

biennaleofsydney

Monica Rani Rudhar

The fire in me was lit long ago, 2026

three-channel video installation

Courtesy of the artist

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Education Resource (K-6)



The fire in me was lit long ago, 2026

Three-channel video installation, looped 8mins.

Installation view in Rememory:25th Biennale of Sydney at Lewers: Penrith Regional Gallery, 2026.

Courtesy of the artist and Ames Yavuz. Photography: Maja Baska





Monica Rani Rudhar. Photograph: Jacquie Manning.

Overview

Imagine if the stories and jewellery passed down through your family were actually secret maps of courage. This artwork tells the true history of Monica Rani Rudhar's family, focusing on her grandfather, Ram Prakesh, who was a brave freedom fighter in 1940s Punjab, an area now divided between Pakistan and India. Monica shows us a large sugarcane field that seems like a normal farm, but it was a secret place where her grandfather and his friends gathered to stand up against unfair rules. To represent this fire of bravery, Monica uses powerful symbols like a golden lion ring. For her family, the lion isn't just an animal; it represents the Lion of Punjab, a legacy of being strong and doing what is right.

Monica also creates large replicas of jewellery to memorialise Indian traditions and family ties. By making these pieces so big, she helps us see how important these objects are for keeping memories alive, even when they have been lost or taken away. She uses three different video screens to show her images, which helps us understand that while memories can sometimes feel broken or incomplete, they remain incredibly powerful.

Through symbols and poetry, Monica shares difficult moments to honour her family's resilience. Her work reminds us that standing up against unfairness is a beautiful legacy we can all carry with us.



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I Cook a Lot of All These Foods, 2022,
Three Channel video 15:38 carpet, curtain, glazed earthenware, furniture, shoe rack, oil, moth balls
Installation view, Firstdraft, Sydney.
Photo by Anthony Hodgkinson



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Discussion Questions

Monica Rani Rudhar uses video to tell the story of her family's bravery.

- How **many** screens are showing **videos** at the same time?
- Do the images look **like** one big **movie**, or do they look like **separate** pieces of a **puzzle**?
- What **colours** do you **see** in the videos? Are they bright and happy, or dark and quiet?

The lion is a symbol for the Lion of Punjab, which means being a brave fighter for freedom.

- Why would a family want to pass down a **symbol** of a lion?
- Can you **find** the lion in the artwork? What do you think a lion **represents** to someone fighting for **freedom**?
- **Imagine** you are wearing the golden lion ring. Does it make you **feel** like you have a secret **power** to do what is right?

Practical Activities

Activity 1:

Select a personal quality or story about your family you are proud of. If you had to turn this story into a piece of jewellery, what form would it take? Would it be a heavy, protective shield-ring, or a delicate, interlocking chain?

On your paper, draw a large-scale version of this jewellery piece. Much like Rani Rudhar creates large replicas to memorialise what was lost, draw your object big enough to fill the page.

Inside the details of your drawing, write the names of the family members who give you this strength. Use bold lines for the parts that represent protection and soft, swirling lines for the parts that represent love.

Activity 2:

Fold your piece of paper into three equal parts (like a brochure). Each panel is one of your movie screens. In the first panel, draw a place that is important to your family (like a house or a park).



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In the middle panel, draw a symbol for a challenge you've had (something you found difficult to do). In the last panel, draw a symbol of love or victory.

Draw a colourful memory vine that starts in the first panel and travels all the way through the other two. This shows that all these different memories are connected to you. At the bottom of your paper, finish this sentence: "The most important thing my family taught me is..."



Drop Earrings That Once Belonged To My Mother, 2022

Terracotta, glaze, lustre, chain, wire, 125 x 163 cm

Photo by Monica Rani Rudhar

