

Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning

announces

Encounters

***an art exhibition organized by the
South Asian Womxn's Creative Collective***



On view: April 1 - May 15, 2021

By appointment at JCAL's Miller Gallery

161-04 Jamaica Ave, Jamaica, NY 11432

And online at jcal.org/encounters

March 23, 2021 (New York) -- Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning (JCAL) is excited to partner with the South Asian Womxn's Creative Collective (SAWCC) to present ***Encounters***, a group exhibition curated by Grace Aneiza Ali.

Encounters is the product of 14 women, all of the South Asian Diaspora, working in collaboration as "artist pairs" across geographical, cultural, political and religious boundaries to maintain a space for connection and creativity. This time of prolonged separation, turmoil and sorrow highlights how crucial human connection is both for individual well-being and for healthy societies that can work through painful issues



For Immediate Release

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together. The artists in *Encounters* bring their unique perspectives to the present moment, illuminating shared bonds and histories while envisioning an equitable future in which women thrive. Southeast Queens is home to a large, diverse community of South Asians, so JCAL is thrilled to provide SAWCC with a platform to share their artwork and to facilitate further creative encounters.

The press opening of *Encounters* will be Thursday, April 1 between 12 and 4pm. Members of the press may make appointments to visit the gallery or to speak with SAWCC representatives by contacting JCAL Marketing Manager Tyrel Hunt (347-515-3652 or tyrelh@jcal.org). There will be a private reception for the artists and organizers on Friday, April 2. The exhibition is open to the public on weekdays and select Saturdays, also by appointment, between Thursday, April 1 and Saturday, May 15, 2021. More information can be found at jcal.org/visit-the-gallery. *Encounters* can also be encountered online at jcal.org/encounters.

Public programs to accompany the exhibition begin with **Conversation with the Artist Pairs**, a virtual panel moderated by Ali on Saturday, April 10, from 2 to 4pm, on [JCAL's YouTube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...). On Saturday, May 1, from 2 to 4pm, there will be a virtual workshop titled **"Sketch Memory: Impressions, Inspirations and Aspirations with Labkhand Olfatmanesh and Gazelle Samizay."** The workshop will explore the relationship between inspiration, memories and hope, and offer participants an opportunity to reflect on impactful moments through writing exercises, collage making and group sharing. Finally, on Saturday, May 8 at 12pm, there will be **"Sand Art and Dance Performance with Shreya Mehta and Barkha Patel,"** a live performance in the Miller Gallery (COVID safe, with social distancing) that will be live-streamed as well. Viewers of this 48-minute performance will be invited to peek into the artists' creative process, beginning with the chanting of the eternal sound Aum, followed by a short meditation and a performance of the five elements.

"Together with SAWCC, JCAL began envisioning the exhibition *Encounters* back in 2019—before the twin viruses of COVID and toxic anti-Asian hatred revealed themselves as challenges to our society," noted JCAL Interim Artistic Director Courtney Ffrench. "We all recommitted ourselves to the importance of *Encounters*, and we're immensely honored and proud to present this magnificent, thought-provoking exhibition to the public."

"We're over 'inclusion' being some buzzword," added JCAL Interim Executive Director Leonard Jacobs. "Inclusion means providing real-world platforms for the traditionally marginalized and disenfranchised to speak their truth—to meaningfully bend that long arc of history toward justice. *Encounters* shows how cultural institutions like JCAL can and should and must do their part. We're hugely honored to work with SAWCC and encourage everyone to stop by."

Exhibition curator Ali provided a statement that reads, in part:



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“In a year defined by great turmoil and deep sorrow, when all forms of symbolic and actual distance, division, and isolation overwhelmed our daily lives and our world, how did we make space for meaningful creativity, connection, and collaboration?”

“...In their collaborations, the artists draw on many South Asian traditions of craft, such as *bandhani* dyeing techniques, *mehndi*, weaving, embroidery, as well as mediums of video, painting, sculpture, installation, photography and choreography. Underscoring these artistic encounters are works that elevate the voices of generations of women across South Asian communities and address a range of pressing issues weighing on their hearts and minds: displacement and migration; the impact of ongoing traumas of war and gender violence. Whether they co-created these works digitally, over many Zoom sessions or through back-and-forth travels through the mail, the artists featured in *Encounters* forged—through distance, separation and time zones—what they deem ‘a radical act of dreaming together.’”

Participating artist pairs are: Rashida Abuwala and Maya Mackrandilal; Anjali Deshmukh and Purvi Shah; Renluka Maharaj and Seema Shakti; Shreya Mehta and Barkha Patel; Labkhand Olfatmanesh and Gazelle Samizay; Ramya Ravisankar and Marcy Chevali; and Sania Samad and Sadia Pasha Kamran.

Encounters is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the New York City Council. The exhibition is additionally part of JCAL's two-year pilot project, Building Equity for BIPOC (Black, Immigrant, Indigenous, People of Color) Artists, funded by New York Community Trust. For more information, visit jcal.org.

About SAWCC

The South Asian Womxn’s Creative Collective (SAWCC) is a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to the advancement, visibility, and development of emerging and established South Asian womxn artists and creative professionals by providing a physical and virtual space to profile their creative and intellectual work across disciplines. Our programs present the creative work of South Asian womxn in various disciplines, including visual art, literature, film/media, and performance. SAWCC aims to connect artists, educators, community workers, and professionals of South Asian descent and encourage the growth of our creative community. For more information, visit sawcc.org

About JCAL

Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning (JCAL), founded in 1972, is a multidisciplinary arts center based in the diverse community of Southeast Queens. Our mission is devoted to offering quality visual, performing, and literary arts, and to providing accessible education programs to encourage participation in the arts. JCAL’s offices and arts spaces are open in strict accordance with state and local COVID-19 guidelines. Operating hours by appointment: Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm, and galleries on Saturdays; closed major holidays. For additional information, call JCAL at 718-658-7400 or visit jcal.org.

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