

Nottingham Contemporary Teacher / Group Leader Notes

Shahana Rajani

Lines That World a River لکیروں سے دریا تھامنا

Gallery 1

Dala Nasser

Cemetery of Martyrs

Galleries 2 & 3

7 Feb – 10 May 2026

Featuring: Large-scale sculptural and sonic installation, multi-channel immersive film installations, video and paintings.



Shrine painting by Abdul Sattar.
Image courtesy of Shahana Rajani.

Shahana Rajani's artworks are based on her research into the communities of the Indus River Delta in Pakistan. Working closely with the people who live there, she documents their practices of drawing to honour and stay connected to disappearing sacred sites and rivers.

Dala Nasser's large-scale sculptural and sound installation honours artists, poets, journalists and filmmakers from Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan and England who fought for freedom and independence. Fabric marked with natural elements and charcoal rubbings from graves create a space for remembrance.

Both exhibitions explore themes of loss, erasure and remembrance, and the impact of political and ecological change and violence on land, people and culture. Both artists use research, documentation and mark-making in their work.

Curriculum and themes:

- **Geography:** River systems, human impact on changing landscapes, understanding of different countries and cultures
- **Citizenship:** Community, political and ecological activism
- **History:** Archiving and documentation, power, conflict, identity, migration and empire
- **PSHE:** Emotions and human experiences, remembrance and mourning, creative imagination and freedoms, resilience
- **Art:** Mark-making, processes and materials such as cyanotypes, frottage and dyeing. Video and sound-works and installation, collaborative art practices
- **RE:** Symbols and rituals, sacred sites, mourning and honouring, Islam

Shahana Rajani - Gallery 1

In Arabic the word for universe, 'alam', and the word for knowledge, 'ilm', share their origin in the word, 'alamah', meaning 'a mark'. To make a mark, to draw a line, is a way of knowing the world. Shahana's video works document practices of drawing and painting murals by the people of the Indus River Delta to honour and maintain their relationship to their disappearing homelands and sacred sites.

In the Indus Delta where the River Indus meets the Arabian sea, dams and canals that distribute water for farming are causing rivers to disappear. Rising water levels and land erosion are causing the sea to engulf the land. For fisher communities, the meeting of the river and sea is a sacred union. As the sea encroaches on the land and the river disappears, elders explain that the sea is coming forward in search of its beloved, the river.



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

Spread across the delta is a network of water shrines and saints known to oversee the sacred union between river and sea. The central seating structure in the gallery references the form of a local shrine.

People bring gifts to the shrines and ask for protection for the land and water. As water levels rise the shrines too are disappearing and local painters make murals to remember the shrines they can no longer visit. Community practices of drawing river-maps and painting sea-murals become a ritual for reconnection and follow ancient traditions of drawing talismans to protect and invoke in Islamic culture.



Image courtesy of Shahana Rajani.

Paintings by Ustad Abdul Aziz and Abdul Sattar of the delta's shrines, landscape and wildlife are included in the exhibition. Shahana and Aziza Ahmad also worked with children to make a collaborative animated glossary exploring their connections to the river.

Associate Artists worked with pupils at Huntingdon Academy and Westbury Academy to explore Nottingham's waterways and memories of water through mark making to create a zine and collaborative artwork to be added to. If you would like your group to take part in the mural, please contact us to book a session with one of our Associate Artists.

Dala Nasser - Galleries 2 and 3

Dala's artwork is a large-scale sculpture and sound installation and a space to remember those who fought for freedom, to learn from the past and think about the future.



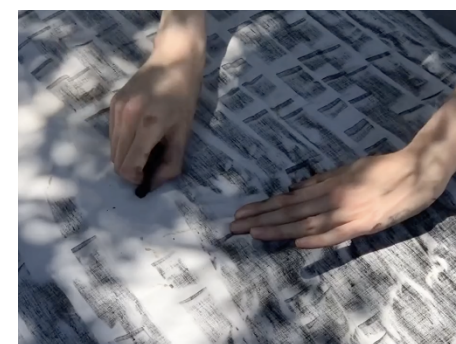
Dala Nasser, Adonis River, installation view at the Renaissance Society, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist and Renaissance Society, University of Chicago. Photo by

Some of the people Dala has remembered were part of The Nahda, or Arab Renaissance, of the mid-nineteenth century when countries like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Tunisia were ruled by the Ottoman Empire, and when artists, writers and poets were developing new thinking about independence and equality.

The people remembered are from different times and places. Some were living 150 years ago, and some were alive until recently. All used their art and writing to speak out for freedom. Dala's artwork brings them together in a shared space for people to remember them.

Across two galleries is a huge wooden trellis, sometimes of double height. The trellis is in a grid formation like the rows of a graveyard and draped with lengths of dyed mourning fabric. Dala dyed the fabric herself using natural dyes and marking them with natural elements - rocks, shells, ash and seeds.

On the fabrics are charcoal rubbings from the surfaces of the graves of the people being remembered. When graves are lost or unreachable she writes their names in Arabic in sand and makes a cyanotype as a stand-in for a rubbing and a reconstruction of a grave. Each rubbing can be thought of as a ritual or spiritual act to connect to the voices of the past.



Dala Nasser, film still of the artist making a rubbing of Ghassan Kanafani's grave, 2021. Courtesy of the artist.

An immersive soundscape of field recordings collected from cemeteries threads through the space and visitors are invited to move through the installation.

Accompanying the exhibition is a booklet to honour the people remembered with details of the lives and deaths.