

ANAT EBGİ

ARTFORUM

Critics' Pick

Written by Daniel Gerwin

November 12, 2019



Srijon Chowdhury *Red Morning Glory, Red Knife*, 2019
Oil on linen, 24 x 18 inches

Life and death spiral around each other in “A Divine Dance,” Srijon Chowdhury’s first exhibition at Anat Ebgi. Two sober, modestly scaled paintings represent life with particular frankness: *Birth* (all works 2019) documents Chowdhury’s child emerging from his girlfriend’s straining body, while in the dark and tender *3am*, close inspection reveals a hand holding a bottle to an infant’s mouth. Similar subjects are given a different treatment elsewhere, as in *A Divine Dance*, which towers more than eleven feet high. Its physical edges are doubled by two hands whose elongated fingers meet at the top to suggest a fleshy portal, within which Chowdhury’s pregnant girlfriend carries a Christ-like baby through flames, demons, and flowers, all depicted in swirls of crimson. The image veers into melodrama, a tone the young artist approaches but does not enter in his best work.

Death gets its due in several paintings, including *Red Morning Glory, Red Knife*, in which the green of a thorny vine balances the titular reds. A left hand cradles a morning glory—a flower that blooms and withers the same day—while the right hand holds a sanguineous blade to the flower’s stem. *Pale Rider* is sixteen feet wide, full of beauty and free of bombast: An alabaster

ANAT EBGI

woman straddling a white horse holds a scythe as the animal gallops through a riotous profusion of flowers. All this is seen through a layer of text from William Blake's poem "A Divine Image," published in the late 1700s. Rendered as a thin metal lattice, the words run from the left edge of the canvas all the way to the right. Chowdhury's exhibition as a whole is not pitch-perfect, but this painting is.