Rungh, Means, Colour: an interview with our Community Partner

Photo courtesy of: Rungh Archive

Rungh comes onto the scene in the early nineties, as a quarterly magazine that held its focus on South Asian Culture, Comment and Criticism. It provided an outlet for marginalized communities to express their opinions, experiences and struggles and hold space to challenge dominant narratives. 20 years on, Rungh has evolved as an online platform that continues to challenge diversity and the arts and seeks conversations that encourage cultural growth within Canada. We speak with co-founder and editor of Rungh, Deep Saini, to learn more.

Can you tell us a little bit about Rungh, for those who may have not heard of it yet?

Rungh is a word in the Punjabi language, meaning “colours”. Our name is an en-capsulation of our mandate. Our name is Rungh, Means, Colour. If you speak any of the language(s) of South Asia, Hindu, Punjabi, Paris, and many you will know Rungh started as a niche literary and a print magazine in 1992. Rungh also hosted and produced arts events like readings, workshops, creative productions, and hosted a variety of conversations. Rungh also partnered against how Canada’s arts institutions worked. We sought to do a different kind of arts work, creating a unique space which continues to be something of a model for non-Western arts institutions.

What inspired you to create the first issue, all those years ago, back in 1992?

Rungh was inspired by an absence of voices in Canada’s cultural industries. These voices are referred to as “non-Western” in most Canadian cultural policies, yet South Asian artists, activists, and allies are referred to as “non-Western” in most Canadian cultural policies, yet South Asian artists, activists, and allies are being left out of conversations on race, gender, sexuality, geography, class, power and otherwise.

How would you say, the conversations in the arts has changed over the last thirty years?

In many ways, the conversations has not changed, sadly. But, in other ways, the conversations have moved toward and centred Indigenous voices. Rungh is an excavation partner with a new set of conversations which are taking place under the heading of Primary Colours/Colour Primaries. This issue of Rungh focuses on contemporary voices in the middle of the Canadian art system. Rungh is an attempt to show what has happened and what is happening in the future. Reconciliation means that the necessary transition within Canada’s arts systems will be found in Rungh.

Have you seen any firsthand accounts of how Rungh has impacted its audience?

Rungh has played a pivotal role in creating and documenting conversations, and creative works around the idea of “multiculturalism” and “race”. Belonging to us means over the past 20 years, put these terms in quotation marks because every time these terms are used, they are also used to define us. Records of what we have said and the many marginalized voices have contributed to the Canadian art system continue to be lost, if they are kept at all. These histories are vital and Rungh is working to secure and foster these works found in Rungh archives but also to help other similar situated communities to do so. But none of us who makes art and culture in Canada need to change.

What are your thoughts on the diversity within Canada’s community, and are there any improvements in the last few years?

Rungh is about to publish a conversation with Mori Chokunai, Jiv Parmar, Kathleen Pather-Mehra, Dina Vera, and Zebede Rahemtulla. We do not know who they are, but they have contributed to the conversations on South Asian art and culture in Canada. In many ways, what could be called “South Asian theatre in Canada”, this is only one slice of an ongoing conversation. Too many people ask the questions, is the ethnic other work is produced and divides us. Within South Asian communities continues to evolve. Non-Canadian in Toronto and Vancouver are quite different. There are many voices working in this industry, offering general and providing cultural specificity. In detail therefore works about “South Asian”, might be a slice of the issue in defining conversations. I urge the readers to read the interview in Rungh when it is published. Join our free mailing list at www.rungh.org

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Rungh Re-Launch

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