

Press Release  
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Welancora Gallery presents *In my Home Clothes*



Welancora Gallery is pleased to present, *In my Home Clothes*, a solo exhibition of new and recent work by Renluka Maharaj. The exhibition will take place from June 8 to July 13, 2023. This will be Maharaj's first solo exhibition with Welancora.

Born in Trinidad and Tobago, Renluka Maharaj utilizes sourced photographs, textiles, sculpture, research and travel to create mixed media compositions that investigate how history, migration, memory, religion, and gender inform identity in general and that of her family in particular. The artist's family lineage can be traced back to India during the 19th century when forced indentured servitude replaced African slave labor on sugarcane plantations in the Caribbean.

Maharaj's layered compositions consist of small screen shots of Indo-Caribbean women featured on postcards sold throughout Europe to promote tourism during the 19th century. The smaller screen shots are reassembled in a much larger format to create a new hand painted photograph, printed on canvas, bordered by textiles and embellished with beading. The resulting work serves as a counter to the culturally diluted poses and attire that these women had to wear to present a palatable idea of "Indian" while furthering the view of the Indian subcontinent as a playground and Indians as dehumanized objects of fetish.

The title of the show is inspired by works of fiction from Caribbean authors. It signals a sense of comfort within one's own culture juxtaposed with the survival tactic of code switching. Home becomes much more than a location, but what you eat, how you speak, and what you wear. Thus, Maharaj takes delicate care in her practice to give each woman in her work a narrative that was stripped from her, lifting her out of the archive. Viewing the women and the subjects in the photos as extensions as her own family members, Maharaj treats the images she pulls from the archive with respect. By assigning an animal associated with a Hindu god to each woman, Maharaj also asserts particular strengths and reinstates a cultural aspect that was lost to the original photographers. She further addresses her transnational identity by choosing colors that simultaneously reference the symbolic and religious colors associated with these Hindu gods, as well as lush tropics of her island homeland. To hone her focus on these Indo-Caribbean subjects is an attempt to strengthen an international solidarity between the diasporic Indian populations that has been historically strained.

### About the Artist

Renluka Maharaj was born in Trinidad and Tobago and works between Colorado, New York City and Trinidad. She attended the University of Colorado, Boulder where she earned her BFA, and her MFA at The School Of The Art Institute of Chicago. She has received numerous awards including the Martha Kate Thomas Fund, the Presidential Scholarship at Anderson Ranch Center and the Barbara De Genevieve Scholarship. Her works are in institutional collections including The Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, Joan Flasch artist book collection, Los Angeles Center for Digital Art, Flaten Museum, special collections at the University of Colorado, Boulder, as well as numerous private collections. Her work has been recognized through various fellowships and residencies including but not limited to Project For Empty Space, Golden Arts Foundation, Fountainhead Residency, Vermont Studio Center. Her work has also appeared, most recently, in Washington Post, Elle India, Harper's Bazaar India, New American Paintings, Coolitude Volume II, Juxtapoz and Hyperallergic.

Image: "Zahra And Her Dragon", 2023, 63 x 48 inches, pigmented ink print, acrylic paint, acrylic markers, thread, fabric on canvas with bamboo pole.

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