

ART

Dhara Mehrotra's latest artistic project reveals some extraordinary insights about nature

Shailaja Tripathi | NOVEMBER 22, 2018 16:48 IST | UPDATED: NOVEMBER 22, 2018 17:50 IST

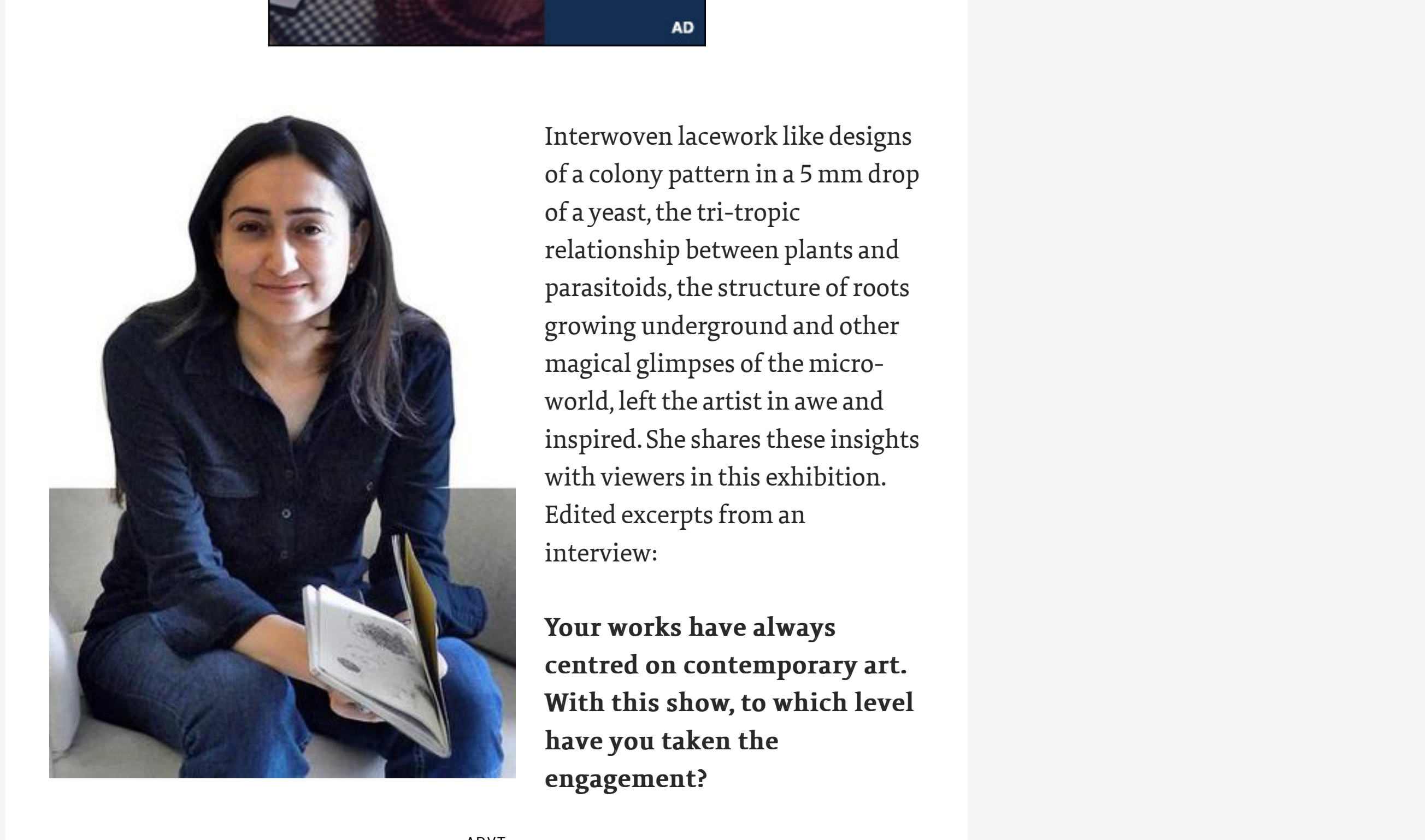


Dhara Mehrotra's latest artistic endeavour developed at the NCBS-TIFR campus in Bengaluru, reveals some extraordinary insights about nature

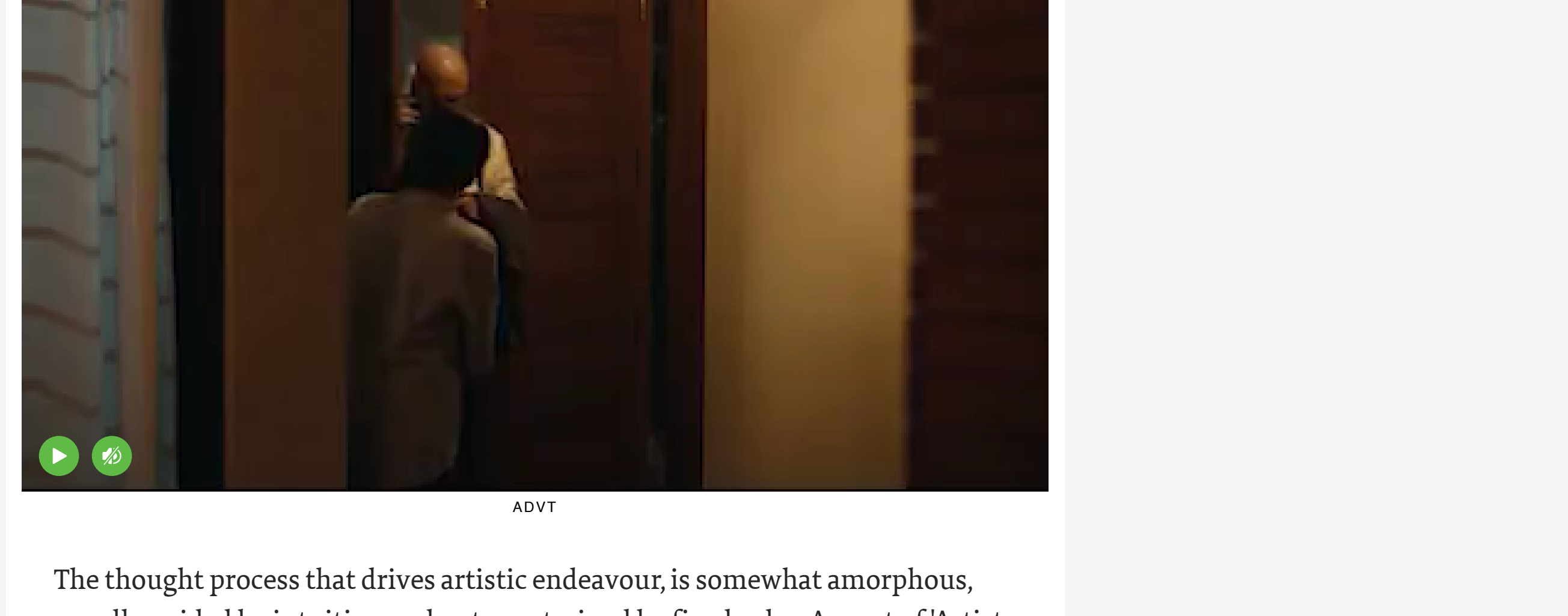
We are all part of the World Wide Web (WWW). In fact, deeply entrenched into it. But, we aren't the only ones who are a part of a network. Since time immemorial, the woodwide web has existed. The trees in a forest communicate with each other through a fungi network system, Mycelia. This concept forms the crux of artist Dhara Mehrotra's latest project "Through Clusters And Networks: The woodwide web and other stories". The project developed with Dhara being part of Artist-in-Residence outreach program at National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS). From January till August, Dhara conducted research, interacted with professors and scientists on this subject which has resulted in paintings, wall installations and a sculpture.

Interwoven lacework like designs of a colony pattern in a 5 mm drop of a yeast, the tri-tropic relationship between plants and parasitoids, the structure of roots growing underground and other magical glimpses of the micro-world, left the artist in awe and inspired. She shares these insights with viewers in this exhibition. Edited excerpts from an interview:

Your works have always centred on contemporary art. With this show, to which level have you taken the engagement?



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The thought process that drives artistic endeavour, is somewhat amorphous, usually guided by intuition and not constrained by fixed rules. As part of 'Artist-in-Residence program', this exhibition is an attempt to complement the artistic intuition with the logic and rigours of scientific method.

What is the premise of 'Clusters & Networks' and what artistic liberty does it allow you?

The work centres around the idea of Clusters and Networks, to evoke a sense of fluidity and boundlessness of world around us. Working with various laboratories at NCBS, often using advanced equipment like Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM), I had a first-hand observation of these in various animate and inanimate subjects. However, the observed forms and structures do not become literal constituents of the artwork but serve more as metaphors to bring forth the essence.

How do you see the relationship between art and science?

I have pondered over this question myself a lot during this residency, and I think no words of mine can articulate it better than those of Dr. Aswin Seshasayee, whom I worked with closely during the residency: "Art and Science are deeply intertwined. Both are representations of our knowledge, perceptions and imaginations of the world around us. At a more practical level, art enables effective communication of science, and the development of artistic involves - at least subconsciously - elements of the scientific method".

What were the discoveries and learnings made along the way while doing your research at NCBS? Also, how did the experience of this residency enrich your art practice?

Understanding the idea of how self-organisation works in nature and recurrence of patterns across scales have been some of the wonderful phenomena I came to observe up close. Also, interactions during the residency, with people having diverse backgrounds, broaden the horizons of the art practice, allowing to see things from a totally fresh perspective.

(The Artist-in-Residence outreach program, showcases at the NCBS museum gallery, that also opens their new museum space as its inaugural exhibition at the InStem building, NCBS-TIFR campus in Bangalore. 'Through CLUSTERS AND NETWORKS', installations by Dhara Mehrotra shall be on view till February 15th 2019.)

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