

Brishty Alam

About the New. Viennese scenes and beyond

Belvedere 21. Museum of Contemporary Art

Text by Luisa Ziaja
2023

Fish have long been the starting point for Brishty Alam's sculptural investigations – as forms and living beings, but also as consumable commodities. As part of her investigation into the transcultural production of meaning, her work is equally inspired by everyday life in Bangladesh where fish merchants are omnipresent and the British television show *Snackmasters*, in which star chefs compete to recreate popular snacks and fast foods – as well as everything that lies between them, be it geographically, sociologically, ecologically, or politically.

Alam experiments with the changeability of forms, dimensions, and materialities in order to manifest this “in-between,” at least temporarily. The sculpture *big-fish, little-fish, cardboard-box* thus comprises an abstract tuna that is fragmented into individual segments so that it can take on different dimensions and manifestations. As such, its function oscillates between an expansive object for exhibition contexts and props for a video

The artist also pursues the play between high and low in her use of materials. While the elements of the sculpture are cut out of inexpensive, lightweight Styrofoam, which is still hardly considered an art-worthy material, Alam has elaborately refined the surfaces with adhesive tape and pigment. Finally, the title of the work is borrowed from a British dance party hit of the 1990s [...] By rhythmically emulating the dimensions of a big fish, a little fish, and a cardboard box, the song and accompanying dance speak of the differences in social status between the wealthy and the homeless. With a mixture of humor and seriousness, Brishty Alam pursues art's ability to negotiate the ambivalences and interdependencies of our existence beyond simplistic platitudes.

Text for 'On the New. Viennese Scenes and Beyond' at Belvedere 21. Museum of Contemporary Art, 2023, Vienna.

www.brishtyalam.com