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**Press Release**

**Released: 29th March 2023**

**‘WE ARE HERE,’ DECLARES SANGINI’S**

**20TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION**

ARTS Centre Washington (ACW) is to host an exhibition celebrating the 20th anniversary of a ‘remarkable’ women’s group.

*Amra Shobai Aikhaney*, Bengali for We Are Here, will be a free exhibition organised by Sangini, a community arts project led by black and minorities women. The exhibition will be on display from April 1 to April 29.

Padma Rao, Director for Sangini, said: “We were set up 20 years ago by a group of women who identified a gap in the area of health and looked for ways to raise awareness about it.

“We seek to improve the quality of life for women from Black, minorities and socially excluded communities by increasing their physical, mental and spiritual health through artistic, heritage, crafts and social activities that help women recover from experiences of gender based violence.

“We seek to reach women in innovative and creative ways, providing opportunities for tackling inequalities. Our previous projects have had a positive impact in encouraging women from different communities to engage in educational, creative and participatory activities by providing support and encouragement thereby removing the social and cultural barriers.

“*Amra Shobai Aikhaney* is a great way of marking our anniversary and we worked with Sunderland Women’s Art Group (SWAG) to curate the exhibition.

“The exhibition is an opportunity to present a creative response to the ethos of care, inclusivity, resilience and women’s expression by creating a ‘space’ that is diverse, welcoming and inspiring.

“To do so, the artists aim to reimagine the space - a temporary home that invites the visitors to collaborate, co-create and have fun. In that, visitors are an important part of this exhibition. It welcomes and inspires them to participate, in other words, they are a part of this exhibition both as visitors as well as creators.”

“This exhibition brings a unique perspective on women’s art in contemporary times – including the current war in Ukraine. Artists from different nationalities and cultures are represented here, providing visibility to a truly diverse feminist expression.”

To this end, Sangini will be hosting a series of free workshops at ACW in various artforms, with work produced forming part of the exhibition. These include:

* [Paper Folding, Zene Making and Zentangle Design – Saturday, April 1, 1-3pm](https://sunderlandculture.org.uk/events/paper-folding-zene-making-and-zentangle-design/)
* Wycinanki Easter Egg Decorating and Card Making – Wednesday, April 5, 1-3pm
* A Pocket for You – Saturday, April 15, 1-3pm
* Introduction to Arabic Calligraphy – Wednesday, April 12, 1-3pm
* Rangoli – Saturday, April 22, 1-3pm

Matt Blyth, Culture and Heritage Officer at ACW explained: “We’re delighted to be hosting this exhibition by a remarkable women’s group.

“Sangini’s story is about tenacity, diversity, women’s expression, care, friendship, resilience and cultural activism that ensures visibility and equality for the Black and minoritised women in the North East.

“The art forms presented in *Amra Shobai Aikhaney* are also diverse andinclude textile, felting, drawing and calligraphy – alongside food and gardening.”

Agnieszka Wood, one of the participating artists, said, “*I have joined SWAG only four years ago, but it feels like I’ve known them forever. The encouragement, the inspiration, the practical support that I have encountered on route are totally invaluable. The confidence and self-belief experienced so far are so important to my own (and the group as a whole) goals and aspirations.”*

For more information, or to book a place at one of the workshops, log on to ACW’s website at <https://www.artscentrewashington.co.uk>

**Ends-**

**Captions-**

**NEW EXHIBITION … women from Sangini and Sunderland Women’s Art Group have come together to create an exhibition to mark Sangini’s 20th anniversary**

**For further press information please contact:**

Rob Lawson, rob.lawson@sunderlandculture.org.uk 07740 939073

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Sunderland Culture**

Sunderland Culture was set up in 2016 to bring together the cultural programmes of Sunderland City Council, University of Sunderland and Sunderland Music, Arts and Culture (MAC) Trust into a single, independent, delivery model. Sunderland Culture delivers the programme in National Glass Centre and Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, Arts Centre Washington and The Fire Station, as well as cultural engagement and events in communities across the city. It works to ensure the power of great art, culture and creativity is harnessed for the benefit of Sunderland, its residents and visitors. Sunderland Culture is a registered charity and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. Its mission is to improve life for everyone in Sunderland through culture.

