

Shahana Rajani, *Lines That World a River* at Nottingham Contemporary

Sat 7 Feb – Sun 10 May 2026

Private View: Fri 6 Feb



Still from *Four Acts of Recovery*, 2025. Courtesy Shahana Rajani.

In Spring 2026 Nottingham Contemporary will present the first European solo exhibition by multi-disciplinary artist Shahana Rajani (b.1987, Pakistan).

In Arabic the word for universe, alam, and the word for knowledge, ilm, share their origin in the word, alamah, a mark. To make a mark, to draw a line, is a way of knowing the world. As the world is changed, and continues to be changed through human intervention and the resultant effects on the global ecology and climate, marks also become a point at which we can tether ourselves to each other, our communities and our sacred spaces.

The body of work in this exhibition centres practices and lineages of drawing and painting through which coastal communities in Pakistan remain connected to sacred ecologies of rivers and sea amidst the violence and erasure of infrastructure and the climate emergency. Situated across the Indus Delta – where infrastructure is disappearing rivers, and the sea is disappearing land – the works collectively explore community-based practices of drawing river-maps and painting sea-murals as ways of maintaining sacred relation to disappearing worlds. Unlike the colonial approach of drawing lines to divide and enclose, drawing here is a ritual that protects, animates and enlivens endangered worlds.

For fisher communities, the meeting of the river and sea is a sacred union giving birth to all life and land. As rivers are barraged, mined and ravaged, elders explain that the sea is coming forward in search of its beloved, the river. In the midst of this ongoing catastrophe, new practices of visual expression and devotion emerge, through which communities return the river to the sea, land to water, and art to the promise of survival. These expansive visual practices draw on older Islamic traditions of drawing talismans and charms for protection, remembrance and recovery. While conservative revisionings of Islam have sought to erase the centrality of image-making, the works presented explore how these mystical practices have persisted, transformed and survived, and are now being mobilised by coastal communities. By foregrounding this sacred lineage, the exhibition centres drawing as a vital method which allows for passage, encounter and relation in a world rendered increasingly unstable.

For more information about *Lines That World a River* and other exhibitions at Nottingham Contemporary, please visit [our website](#).

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the generous support of:

The Nottingham Contemporary Commissioning Circle: Nissreen Darawish, Gabriela Galcerán, Il Posto, Rafik&Najoua, Hamza Serafi and Mercedes Vilardell

Four Acts of Recovery (2025) is commissioned by the Han Nefkens Foundation – the South Asian Video Art Production Grant 2023, in collaboration with Para Site, Hong Kong; Prameya Art Foundation, Delhi, India; Nottingham Contemporary, UK; Ishara Art Foundation, Dubai, UAE; and Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, Belgium.

Lines That World a River is made with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

Lines That World a River is curated by Niall Ó Faircheallaigh.

Notes to Editors:

Currently showing (until Sun 11 Jan 2026):

I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih: *Feels Strangely Good, Ya?*

Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou-Rahme: *Prisoners of Love: Until the Sun of Freedom*

Shahana Rajani: *Lines That World a River* is showing alongside Dala Nasser: *Cemetery of Martyrs*

For more information and images please contact:

Pickles PR

Gair Burton

Email: gair@picklespr.com

Alfred Worrall

Email: alfred@picklespr.com

Nottingham Contemporary
Press@nottinghamcontemporary.org
Catherine Masters
Email: cmasters@nottinghamcontemporary.org
Phone: 0115 948 9750

About Nottingham Contemporary

Nottingham Contemporary is one of the leading centres of contemporary art in Europe. Since opening in 2009, we have welcomed over 2 million visitors – with free admission for all – to our highly ambitious programme that has featured hundreds of artists and cultural practitioners from across the globe.

Our programme champions international art and artists who invite us to imagine the world in new ways, and empower different perspectives into the most pressing cultural, social, and political questions of today. We support artists at different stages of their careers – from first-time solo shows in the UK to surveys of renowned or overlooked figures – and regularly present significant thematic exhibitions and major artist-curated projects. Nottingham Contemporary was shortlisted for Art Fund Museum of the Year 2019. Nottingham Contemporary is supported using public funding by Arts Council England.

Nottingham Contemporary, Weekday Cross, Nottingham NG1 2GB
+44 (0)115 948 9750
www.nottinghamcontemporary.org

About the artist

Shahana Rajani is an artist exploring the visualities, landscapes and infrastructures of development, militarisation and ecological resistance in Pakistan. Community-based and collaborative approaches to research are central to her practice. Working across moving image, installation and printed matter, she engages with dissident histories, lineages and practices of representation and relation. She is a co-founder of Karachi LaJamia (with Zahra Malkani) which is an experimental project devoted to seeking and sharing eco-pedagogies that emerge from struggles around land and water in the city. She is currently based in Tkaronto, Canada.

About Han Nefkens Foundation

Founded in 2009 in Barcelona by writer and collector Han Nefkens, the Han Nefkens Foundation is a non-profit organisation that supports emerging and mid-career artists working with video. Through awards and collaborative commissions with international art institutions, the foundation provides support for the production of new work and opportunities to exhibit internationally.

www.hnfoundation.com

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Supported using public funding by
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