

Jalsaghar

Debjani Banerjee

28 September — 30 November 2024
Tue — Sat / 11am — 6pm

for
Dida, Ma, Didi and Lotta

Artist bio

Debjani Banerjee is an artist whose diverse body of work spans various mediums, including sculpture, textiles, performance, dance, film, and participatory collaborative making. Her artistic practice challenges reductive dualisms often found in post-colonial narratives, such as the dichotomies of Indian versus western, white versus brown, and male versus female. By doing so, Banerjee's work aims to present more nuanced and playful representations of cultural plurality, contemporary South Asian womanhood, and the broader human experience.

Banerjee's interests are not limited to her own creations; she is deeply engaged in workshops, participatory practices, and archival research. These elements are integral to her approach, as they foster community involvement and deeper explorations into historical and cultural contexts. Her work often involves collaboration, inviting participants to contribute to the artistic process, thereby enriching the dialogue around identity, culture, and belonging.

Jalsaghar

Debjani Banerjee's exhibition *Jalsaghar* is an intricate exploration of identity, culture, and heritage. The title, which translates to "The Music Room," hints at a space of cultural expression. Banerjee's works delve into the multifaceted nature of her identity as a British Bengali, shaped by her experiences growing up in England during the 1980s. This backdrop provides a rich tapestry for examining the layers of cultural dissonance and hybridity that define her perspective.

Her sculptures, textiles and audio installations blend traditional Indian craft techniques with contemporary artistic expressions, reflecting the duality of her heritage. Banerjee draws inspiration from various sources, including family conversations, Indian pop culture, Hindu iconography, and sacred rituals. These elements are interwoven into her art, creating pieces that are both deeply personal and universally resonant.

In *Jalsaghar*, Debjani Banerjee has embraced her interest in workshops, engagement, and participatory art practices by collaborating with several artists and contributors. Bernie Reid, Marta Aspe, Mita Pujara, and Kavi Pujara have all played significant roles in the creation of various aspects of the exhibition. This collaborative approach is central to Banerjee's work, emphasising community involvement and the blending of different artistic perspectives.

The exhibition navigates themes of cultural migration and the evolving nature of identity. Banerjee's work is characterised by a delicate balance of humour and poignancy, capturing the joy and melancholy inherent in the experience of belonging to multiple cultures.

Public Programme

स्वागतम्

Swagatam

Friday 26 September, 7pm

Free, unticketed

To open the Jalsaghar, music room, Mita Pujara and Kavi Pujara will perform two pieces of music that take inspiration from traditional Bengali compositions and experiment with interpretations that reflect contemporary context of traditional cultural influences.

Mita Pujara is an interdisciplinary artist with a background in writing, performance, theatre making, South Asian dance and movement. Her work focuses on the female experience, through a Bengali-British lens. She has performed and collaborated with artists, theatre makers and musicians both in the UK and India, Bangladesh, China, Palestine and Kenya since the mid 90s. She is based in Leicester and is currently developing a one woman show, *In-her-itage*.

Kavi Pujara is a Leicester-based photographer whose work is currently exhibiting with the Hayward Gallery touring show, *After the End of History: British Working Class Photography 1989–2024*. His debut project, *This Golden Mile*, was first shown at the Martin Parr Foundation, and a monograph of the same name was published by Setanta Books in 2022. He is currently expanding his practice to include an ongoing exploration of experimental music production.

'Present'-ing the Future / Recognizing the Past

A four-part immersion into historical and cultural themes in Debjani Banerjee's Jalsaghar by Dr. Ranjana Thapalyal and guests

Free, ticketed

The references in Jalsaghar are rich and varied, encompassing the classics of ancient Indian literature, their presence in pop culture, and the politics of migration rooted in Britain's colonial

history. Most vividly, Jalsaghar brings before us the vibrant characters of the Mahabharata, India's c. second-century BCE epic, a complex and intricately woven tale that has been told, retold, and passionately discussed through the ages. Contemporary interpretations and critiques abound, both in everyday conversations and academic studies. Banerjee's selection of characters from the Mahabharata float alongside snippets of recent British political history, with its long reach back to colonial-era decisions. These characters also resonate with themes of migration and personal diasporic experience, of belonging, and the transgressions required to assert hybrid cultural identities. This series of workshops and talks delves into these subjects with the aim of critically contextualising them, exploring connections to contemporary questions about community, human relations, spirituality, and art's role in reflecting on all of this.

There will be four sessions of 2 hours, each consisting of a talk and a practical workshop. We suggest you attend all four sessions to get a more in-depth sense of the issues and ideas we will touch on, but if this is not possible, you are welcome to attend a selection. Please visit cca-glasgow.com to book.

Session 1: A Garland of Songs

Tuesday 8 October 6.30pm - 8.30 pm

Session 2: "We Are Here Because You Were There"

Tuesday 15 October 6.30pm - 8.30 pm

Session 3: Education and Equality

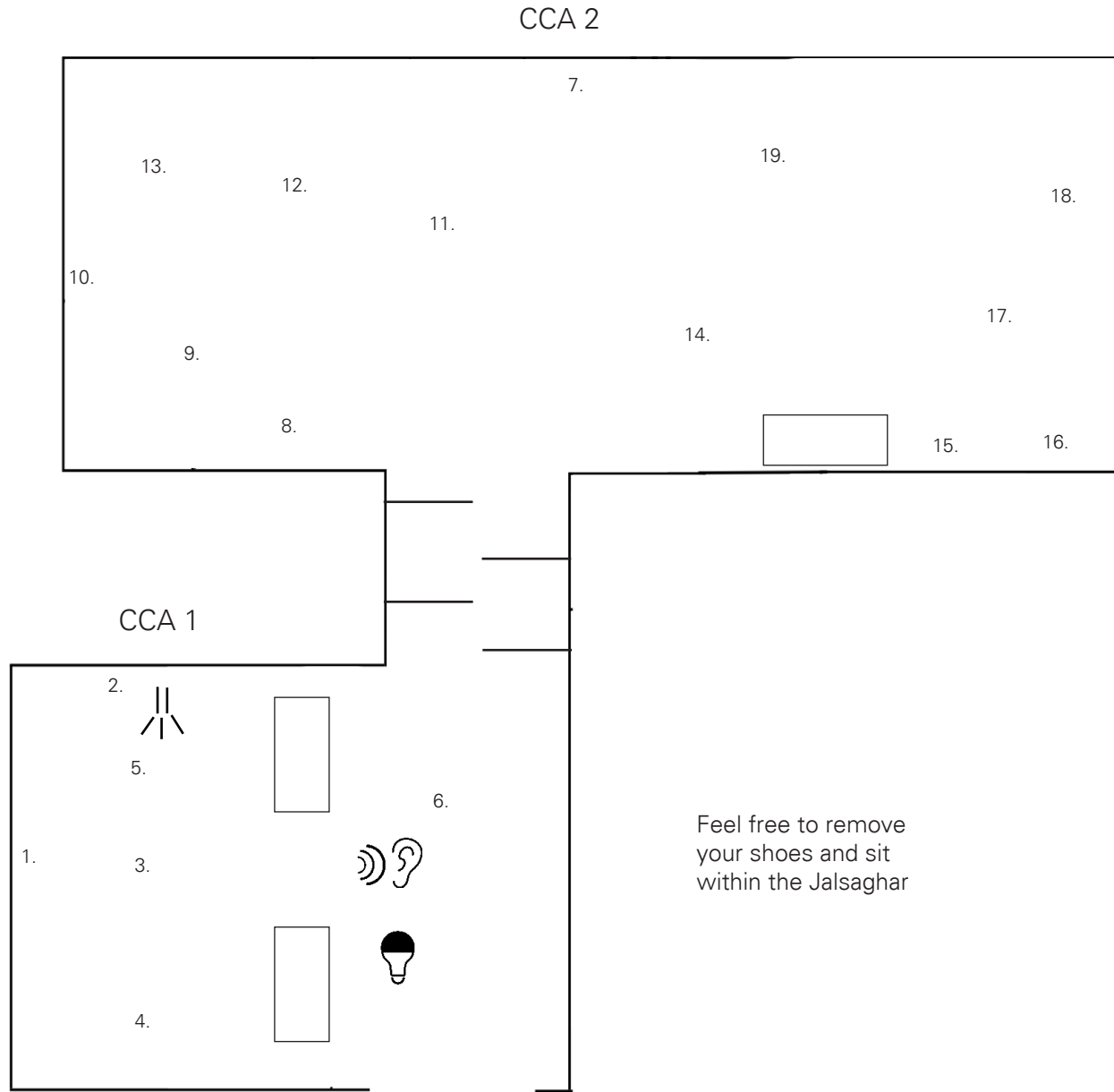
Tuesday 22 October 6.30pm - 8.30 pm

Session 4: Mythology, popular culture and Social Justice -





Women and Caste in the Mahabharata

Tuesday 29 October 6.30pm - 8.30 pm

Gallery Map



Sensory elements

-  Dim lighting
-  Spotlight
-  Sound out loud
-  Seating

CCA 1

1. **Naach**, 2021, Debjani Banerjee.
Appliquéd felt on blackout fabric, mirrors and hi-vis tape.
2. **Jalsaghar neon**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee.
Acrylic paint on board and neon.
3. **Jalsaghar seating**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee.
Bolster cushions, mattresses and high-vis tape.
4. **Charu**, 2020, Debjani Banerjee .
Digitally printed film still on canvas stitched on to high-vis jacket.
5. **When I stitched the blue smoke from pipe to blood to eye to I and out into the blue world**, 2024. Debjani Banerjee.
Hookah pipe and ceramic chillum.
6. **Kali Kamaliya Wale**, 2024, Mita Pujara and Kavi Pujara
Audio, 11 minutes.

Bujhi oi sudure, 2024, Mita Pujara and Kavi Pujara
Audio, 8 minutes.

CCA 2

7. **Mahabharata**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee and co-sewers.
Hand stitched appliquéd cotton, sequins, beads, feathers, jewellery, embroidery, digital prints, on calico.
8. **Cheese on shelf**, 2023, Debjani Banerjee.
Ceramic and enamel paint, wood and spray paint.
9. **Baboon jug and Mudra on Goddess plinth**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee.
Ceramic and enamel paint, wood and spray paint.

10. **That floats on high o'er vales and hills**, 2023, Debjani Banerjee.
Hand stitched appliquéd cotton on linen.

11. **Crying Bitilasana on Yoga Mat**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee.
Ceramic, enamel paint, rhinestones, jewellery, yoga mat and spray paint.

12. **Ganesh mask**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee.
Papier-mâché, fake hibiscus flowers, bells, wire and red saree.

13. **Putna on shrine**, 2023, Debjani Banerjee.
Ceramic, jewellery, enamel paint, gold leaf, wood and spray.

14. **Shiva Fountain on plinth**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee.
Ceramic, enamel paint, water pump, wood and spray paint.

15. **Jalsaghar neon**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee.
Neon on board.

16. **Kali Apron**, 2020, Debjani Banerjee .
Cotton appliquéd and embroidery.

17. **Henry Cobra on plinth**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee.
Ceramic, enamel paint, incense, saree fabric, wood and spray paint.

18. **Absolutely fit for the UK**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee.
Hand stitched appliquéd cotton, sequins, beads, feathers, jewellery and embroidery on linen.

19. **Vomiting Marjaryasana on Yoga Mat**, 2024, Debjani Banerjee.
Ceramic, enamel paint, jewellery, yoga mat and spray paint.

Acknowledgements

The making of this exhibition would not have been possible without the help from the many collaborators and contributors.

Collaborators

Thank you to Marta Aspe for making the bolsters and cushions for the *Jalsaghar*, for sharing your knowledge of the Mahabharata and helping me realise this work and your friendship.

My sister, Mita Pujara and brother in law, Kavi Pujara, I am so grateful to you both for creating something so special and beyond anything I could ever have imagined for the *Jalsaghar* space and for performing live at the opening.

Bernie Reid thank you for making the beautiful structures for the ceramics, for your incredible painting skills on the neon and Mahabharata sky, for your patience, friendship and trust.

Contributors

Thank you to Chris Coatham for making the beautiful Ganesh mask.

Saehee Simmons for the popping bench cushion, your help with the Mahabharata and all the bling you brought to it.

Eleanor Collins for finishing the borders on my wall hangings.

Meabh Breathnach for helping me build the vomiting cat and crying cow.

Charlotte Barker for sharing your clay knowledge and teaching me the basics.

Thank you to all the co-sewers who shared stories and stitched the Mahabharata with me:

Marta Aspe, Ashleen Lewis, Alaya Ang, Neha Apsara, Agnes, Rosheen Murray, Morwenna Kearsley, Chris Coatham, Saehee Simmons, Francesca Nobilucci, Lorelai Pathaik, Adam Nasser Benmakhlouf, Peilin Shi, MC Laffitte, Jack Cheetham, Kirsten

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Very special thanks and appreciation to...Lotta Banerjee Brown, Joya Banerjee, Mita Pujara, Kavi Pujara, Sonya Shah, Sabrina Henry, Alaya Ang, Neha Apsara, Francis Mckee, Alan Keen, Shaun Kingsley, Angus Wyatt, Conor Cooke, Kate Theodore, Jon Young, Filip Velkovski, Toby Mills, Kenny Christie, Aria Broxterman, Natalie Brazil, Darren Rhymes, Jessica Taylor, Jessie McGoff, all at CCA, Parallel, Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, Critical pals crit group, Adam Nasser Benmakhlouf, Sarah Tripp, Nat Raha, Mary Carew-Stirrat and lastly to my dearest friend Daniel Brown, thank you for your infinite patience, sound advice, unending support, and belief, I am so very grateful to you.

“...the dreams which aren't dreams but conversations, visitations from absent friends, a raucous procession behind your closed eyelids, your awake and dreaming eyes, and sometimes a voice wakes you, your own voice talking to someone who isn't there.”

Narcopolis, Jeet Thayil

Debjani has curated a visual archive, as well as published a text *In this world, my dear...* on our digital platform **CCA Annex**. You can also find a playlist to accompany the exhibition, and a digital version of a newly commissioned text in response to the exhibition by Nat Raha.

Follow the QR code for CCA Annex
<https://cca-annex.net/>

