm  
Wednesday 4:30-7:30pm

## Make an appointment:

<https://calendly.com/kohlgallery/monica-jahan-bose-renew>

For more information about the artist:

<https://monicajahanbose.com/home.html>

<http://storytellingwithsaris.com/>

For all other inquiries contact:

Gallery Director, Tara Gladden

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# RENEW

## Monica Jahan Bose



August 31- October 1, 2021

## ABOUT THE EXHIBIT

Artist and activist Monica Jahan Bose has been working at the intersection of art, climate action, women's issues, and racial justice for years. Her prolific, multidisciplinary practice has yielded many socially engaged, community-driven projects that include components of creativity, education, advocacy, and empowerment for participants. While her work presents a global perspective, it is unique in that the global perspective is made personal through her ongoing work with the two communities she is closest to: Katakhalī, her ancestral village in Bangladesh and her home community in Washington DC – where she lives currently. This combination creates a perspective that makes the global personal and offers an intimate view into the impact of climate change on specific, individual communities with whom she has a personal relationship.

*RENEW* presents a survey of Monica Jahan Bose's recent work. A central focus of the exhibit is the sari – an integral symbol in Jahan Bose's work that she describes as “a precolonial unstitched garment that is never discarded, representing the female body and the continuity of life on the planet.” The saris on display were created as part of her ongoing *Storytelling with Saris* project. This multi-layered collaborative project uses woodblock prints on saris, writing, oral history, performance, advocacy, workshops, and film to empower communities around the world to address climate justice in solidarity with the women of Katakhalī Village, an island community in Bangladesh on the frontlines of climate change. Through this project, communities are engaged to take action against climate change by making written pledges on saris to reduce their carbon footprint in an act of cross-border solidarity. These climate pledge saris are then used in various contexts such as performances and exhibitions and ultimately returned to Bangladesh where they are worn by the women of Katakhalī.



image:  
*Storm Winds Are Blowing*

The symbolic sari continues in a narrative series of paintings that are documentations of participatory performances. All of the performances represented included singing a Bengali song entitled, *Kharobayu Boye Bege (Storm Winds are Blowing)* in which the words “O Boatman” are replaced with “O Woman” to create a feminist narrative about working together to row a boat to shore during a storm. The various lines from this song are the titles of the paintings.

Also included in the exhibit is a selection of prints on handmade Bangladeshi paper. These works, some created in collaboration with Indo-French artist Anju Chaudhuri, feature Jahan Bose's handmade woodblocks and speak to warming waters, rising water, salt incursion into agricultural land, and their impact on fish, agriculture, and animals, taking another view of climate change and its impact on agriculture and food insecurity.

The most recent works in the exhibit are a collection of sculptures Jahan Bose created as part of *Concrete Dreams* – a collaborative public art project that took place over the course of eight months during COVID. It included virtual and outdoor workshops led by Bose, co-facilitated by Maps Glover, that prompted participants to write “concrete poetry” – poetry written or structured visually to reflect its meaning. Excerpts of this poetry in Bangla and English are represented in the plaster sculptures, cast and printed using etching and intaglio techniques. Jahan Bose calls these works “steles” – referencing the archeological term applied to ancient artifacts made of stone or wood that were inscribed, carved in relief, or painted and most often used for commemorative purposes. *Concrete Dreams* culminated in a public outdoor event that included an installation of saris draped over the side of the DC Arts Center on which filmmaker Robin Bell projected footage of workshops and the poetry.

The painting *Water 4 (Durga)* from 2008 acts a reference point for the exhibition illustrating Jahan Bose's sustained work on climate related issues. It includes the image of the goddess Durga and a mosque in the midst of a rising sea. The border contains Bengali words for water, Pani (used more by Muslims) and Jal (used more by Hindus). It also includes kantha stitching painted on the border, referring to the practice of women stitching recycled saris together to create kantha blankets.

Finally, *RENEW* also includes an interactive educational area in which gallery visitors can get a documentary style view into Jahan Bose's process of creation, including her approach to community engagement and advocacy through her artist books, short film *Storytelling with Saris: Rising Up to Climate Change*, a sample letter written by one of her workshop participants in Bangladesh, woodblocks used for printing, and an etching plate used to create her “steles.” An important special component of the exhibition is the Climate Pledge Workshop that will take place on September 15th in which Jahan Bose will guide our community through the process of creating our own climate sari to add to the *Storytelling with Saris* project.