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INHERENT RESISTANCE: PEDAGOGY AND POLITICS OF EVERYDAY MATERIALS

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Abstract

Resistance is often seen as a position taken against something from a critical distance. This paper reveals that resistance can be material: enacted rather than adopted. It examines two bodies of creative work, *Desire for Belonging a*nd *Inheritance*, where turmeric, Khadi, reclaimed sarees, and gum tree branches perform resistance by staining, fraying, and resisting permanence. Living as a first-generation Bangladeshi-Australian artist-researcher working from within bicultural in-betweenness, I develop this practice-led, critically autoethnographic methodology grounded in a decolonial theoretical ecology — Third Space, hometactics, and Asia as Method — that treats materials as epistemic agents rather than symbolic illustrations. The paper's central claim is that this resistance is inherited rather than adopted: transmitted through postmemory, ancestral practice, and family history, requiring no institutional validation to be legitimate knowledge. My research grounds Bangladesh as an epistemic centre rather than a cultural case study. This repositioning suggests that resistance doesn't have to be loud, destructive, or violent; it can reside in the collective impact of small, repeated, embodied gestures. In a time marked by censorship and cultural division, this approach emphasises disobedience as a continuous, relational inheritance rather than a rupture—where art fosters a space for resistance, survival, and transformation.

Keywords: Resistance, Third Space, Diaspora, Decolonial epistemology, Material practice

Where are you from?

Where are you from? Twice uprooted — first as an inter-regional climate migrant from the river delta, then as an immigrant in Australia — this question has followed me since childhood, across playgrounds, geographies and institutions. Never merely geographical, it is political and relational, demanding that my presence justify itself and that my identity be narrated in terms legible to those asking. It is from within the weight and texture of this

question — not above it, not at critical distance — that this research proceeds.

This paper engages with this conference's provocation of disobedience through the register of resistance — the term my broader research uses to describe what these materials do. It examines how resistance operates as a material practice in two bodies of work: *Desire for Belonging* (Trocadero Project Space, Footscray, 2025) and *Inheritance* (RMIT First Site Gallery, 2026). I am a first-generation Bangladeshi-Australian artist-researcher, and these exhibitions emerge from my bicultural in-betweenness — belonging fully to neither Bangladesh nor Australia, yet inhabiting both, a condition my practice works with rather than resolves. Through turmeric, Khadi (a hand-spun, handwoven cotton cloth which has a direct connection with colonial resistance in the Bengal region), reclaimed sarees (a common cultural attire of Bengali women along with other South Asian women), and found gum tree branches, I proceed a quiet, persistent, material resistance: one that resists western epistemological authority, the erasure of ancestral knowledge, and institutional validation for knowledge that already stands on its own merits.

Central to my practice is the agency of the materials themselves. Turmeric stains, Khadi, sarees carry the ancestral memory; gum tree branches resist being tamed into permanence: each material acts rather than illustrates, resistant in how it behaves, degrades, and evades containment within a western art-historical frame.

In my practice, resistance is not a critical position adopted from a distance, but rather inherited — transferred through the practice of Bengali women who stitched Kantha (a common hand-stitched household in the Bengal region mainly crafted by women from reused cotton saree) for generations, the anti-colonial genealogy embedded in Khadi, my family's direct participation in the anti-British movement and 1971 Liberation War, and my mother's embodied knowledge of turmeric, dismissed by dominant epistemologies until western institutions found it profitable. My practice understands these inheritances not merely as cultural references but as epistemological ground: what makes my practice resistant — its refusal to subordinate inherited, embodied, and materially situated knowledge to western frameworks of legitimacy.

My argument sits within what I describe as a decolonial theoretical ecology — stitching together Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space (Bhabha, 1994, 2015), Mariana Ortega's hometactics (Ortega, 2016), and Kuan-Hsing Chen's Asia as Method (Chen, 2010), alongside the feminist phenomenological work of Sara Ahmed and Donna Haraway. These frameworks interact and reinforce one another, resisting the dominance of western epistemological authority and centring Bangladesh as an epistemic locus in its own right.

The paper proceeds in four movements. First, it establishes this decolonial theoretical ecology. Second, it outlines a practice-led, critically autoethnographic, material-led methodology in which I am both artist-researcher and researched, and in which refusing the fiction of objectivity is itself a methodological act of resistance. Third, it presents findings from *Desire for Belonging* and *Inheritance* — that resistance is material, genealogical, and enacted through the accumulated weight of repeated, embodied acts such as dyeing,

stitching, wrapping, and the continuation of ancestral practice. Finally, it concludes that this inherent resistance lives in the smallest gestures — how we work certain fabrics, orient toward certain plants, wrap broken branches in refusal of assimilation, or answer, still, disobediently, "Where are you from?"

A Decolonial Theoretical Ecology

Rather than assembling theories that merely coexist, this research stitches together frameworks that share conceptual resonance. Each framework enacts marginalised knowledge, validates embodied experience, recognises multiplicity, and works to resist and decentre western epistemological dominance. Together, they form a decolonial theoretical ecology grounded in three primary frameworks: Homi K. Bhabha's *Third Space*, Mariana Ortega's *hometactics,* and Kuan-Hsing Chen's *Asia as Method*, alongside the feminist phenomenological work of Sara Ahmed, Donna Haraway and Marianne Hirsch, which provide the embodied and situated dimensions through which I read my material practice; see Figure 1.

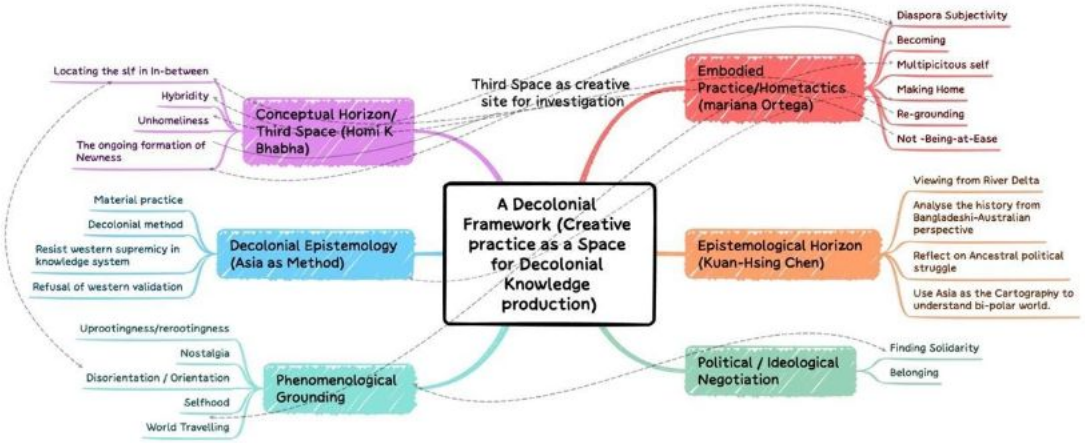

Figure 1: Methodological mind map

Bhabha's concept of the Third Space provides the conceptual terrain through which I understand my hybrid subjectivity and the lived condition of in-betweenness that shapes this research. Rather than positioning identity as fixed or rooted in a singular cultural origin, the Third Space describes identity as a negotiated condition across overlapping cultural frameworks — a productive site where hybridity emerges through interstitial negotiation rather than resolution (Bhabha, 1994). This understanding aligns with Stuart Hall's articulation of cultural identity as a process of becoming rather than being, formed through history, representation, and lived experience (Hall, 2014), and with Avtar Brah's notion of diaspora space, which emphasises the relational and contested nature of belonging (Brah, 1996). Artist-researcher Torika Bolatagici draws on these formulations to describe hybrid identity as a "(n)either/(n)or" position — indeterminate, blurred, and generative (Bolatagici, 2004). This resonates with my own experience as a first-generation Bangladeshi-Australian artist-researcher, where belonging is neither resolved in Bangladesh nor fully secured in Australia but continually formed through movement between them.

Within this negotiated terrain, Mariana Ortega's concept of hometactics offers a framework

for understanding how temporal home-feeling is produced through embodied practice. Ortega describes hometactics as everyday gestures through which diasporas create moments of dwelling without experiencing permanent belonging (Ortega, 2016)— gestures informed by Gloria Anzaldúa's idea of borderlands subjectivity, where identity is shaped through negotiation across cultural boundaries rather than from a single origin (Anzaldúa et al., 2023). This emphasis on lived, embodied negotiation connects directly to Sara Ahmed's feminist phenomenology of orientation — her argument that bodies create a sense of home through repeated actions, movements, and material attachments (Ahmed, 2006). In my practice, hometactics and orientation are not theoretical concepts; they function by gathering gum tree branches, working with Khadi and reclaimed sarees, hand-stitching, wrapping, and staining with turmeric. These acts do not resolve questions of belonging; they generate temporary feelings of being at home through repetition, touch, and embodied memory.

Chen's *Asia as Method* provides the overarching epistemological orientation for this research. Rather than treating western theory as the universal framework through which non-western contexts must be interpreted, Chen proposes using Asia as the legitimate reference point for thought, comparison, and knowledge production — shifting the locus of interpretation away from western theoretical authority (Chen, 2010). This decentring resonates with Dipesh Chakrabarty's call to provincialise Europe, which argues for pluralising knowledge by recognising multiple intellectual traditions rather than treating European thought as the normative centre (Chakrabarty, 2009). Together, these frameworks support an epistemic repositioning in which Bangladesh is not a peripheral case requiring western validation, but a site of knowledge in its own right. Within this orientation, Donna Haraway's concept of situated knowledges — the insistence that knowledge is always partial, located, and materially grounded rather than universal (Haraway, 1988) — grounds my material practice as a legitimate epistemological act. Working with turmeric, Khadi, and reclaimed sarees is not mere illustration; it is inquiry, conducted within specific cultural, political, and embodied lineages.

A question this framework raises is why I draw on Bhabha while simultaneously positioning the research within a non-western epistemological orientation. This is not a contradiction. My approach does not reject western epistemology; rather, it resists treating western frameworks as the only universal standards against which all knowledge must be measured. Bhabha's Third Space is strategically repositioned within a broader decolonial framework shaped by Ortega's hometactic and Chen's *Asia as Method* — mobilised relationally alongside non-western epistemologies rather than privileged as authoritative. This reorientation retains conceptual usefulness while detaching theory from its institutional hierarchies.

Making Home in the In-Between

My research is grounded in a practice-led methodology that integrates critical autoethnography, studio-based inquiry, and material-led practice. I am both the artist-researcher and the researched. This dual positioning is not a limitation requiring

methodological compensation; it is the constitutive condition of this inquiry. Critical autoethnography positions my lived experience — my body, memory, displacement, postmemory (Hirsch, 2012), and inherited cultural practices — not as anecdotal background but as the primary terrain of knowledge production. I am not a detached observer of diasporic experience; I am its embodied site. Refusing the fiction of objectivity is itself a methodological act of disobedience.

My art practice operates not as illustration but as a rigorous epistemological method in its own merit — it generates knowledge that conventional research cannot produce. I do not register with Bhabha's Third Space or Ortega's hometactics from the outside, as an outsider; I live in that terrain — I materialise and mobilise them through making and creating. In *Desire for Belonging*, 2025, I collected broken gum tree branches from my neighbourhood in Tarneit and wrapped them with old sarees, Khadi fabric, and cotton threads; see Figure 2. This is not a metaphor for diasporic vulnerability; the act of gathering, wrapping, binding, and assembling is a hometactic in itself — belonging negotiated through embodied labour. The work does not represent in-betweenness from a distance; it enacts it materially. Through this process of collecting, making, and remaking, I engage in the world-travelling that diasporic subjects perform — consciously and subconsciously — through their everyday acts (Lugones, 1987).

Figure 2: Installation view, *Desire for Belonging,* Trocadero Project Space, Footscray, 2025

In *Inheritance*, 2026, see Figure 3*:* turmeric, Khadi, Bangla anti-colonial text, and hand-stitching perform as active epistemic agents, not only cultural signifiers. The works are suspended from broken, found gum tree branches — branches that do not merely hold the work structurally but become its frame, its threshold, its colonial encounter. Here, the gum tree branch is the meeting point of two colonised lands. It holds Bangladeshi Khadi dyed

with turmeric, stitched with inherited knowledge, suspended within the landscape of another colonised land. When I dye Bangladeshi Khadi with turmeric, I do not produce an illustration of hybridity; I activate a shared yet uneven colonial history — two lands shaped by imperial violence, joined through deliberate material encounter in a newly formed space. Turmeric carries the memory of Bengali healing rituals and my mother's hands; Khadi carries the genealogy of anti-colonial resistance in the Bengal region and my ancestral connection with the movement. These acts of dyeing, stitching, and remaking are analytical acts through which I understand memory and identity.

Figure 3: Installation view, *Inheritance,* RMIT First Site Gallery, 2026.

I called this approach material storytelling; turmeric, Khadi, reclaimed sarees, and gum tree branches carry genealogies of labour, resistance, care, and survival that exceed textual explanation. They are not passive symbols awaiting interpretation; they are collaborators in thought. Following Kuan-Hsing Chen's concept of *Asia as Method* (Chen, 2010), I position Bangladesh not as a cultural case study, but as the epistemic centre. I do not ask how Bangladesh fits within western theoretical frameworks; I ask what the world looks like when viewed from the River Delta. Bengali intellectual genealogies, inherited domestic rituals, and embodied cultural practices are legitimate sites of knowledge production in their own right.

Following Haraway's insistence on situated and accountable knowledge (Haraway, 1988), this methodology dismisses the demand for translation into western legibility. Olvia Khoo's Diaspora as Method sharpens this point: the diasporic position here is not simply where the materials are worked, but the very ground of the knowledge they produce (Khoo, 2019). The materials in Desire for Belonging and Inheritance embody their own epistemologies. These works adopt a disobedient methodological stance—refusing western epistemological authority—and affirm that diasporic, material, and embodied knowledge do not require institutional validation to be legitimate. This knowledge already resides in inherited rituals, material gestures, and lived practices of survival.

Materials as Teachers: Turmeric and Ancestral Knowledge

Turmeric is my first teacher. Long before I understood it as an artistic material, it was the remedy my mother reached for when we had stomach pain, indigestion, or small cuts on our skin. She would make turmeric paste, mix it with rice congee, and our discomfort would ease. For cuts, she applied turmeric paste directly to our wounds, and healing would begin. This knowledge extended beyond human care — when our domestic chickens and ducks were injured by predators, my mother treated them with the same turmeric paste. This was not theoretical knowledge; it was lived, embodied, passed down through generations of Bengali women who understood turmeric's properties long before western science validated them (Gupta et al., 2013; Reddi, 2013).

The significance of turmeric in my practice is inseparable from this childhood witnessing. As someone who has experienced layers of unhomeliness — segregated in my birthplace, identified as an outsider in Bangladesh, and repeatedly asked “Where are you from?” in Australia — turmeric became a way of healing, of creating comfort in an unhomely world. Working with turmeric to dye Khadi is an act of remembering my mother and reconnecting with ancestral knowledge systems that western rationality once dismissed as superstition. It also resonates with Donna Haraway’s insistence that knowledge is embodied and situated (Haraway, 1988).

A few years ago, while suffering from the flu, I ordered a turmeric latte at a café near my university. The barista proceeded to lecture me about turmeric's benefits. I listened, then told him: yes, I know, because my mother fed us turmeric when we were sick, she treated our cuts with it, and she even healed our injured chickens and ducks with turmeric paste. His surprise was telling. This moment crystallised for me the violence of cultural appropriation and erasure, what A. Suresh Canagarajah describes as the systematic dismissal and later extraction of local knowledge by dominant epistemologies (Canagarajah, 2005).

Knowledge, materials, and practices far too often become valuable only after receiving western validation; my practice critiques this. Chen observes that this pattern reflects neocolonial dynamics that persist even after formal independence (Chen, 2010). My mother's knowledge was ancestral, tacit, and embedded in daily care practices — dismissed until western institutions could extract, measure, and profit from it. Using turmeric to dye fabric in my work is therefore an act of reclamation, a refusal of this epistemological violence.

Turmeric also carries ceremonial significance that speaks to transformation and blessing. In Bengali weddings, during the *Holud Sondha* ritual, the couple is seated while relatives apply fresh turmeric paste to their bodies — an act of purification preparing them for a new life (Akter, 2021). This sacred use of turmeric, like its medicinal use, represents knowledge systems that persist despite colonial dismissal and contemporary appropriation. When I work with turmeric-dyed fabrics, wrapping them around broken gum branches, I am engaging this full archive — healing, ceremony, resistance, and the ongoing presence of my mother's hands teaching mine.

Khadi, Swadeshi, and Inherited Resistance

While turmeric connects me to my mother's embodied knowledge, my connection with Khadi is simultaneously personal and collective: the long history of anti-colonial resistance in Bengal, and the intergenerational transmission of that resistance through material practice. Khadi is not simply a textile; it is a material archive of the Swadeshi movement, which began in 1905 to oppose the partition of the Bengal region (Sarkar, 1973, 2018). Wearing or making Khadi was a political act — a material refusal of colonial economic dependency practised through everyday life and mobilising the native practice and act of resistance (Watt, 2025).

This history didn't end with independence. It was transmitted across generations and borders through those who carried resistance memory in their bodies without explicitly naming it. Marianne Hirsch's postmemory describes this: the passing of traumatic historical experience so internalised it shapes identity, as if it were one's own (Hirsch, 2012). Postmemory isn't only personal; the Swadeshi movement is a collective postmemory for Bengali generations — transmitted through objects, gestures, and materials, not just documents. Khadi is a postmemory object, embodying colonial oppression and resistance.

My connection to this history is also deeply personal. My family has a long history in politics and activism, tracing back to anti-British movements in Bengal — a history that shaped my understanding of resistance, justice, and collective action in ways that exceed conscious awareness, mirroring Hirsch's description(Hirsch, 2012).

The presence of Khadi in my work therefore functions as what Anne Ring Petersen calls transnational cultural memory—memory that travels beyond borders and generations (Petersen, 2013). It carries the weight of colonial oppression and the resilience of those who fought against it. Using Khadi is not a reference to this history; it is a continuation of it.

Alongside Khadi, I work with reclaimed sarees — old cotton sarees that belong to me, my mother, and other women in my family. My mother and sisters practised *Kantha*, a hand-stitched embroidery tradition created by layering old sarees. *Kantha* has been practised for centuries, especially during monsoon seasons when women gathered indoors to stitch and share stories(BasaÌ„ka, 2007; Ghosh, 2020; Zaman, 1993). Introducing stitching into my practice reconnects me with this tradition — joining my fragmented memory with inherited knowledge. As Bolatagici argues, hybrid identity requires engaging with the complexities of living in multiple worlds simultaneously (Bolatagici, 2004). Each stitch is an act of care, an attempt to re-connect what has been broken by migration and cultural erasure.

Khadi and reclaimed sarees express what Hall describes as identity as a process, always in formation (Hall, 2014). My practice does not resolve the contradictions of my hybrid identity; it fully inhabits them.

Desire for Belonging – Vulnerability and the In-Between

Desire for Belonging, exhibited at Trocadero Project Space in January 2025, consists of ephemeral sculptures made from found gum tree branches, reclaimed sarees, Khadi fabric, and cotton threads. These works arise from the persistent question: “Where are you from?” They reveal the complexities of diasporic identity, being from both the river delta of Bangladesh and the western side of Melbourne yet fully belonging to neither.

The branches I gather from my neighbourhood after windy days serve as both memorials and connectors. Growing up in Bangladesh—a monsoon-prone land—I would collect fallen branches after storms to play with my friends as a young girl. Now, this memory re-emerges in my work as a ritual of remembrance and reconnection. These branches become elements of home tactics and world travelling, representing strategies for building a sense of home amid displacement. (Lugones, 1987; Ortega, 2016).

These branches also represent my present location and position in this stolen land. Working with these native branches acknowledges my complex position and gratitude as both displaced and an immigrant settler on First Nations’ land. Further, Bangladesh and Australia share histories of British colonisation; recognising these parallels enables new forms of solidarity, as Chen suggests (Chen, 2010). This reflects Khoo’s argument: rather than treating the diasporic subject as a deficit position — belonging fully nowhere — the in-between itself becomes a productive standpoint from which to work (Khoo, 2019). The branches, gathered from a colonised land by a subject of another, do not resolve this doubled position; they hold it open as a method.

The sculptures are intentionally awkward and vulnerable. They visualise the fragility of immigrant life — the sense of being off-balance, what Bhabha calls unhomeliness (Bhabha, 1994). Wrapped in saree and Khadi, the branches become body-like forms, caught between states of being. Wrapping evokes care — how wounds are protected and comforted; see Figure 4.

Figure 4: Installation view, *Desire for Belonging-1,* Trocadero Project Space, Footscray, 2025

Their ephemerality is deliberate. As Papastergiadis argues, identity is fluid, mobile, always in negotiation (Papastergiadis, 2000). These sculptures embody in-betweenness — neither fully Bangladeshi nor fully Australian. They also make the Third Space relatable, where hybrid identities create something new (Bhabha, 1994). Australian tree branches and landscape shape my understanding of diasporic complexities. This generative tension is the space where my work lives; see Figure 5.

Figure 5: Installation view*, Desire for Belonging,* Trocadero Project Space, Footscray, 2025

Inheritance: The Politics and Pedagogy of Everyday Materials

Inheritance, exhibited at RMIT University's First Site Gallery in 2026, centres on the political dimensions of my hybrid identity. Through material practice, the exhibition brings together turmeric-dyed Khadi, reclaimed saree, found gum tree branches, and hand-stitching — materials chosen not for their aesthetic qualities alone, but for the political, ancestral, and embodied histories they carry. Where *Desire for Belonging* foregrounds vulnerability and the search for provisional home-feeling, *Inheritance* asks a pointed question: what does it mean to carry a political legacy through material practice? What does it mean to make art from a lineage of resistance?

My connection to anti-colonial history is not academic. My uncle was a prominent student leader, later elected to the first parliament of independent Bangladesh. My father, then a young schoolboy, participated in protests alongside his brother. During the 1971 Liberation War, both my ancestral homes were burned down as a consequence of my father's and my uncles' participation as freedom fighters. My sixty-plus-year-old নানী/*nani* (grandmother)

and my seven-months-pregnant খালা/*khala* (aunt) were taken to the firing squad for execution as punishment for my uncle's activism and his work against the Pakistani Army in the struggle for an independent, sovereign Bangladesh. These are not distant histories I studied — they are histories I inherited through living, through listening to the silences, through the way my parents' voice changed when they spoke of 1971. This is Hirsch's postmemory at its most literal — a story not told to me, but a history I carry as if it were my own, stories that shaped my view (Hirsch, 2012). When I work with Khadi, I am not referencing this history from a distance — I am working from within it, from my postmemories.

The works in *Inheritance* are themselves postmemory objects. The body of work holds what could not be formally archived — the histories that were buried, silenced, or displaced rather than preserved; see Figure 6. Khadi carries in its weave the collective postmemory of the Swadeshi movement; the reclaimed sarees carry the intimate postmemory of my mother's hands and the women who wore these fabrics before me. The Kantha stitching that runs through the work does not merely reference this inheritance—it proclaims it, stitch by stitch, through the same repeated bodily gestures by which women before me transmitted knowledge across generations. These are not symbols of postmemory; they are its material form.

Figure 6: Installation view, *Inheritance,* RMIT First Site Gallery, 2026.

Hand-stitching is a central method across *Inheritance*. It is slow, repetitive, labour-intensive, and historically gendered – a practice I never formally learned, but absorbed by watching my mother's Kantha stitching, day after day. I had not consciously practised it, yet my hands

already knew its rhythms: an embodied knowledge held in the body before it is named as a skill — postmemory working through muscle and fingers, rather than training (Hirsch, 2012). As Haraway insists (Haraway, 1988), knowledge is always situated; stitching Khadi and reclaimed saree reconnects me with my mother's and sisters' embodied knowledge, with generations of Bengali women who made meaning through the same gestures. This is not decorative labour — it is research conducted through the hands. The act of stitching joins my positionality across all the intersections I inhabit: it connects both my homes, my past to my present, myself to my ancestors; see Figure 7.

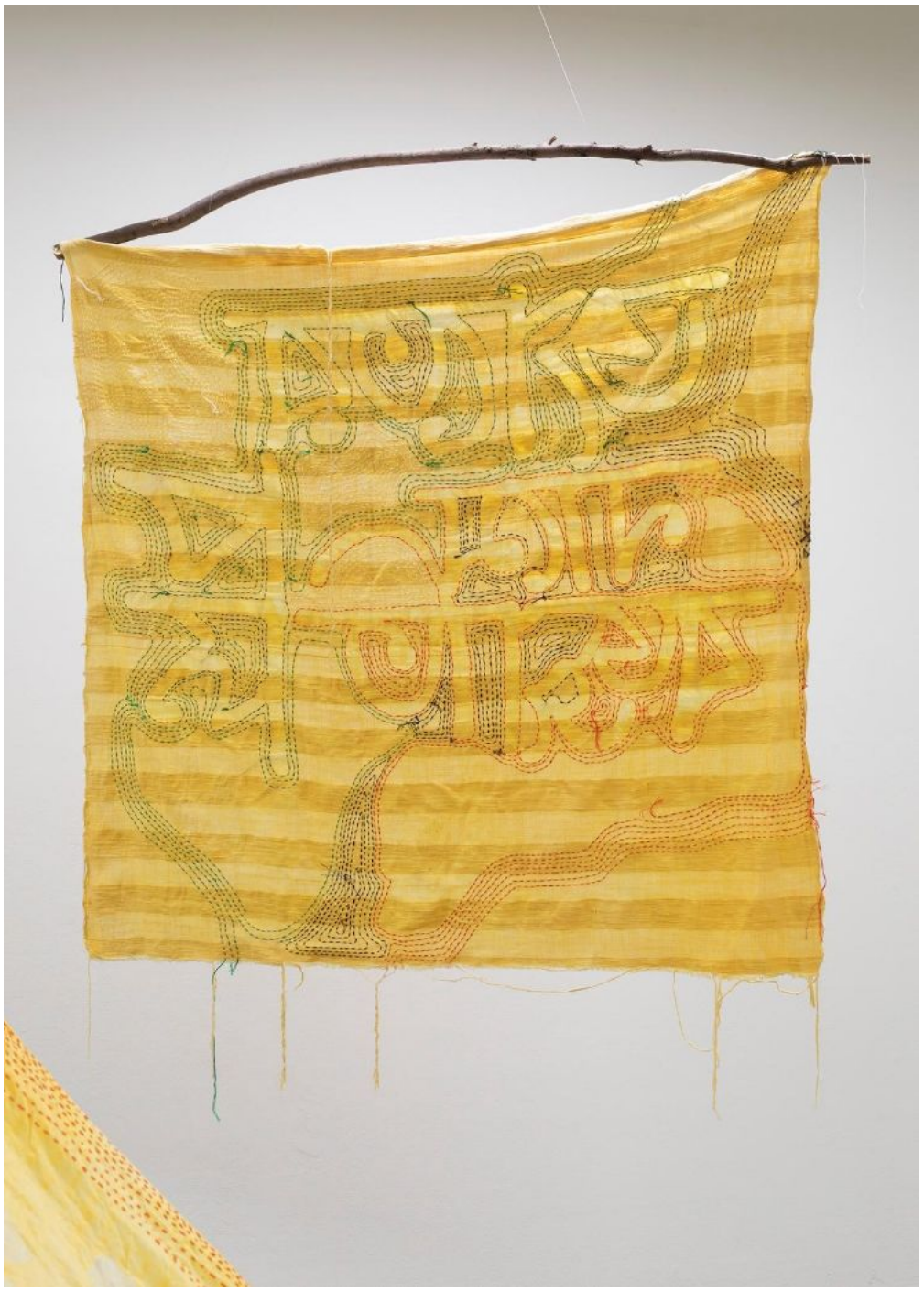

Figure 7: Installation view, *Inheritance,* RMIT First Site Gallery, 2026.

Alongside Khadi, reclaimed saree carries intergenerational weight. A saree is more than clothing; it accumulates the touch, labour, and emotional histories of women over generations. I work with sarees from my late mother, sisters, and myself—fabrics loved, lived in, and carried across continents, transformed here into Kantha as they wear. Each stitch, as Ahmed argues (Ahmed, 2006), creates attachment and a sense of home—not by resolving displacement but by temporarily suspending it.

In স্বীকারোক্তি*/Acknowledgement*, turmeric-dyed seven-metre Khadi fabric is folded over gum tree branches, forming tent-like shelters that are shelter, vulnerable, and persistent. Beneath, gathered gum branches act as a meeting point of my two homes, shaped by colonial legacy, making the in-between visible; see Figure 8. The turmeric stain — golden, indelible, resistant to erasure — symbolises cultural memory that refuses to fade. The wrapped branches evoke wounding and care: bodies broken, tended, and held together. Their ephemerality is deliberate, refusing permanence and smooth assimilation. They inhabit transitional space — neither fully resolved nor lost — embodying Bhabha's (1994) concept of unhomeliness within hybrid identity.

Figure 8: Installation view, স্বীকারোক্তি*/Acknowledgement, Inheritance,* RMIT First Site Gallery, 2026.

Inheritance suggests that resistance doesn't always have to be loud or confrontational.

Sometimes, it's about persistence—continuing to stitch, work with turmeric, or speak ancestral languages despite efforts to silence us. Our diasporic identity isn't a flaw needing correction but a reality. This practice uses materials, repetition, and care to create a space where our complex heritage is visible and survives through fragmentation. (Chen, 2010; Ortega, 2016).

Discussion

Desire for Belonging and Inheritance materialise the historical resonances of resistance and collective postmemory without requiring outright disobedience. Taken together, these two bodies of work reveal that disobedience in this research operates simultaneously at three registers: the intimate and ancestral, the collective and political, and the spatial and structural. It is not adopted as a critical position; it takes shape through making.

At the café encounter, my ancestral knowledge of turmeric met surprise from someone aware of its wellness benefits. This explains Canagarajah's idea of dominant epistemologies dismissing and extracting local knowledge (Canagarajah, 2005). Dying Khadi with turmeric in my studio isn't a cultural gesture but a rejection of epistemological violence. The knowledge wasn't absent but dismissed. Its reappearance isn't revival but continuation.

At the collective register, Khadi carries the postmemory of the Swadeshi movement and the 1971 Liberation War — histories transmitted not through documents but through the bodies, silences, and material practices of those who inherited them (Hirsch, 2012). When this collective postmemory meets its personal dimension — the postmemory of my own family's disobedience — it becomes clear that my practice does not produce resistance. It continues. This echoes Khoo's call to treat the diaspora as a method rather than a peripheral case requiring validation from established area-studies frameworks (Khoo, 2019). Khoo argues that Asian diasporic communities in the west should be seen as interlocutors with shared priorities, not as marginalised subjects (Khoo, 2019). Similarly, turmeric, Khadi, and postmemory constitute knowledge in their own right, without needing western institutional validation.

At the spatial and structural register, the gum tree branch holds the argument together. In Desire for Belonging, it is wrapped, bound, and suspended — a hometactic enacted materially. In Inheritance, it becomes a frame: the structural meeting point of two colonised lands, holding Bangladeshi Khadi within the landscape of another colonised country. Bangladesh and Australia share histories of British imperial violence; the branch makes this convergence visible not as metaphor but as material fact.

Together, these three registers — the intimate and ancestral, the collective and political, the spatial and structural — show what this practice does, rather than what it argues: they are not separate arguments but the same turmeric stain, the same line of stitching, the same suspended branch, worked through at once. The materials do this work themselves, gesture by gesture; naming it a disobedient pedagogy describes that work, not a claim the practice has to perform.

The pedagogical resistance through making and creating

My practice understands turmeric, Khadi, reclaimed saree, and gum tree branches as agents of memory, care, and resistance: in the turmeric stain that refuses to fade, in the fragility of wrapped branches that still hold together, in the stitches that echo the work of women before me. Through slow processes of dyeing, wrapping, and stitching, these materials enact a pedagogy rooted in ancestral knowledge, feminist labour, and postcolonial critique, challenging the erasures of colonial and neocolonial epistemologies and resisting demands for neutrality and universality, while holding permanence as a choice rather than an institutional given.

This research offers a practice-led, decolonial inquiry that understands theory through making, and personal history with politics. Where hybrid identities and transnational memories converge in the Third Space (Bhabha, 1994), these materials generate new forms of relation and understanding — not through declaration, but through the accumulated weight of repeated, embodied acts. The materials used are the argument itself, not mere artworks. By positioning Bangladesh as an epistemic centre and grounding it in Bengali women's embodied, inherited, and material knowledge, this practice-led research stands as an epistemological stance — one in which lived and inherited knowledge is authorised from within, rather than validated externally.

Resistance in my research is not an idea fostered to art practice from the outside. Every act of making — dyeing, wrapping, stitching, suspending — is an act of refusing the terms under which diasporic knowledge is permitted to exist. By engaging with the politics of everyday materials, this research demonstrates that resistance can be expressed through small gestures — how we connect with specific fabrics, work with certain plants, practise and recreate ancestral techniques like Kantha making, and gather or join broken branches that resist assimilation or the question, “Where are you from?” Ultimately, this enduring disobedience resides in caring for what dominant systems dismiss as insignificant and refusing to let this knowledge be forgotten. In this way, resistance is not an exception to everyday diasporic life; it is integral to its very fabric.

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