

Maya: The Birth of a Superhero

Maya: Naissance d'une super-héroïne



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Logline

An immersive story following Maya, an ordinary 21st Century girl, as she transforms into a uniquely female superhero whose powers derive from menstruation.

TRAILER (English and French versions available)

Country: UK, France, United States

Status: EU premiere

Synopsis

The story of a South Asian girl's coming of age and the awakening of her sexuality. She must overcome her shame and fear to find her inner strength and true superpowers.

With the arrival of her first period, Maya's world is turned upside down as she is confronted by the restrictive traditions of her conservative family and a world of hidden shame, stigma and taboo in contemporary London.

An odyssey of womanhood and femininity, referencing ancient symbols of spiritual and feminine power, the piece draws together the real and imaginary to trace possible paths to resilience and justice. The Player must discover a radical power based on self-love, care and solidarity.

Created and co-directed by renowned artist and women rights activist, Poulomi Basu and co-directed by CJ Clarke, *Maya: The Birth of a Superhero* stars Indira Varma (Game of Thrones) with Charithra Chandran (Bridgerton) in the English language version and Kathy Packianathan (Ici tout commence) in the French language version.

Quotes

Please attribute quotes to Poulomi Basu & CJ Clarke:

“Immersive technologies are not bound by the conventions of the past and allow us to create new narrative modes that realise radical perspectives. With this female-led narrative, we can present new worlds of possibilities and magic to forge new audiences and inspire them to find the magic within themselves.

Maya: The Birth of a Superhero takes inspiration from ancient Indian mythology, feminist thinkers, such as Audre Lorde and post-colonial literature. We aim to inspire the audience to not only find the magic within themselves but embrace their trauma. This is a work of embodied activism.

The story of Maya creates a fantastical alternate reality where women are powerful and their strength is celebrated. What we need now, more than ever, is a little brown girl magic!

Maya: The Birth of a Superhero is a subversive coming-of-age tale of a young British Asian girl's sexuality: her period, her power, her magic, and her protest.

Through this experience, we are de-colonising the superhero character and presenting a figure from the majority world with power and agency. This work simultaneously connects us with the past, whilst also giving us a glimpse of the future. And that future is female.”

Project Insights

Select advance interview questions with Poulomi Basu & CJ Clarke (please attribute the responses to both individuals).

1. What film genre would you assign to your immersive piece? Why?

All good art or cinema should aim to transcend genre. To experience Maya is to move between worlds both real, magical and fantastical. The piece blends elements of a psychological thriller with horror and magical realism to create a unique and compelling piece.

2. How is your immersive piece similar to traditional cinema?

Cinematic is a word that audiences often use when describing the experience of watching Maya. The work tells a rich, vibrant and nuanced story that transports the audience through worlds both real and magical to make them look afresh at our contemporary world. In this way, experiencing Maya is no different to experiencing traditional cinema.

3. Where does your immersive piece depart from traditional cinema?

Maya: The Birth of a Superhero offers the audience an embodied experience. They directly experience a world conditioned by their first period and, in the world beyond their conservative home, they encounter the teasing and taunting of her peers, where menstruation is weaponised in the daily fight for survival in a tough inner-city school. At every turn, they confront the continuing taboo of menstruation and the normalisation of shame. The audience journeys through a menstrual portal to discover a strength that emerges out of trauma to be a power based on self-love and solidarity.

The experience is not only embodied but also spatial. And, in this sense, it is closer to theatre or contemporary art installations. It blends, subverts and uses elements from a range of disciplines to create something truly unique.

4. Anything else? This is your chance to share something fun, challenging, exciting, thoughtful about your project.

Our intention is to subvert the idea of power as it is traditionally applied to the Western superhero genre. It is the last word on superhero origin stories, period.

Team Bios

Poulomi Basu is a neurodiverse artist known for her exploration of the interrelationship between systems of power and bodies through work that exists at the limits of art, film and social practice.

CJ Clarke is an award-winning director, writer, author and producer. Crossing between narrative and experimental film, XR and installation, his work explores themes and stories at the intersection of youth, identity and class. He often collaborates with other artists to enable and activate historically marginalised and socially engaged narratives.

Links to Image Assets

Headshots (ZIP)

- Poulomi Basu
- CJ Clarke

Project Photos

Project Poster (ZIP): English and French versions are available

Links to Video Assets

Trailer: English and French versions available

Social Media Tags

Instagram:

@poulomi07

@japc_japc

@florealfilms

Hashtags: #mayasuperhero