

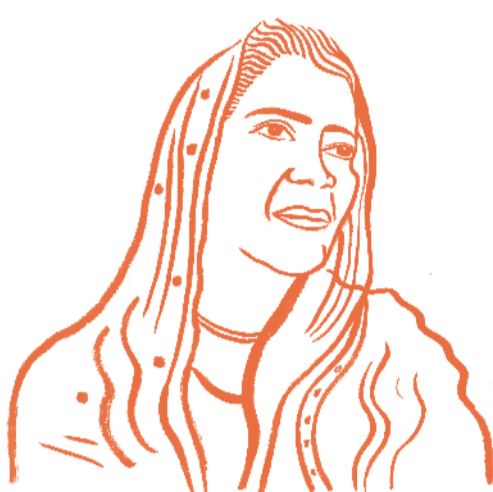
## SKILLS

# THE ART ALREADY MADE

## EXCHANGE

### MOHANA

I am from Bangladesh. Mehndi is an art there; it is something always present in our childhood. We grow up with it as a community. I learnt to do mehndi by practicing on my own. My mother would take the mehndi from the tree and then we would make paste from the leaves. Women get to know each other by doing mehndi. In special occasions, we sit and sing; Men like mehndi too. They also have to wear it on their wedding day.



### ABIDA

I moved to London from Pakistan three years ago, I came with my husband. My children now are back there with their grandparents. I did a beauty course in Pakistan and I worked as a beautician. Women enjoy having a beauty treatment for their weddings and Eid, or in other special occasions. It is very relaxing and makes them feel good. I would like to be able to do more of this work here in the UK so now I am applying to beauty courses.



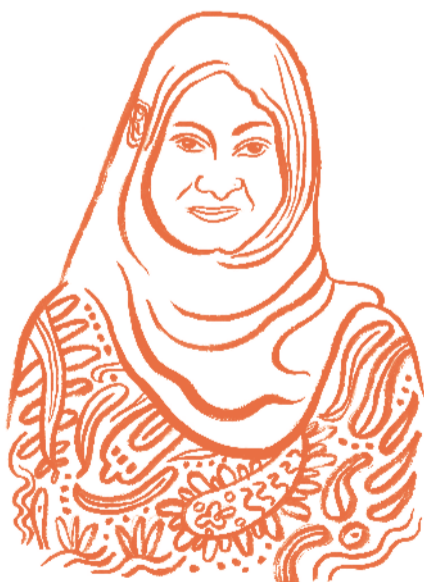
### ASIA

I am from Sylhet. I have experience in making embroidered blankets in Bangladesh. We make small blankets for new-born babies. I made one with the frills after our sessions here. Being creative has made me push myself. It has also kept me very busy and now I am thinking of ways in which I could sell what I make.



### MOSHODA

Where I am from in Bangladesh, *Chana Chur* is a traditional food popular in many events. It is very cheap to make and a great snack for all occasions. This recipe goes a long way back. I have used it to encourage people in the neighbourhood to come to City Gateway. When I first started working here doing events in the park, children would run to the table to eat the Chana Chur. I would get them to come back with their mothers. This was how I got some women to sign up for courses at City Gateway!



The Whitechapel Gallery Community Programme offers free workshops for local groups including ESOL groups, adults with learning disabilities, older people, parent groups, rough sleepers and mental health service users. Groups visit the exhibitions and take part in activities in our studio spaces. — [whitechapelcommunityworkshops.tumblr.com](http://whitechapelcommunityworkshops.tumblr.com)

Rebecca Davies is an artist working within a participatory practice through illustration, performance and live events. — [rebeccadaviesartist.co.uk](http://rebeccadaviesartist.co.uk)

Project Co-developed by Whitechapel Gallery, City Gateway Women's Programmes and Rebecca Davies

Photo credit Vicky Carmichael, Felicity Crawshaw and Justyna Fedec

Illustrations Rebecca Davies

Supported by

## THE ART ALREADY MADE

The Community Programme at Whitechapel Gallery is a platform for collaboration, exchange and experimentation where people of all ages and backgrounds come together. Our work with local communities stretches through all levels of learning and critical engagement and reflects the Gallery's commitment to participatory processes in close dialogue with local organisations.

The Art Already Made: Skills Exchange was developed in direct response to findings from focus groups held with organisations based in Tower Hamlets. The project brought together local knowledge, art practice and public participation. It sought to address and engage with the challenges and opportunities of our local context, in direct response to concrete issues and expectations.

Partnering with the charity City Gateway and their staff, the Whitechapel Gallery team and artist Rebecca Davies collaborated with a group of women to share and develop new and existing

skills. Focusing on learning as an exchange, the project featured a series of workshops offsite and at the Gallery. City Gateway works closely with local women and their families to provide inspirational training, apprenticeships and creative programmes that build confidence and community cohesion.

Workshop sessions took place from October 2015 to March 2016 at City Gateway at Lansbury Lodge (Poplar) and Stepney Life Centre (Stepney Green). Additionally, there were family drop-in workshops at both centres and Family Days at Whitechapel Gallery. The skills exchange ranged from engraving and book-binding to embroidery and illustration.

The encounters between artist Rebecca Davies and the group acted as a catalyst for conversation, creative practice and critical reflection. The project fostered connections between women's family life and personal achievement.



## MEHNDI AND ENGRAVING

Exploring the history of Henna followed by engraving workshop inspired by Mehndi decorative motives. Recalling family stories around Mehndi.

## BOOKBINDING

Learning bookbinding techniques drawing upon already existing sewing skills.



## PATTERN AND PRINT

Making prints onto textiles using linocut, followed by a frame-design activity led by Shopna.



## SEWING

Creating hand knitted and embroidered cushion covers with textiles from previous sessions, led by Lima and Asia.



## WEAVING

Recalling and sharing weaving traditions from Bangladesh using materials such as wicker and reeds to create objects and patterns.

