



BUSH DIWAN

Manisha Anjali
Anindita Banerjee
Perun Bonser
Monisha Chippada
Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa
Amardeep Shergill

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4A Centre for
Contemporary
Asian Art

BENALLA
ART
GALLERY

List of artworks:

- Manisha Anjali, *Sea, Pilgrim*, 2021, text on adhesive vinyl, sand, glass marbles, 190.5 x 110 cm (per vinyl).
- Anindita Banerjee, *Transient Temples*, 2019, site-specific performance installation.
- Anindita Banerjee, *Transient Temples*, 2019, documentation of performance installation, C-type photographs on cotton rag paper, 84.1 x 56.1cm. Photo credit: Madhubani Dutta.
- Anindita Banerjee, *Transient Temples*, 2019, documentation of performance installation, single channel video with audio, 2:39 minutes.
- Monisha Chippada, *ilū*, 2018, single channel video with audio, 18:21 minutes.
- Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa and Perun Bonser, *Smoke and linen*, 2022, single channel video, 5:00 minutes.
- Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa and Perun Bonser, *See you at the train station*, 2022, single channel video, 2:33 minutes.
- Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa and Perun Bonser, *Stolen Goods*, 2022, single channel video, 3:08 minutes.
- Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa, *Fence sitting 1*, 2018, C-type photograph on cotton rag paper, 144 x 96cm.
- Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa, *Fence sitting 2*, 2018, C-type photograph on cotton rag paper, 144 x 96cm.
- Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa, *Fence sitting 3*, 2018, C-type photograph on cotton rag paper, 144 x 96cm.
- Amardeep Shergill, *Break off but not away*, 2018, DMC thread on perforated mesh, fabric marker, 100 x 68 x 11cm.
- Amardeep Shergill, *Sneddon (Lynette) I*, 2019, DMC thread on perforated mesh, 122 x 125 x 27cm.
- Amardeep Shergill, *Sneddon (Lynette) II*, 2019, DMC thread on perforated mesh, 122 x 123 x 27cm.
- Amardeep Shergill, *Re-interpretation of Dhan Kaur's Phulkari II (yellow)*, 2018, DMC thread on perforated mesh, 122 x 144 x 27cm.
- Amardeep Shergill, *Kalamandir Blue*, 2018, DMC thread on perforated mesh, fishing wire, 50.5 x 51 x 26cm.
- Amardeep Shergill, *Kalamandir Green and Gold*, 2018, DMC thread on perforated mesh, fishing wire, 50.5 x 51 x 26cm.
- Amardeep Shergill, *Kalamandir Yellow*, 2018, DMC thread on perforated mesh, fishing wire, 50.5 x 51 x 26cm.
- Amardeep Shergill, *Re-interpretation of Dhan Kaur's Phulkari III (blue)*, 2018, DMC thread on perforated mesh, 95 x 48 x 54cm.
- Amardeep Shergill, *GO BACK... to your Centre I (deep red, blue, and green)*, 2018, DMC thread on perforated mesh, fabric marker, 125 x 61.5 x 8.5cm.

Threaded through with stories of migration, *Bush Diwan* gathers artists and storytellers from across Australia, whose work delves into the struggles and triumphs of people and communities who have come from afar to restart their lives in a new place.

This exhibition is a contemporary reimagining of Benalla local Siva Singh's story from the perspective of artists from South Asian diasporas and First Nations communities. The Punjabi word *diwan* means gathering or religious event, an important practice in community formation and connecting to a place. Inspired by Siva Singh and the offerings his community leadership left behind, *Bush Diwan* asks us to consider the processes of migration, reconciliation with homeland, and how his migratory narrative continues to resonate in contemporary Australia.

Siva Singh arrived in Australia in approximately 1896, and worked as a hawker in Benalla and the surrounding regions from 1898. He established himself as part of the local community—widely recognised for his distinctive pink turban—and owned a 320 acre farm by 1915. The exhibition takes its distinctive colour palette from this particular eccentricity of Siva Singh's and one can see signature walls in the gallery space painted a soft pink to signal his presence.

Siva Singh took on the duties of a Granthi or custodian of the Sikh scriptures in Benalla and surrounding regions, and following the arrival of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (Sikh scriptures) in Australia, he facilitated an Akhand Path, a ceremonial continuous reading, on his farm on 16 December 1920. Attended by approximately 30 Sikhs, the ceremony was performed for Hernam Singh. Photographed by William John Howship, it was the first known Akhand Path that included the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji in Australia.

Siva Singh is also remembered for his personal fight against the White Australia Policy, which had seen him struck off the electoral roll, despite having voted in three previous elections. While his court case was initially thrown out, and Siva Singh ordered to pay the legal costs, he regained the right to vote in 1925 after a decade-long legal battle.

The works found within the exhibition exemplify Siva Singh's themes of personal triumphs and collective struggles. Anindita Banerjee, Monisha Chippada, and Amardeep Shergill explore familial traditions, objects and ideas to connect their new lives in Australia to home, reminiscent of Siva Singh's gathering of Sikhs in worship on his property in 1920. Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa and Perun Bonser, and Manisha Anjali centre their voices and social justice in their text-based work and performance videos, echoing the civil rights and legal campaign Siva Singh mounted to assert his right to vote.

From moving-image to stills, sound to ritualistic performance, and textiles to installation, *Bush Diwan* presents six artists whose works respond to the universal story of Siva Singh and his contribution to Sikh history and anti-racism movements in Australia. Through their contemporary practices, the artists in *Bush Diwan* reclaim their own identities and, in turn, explore forming, gathering and laying foundations for their communities.

Bush Diwan is curated by Amrit Gill and Reina Takeuchi.

4a.com.au/exhibitions/bush-diwan
benallaartgallery.com.au/bush-diwan/

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Amardeep Shergill, *GO BACK... to your Centre II (green)*, 2018, DMC thread on perforated mesh, 120 x 65.5 x 8.5cm.

Amardeep Shergill, *Aussie Phulkari*, 2022, DMC thread on perforated mesh, 122 x 245 x 37cm.

Inside poster image:
A group of Sikhs gathered at Siva Singh's property at Reef Hills outside Benalla, 1920; photo: WJ Howship Collection, University of Melbourne.