

# firstdraft

Gallery 2  
8-31 Jan 2020

Opening,  
Wed 8 Jan, 6-8pm

Artist Talks  
Thu 30 Jan, 6-7pm

## Echoes Over Oceans

# Sancintya Mohini Simpson & Shivanjani Lal

### About the work

Echoes Over Oceans We are mirrors. You and me. Our stories are echoes from different oceans and different continents. Sharing a history both our own and both lost. We have locations somewhere in South India, where we might be from... it is possible we could even be from the same village. The same gaon. Our bodies reflect another time, another India. Our families traversed the Kala Pani [Black Waters] in opposite directions. Sancintya's towards Africa, and Shivanjani's towards the Pacific. New lines were created, old ideas where unmade. We worked on cane fields and dreamed of our home, our mother country, India. Prayer becomes the language that told us about our home and our exile. We lost language, but gained song. We gave our bodies to the cane fields, so we could feed the Empire sugar. We lost our bodies, we lost our sweetness, we lost our home, and we lost our place in history. Using this as a navigating point we meet in Bengaluru, South India to create gestures towards healing. We tell the stories of the women of indentured labour, our ancestors were coerced, tricked and chosen by colonial enterprise, and taken too far off lands to do the bidding of Empire. We hold space for each other, through shared histories. The stories of our mothers, grandmothers and our great-grandmothers. It is not about holding onto pain, although it is there, it is witnessing survival, and the strength of holding space for our own.

### About the artist

Sancintya Mohini Simpson is an artist and researcher based in Brisbane, Australia. Her practice addresses the impact of colonisation on the historical and lived experiences of her family, and more broadly traces the movements and passages of indentured labourers from India to South Africa during the late 1800's and throughout the early 1900's. Her interdisciplinary practice draws on the archive to explore the complexities of migration, memory and trauma. Simpson's work moves between painting and video, to poetry and performance, developing narratives and rituals, which she uses to navigate family history, and embed wider narratives surrounding the Indian indenture diaspora community.

Shivanjani Lal is a twice-removed Fijian-Indian-Australian artist and curator. As an artist living in Australia, she is tied to a long history of familial movement; her work uses personal grief to account for ancestral loss and trauma. She is a member of the indentured labourer diaspora from the Indian and Pacific oceans. She employs intimate images of family, sourced from photo albums, along with video and images from contemporary travels to the Asia-Pacific to reconstruct temporary landscapes. These landscapes act as shifting sites for diasporic healing - from which she emerges. A fundamental concern in the work is how art develops and represents culture as it transitions between contexts, while also probing the experiences of women in these situations of flux.

Gallery 1  
**I LOVE YOU,  
I'M SORRY.**  
Dean Cross

Gallery 3  
**Isma' {listen}**  
Shireen Taweel, Zeina laali  
& Nicole Barakat

Gallery 4  
**An Invitation to Grieve**  
Dexter Rosengrave

Firstdraft acknowledges and pays respect to the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which Firstdraft is built and operates.

**13-17 riley st,  
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Firstdraft is supported by the  
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Australian Government  
THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT STRATEGY



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Most importantly we would like to thank our families for whom we make this work.

## **Works (gallery 2, clockwise from door):**

*Rituals Over Landscape*, 2020  
single-channel video, 18.21 mins

*Conversation #5*, 2020  
dual-channel sound, 39 mins 38 sec  
sound design: Isha Ram Das

*Echoes Over Oceans*, 2020  
performance residue, stainless vessels, haldi, kum  
kum, namak, pani, khadi, woven mat

*Sancintya*, 2020  
left channel,  
dual-channel projection on khadi, 3.50 mins

*Shivanjani*, 2020  
right channel,  
dual-channel projection on khadi, 3.50 mins

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