

MAYA ISABELLA MACKRANDILAL

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ARTIST STATEMENT

As the child of diaspora, material roots me to history and identity. My first art teacher was my grandmother, who taught me to sew, embroider, and knit, to create objects that held stories, that lived intimately with our family, spread out over two continents, with roots stretching back to three more. This creative inheritance is the basis for my symbolic and material artistic language that moves into broader conversations around global issues of migration, cultural memory, and liberation. I am the descendant of women who survived enslavement, indentured labor, colonialism, and domestic violence. Women whose labor built the foundations of “Modern Western Civilization” but who were denied full personhood within the systems it produced. Through my ancestors I carry the responsibility of challenging systems of oppression as an artist, educator, and arts organizer. As the child of an immigrant to the US from the Global South, having lived across the country in rural, suburban, and urban communities, I experienced the contradictions of American mythology first hand. These lineages and experiences produce my practice, which weaves together disparate histories, perspectives, and identities—an ever-expanding web of associations and intersections—a non-linear, rhizomatic structure continuously folding back in on itself. My practice is rooted in sculpture, in art that manipulates the material of our physical world into new spatial and conceptual experiences, but it is a broad, expansive definition of sculpture that includes social media interventions and ephemeral public performances as well as object making, image making, video, installation, and virtual reality. Regardless of the final medium of presentation, I want viewing art to never be a passive experience—I treat the audience’s interaction with the work as a kind of performance, a place of intimacy where we can learn to connect with each other as human beings, and connect with ourselves. Aesthetically, my work draws on intersections between the classic “Western” art history cannon and practices from South Asia, West Africa, and the Caribbean. I embrace bold color, abundance of form, texture, and pattern, exploring both figurative and abstract forms, in particular the female body and its symbolic significance in the broader culture with regards to race and power. Collaboration is also a vital part of my practice, where I work to build new forms of art making that are non-hierarchical and center liberation of the community alongside individual creative expression.