

## Exhibition Events

Thursday 5 March, 6-7pm

**The legacy of indentured labour:  
Sancintya Mohini Simpson and Imelda Miller  
in conversation**

Thursday 5 March, 7-10pm

**First Thursdays, Sancintya Mohini Simpson  
(Women's History Month)**

Performances by Joella Warkill, Manisha Anjali, Shivanjani Lal,  
Sancintya Mohini Simpson, and Isha Ram Das

Tell us what you thought about your experience and you could WIN  
two tickets to New Farm Cinema: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/imasay](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/imasay)

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### Institute of Modern Art

420 Brunswick Street | Brisbane QLD 4006, Australia

#### Opening Hours

Tuesday-Saturday 11am-6pm | First Thursday of the month 11am-9pm

#### Façade Projection

Visible nightly Tuesday-Saturday

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### IMA Belltower Partners



IMA Belltower at the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

### IMA Principal Support



Australian Government  
Visual Arts and Craft Strategy

CONTEMPORARY  
ARTS  
ORGANISATIONS  
AUSTRALIA

The IMA is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, and from the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, and through the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian Federal, State, and Territory Governments. The IMA is a member of Contemporary Art Organisations Australia.

**IMA**  
**BELLTOWER**  
AT JUDITH WRIGHT CENTRE  
OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

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## Sancintya Mohini Simpson

*Kūlī nām dharāyā /  
they've given you the name 'coolie'*

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22 February-18 April 2020

## Exhibition Guide

## IMA Belltower: Sancintya Mohini Simpson

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*Kūlī nām dharāyā/ they've given you the name 'coolie'* recalls the lived experiences of indentured labourers taken from India to Natal, South Africa (now KwaZulu-Natal) to work on sugar plantations during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Continuing to trace her maternal background, Simpson creates a new archive that speaks to shared narratives of indentured labour.

The word 'coolie' is significant to this exhibition: it was often used as a derogative term to refer to indentured Indians and diaspora. By using language with links to this past, Simpson brings forward colonial narratives as way of acknowledging the intergenerational strength of her people. Their stories, legacies, and realities are embodied in the installation—comprising a corrugated iron structure, video, sound, and smell.

The large-scale structure evokes direct experiences of indentured labourers on the plantations. These plantations are reflected in moving imagery of a sugar cane field, tinted with a red sky similar to the hand coloured colonial postcards Simpson has uncovered in her research. Simpson's mother sings a Bhojpuri folk song (with words loaned from South African Tamil) which echoes throughout the gallery. This song is from the early period of Indian indenture and describes how people were given the name 'coolie', rather than choosing it.

As part of this exhibition, a projection work on the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts façade has been developed in collaboration with **Sai Karlen**. The footage of a mirrored black sea conjures the journeys of people, separated from their families and lands, as they travelled across different oceans and continents to work on the plantations. The sea's continuous cycle provides a reminder of the stories and memories that are carried through generations and across time.

The cultural, historical, and physical elements that Simpson brings together in this exhibition are informed by archival material and the lived experience and memory of the artist and her family.

Simpson's re-representation of history through her unique perspective creates a reflective space for ongoing resistance and healing.

IMA Belltower at the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts is curated by **Freja Carmichael**.

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**Sancintya Mohini Simpson**, *Kortri*, 2020  
Corrugated iron structure, wooden bench, soil, scent

**Sancintya Mohini Simpson**, *Plantation*, 2020  
Single-channel projection, 00:14:00

**Sancintya Mohini Simpson**, *Kūlī nām dharāyā*, 2020  
Sound, 00:04:47  
Sound design: Isha Ram Das

**Sancintya Mohini Simpson**, *Kālāpānī*, 2019-2020  
Façade projection

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### Biography:

**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 1800s and throughout the early 1900s. 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.

Her solo exhibitions include, *Echoes Over Oceans* (with Shivanjani Lal), Firstdraft (2020), *Remnants of my ancestors*, Boxcopy, Hobiennale (2019), *Natal's Coolie Women*, CARPARK, Milani Gallery (2019) and *Bloodlines* at both Metro Arts and Blak Dot Gallery (Next Wave Festival) (2018). In 2019 Simpson exhibited in a number of group shows including *New Woman*, Museum of Brisbane, and *Botanica*, Brisbane City Botanic Gardens. She recently completed an Asialink Arts Creative Exchange at 1Shanthiroad Studio Gallery in Bangalore, India. Her work is held in private and public collections including The University of Queensland Art Museum and Museum of Brisbane. She completed a Bachelor of Photography with Honours at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University (2014) and a Graduate Certificate in Writing, Editing and Publishing at The University of Queensland (2016).

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