

Rabiya Choudhry
'Give light and people will find the way (Ella Baker)'
Dennistoun, Shettleston and Glasgow Women's Library

28 January – 30 July 2023

Rabiya Choudhry's new illuminated artworks for three East-End libraries have been created for places which hold significance for the artist. Their design is based on a painting by Choudhry, part of the artist's ongoing project 'Lost Lighting' – a series of lighting artworks for public places intended to "act like a vigil in the dark".

'Give light and people will find the way (Ella Baker)' (2022) is the first Lost Lighting artwork to be realised in public space. Taking shape as illuminated signs, they repurpose Andrew Carnegie's flaming torch motif; a feature found on many Carnegie library buildings as well as an emblem used in the bookplate for his own private library collection.

In Choudhry's work, the torch is encircled with the words of African-American civil rights activist and organiser, Ella Baker (1903 – 1986) who worked to instigate societal change through individual and grassroots community empowerment. Baker's words 'give light and people will find the way', are a manifestation of power for ordinary people, invoking a spirit of togetherness and inspiring hope for change.

Choudhry says, "Ella Baker came to me through light. Her words felt like a special gift after years of contemplating life, loss, and light during one of the most difficult times. Her life, actions, and words are hugely inspiring and articulate what I wanted to echo in these public artworks for libraries at a time where light comes at some cost and hope is hard to put into words."

Choudhry's illuminated artworks will be accompanied by a fragment of narrative non-fiction from the award-winning journalist and author, Chitra Ramaswamy.

Ramaswamy's writing will be available to pick up from April 2023 from Dennistoun Library, Shettleston Library and Glasgow Women's Library for the duration of the project.

Rabiya Choudhry was born in Glasgow in 1982 to Scottish and Pakistani parents. Choudhry studied at Edinburgh College of Art to MA level, graduating in 2006. She lives and works in Edinburgh.

Choudhry's work explores themes of identity and cultural displacement in contemporary British society with a darkly comedic approach. Her work expresses the complicated coupling of eastern and western cultures in richly vibrant autobiographical portrayals. Recent exhibitions include 'TESTAMENT', Goldsmiths CCA, London (2022); 'ambi', CCA Glasgow; and 'Fabric of Society', Glasgow International (both 2021). Choudhry's work 'Dad' (2018) was acquired by the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow in 2020 and is now on permanent display there.

Chitra Ramaswamy is an author and journalist. Her latest book, 'Homelands: The History of a Friendship' (Canongate) is a work of creative non-fiction exploring her friendship with a 98-year-old German Jewish refugee called Henry Wuga and winner of the 2022 Saltire Non-Fiction Book

of the Year. Her first book, 'Expecting: The Inner Life of Pregnancy' (2016) won the Saltire First Book of the Year Award and was shortlisted for the Polari Prize.

She has contributed essays to Antlers of Water, Nasty Women, The Freedom Papers, The Bible, and Message From The Skies. She writes for The Guardian, is the restaurant critic for The Times Scotland, and broadcasts for BBC radio.