

British Art Studies

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London, Asia, Exhibitions, Histories

**Edited by Hammad Nasar and Sarah
Victoria Turner**



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Cover image: Rubber shavings made during Bettina Fung's performance of "Towards All or Nothing (In Memory of Li Yuan-chia)" at Manchester Art Gallery, 6 March 2019.. Digital image courtesy of Bettina Fung.

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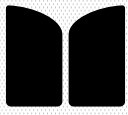
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Researching Exhibitions of South Asian Women Artists in Britain in the 1980s

Alice Correia

Abstract

This paper narrates the author's research methodologies and findings relating to her ongoing project, *Articulating British Asian Art Histories*. With a specific focus on four exhibitions of South Asian women artists during the 1980s and early 1990s, it provides an overview of her primary and secondary research, and presents archival material, which cumulatively gives a richer understanding of the aesthetic and political aims of exhibitors, and the contexts in which they were working. Exhibitions of exclusively women artists of South Asian heritage were rare during this period, but close visual analysis of individual exhibitions and artworks reveals an active engagement with the specificities of the female, British-Asian experience.

This article is accompanied by two downloadable resources: a complete copy of the *Numaish* exhibition catalogue (Fig. 15) and a copy of the exhibition pamphlet for *Jagrati* (Fig. 22).

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Introduction

In 2014, I initiated a large-scale research project titled *Articulating British Asian Art Histories*. The aim of the project was to undertake new primary and secondary research into the contributions made by South Asian diaspora artists to British art during the 1980s and 1990s. In collating and organising archival information, conducting studio visits and artist interviews, and undertaking close visual analysis of individual artworks, my objective was to gain a richer understanding of the aesthetic and political aims of South Asian diaspora artists, and the contexts in which they were working. Although the so-called “Black Arts Movement” has increasingly become an area of art-historical research in Britain, I identified an urgent need for the specific analysis of South Asian diaspora artists. Although deeply imbricated within counter-narratives of mainstream British art, and making important contributions to intellectual conceptions of Black Art, the activities of artists of South Asian heritage have largely remained on the fringes of those histories.

Superficially, perhaps, the presence of South Asian artists within narratives of Black British art histories appears secure. After all, Rasheed Araeen’s work as an artist, curator, and scholar has arguably shaped this emergent field of enquiry, and his 1989 exhibition, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* and its attendant catalogue, remain for many scholars, myself included, an important point of departure when studying diaspora artists in Britain.¹ Of the twenty-four artists included in the exhibition, ten were of South Asian origin, including Araeen himself.² But in using *The Other Story* as a launch for my research, its shortcomings quickly became apparent. Of the South Asian artists included, all were men, and at the time of the exhibition, all were aged forty or above. My project sought to recover from the archive the stories of a younger generation of artists, born and/or raised in Britain, who came to prominence during the 1980s. During this period, in what has become known as the “critical decade”, some young South Asian artists forged productive allegiances with artists from Britain’s African and Caribbean communities, producing work with specific anti-racist and anti-imperialist themes.³ While affiliations were fluid, the self-identification of artists including Chila Kumari Burman, Allan deSouza, and Shaheen Merali as “Black” has positioned them and their work within a specific art-historical discourse set against the backdrop of discriminatory police practices and civic unrest. But many artists later found that although there was benefit in creating cross-cultural political allegiances under the sign of Blackness, as Stuart Hall noted, such an essentialised identification also enacted silences; as a collective identifier, Black “had a certain way of silencing the very specific experiences of Asian people”.⁴

In 2015, while rummaging in the Panchayat archive, then housed at the University of Westminster, I came across Parita Trivedi's 1984 essay, "To Deny Our Fullness: Asian Women in the Making of History", published in *Feminist Review*, in which she discussed the representation and status of Asian women, both historically in colonial India, and in contemporary post-colonial Britain. In her opening paragraph, she challenged her readers to "conjure up a picture of an Asian woman". She asked: "Have the words 'passive, submissive', been part of your portrayal?"⁵ Reading Trivedi's essay, I was encouraged to think deeply about the representation of South Asian women in Britain, and how a generation of female artists were actively seeking to challenge the stereotype of Asian womanhood she described, both in what they produced and in how they exhibited their work. Although I was interested in the work of female artists, henceforth my project took on a more determined dimension: to explore how South Asian women artists were critically enacting and creating new self-representations, challenging stereotypes and articulating what being British, Asian, and female in the 1980s, meant. This paper presents my research methodologies and findings relating to exhibitions of South Asian women artists in the 1980s, and the ways in which artists sought to address the silences identified by Hall through their active engagement with the specificities of the female British-Asian experience.

Although the work of Sutapa Biswas, Zarina Bhimji, and Chila Kumari Burman was familiar to me from my postgraduate studies, it was evident from my initial literature review that the 1980s saw a generation of young South Asian female artists graduate from art colleges across the UK. Names including Nilofar Akmut, Nina Edge, Perminder Kaur, Gurminder Sikand, and Shanti Thomas came into view. However, while finding the names of artists was relatively easy, locating examples of their work or lengthy critical analysis was more difficult. Arguably, my project inadvertently became one of advocacy; of re-orientating historiographies of the 'Other' in British art away from the narrative constructed by Araeen towards a messier assemblage. In undertaking what has been described as "sincere historiography", my argument for inclusion—that female artists of South Asian origin should, indeed must, be included in histories of British art—may seem simplistic, unambitious, or inarguable.⁶ But at a time when debates over who is included within British cultural identity are rife, the simple, albeit laborious, act of retrieval and recovery has become a politicised necessity; there are many in British public life who would question the value of contributions made to British culture by immigrant communities.⁷ While the impact of South Asian female artists on British culture in the 1980s may have been modest (and I make this characterisation on the basis that most artists considered below are not widely known, their work is not held in large quantities in major national collections, and they have not been recipients of large-scale exhibitions or subjects of scholarly publications), this does not

render their work unworthy of attention. It should also be said that this is an ongoing project and in presenting a historiography of exhibition histories, I also point to gaps and further questions. It is hoped that I am not only making certain histories visible—opening the archive up to further scrutiny—but also encouraging those with personal archives and memories of exhibitions and artistic activity to add to, correct, or amend this patchwork narrative. The arguably more radical or challenging praxis of reading artists and their artworks through different theoretical, philosophical, or analytical perspectives is the next stage of research.

The South Asian Diaspora in Britain during the 1970s

The generation of artists who came to prominence during the late 1970s and 1980s were either born in Britain, or arrived as small children. Their experience of being South Asian in Britain was thus shaped by the cultural context of the 1970s and the political and social disquiet that “coloured migration” stimulated.⁸ The end of the 1960s and early 1970s saw the arrival of what many in Britain regarded as alarming numbers of South Asian migrants, particularly from East Africa; the Kenyan, and then Ugandan crisis of 1968 and 1972 respectively, saw thousands of displaced people of South Asian descent settle in Britain.⁹ For many on the political right, these people were regarded as a homogenous threat, but as Avtar Brah reminds us, the term ‘South Asian’ is a label used to categorise a heterogeneous group of people.¹⁰ Although nominally used to describe people originating from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, due to the legacies of British colonialism, it also includes those born in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and elsewhere. Britain’s South Asian community thus includes people from different social classes, religions, and castes, who consequently have different socio-economic and political agency.

Nonetheless, a common experience of South Asian people in Britain during the 1970s was that of racism, both physical and epistemic. In his landmark text of 1981, “From Resistance to Rebellion: Asian and Afro-Caribbean Struggles in Britain”, Ambalavaner Sivanandan charted the racism encountered by Black and Asian migrants since the 1950s and their resistance to it.¹¹ The political climate that followed Enoch Powell’s 1968 “Rivers of Blood” speech, in which he foretold of a Britain overrun with Black immigrants, led to the rise of the National Front as a menacing presence on the streets of British cities, and white youths regularly terrorised Asian communities.¹² The *Observer* noted in April 1970, “any Asian careless enough to be walking the streets alone at night is a fool”, and racially motivated violence, commonly known as “Paki-bashing”, became regular occurrences.¹³ Police response to attacks on South Asian victims was characterised by an unwillingness to afford protection; delays and

inadequate investigations; treating the victim as the aggressor; and subjecting victims to continued harassment and persecution.¹⁴ Kenneth Leech records that in 1976, the Anti-Racist Committee of Asians in East London was established to “draw attention to the inadequacy of the protection offered to Asian people by the police and authorities”.¹⁵ By the late 1970s and early 1980s, “the political activism of Asian young people hit the headlines as they adopted a highly visible and militant stance against racial oppression”.¹⁶ Responding to the murder of Altab Ali in Whitechapel, East London, an area home to a large Bengali community, on 14 May 1978, 7,000 people marched behind his coffin from Brick Lane to Downing Street. In response on 11 June, approximately 150 white youths “rampaged through Brick Lane shouting ‘Kill the black bastards’, smashing windows of Bengali shops”.¹⁷ On 23 April 1979, the National Front held a pre-election rally at Southall Town Hall, which resulted in the police brutally quashing a peaceful counter-demonstration; eyewitnesses reported police vans driving into crowds; nearly 700 people were arrested; and Blair Peach, a white member of the Anti-Nazi League, was killed by riot police.¹⁸

In addition to facing discrimination and intimidation by British authorities, South Asian women (like Asian men) suffered racism and forms of humiliation in the workplace. In 1976–1977, a strike at the Grunwick film processing plant in north London, ostensibly about the right to trade union recognition, was led by Jayaben Desai, and was undertaken by the mainly female Asian workforce unwilling to accept poor pay and degrading treatment by the white managers and owners.¹⁹ The Grunwick strike lasted for fourteen months and the striking women were subject to particular forms of racial and sexual provocation as factory management sought to use their preconceived understanding of Asian patriarchy as a mode of control, arguing that those on the picket line brought shame on their families. The demonstration of South Asian female agency at Grunwick, as at the earlier Imperial Typewriters strike in Leicester, in 1974, challenged the widespread short-sightedness in Britain that failed to recognise women’s active participation in the vocal fight against workplace injustice because of racial and gender biases.²⁰

South Asian women were also engaging in social protest against domestic and sexual violence, and challenged racist practices within housing and social welfare provision. During the late 1970s, many Asian women joined forces with Black women from the African and Caribbean diaspora “in an expression of solidarity against the shared experience of anti-black racism”.²¹ Groups such as the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD), established in 1978, and Southall Black Sisters, established in 1979, addressed the specific needs of Black and Asian women, and particularly focused on achieving justice for victims of domestic abuse,

forced marriage, and honour-based violence.²² At the end of the 1970s, gender-based violence and racial discrimination perpetrated against South Asian women hit the headlines. On 1 February 1979, the *Guardian* newspaper published a story on its front page, reporting that a few weeks earlier, on 24 January, a thirty-five-year-old Indian woman arriving at Heathrow had been subjected to an internal medical examination, to determine whether or not she had previously had children. On the basis of this information, it was believed possible to ascertain whether or not she was still a virgin. The outcome of this so-called virginity test would then determine the outcome of her application to enter the UK in order to marry her fiancé.²³ Female South Asian migrants were regarded with particular mistrust by British immigration officers who believed that fiancées seeking entry to Britain to participate in arranged marriages sought to join their prospective husbands fraudulently—in order to obtain a British passport, rather than for love. Based on an assumption that South Asian women did not engage in pre-marital sex, border officials controversially inflicted ‘virginity tests’ on women and despite government proclamations that the case reported in the *Guardian* was unique, it is known that these invasive procedures regularly took place, whether in the UK, or prior to the women’s departure from the subcontinent.²⁴ In 1980, Southall Black Sisters were at the forefront of the campaign against virginity testing.²⁵

An Overview of South Asian Artists in Britain

South Asian artists had been active in Britain throughout the twentieth century, from Mukul Dey to Anwar Jalal Shemza, who studied at the Slade School of Art in the 1920s and 1950s respectively. During the 1950s, Shemza, Francis Newton Souza, and Avinash Chandra exhibited with considerable success at Gallery One, London, run by Victor Musgrove. The Indian Painters Collective UK, whose members included Gajanan Baghwat and Lancelot Ribeiro, was formed in 1963, and although short-lived, it provided the template for the later organisation, Indian Artists UK, known as IAUK. Established in 1976, IAUK’s founding members were Balraj Khanna, Yashwant Mali, Lancelot Ribeiro, and Ibrahim Wagh; the organisation sought to support its members in their artistic careers, not only through exhibition opportunities, but also by working collectively to raise awareness of Indian arts and culture in the UK.²⁶ Despite these collective activities, given the range of thematic concerns and aesthetic preferences evident in their work, it is clear that South Asian artists in Britain cannot be classified as a group stylistically, but rather, their experiences as artists of colour, working within the particular socio-political climate in Britain, provided points of commonality. In the 1970s, while artists such as Amal Ghosh and Prafulla Mohanti were principally engaged with aesthetic concerns, centred around

the modernist doctrines of colour, form, and spirituality, at around the same time, Rasheed Araeen's work took a distinctively politicised turn to performance and photography.

No study of British Asian art can omit the influential work of Rasheed Araeen. As already noted, as a scholar and curator, he is a ubiquitous presence in narratives of Black British art history, and significantly, his artistic practice has recently been subject to renewed critical analysis.²⁷ In 1975, Araeen staged his first one-person exhibition at the Artists for Democracy space on Whitfield Street, London. Established by David Medalla, the collective Artists for Democracy attempted to claim political agency in the field of art, and Araeen's exhibition included *For Oluwale* (1971–1973, 1975), a conceptual text and image work that addressed the death of Nigerian migrant, David Oluwale, in Leeds and the subsequent investigation into the Leeds police force.²⁸ On 31 July 1977, in response to the prolonged attacks on the South Asian community in east London, Araeen showcased what was described as “a live event with slides”.²⁹ His multimedia performance, *Paki Bastard (Portrait of the Artist as a Black Person)*, saw Araeen perform a number of menial tasks such as sweeping the floor, and then blindfolding himself, and sitting mute in front of a sequenced slide show which projected images of South Asian cafés and urban street scenes in London's East End, alongside images of mounted police, anti-fascist marches, the picketers at the Grunwick strike, and newspaper clippings reporting violence against South Asian people in London. The soundtrack included excerpts from Handel's *Messiah* which were followed by male voices aggressively chanting “Paki, Paki, Go Home”. The work sought to enact the lived experience of South Asian people in Britain, as being under constant intimidation and threat. Araeen re-used some of his photographs featured in *Paki Bastard (Portrait of the Artist as a Black Person)* in the cruciform work, *Tableau Noir* (1987). A mural of an exoticised reclining Asian woman, photographed in a Bangladeshi restaurant in Brick Lane, is surrounded by black and white images of mounted riot police protecting a meeting of National Front members at Conway Hall, London, in 1973. As Zoe Sutherland, notes, “That the police gave little protection to South Asian people—including many Bangladeshis who were brutally, and sometimes fatally, attacked by the National Front—makes this configuration particularly pointed”.³⁰

Rasheed Araeen's curatorial intervention, *The Other Story*, provided an unprecedented, and personal, overview of post-war modernist practice, and during my postgraduate studies, the exhibition's catalogue introduced me to the work of Chandra and Souza, among others. Such is the ubiquity and importance of *The Other Story* in the story of Black British art history, that its legacies can be found in nearly every publication and exhibition on the subject, and it is always included in bibliographies and timelines. Indeed, Hammad Nasar has argued that Tate Britain's 2012 exhibition *Migrations*:

Journeys into British Art “can be read as a partial restaging of *The Other Story*”.³¹ *Migrations* included not just a number of the same artists featured in Araeen’s exhibition, but also a number of the same artworks. Although Nasar contends that *Migrations* was not a conscious re-staging of *The Other Story*, its repetitions of the 1989 show raise some important questions: if *The Other Story* is being used as a curatorial template, what happens to the many significant artists who were not included, or who declined to take part? Are curators and scholars looking beyond *The Other Story* in their research of Black and Asian artists? Or does Araeen’s catalogue, and the increasing availability of archival material relating to the show, facilitate lazy curating? My project aimed to go beyond the parameters of *The Other Story*, and investigate those not included in Araeen’s exhibition. Having been prompted to consider the activities of women artists, it was immediately clear that *The Other Story* would be of little use. Despite its undeniable importance in constructing a narrative of Black British art history, one of the criticisms levelled at the exhibition was its noticeable lack of female, and in particular, South Asian female artists. Rita Keegan’s assessment of *The Other Story* rang in my ears: “No Asian women were included”.³²

My literature review and archival research, discussed below, evinced that during the 1980s a generation of young artists of South Asian origin emerged and produced (politically) engaging work. But despite a rich and diverse history of art production in Britain, to date, this story has not been fully recounted. The only book specifically examining the work of British Asian artists that I have identified is *Beyond Frontiers: Contemporary British Art by Artists of South Asian Descent* (2001).³³ This publication was belatedly produced to accompany the South Asian Contemporary Visual Arts Festival, organised by Juginder Lamba, and staged across the West Midlands in 1993. Although a vital resource, examining the work of two generations of artists, with excellent chapters on female artists including Nina Edge and Bhajan Hunjan, *Beyond Frontiers* has had a limited circulation. Other published sources, including *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in Britain* (2005), remain important sources for illustrations and information about the activities of British-born and diaspora artists during the 1980s and early 1990s.³⁴ In 2006, John Holt and Laura Turney published their essay “The Singular Journey: South Asian Visual Art in Britain”.³⁵ Although much of this essay is faithful to the narrative propounded by Araeen, in their discussion of the 1990s and early 2000s, the authors make the important point that “much of the most innovative work in raising the profile of South Asian art has occurred in the North West” and make particular reference to the organisation Shisha, and the Asia Triennial Manchester.³⁶ Eddie Chambers’ book *Black Artists in British Art: A History since the 1950s* (2014) was published as I started my project and provides a forensic chronology of which

artists were active and where they exhibited, but relatively little discussion is given to visual analysis of individual artworks or the reception exhibitions received.³⁷

Methodologies

Having decided to undertake a project specifically investigating South Asian diaspora artists, I visited Lubaina Himid's *Making Histories Visible* archive at the University of Central Lancaster, in Preston. I discussed with her my interest in the position of South Asian artists within the existing narratives of the British Black Arts Movement of the 1980s and consulted her archives. She alerted me to the work of Saleem Arif and Shanti Panchal, with whom she exhibited during the 1980s, but two things struck me during that visit. The first was the reproduction of Nina Edge's mixed media work, *Snakes and Ladders* (1988) on the cover of Maud Saulter's book *Passion: Discourses on Blackwomen's Creativity*; and the second was a catalogue for a small exhibition called *Keepin' it Together* staged at the Pavilion, Leeds, 1992-1993, and curated by Chila Burman.³⁸ Here were two examples of South Asian women specifically engaging with the politics of feminism, and I was enthused that I was on the right track.

My first task was to gauge the extent to which there was significant activity by female South Asian artists within a broader and collaborative Black Arts Movement during the 1980s. I started my project by compiling lists of relevant exhibitions and a bibliography of related catalogues. To this end, the timeline of exhibitions and events, and the bibliography included in *Shades of Black* was invaluable. The online catalogues of the Stuart Hall Library, Iniva, and the Tate Library and Archive were very useful for undertaking keyword searches and generating reading lists of materials that I was able to consult during several visits. My purchase of *Recordings: A Select Bibliography of Contemporary African, Afro-Caribbean and Asian British Art*, published by Iniva, was a game-changer.³⁹ This publication catalogues the African-Caribbean, Asian & African Art in Britain Archive, held at Chelsea College of Arts, and provides bibliographies for individual artists and exhibitions. With this resource, I was able to identify not only artists, and when and where they exhibited, but also reviews and other published materials. These preparatory lists were invaluable while undertaking archival and library visits.

The Stuart Hall Library at Iniva and the archive held at Chelsea were well-known collections, but during internet searches, I identified a number of other archival resources. The digitised African and Asian Visual Artists Archive, and the South Asian Diaspora Literature and Arts Archive, both available through the Visual Arts Data Service (vads.ac.uk), were very useful

for images of digitised ephemera such as exhibition pamphlets and press releases, and in some cases, also provided images of individual artworks. The University of Brunel special collections held significant materials relating to South Asian artists in Britain, although on consultation, it was discovered that much of this material related to male artists active during the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁰

By far the most significant collection was the Panchayat archive, then held at the University of Westminster, and now at Tate. Established in 1988, Panchayat was an arts education agency with the aim of distributing and archiving materials relating to South Asian artists in Britain. The founding members of Panchayat were all artists—Bhajan Hunjan, Shaheen Merali, Symrath Patti, Allan deSouza, and Shanti Thomas—who came together after conversations at the Slade School of Art to establish a collaborative and supportive network for South Asian arts practitioners in Britain. The collective's name, meaning "group of five", took inspiration from the systems of Indian village governance, where the Panchayat acted and still acts as a local council. During its period of existence, Panchayat had educational, curatorial, and archival objectives, and organised exhibitions including *Crossing Black Waters*, touring Leicester, Bradford, and Oldham during 1992. I spent days in the Panchayat archive at the University of Westminster. With my digital camera in hand, I photographed ephemera relating to individual artists and exhibitions, as well as catalogues, magazines, and journals. The archive had its own idiosyncratic filing system, but significantly had files on individual artists, as well as a slide collection of artworks. The problem with working in the Panchayat Archive was knowing when to stop: everything was potentially relevant. Initially, I focused my data-gathering on artists and exhibitions that I had already identified as being of interest; this is not to say that I curtailed my curiosity, and I certainly found material on artists and exhibitions completely new to me. Simultaneously, I worked my way through the British Library's holdings of *Bazaar: South Asian Arts Magazine* and *ArtRage*, both important arts and culture magazines championing Black and Asian artists in the later 1980s and early 1990s. These magazines, along with particular issues of *Spare Rib* (then recently digitised by the British Library), were invaluable for providing the broader context in which exhibitions were taking place. Established in 1983, the Mukti Collective published a magazine in five South Asian languages, and aimed to voice concerns of a broad female community, in a tone of defiant feminism.⁴¹ Although language barriers will be a problem, I look forward to studying copies of *Mukti*, held in the British Library.

Having amassed large amounts of archival material, the next problem was how to decide which exhibitions and artists to examine in detail. In this regard, my task was helped by the fact that there seemed to be only a few exhibitions of exclusively South Asian women artists. In 2016, I presented my

initial findings relating to four exhibitions of South Asian women artists at the conference, *Showing, Telling, Seeing: Exhibiting South Asia in Britain 1900–Now*, organised by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Asia Art Archive.⁴² At that event, I limited my presentation to consider exhibitions staged within a ten-year period. These were:

1. *Four Indian Women Artists*, Indian Artists (UK) Gallery, 1981–1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan and Chila Burman;
2. *Numaish: An Exhibition of 5 Asian Womens Work*, People’s Gallery, 1986, organised by Bhajan Hunjan;
3. *Jagrati: An Exhibition of Work by Asian Women Artists*, Greenwich Citizens Gallery, Woolwich, 1986, organised by Symrath Patti; and
4. *In Focus*, Horizon Gallery, London, 1990, coordinated by Georgina Grange.

The only other group exhibition of exclusively South Asian Women artists that I have been able to identify is *Aurat Shakti*, a community-based photographic show organised by Mumtaz Karimjee and Amina Patel in 1987.⁴³ However, to date, I have found very little archival material regarding this exhibition but will continue investigating it as my project progresses. Indeed, I am hopeful that other exhibitions may come to light, and there is certainly scope to extend my research into the 1990s; in 1991, *A Table of Four*, was shown at the Bluecoat in Liverpool and then toured, while *The Circular Dance* was displayed the Arnolfini in Bristol before also touring. Arguably, both exhibitions were directly informed by the earlier shows.

Having identified these four exhibitions, on closer inspection of the archival materials available, I discovered some common problems. Although not all of these issues related to each exhibition, they included: the absence of an exhibition catalogue, a press release, an exhibition list, or installation images; and the problem of the exhibition venue no longer existing. [Figure 1](#) is a visual representation of how widespread these barriers to research were when investigating my chosen exhibitions. Immediately apparent is the rarity of installation images and the ephemerality of the exhibition sites themselves.

[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 1.

Common Barriers to Research, A table showing the common barriers to research encountered by the author when investigating four key exhibitions of work by South Asian women artists in Britain.

In the absence of what might be regarded as “official” documentation, press materials became particularly important. Each of the four exhibitions received coverage in the art or British Asian press; despite being of varying

length and detail, in the absence of catalogue lists itemising exhibited artworks, reviews naming and illustrating artworks are vital. However, although an image may be reproduced in relation to an exhibition preview or review, this is not a guarantee that that particular artwork was included in the show; as such these materials are used with caution.

Having identified the four exhibitions, I cross-referenced who exhibited in each ([Fig. 2](#)). Mapping the participation of individual artists in these shows was revealing: only Bhajan Hunjan exhibited in all four, and this being the case, I was curious as to why she and her work is so little known within wider narratives of (Black) British art. Simultaneously, this mapping also identified *Jagrati* as a comparatively large-scale exhibition, showing by far the largest number of artists. In simple numerical terms then, *Jagrati* was identified as being worthy of further study.

[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 2.

Cross-Referencing Artists and Exhibitions, A table showing which artists exhibited in each of the author's four exhibitions chosen for study.

Informal meetings and interviews with artists active during the 1980s have been invaluable sources of information and encouragement; in some cases, personal recollections have been supplemented with access to private, and thus unofficial and uncatalogued archives. A colleague introduced me to Chila Burman via email. Following a period of correspondence, I visited her studio in East London, and we have had numerous meetings and discussions since. Bhajan Hunjan, who I contacted via her personal website, has been exceptionally generous and has provided access to her personal archives, actively shaping the narratives I give below. Following email correspondence with Nina Edge, I also visited her studio, during which I was able to consult her collection of books and ephemera. After sharing digital images of materials I'd found in the Panchayat archive relating to her work, Edge then went on to find additional materials relating to, and (excitingly) artworks exhibited in, *Jagrati*. In addition to Burman, Hunjan, and Edge, two of the artists who had exhibited in *Jagrati* were already personally known to me, while I contacted others via their personal or institutional websites, or social media profiles. Some artists have not responded to my enquiries. Some did not want, or found it difficult, to talk about that period of their life; others, while encouraging of the project, had little to add to the narrative I had pieced together from archival material. Of the seventeen artists listed in Figure 2, I have been in contact with ten; contacting the remaining artists is an ongoing project.

Exhibitions of South Asian Women Artists in Britain: Case Studies

What follows is an introduction to each of the four exhibitions, based on my archival research and conversations with artists. These introductions are a first step towards narrating a richer history of British Asian art history than is currently available, and as such, are incomplete. I have found more information on some exhibitions than others, and there remain gaps and uncertainties.

***Four Indian Women Artists*, Indian Artists UK Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan and Chila Burman**

The exhibition *Four Indian Women Artists* at the Indian Artists UK Gallery was organised by Bhajan Hunjan with Chila Burman, and included examples of their paintings and prints alongside wooden sculpture by Naomi Iny and ceramic works by Vinodini Ebdon (Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 6, Fig. 7). The show ran from December 1981 until February 1982, and in a conversation, Hunjan recalled that she was “invited by members of the Indian Artists UK (IAUK) to curate the show”, which was “the first one in their new premises at Audley Street”, in the basement of the Indian high commission.⁴⁴ Hunjan was, in her recollection, “the only woman on the board”, and as such it fell to her to organise a show of women artists. Vinodini Ebdon and Naomi Iny were known to the group, although both lived outside London, and Hunjan knew Burman, as they had both studied at the Slade. Hunjan recalled, “The selection of women artists was not planned ... but grew organically as these were the only women on IAUK’s books”. Significantly, feminist scholars Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock identify *Four Indian Women Artists* as the first exhibition of Black women artists in their book, *Framing Feminisms: Art and the Women’s Movement 1970–85*, although, frustratingly, they refrain from discussing its content.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, Burman agreed that the show in itself was intended as a feminist gesture.⁴⁶

In 1963 a group of Indian painters living and working in the United Kingdom got together and formed the Indian Painters Collective, U.K. Then in 1976, we re-formed the group and functioned under the name of Indian Artists Collective U.K. so that it could embrace all forms of art in fine art community. We had several shows, lectures and seminars and helped organize shows for visiting Indian artists. But, we still had one main objective to attain, namely, a recognition of our contribution to the cultural life of the U.K. and fulfill a dream - a place of our own to function from.

In 1978 we adopted our present name - INDIAN ARTISTS UNITED KINGDOM. We resolved to work towards a creation of a genuine awareness on the part of cognoscenti in the art world in this country and the general populace of the variety, extent and depth of the work of our members practising their professions in this country. We further resolved that our work should be evaluated as the work of any other artist practising his profession in this country, and not as that of 'an Indian Artist' working in a 'foreign country!' We do cherish and wish to promote the 'Indian' content and form of our work - but that the projection of that 'Indianness' is to be in harmony with the artistic traditions and development of art of this country and must be viewed as contributions towards its enrichment.

With the gracious help of Indian High Commission, who has given us the use of the premises at 8 South Audley Street, we have seen the beginning of our dream to eventually own our own premises in this great metropolis. The centre was opened by the Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, M.P. Minister for the Arts, in April 1981.

This exhibition of work by four Indian women artists is the first major exhibition to be held since the inauguration of the centre. The work covering as it does, sculpture, printmaking, painting and ceramics indicates the diversity of the four artists, although all are of Indian origin, symbolises both the Indian tradition of I.A.U.K. and its involvement in, and contribution to, the cultural life of the United Kingdom. It is a remarkable example of the multi-cultural enrichment that is possible in art. Three of the artists completed their postgraduate studies at the Slade School of Art. The work in the exhibition combines a sophistication and professionalism with the inspirational background of their Indian Culture. The result is an exhibition of great diversity, originality and freshness.

Figure 3.

Four Indian Women Artists, Indian Artists (UK) Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan and Chila Burman, Press release/ exhibition statement.

<u>CHILA KUMAN BURMAN</u>		
1	Scissors	1980
2	We don't care about them	1980
3	Homage to the Beatles	1980
4	Erosion	1980
5	"Smoke up"	1979
6	"Bloody Cages"	1980
7	"Love Hearts"	1980
8	"Keep up the Scratchin"	1979
9	"Orgasm"	1980
10	"Ban the bomb	1981
11	United	1980
12	Blow-out	1981
13	"White-on-white"	1981
14	"Di-P-Tych	1981
15	Paper sculpture	1976
16	The Girls Toilet	1980
17	Summer 1981	1981
	Series of "Three Copes" (Work in progress)	
<u>Vinodini Ebdon</u>		
18	Five Peacocks	1970
19	Tower of Hindu Trinity	1978
20	Jantar Mantar	1972
21	The sphere	1973
22	Red iron sphere	1969
23	The squares	1968
24	Squares 2	1971
25	Four ovals	1971
26	The mountain	1972
27	Stirrup wine flask	1981
28	Rima's clock with 3 peacocks	1979
29	Dancing peacock clock	1974
30	Round face clock	1978
31	Orange blossoms (Square dish)	1979
32	Peacock dancing	1976
33	Girl picking champa flowers	1981
34	Kalasa	1965
35	Set of three dishes	1963
36	Coiled designed lamp base	1981
37	Girl in a garden	1977
38	Orange blossoms (Square dish)	1978
39	Set of 3 bowls	1979
40	Two candils	1977
41	Tarboose	1974
42	Peacock round plate	1978
43	Girl with peacocks	1979
44	Ammonite barrel	1975
45	Cake dish with cover	1965
46	The Inca bottle	1971
<u>Bhajan Hunjan</u>		
47	The one	1979
48	All and one	1979
49	Enclosure	1979
50	Male and female	1979
51	Tension	1980
52	The Human race	1980
53	Four dimensions	1980
54	The embrace	1979
55	The birth	1980
56	Opposites	1981
57	Untitled	1980
58	The passionate snake	1980
59	Postures	1980
60	The Human race	1980
61	Emotions	1981
62	Intimacy	1980
63	Symbols	1981
64	Emotions 2	1981
65	Maze of life	1981
66	Four dimenstions 2	1980
67	Relationships	1981
68	Passion	1981
69	Relationships 2	1981
70	Lizzard and the egg	1981
71	Passions	1981
72	Intimacy 2	1981
73	Fertility	1981
<u>Naomi Inv</u>		
74	Tree man	1980
75	Mother and child	1979
76	Untitled	1976
77	The Fool	1981
78	Untitled	1977
79	Angel	1978

Figure 4. Four Indian Women Artists, Indian Artists (UK) Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan and Chila Burman, list of artists and works.

CHILA KUMARI BURMAN Prints

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

- 1957 Born in Liverpool.
1977 Studied Foundation Course at Southport College of Art.
1977-80 Studied for B.A.Honours in Graphics at the Leeds Polytechnic.
1980-82 Currently a postgraduate student in the department of Print-making at the Slade School of Art, University College London.

Graduate work was researching into graffiti and the environment. Recent work will be encompassing and illustrating social, political, women's and race issues, in print and hopefully introducing the use of video.

EXHIBITIONS

- 1980 St. Pauls, Leeds. Group Exhibition of Leeds Polytechnic students.
1981 Stowells Trophy, Royal Academy of Arts, London.
1981 New Contemporaries, ICA Galleries, London.
1981 Third World Artists Exhibition, London School of Economics, London.
1981 Soma Black Book Fair, Brent Town Hall, Middlesex.
1981 Group Show of Indian Artists(UK), London WI.

VINODINI EBDON Ceramics

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

- 1919 Born, in Delhi, India.
Second daughter of Samuel and Grace Jaikumari Joseph of Delhi.
Studied at Queen Marys School, Isabella Thoburn College, and St Stephens College, Delhi.
1945 Married Major A.V.Ebdon, Madras Regiment.
Had two daughters and a son.
1947 War having twice prevented her proposed further education she eventually reached England.
1949-52 Short return to India.
1953 Became a permanent resident of England.
1962 First became interested in ceramics.
Studied under Peter Wright at the Bath Academy of Art, Bath.

Clay work was just another activity when I started, other than looking after my family and teaching a remedial class of mixed age group children.

Figure 5.
Four Indian Women Artists, Indian Artists (UK) Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan and Chila Burman, Chila Burman and Vinodini Ebdon CVs.

Finding I enjoyed it, I continued and found my family in India just thinking it was a great 'hoot' as only 'Kumhars' work with clay. I certainly feel that anything I make should be functional and pleasing to look at. I think that probably a lot of my styling and ideas come from my Indian heritage which is so rich and inspiring and of course from nature. Most of all I work in clay simply because I enjoy it.

Other women in my family are artists too. Usha Rani is well known sculptor and Mohini a painter.

EXHIBITIONS

Exhibits annually at the Bath Academy, Bath.

COLLECTIONS

Work in private collections in India, Scotland, England and USA.

BHAJAN HUNJAN

Paintings Prints and Floorpieces.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

1956 Born in Manyuki, Kenya.
1975-79 Studied for B.A.Honours in Art, at Reading University, Reading.
1979-81 Postgraduate course in the department of Printmaking, at the Slade School of Art, University College London.
1979-81 Part-time student in the department of Ceramics, at the Central School of Art and Design.

My work was concerned with the relationship of circular and flexible linear forms. The linear forms enclosing and expressing real and illusionistic space. Within the last two years, I have concentrated on small works, getting more involved into symbols used right throughout mankind's history, using solid and organic forms. Etching being the major printmaking technique and clay for its most tactile quality have been used for the expression of my ideas.

EXHIBITIONS

1979 Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences, Reading University.
1979 Stowells Trophy, Royal Academy of Arts, London.
1980 Slade Folio Show, Greenwich Theatre, Greenwich.
1980 Rainbow Arts Group, Berthe Hesse Museum, St Pauls, London.
1981 Stowells Trophy, Royal Academy of Arts, London.
1981 Third World Artists Exhibition, London School of Economics.
1981 Indian Artists (U.K.) Group Show, Indian Artists (U.K.) Centre, London.
1981 Soma Black Book Fair, Brent Town Hall, Middlesex.

Figure 6.
Four Indian Women Artists, Indian Artists (UK)
Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan
and Chila Burman, Bhajan Hunjan CV.

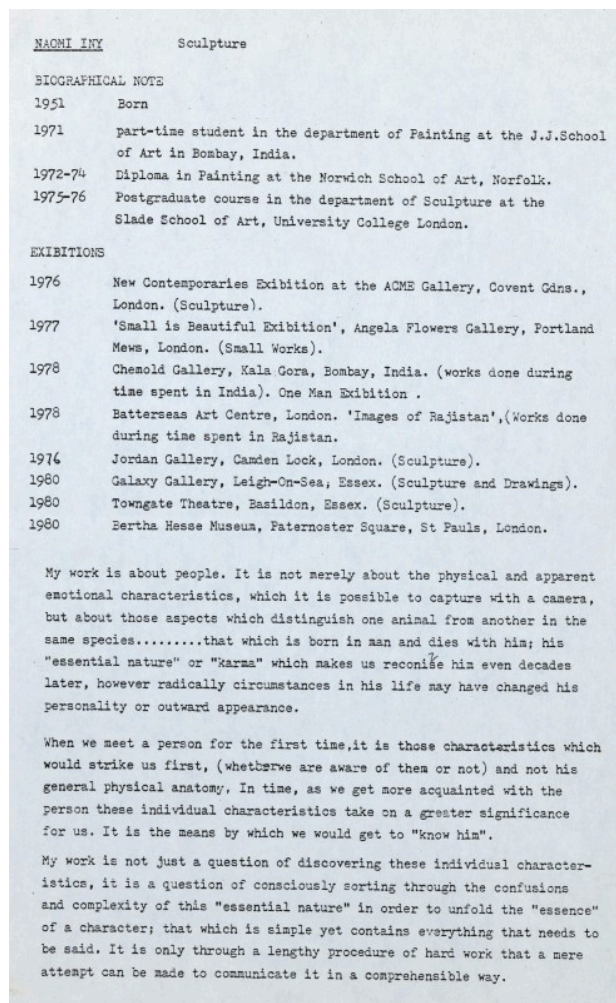


Figure 7.
Four Indian Women Artists, Indian Artists (UK)
Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan
and Chila Burman, Naomi Iny CV.

Of the four artists, Burman can most easily be identified as challenging the oppressive parameters placed on South Asian women and since the earliest stage of her career has been outspoken in her advocacy of feminist politics. The exhibition's list of works notes that she exhibited seventeen works including *Bloody Cages* (1980), *Orgasm* (1980), and *Ban the Bomb* (1981)—the titles of which are suggestive of her thematic concerns. Although partial, a series of photographs taken at the exhibition's opening provides an insight into its content (Fig. 8, Fig. 9, Fig. 10, Fig. 11, and Fig. 12). From these images, it might be surmised that the works on display did not uniformly exude radical feminist action; it would perhaps be hard to make a case that Ebdon's ceramics were expressions of subversive descent in the way that Burman's prints were intended as politicised gestures. However, Iny's *Angel*

(1978), reproduced in *Echo*, the newsletter of Minority Arts Advisory Service, is deserving of further scrutiny and could potentially be positioned within discourses of feminist soft sculpture (Fig. 13).



Figure 8.

Four Indian Women Artists, Indian Artists (UK) Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan and Chila Burman, photograph of Chila Burman with one of her body prints.



Figure 9.

Four Indian Women Artists, Indian Artists (UK) Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan and Chila Burman, photograph of Bhajan Hunjan with one of her paintings at the private view.



Figure 10.

Four Indian Women Artists, Indian Artists (UK) Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan and Chila Burman, photograph of Naomi Iny with one of her sculptures.



Figure 11.

Four Indian Women Artists, Indian Artists (UK) Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan and Chila Burman, photograph of the private viewing with the artists and the Indian high commissioner and his wife.



Figure 12. Four Indian Women Artists, Indian Artists (UK) Gallery, 1981-1982, organised by Bhajan Hunjan and Chila Burman, installation photograph.

VISUAL ARTS

Four Indian Women Artists

ERROLL LLOYD

Four Indian women artists are featured in a special issue of the newsletter, published in April-May 1982. The artists are: Kusum Kulkarni, Sunita Kulkarni, Chila Burman and Bhajan Hunjan. The issue is part of a series of newsletters published by the Minorities Arts Advisory Service (MAAS).

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VISUAL ARTS

FRIDA KAHLO and TINA MODOTI

Whitbread Art Gallery
106, Mark Lane, East London

This is the first exhibition in the series to feature the work of the painter Frida Kahlo and the sculptor Tina Modotti. The exhibition is part of a series of newsletters published by the Minorities Arts Advisory Service (MAAS).

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This is the first exhibition in the series to feature the work of the painter Frida Kahlo and the sculptor Tina Modotti. The exhibition is part of a series of newsletters published by the Minorities Arts Advisory Service (MAAS).

INDIA and BRITAIN

TWO FRIDAYS FOR ILLUMINATED LETTERS

This is the first exhibition in the series to feature the work of the painter Frida Kahlo and the sculptor Tina Modotti. The exhibition is part of a series of newsletters published by the Minorities Arts Advisory Service (MAAS).

Figure 13. Erroll Lloyd, "Four Indian Women Artists", Echo: Living Arts in Britain's Ethnic Communities, No.48, April-May 1982, p.14-15, newsletter published by the Minorities Arts Advisory Service (MAAS).

Although the show was by all accounts modest in size and without any well-known participants, it was reviewed in the magazine *Arts Review* by the writer and curator, Caroline Collier. This was in many respects, remarkable; of the four exhibitions under consideration, at the time of writing, this is the only known review to be published in what may be regarded as a mainstream art publication. Nonetheless, it is plausible that the decision to review the show was made because it coincided with the magazine's editorial focus on the 1982 Festival of India, rather than any explicit desire to support diasporic women artists. For Collier, the show examined "the power of emblems, and raise[d] questions about the nature of symbols".⁴⁷ Interestingly, Burman's prints, which focused on urban Liverpool, depicting barred windows and metal grills, or made with graffiti-like marks, were viewed as symbolic equivalents of Hunjan's prints evoking regenerative seed pods and highly textured sawdust paintings presented in a colour palette of reds and umbers, reminiscent of scorched earth.



Figure 14. "Indian Artists U.K. Present Four Indian Women Artists Show", *New Life*, 29 January 1982, 10-11.

In a review of the show in the British-Asian newspaper, *New Life*, an unnamed journalist explained that the show aimed to demonstrate how this generation of artists, trained in British art schools, were combining that training with “the richly imaginative and inspiring seedbed of their Indian origins” (Fig. 14).⁴⁸ This in itself was a new way of thinking about and representing second generation migrants: as part of, and making significant contributions to, British cultural life. However, in their description of the show, the journalist also reverted to female stereotypes, writing:

One senses as soon as one enters the exhibition that one is in a—dare one say it without being labelled sexist?—women’s world. ... Thick earthy coloured paint swims with primaevaeal commencement, worms or sperms struggle into age-old beginnings ... Womanhood in dark shiny wood or pallid puffy stuffed material, eyes the world from under long swathes of very real and very femaley dead hair.⁴⁹

This elision of femininity with generative, primal forms could be regarded as reductive, but conversely these concerns with natural forms and life forces may equally indicate how this generation of artists were engaged with feminist concerns, as outlined in Lucy Lippard’s *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*.⁵⁰ Certainly, Collier’s review seemed to evoke the aesthetic intersection of feminist concerns and natural forces. Further research concentrating on specific works by Ebdon and Iny, and their artistic practices, is required to fully gauge the potency of such an intersectional reading. Nonetheless, I would suggest that in asserting their identities as artists, and in the acts of making, and of pursuing artistic careers, *Four Indian Women Artists* should be regarded as a manifestation of feminist agency and a challenge to those who thought that Asian women could not, or should not, be artists.

Numaish: An Exhibition of 5 Asian Womens Work, People’s Gallery, 1986, organised by Bhajan Hunjan

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Figure 15.

Numaish: An Exhibition of 5 Asian Womens Work, People’s Gallery, 1986, organised by Bhajan Hunjan, exhibition catalogue.

Numaish: An Exhibition of 5 Asian Womens Work at the People’s Gallery, 1986 was organised by Bhajan Hunjan, and sought to highlight the creative diversity of Asian women artists. Hunjan recalled that the show was staged at short notice in response to the availability of funding from the Greater

London Council (GLC), which also enabled the production of an exhibition catalogue (Fig. 15).⁵¹ The exhibition showcased work made in sculpture, stained glass, print, ceramics, and painting, produced by Dushka Ahmed, Vinodini Ebdon, Nina Edge, Bhajan Hunjan, and Naomi Iny. Hunjan recalled that, by 1986, she had met a widening circle of artists and was subsequently able to include a larger number of artists, in comparison to the earlier *Four Indian Women Artists*. Little is known of what was included in the show and the catalogue does not contain an exhibition list; however, it is known that the show did not have a specific thematic agenda, but rather sought to showcase the work of the participating artists. Some of the artworks displayed were illustrated in a review published by *Asian Times*, and further research into the individual artists may help identify which other artworks were exhibited and provide a greater sense of the variety of artistic practices that it presented (Fig. 16, Fig. 17, Fig. 18, Fig. 19, Fig. 20, and Fig. 21). It seems, however, that the exhibition was staged opportunistically, in response to available funding rather than developing from considered curatorial interests. To what extent then, can this show be regarded as exemplary of the ways in which minority artists were corralled and contained by quangos and funding bodies during the 1980s?⁵² Might this be an instance of an art exhibition being used as tick-box exercise, paying lip-service to equal opportunities through ad hoc funding?

14 Asian Times Friday 11th April 1986

Arts

Sauntering through the Gallery of Creativity

by Naqi Ali

The Numaish (exhibition) of the works of five Asian women artists organised under 'Changai' - the GLC's own song to celebrate Asian culture - at People's Gallery in North London, reveals a deep sense of creativity and artistic aspiration. It represents a panorama of talents in ceramics, prints, sculpture, paintings and stained glass. Although all the artists are imbued with personal idiosyncrasies, there seems to be an unobscured stream of creativity that combines them with the Eastern traditions and values.

Vindoni Ebdon who works in ceramics, is more mature among them. Born in 1919 she came to Britain in 1947 and studied ceramics at Bath Academy of Arts. Her work is functional in approach and understating of the medium. The serene and evocative expressions of the figures elicit an intense response from the audience.

Bhajan Hunjan, who has also dropped the brush and is the author of a ceramic book, says Ebdon, that in the past she has produced many individual and group shows in her studio. "My work at present is about my experiences, women, and in particular about Asian women", says Hunjan. And indeed it is. The five paintings on display reflect the serene, delicate and images of Asian women from a compassionate, sincere and imaginative point of view. The simple delineation of the girls in international figures - Woman and Snake (etching), Wo-

man Inside Out (acrylic standing - of the woman (etching) - with lines and circular forms in a symbolic way are painted with a restricted use of colour. Lastly Bhajan's work has been more figurative. Her other two paintings - 'Choice' (acrylic) and 'Dilemma' (etching) - both explore the dilemma that Asian women face: the need to stand apart from the rest of the world, and the only choice that often lies between the devil and the deep blue sea".

Dushika Ahmed's five paintings on display - a light pastel and two paintings - deal with a time bomb, perhaps an explosive or up. And that is the title of her international figures - Woman and Snake (etching), Wo-

man Inside Out (acrylic standing - of the woman (etching) - with lines and circular forms in a symbolic way are painted with a restricted use of colour. Lastly Bhajan's work has been more figurative. Her other two paintings - 'Choice' (acrylic) and 'Dilemma' (etching) - both explore the dilemma that Asian women face: the need to stand apart from the rest of the world, and the only choice that often lies between the devil and the deep blue sea".

Dushika Ahmed's five paintings on display - a light pastel and two paintings - deal with a time bomb, perhaps an explosive or up. And that is the title of her international figures - Woman and Snake (etching), Wo-














Choice - acrylic on board by Bhajan Hunjan

Vindoni Ebdon

Vindoni Ebdon's "Deep" ceramic

Cont. on pg. 21

Figure 16. Numaish: An Exhibition of 5 Asian Womens Work, People's Gallery, 1986, organised by Bhajan Hunjan, full page review; Naqi Ali, "Sauntering through the Gallery of Creativity", *Asian Times*, Friday 11 April 1986, 14 and 21.



Figure 17.
Bhajan Hunjan, *The Choice*, 1985, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 76 x 51 cm.



Figure 18.
Bhajan Hunjan, *Within*, 1986, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 76 x 51 cm.



Figure 19.

Numaish: An Exhibition of 5 Asian Womens Work, People's Gallery, 1986, organised by Bhajan Hunjan, photograph of Mother and Child, wood sculpture by Naomi Iny.



Figure 20.

Numaish: An Exhibition of 5 Asian Womens Work, People's Gallery, 1986, organised by Bhajan Hunjan, photograph of Grey Vexed Mermaid, ceramic sculpture by Nina Edge.



Figure 21.

Numaish: An Exhibition of 5 Asian Womens Work, People's Gallery, 1986, organised by Bhajan Hunjan, photograph of sculpture by Naomi Iny.

Jagrati—An Exhibition of Work by Asian Women Artists, Greenwich Citizens Gallery, Woolwich, 1986, organised by Symrath Patti

Jagrati—An Exhibition of Work by Asian Women Artists was held at the Greenwich Citizens Gallery, Woolwich, in 1986, and included the work of Dushka Ahmed, Zarina Bhimji, Sutapa Biswas, Chila Kumari Burman, Nina Edge, Bhajan Hunjan, Naomi Iny, Mumtaz Karimjee, Shamina Khanour, Symrath Patti, Sukhwinder Saund, Ranjan Shadra, and Shanti Thomas. Organised by the artist Symrath Patti, who had recently started work at the newly opened gallery, the exhibition aimed to connect “the work of these artists to the experience of the Asian community; enabling the artist to develop a dialogue within the community to raise issues of artistic and

political relevance".⁵³ *Jagrati* had originally been conceived as a thematic show concentrating on the issue of domestic violence, but during the planning stages, it expanded its remit to a broader consideration of the experiences of Asian women. Nonetheless "the experience of fragmentation and isolation" was central to the show and many of the artworks presented solitary female figures.⁵⁴

Although a formal catalogue was not produced, Fay Rodrigues was commissioned to write an extended essay introducing the show, which was accompanied by a list of exhibited works (Fig. 22).⁵⁵ Introductory texts in four different Asian languages were also available at the gallery during the exhibition.⁵⁶ In her essay, Rodrigues referenced the murders of Balwant Kaur and Gurdip Kaur as points of departure for the exhibition. Balwant Kaur was murdered by her husband at the Brent Asian Women's Refuge in 1985; and Gurdip Kaur (no relation) was murdered in Reading by her husband and brother-in-law in 1986. Southall Black Sisters organised campaigns "to ensure the proper prosecution" of those who had perpetrated these murders.⁵⁷ By overtly identifying these tragedies, the exhibition may be regarded as being in step with feminist activism at the time; Shaila Shah noted in 1988 that: "The Asian women's movement in Britain has, for some years now, targeted domestic violence as a prime focus of their fightback for liberation".⁵⁸ While domestic abuse was not exclusively experienced by Asian women, a host of culturally specific factors meant that it was a problem that particularly needed to be addressed: language barriers, institutional racism, and the perceived role of traditional culture and religion within the home, all impacted on how Asian women were mistreated by organisations including the police and social services.

[View this illustration online](#)

Figure 22.

Jagrati—An Exhibition of Work by Asian Women Artists, Greenwich Citizens Gallery, Woolwich, 1986, organised by Symrath Patti, exhibition pamphlet.

The works by Dushka Ahmed and Bhajan Hunjan (who worked at Sahara, the Asian Women's Refuge in Reading during this period) should be properly regarded as artistic interventions aimed at focusing attention on abuse. Reproduced in *ArtRage*, the mural by Dushka Ahmed testifies to the murder of Asian women within the home (Fig. 23).⁵⁹ Enlarged and overlapping black and white newsprint offers a disturbing visual cacophony that conveys "the grim reality of the physical and mental abuse which women suffer".⁶⁰ Headlines shout "Family Plotted Murder", while in the centre, the eye of a defiant woman stares out at us. Like many of Bhajan Hunjan's portrait paintings, *Tribute to Late Balwant Kaur and Gurdip Kaur—Victims of Domestic*

Violence (1986) is divided into two parts (Fig. 24). On the left is a framed image of a woman, dressed in a shalwar kameez, looking out directly at the viewer. She is upright, dignified, and seemingly self-assured. Adjacent to her is an orb of glowing orange, emanating rays of red-orange light. While Ahmed’s mural conveys fury, in Hunjan’s contemplative work, the figurative and symbolic combine. Although this orb could pessimistically be regarded as symbolic of the blood shed by victims of domestic abuse, I prefer to see it as a torch: the women burn brightly in our memory.



Figure 23.
 “Jagrati—An Exhibition by 13 Asian Women Artists”, *Artrage*, no. 15
 (Winter 1986): 24-25.



Figure 24.

Bhajan Hunjan, *Tribute to Late Balwant Kaur and Gurdip Kaur—Victims of Domestic Violence*, August 1986, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 76 x 51 cm.

However, *Jagrati*, which means “awakening” in Hindi, also sought to move beyond the narrative of honour killings and victimhood commonly associated with the representation of South Asian women. Other forms of feminist resistance were explored, and the presentation of powerful and independently minded Asian women as a dominant theme of the show was perhaps an inevitable response to its initial conception. For example, the locations within which South Asian women could assert their visibility and agency were addressed in *City Tempo* (1985) by Shanti Thomas, in which a woman is shown apparently retreating from the looming city skyline (Fig. 25). St Paul’s Cathedral, the Bank of England, and St Bride’s Church jostle for space among the newer towers of London’s financial centre. This is an interesting painting, for despite the dark, oppressive sky and the precariousness of the urban infrastructure, the woman herself seems self-assured and part of her environment: her red briefcase and newspaper could indicate that she works in the City, and her backwards glance connects her with the buildings in the distance. And at the same time, however, her hasty retreat suggests that she has not given herself to this particular urban environment wholeheartedly.



Figure 25.

Shanti Thomas, *City Tempo*, 1984 (featured in the Commonwealth Institute, Exhibition Poster, 1987), painting, 101.6 x 76.2 cm.

Nina Edge was also keen to undercut expectations of Asian womanhood and utilised humour as a mode of subversion. Edge had recently graduated from college in Cardiff when she participated in *Jagrati*. Slightly younger than the other artists, her approach to image making “did not adhere automatically to the radicalisms of the previous generation”, and initially her contact with other Black artists was stimulated by her concern with making rather than politics.⁶¹ Nonetheless, her work has been noted for its ability to combine the wry, humorous and mischievous, with a knowing and cutting critique; what John Brady has described as “combining the qualities of a smile and a stare”.⁶²

Edge contributed two sets of work to *Jagrati*. The first was a series of four figurative pen and ink drawings, *Searching for Flowers in the Tandoori Garden*; *Chips on her Shoulders—Her Arms Fell Off*; *Trying not to Offend My Parents*; and *Paki Goes Home on a Piece of Spit* (Fig. 26, Fig. 27, Fig. 28, and Fig. 29). These were somewhat tongue-in-cheek, addressing the realities of growing up in Britain, and addressing essentialising racial stereotypes through humour. For Fay Rodrigues, these works, “make witty tragi-comic comments on the situation of Asian women. There is a light, ironic touch bordering on self-parody, which belies the poignancy of her work”.⁶³ Edge’s other contributions to the show was a series of eight abstract monoprints: *The Jewel* (Fig. 30); *The Crown* (Fig. 31); *Fingerplate* (Fig. 32); *We Three*

Things of Orient Art (Fig. 33); *Diamond Coloured* (Fig. 34); *Diamond Skin Rug* (Fig. 35); *Gem* (Fig. 36); and *Ink is a Girl's Best Friend* (Fig. 37). Each utilised a diamond-shape motif and through their titles referred to the ways in which British imperialists 'orientalised' India. The fact that these non-figurative works were included in *Jagrati* indicates that both the artist and organisers were conscious that activism and critique could take a variety of forms. On one level, Edge used the diamond to reference the beauty of Indian decorative patternwork, all the while undercutting visual pleasure through her titles.

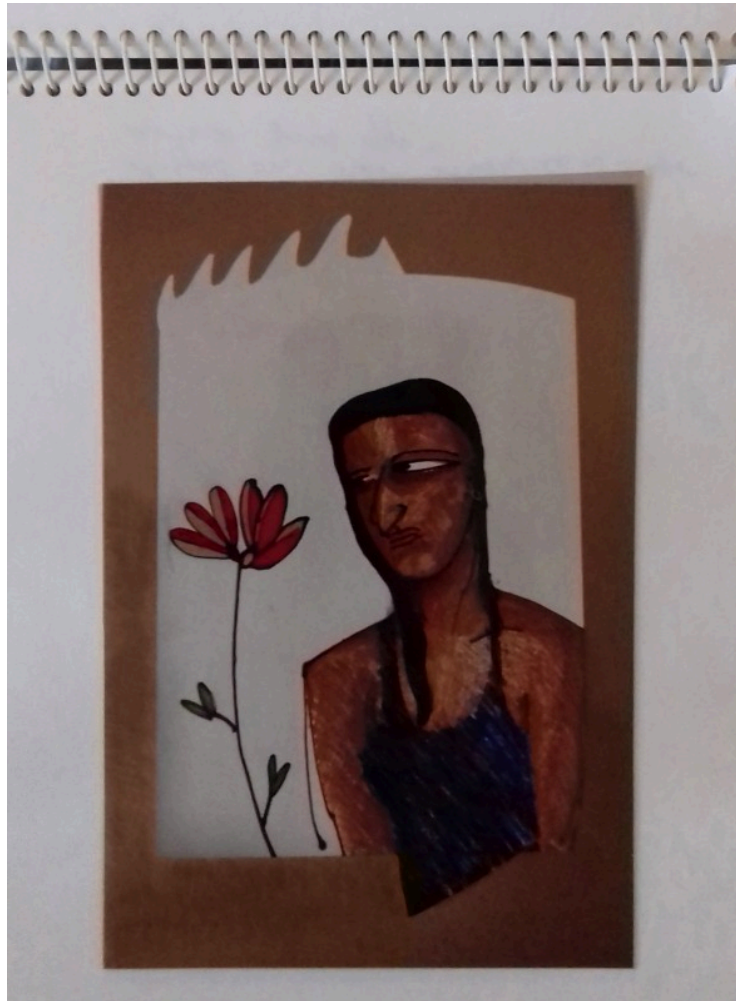


Figure 26.

Nina Edge, *Searching for Flowers in the Tandoori Garden*, felt pen and paper collage.



Figure 27.
Nina Edge, Chips on her shoulders—her arms fell off,
felt pen and paper collage.



Figure 28.

Nina Edge, Trying not to offend my parents, felt pen and paper collage.



Figure 29.

Nina Edge, Paki Goes home on a piece of spit, felt pen and paper collage.



Figure 30.

Nina Edge, *The Jewel*, 1984, monoprint, 53 x 40.8 cm.



Figure 31.
Nina Edge, *The Crown*, 1984, monoprint, 53 x 40.8 cm.



Figure 32.
Nina Edge, Fingerplate, 1984, monoprint, 53 x 40.8 cm.



Figure 33.
Nina Edge, We three things from orient are, 1984, monoprint,
53 x 40.8 cm.



Figure 34.
Nina Edge, *Diamond Coloured*, 1984, monoprint, 53 x 40.8 cm.



Figure 35.
Nina Edge, Diamond Skin Rug, 1984, monoprint, 53 x 40.8 cm.



Figure 36.
Nina Edge, Gem, 1984, monoprint, 53 x 40.8 cm.



Figure 37.

Nina Edge, *Ink is a Girl's Best Friend*, 1984, monoprint, 53 x 40.8 cm.



Figure 38.

Symrath Patti, *Sketches for a Memorial*, 1986, collage with acrylics pastels and pencil, 42 x 59.4 cm.

In July 2019, I made contact with the exhibition's organiser, Symrath Patti. Discussing her own contributions to the exhibition, it became clear how published resources are only useful up to a point. Her gouache and paper collage, *Sketches for a Memorial—Yaadgari* (1986) addressed themes of arranged marriages, sexual violence, and desire (Fig. 38). The blue head of Krishna is overlain with images of brides in their wedding gowns, surrounded by swirling, saturated colour. Patti asserted that colour was used emotively in her work and informed responses to it.⁶⁴ However, having only seen *Sketches for a Memorial—Yaadgari* in black and white reproduction in *ArtRage*, an appreciation of the importance of colour to interpretation had been impossible. It was only when Patti sent me a colour reproduction of the collage that this facet of the work became clear; it also became evident that the image in *ArtRage* had been incorrectly reproduced in verso. This example reiterated to me the importance of having access to correctly orientated, colour images in order to undertake nuanced critical readings of artworks.

There is still much work to be undertaken on *Jagrati*. Numerous questions remain, including: what happened to Dushka Ahmed's mural, and what more is known about the Greenwich Asian Womens' Art Group that commissioned it? What was the audience response to the show, and did it receive any reviews in the art press? Did the seminars, planned to accompany the exhibition, take place? Who spoke at them and what was discussed? Symrath Patti has alerted me to the existence of an archive relating to *Jagrati* held at the Women's Art Library, Goldsmiths, University of London. Materials held in the archive include the minutes of organising meetings, photographs of

individual artworks, and a visitors' comments book. All of this material, in addition to Patti's own recollections of the exhibition will unquestionably shed light on the aims and aspirations of the exhibition, and provide additional information regarding its content and reception. I look forward to consulting this material in due course, in the knowledge that in doing so, more questions will arise.

***In Focus*, Horizon Gallery, London, 1990, coordinated by Georgina Grange**

During its years of operation between 1987 and 1991, the Horizon Gallery worked to promote the work of South Asian artists. In 1990, it made what Eddie Chambers has described as "by far [its] most important curatorial intervention", by staging a series of four consecutive exhibitions under the collective title *In Focus* (Fig. 39 and Fig. 40).⁶⁵ These exhibitions were a direct response to Rasheed Araeen's *The Other Story*, and significantly, eight of the sixteen exhibiting artists—exactly half—were female. The press release for the *In Focus* exhibitions noted that an "important group" of Asian women artists "is not represented in the Hayward show", and went on to explain that the *In Focus* shows "are designed to give a representative view of the work of Asian artists living in Britain".⁶⁶ Reiterating the *In Focus* press release in her review of the *In Focus* exhibitions, Veena Stephenson, writing in *Bazaar*, explained that "particular emphasis was given to women artists who comprise exactly half the exhibitors". For Stephenson, "the significance of this arrangement ... was to highlight the much talked about omission of South Asian women artists in the Hayward show. In fact this was one of the main motivations for mounting this series of exhibitions".⁶⁷ As Jean Fisher recounted, "Among the more analytic exhibition reviews, the poor representation of women artists drew the most criticism", and discovering that a corrective to *The Other Story* had taken place while that exhibition was on display at the Hayward Gallery was mind-blowing!⁶⁸

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70 MARCHMONT STREET, LONDON WC1N 1AB TEL: 01-837 1431

IN FOCUS

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24th January 1990 – 9th February 1990
Bhajan Hunjan, Chila Kumari Burman, Shanti Thomas, Jagjit Chuhan

14th February 1990 – 2nd March 1990
Mumtaz Karimjee, Zarina Bhimji, Nudrat Afza, Pradipta Das

7th March 1990 – 23rd March 1990
Mali, Shafique Uddeen, Sohail, Shareena Hill

28th March 1990 – 13th April 1990
Suresh Vedak, Amal Ghosh, Prafulla Mohanti, Ibrahim Wagh

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Figure 39.
In Focus, Horizon Gallery, London, 1990, coordinated by Georgina Grange, poster.

brings a humanistic approach which is clear wide-ranging. Also, **AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY ANGELA DAVIS** now newly introduced and published in Britain after being out of print for ten years. (Women's Press, P/B £6.95)

LINESX CHANT: Fyna & Nefertiti (Karia Press, P/B £4.25)
Linesx Chant are Fyna Dowe & Nefertiti Gayle and this is their collection of performance poems. Two women who are committed to a positive image of women which certainly reflects in this good selection of some forty five poems. Foreword by Madax Coaton who describes them 'as creative messengers. Nefertiti and Fyna combine poetry and music which carry both bite and humour'.

HERE TO STAY— FOUNDRY STORIES BY AFRICAN-CARIBBEAN WOMEN edited by Phyllis Thompson
Lion Press, Oxford, Tel: 0865 747550, P/B £3.99

A collection of stories by Phyllis Thompson, Ione Brown, Evelyn Ellis and Lureen Lyseight. All Afro-Caribbean women who have had varying involvement with the Black churches. We are given aspects of standing strong between two cultures, the prospect of the Black church into the next decade, parents and children and the pain of racial discrimination and the route to racial recognition.

BANNED LINES by the Bengali Women's Support Group & Yorkshire Art Circus (Orders from Yorkshire Art Circus, Tel: 0977 550401, P/B £4.95)

A bi-lingual anthology in Bengali and English with translations and illustrations by the Bengali Women's Group of South Yorkshire. A bitter-sweet set of experiences by thirty-two women who write of their sense of home and identity, friendships, family, work, work and education. In the form of stories, poems and dialogue they tell us of racism and sexism but above all their aspirations for the future, strong and positive.

ECSTATIC ANTIBODIES—RESISTING THE AIDS MYTHOLOGY Edited by Tessa Buffin & Sunil Gupta (Rivers Oram Press, P/B £9.95)

A powerful exploration in image, photos and text of the impact of the AIDS crisis. This book shows how AIDS has caused devastation in personal lives and also resulted in a creative life. Many of the images provide to counter-act the common assumptions of AIDS and the myths surrounding it and its victims. Contributors include: Allan de Souza, Isaac Julian, Pratibha Parmar and photographs by Sunil Gupta, and Rotimi Fani-Kayode.

A TURN IN THE SOUTH by V S Naipaul

(Penguin Books, P/B £5.99)
A panoramic and yet also a personal view of the peoples of South America by this distinguished writer. Words of ordinary men and women—preachers, farmers, businessmen, musicians and housewives, put into a celebration of colour and lifestyles, noted by Penguin 'not a book of race but an explanation of the present and past as it can be seen today in S. America.'

*****MAGAZINES*****

A new Magazine entitled **PUCKO** will be published by Pucko Peoples Press and writers Agency. A quarterly dedicated to literature, exploring all aspects of Oral and literary forms. The first volume is a major critical appraisal of Dub Poetry. **DUBWISE SMOOTZ** (Other-wise somebody) Avail in April £1.95. Tel: 986 7028 for more details.

*****POETRY READINGS*****

Apples and Snakes March programme features:
Fri 2 - **Mu'rab, Merle Collins, Marcia Prescott & Patience Agard**.
Fri 9 - **Jamie Perry, Storm Webber, Maggie Nicols & Pinise Saul & Janette Mason, & Viv Acton**.
Fri 16 - **The Otheer Ladies, Mark Steel, Logan Murray, Porky the Poet.**

Fri 23 - **John Hegley, Curtis Ingham, Henry Normal & Ann Zietz**
Fri 30 - **Carol Grimes with Angela Vellawjjer, Janette Mason & Shelly Morris, Maud Sulter, Sapphire & Linda King**.
All shows at Covent Garden Community Centre, 46 Earlham Street, WC2. Open 8pm. Tickets: £3.50/£2.00 concs. Tel: 890 5346 For more details.

Pitika Nzali will be reading his poetry and other works. Best known for his work with **Jenako Arts** in N London. A frequent and brilliant performer of his own work with **Apples and Snakes**. Also Bruce Barnes and music from **Jim Deorak**. On 6 Mar at the Blue Nose Cafe, 78 Mountgrove Road, Highbury, NS. Tel: 354 3655. At 7.45pm. Check for prices.

*****SEMINARS & CULTURAL EVENTS*****

OUT OF TOWN - Femi Oyedode & John Haynes both from Nigeria and currently living in Britain. Femi Oyedode's collection of poems, based to your softness & other Dreams. Inscr

weaves memories of his Yoruba childhood with images of contemporary life here. Both Oyedode and Haynes will talk on the expatriate experience on Tues 13 Mar. At 5.30pm. £2/1 concs.

Professor Peter Guikind of Harwick University, will give a lecture on **African Workers: a social history approach**. On 6 Mar at 4.15pm **Frank Birkelsting**, of York University, Canada, will give a lecture on **Beatie Head and Feminism**. On 20 Mar at 4.15pm. All at the Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, 32 Pritchatts Rd, Edgbaston. Tel: (021) 414 5126.

*****BOOK EXHIBITION*****

An exhibition with a difference - **International Writers** includes 160 titles based on the Book Trust's on-going series of guides to writings from around the world, beginning with writers from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. At the Barbican Library from 29 Mar - 28 April. Open Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30pm, Tues 9.30-7.30 pm, Sat 9.30-12.30. Tel: Book Trust Press info: 870 8235.

VISUAL ARTS

IN FOCUS - 4 EXHIBITIONS

The Horizon Gallery brings us an important series of exhibitions by various Asian artists many of whom were not featured in *The Other Story* at the Hayward Gallery. This month sees the opening of the last three which feature the work of: **Sanji Mar - Mumukh Karjode, Zarinsha Bhatiji, Nudrat Afza & Pradypta Das**. From 7 - 23 Mar - **Mali, Sharique Udddeen, Sahali & Shareena Hilli**. And finally from 28 Mar - 13 April - **Sarosh Veda, Amal Ghosh, Pratibha Mohanti, & Ibrahim Magh**. The work of Mumukh Karjode is particularly stunning. Her series of photographic essays on China are breathtaking. Her landscapes are images of mist, colour and purely

artistic. All photos are accompanied with text from poems by Gu Cheng, Su Ting & Bei Dao. The work of all artists above have been designed to give a representative view of work by Asian artists living in Britain, in fact providing us with 'another story' left out of *The Other Story*. Three distinct groups of Asian artists emerge here, the older generation who came here in 1950 to 1970, and also Asians compelled to leave Africa and those born here since the 1960's. The Horizon Gallery and those artists included above have done well to take on the issues and criticisms raised at the talks at the Hayward since Dec 89. At the Horizon Gallery, 70 Marchmont St, WC1.

Figure 40.

Unknown author, "In Focus—4 Exhibitions", Black Arts in London, no. 122, 1-31 March 1990, 9.

The first of the four *In Focus* exhibitions was all female, and included work by Bhajan Hunjan, Chila Kumari Burman, Shanti Thomas, and Jagjit Chuhan. Stephenson records that most of the works were figurative, and subjects included the self-portrait, the family, and notions of home. In her review, Prasanna Probyn highlighted Shanti Thomas's painting *Sleeping Woman* (1985) as an example of contemporary British Asian painting that conveys the duality of the beauty and hardship experienced by women (Fig. 41).⁶⁹ Stephenson recorded that Chila Kumari Burman exhibited *Ma Ji In Basti Sheik—Punjab* (date unknown) (Fig. 42), while Jagjit Chuhan recalled that she exhibited *Yakshi* (1987) (Fig. 43), and Bhajan Hunjan remembers being excited about exhibiting her new painting, *Peacock Feather* (1990) (Fig. 44).⁷⁰



Figure 41.
Shanti Thomas, *Sleeping Woman*, 1985, painting, 121.9 x 152.4 cm.



Figure 42.

Chila Kumari Burman, Ma Ji In Basti Sheik—Punjab, 1989, pastel drawing, 29.7 x 42 cm.

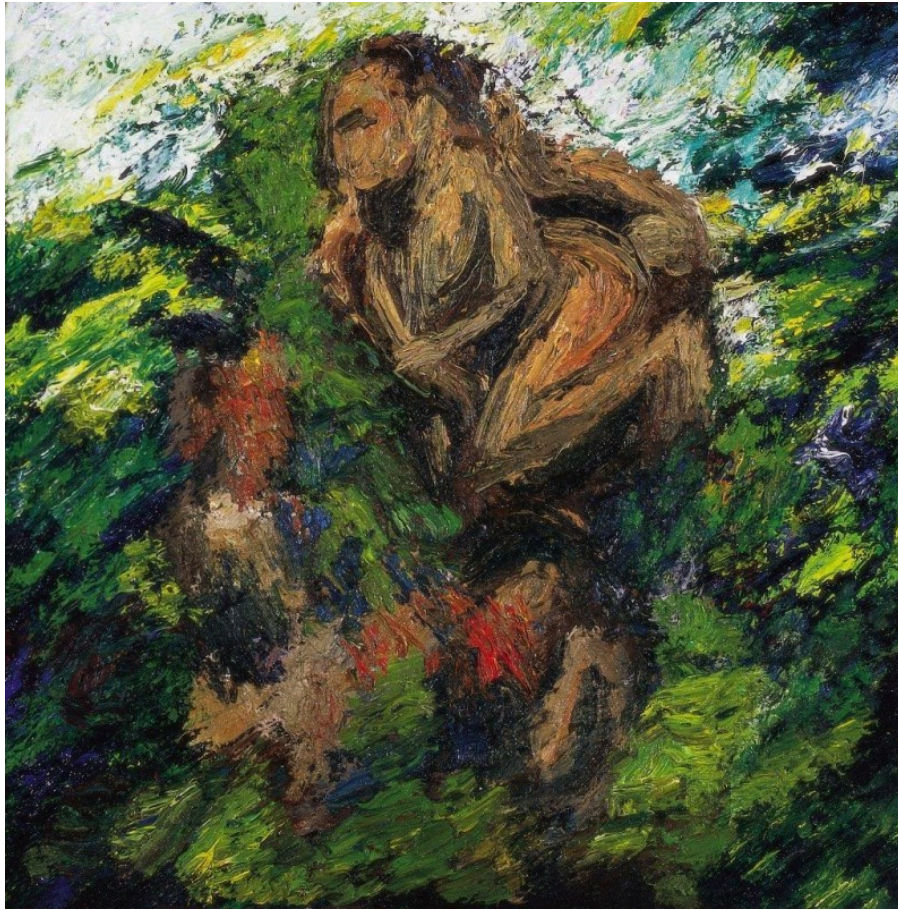


Figure 43.

Jagjit Chuhan, Yakshi, 1987, oil on board, 48 x 48 cm.



Figure 44.

Bhajan Hunjan, *Peacock Feather*, 1990, acrylic on canvas, 91 x 122 cm.

The second show included photographic work by Mumtaz Karimjee, Zarina Bhimji, and Nudrat Afza; Pradipta Das was the only male artist in this display. Each artist addressed themes of memory, history, and sexuality, and proposed the possibility of articulating dissent through the medium of photography. Nudrat Afza and Pradipta Das presented documentary images taken in Europe and South Asia respectively, while Zarina Bhimji presented an installation, combining images with “scattered text, dried flowers and crumpled muslin on the floor”.⁷¹ Mumtaz Karimjee presented work from her series *Notes from the City of the Sun*, in which photographs depicting Chinese landscapes were accompanied by poems by Gu Chen, Shu Ting, and Bei Dao, which the artist herself had translated.⁷² These landscapes were described as “images of mist, colour, and purely artistic”, while the poems were written by scholars closely associated with the pro-democratic movement, and were understood by the artist, and Chinese audiences, as acts of contestation.⁷³ Although more research on her work needs to be undertaken, it is clear that Karimjee’s body of work should be regarded as an investigation of how dissent can be articulated through aesthetic means.

The third *In Focus* exhibition included works by male artists Yashwant Mali, Shafique Uddeen, and Sohail, and the female artist, Shareena Hill. This exhibition included paintings, drawings, photography, and installation, and Hill presented recent paintings depicting magnified domestic utensils,

including *Juicer* (1990) (Fig. 45).⁷⁴ The fourth and final exhibition included recent works by an older generation of male artists, Suresh Vadak, Amal Ghosh, Prafulla Mohanti, and Ibrahim Wagh.

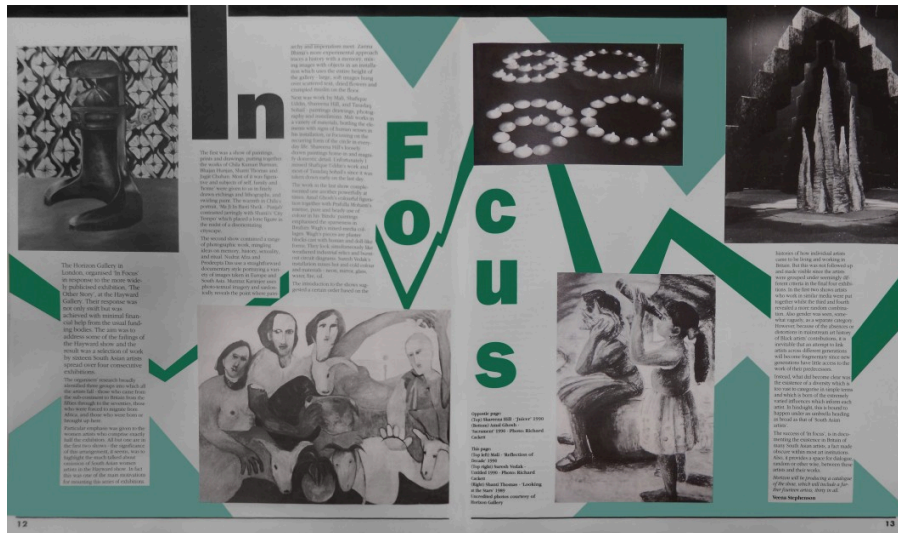


Figure 45.

Veena Stephenson, "In Focus" overview of exhibitions organised by the Horizon Gallery, London, 1990, as supplements to, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain*, London exhibition, The South Bank Centre, 1989, Bazaar 12: 12-13.

Although archival material is scarce and does not give a complete picture of the exhibitions, the critical reception of the Horizon shows seems to have been generally positive. Probyn's review for *Spare Rib* focused on the first two exhibitions and their predominantly female participants (Fig. 46). However, while ostensibly a review article, Probyn says little about the exhibitions, highlighting instead the barriers faced by women artists, suggesting that, "The very need to hold an exhibition of Asian women artists in a more modest setting than the Hayward Gallery ... defines the meaning of Black women's struggle in the world of art".⁷⁵ In the short text, she relayed her conversations with Chila Burman and Shanti Thomas, and reflected on the status of Asian women. Burman is cited as being frustrated by the fact that male artists fail to recognise the struggles Asian women experience in getting to art college, in the face of disapproving or uncomprehending parents, while Thomas is presented as being concerned with finding a balance between both the positive and negative life experiences of women.

Final Thoughts

In creating new images of South Asian women, artists including Dushka Ahmed, Chila Burman, Nina Edge, Bhajan Hunjan, and Shanti Thomas challenged audiences to reconsider long-held stereotypes regarding South Asian femininity, and their work should, I argue, be regarded as acts of reclamation, empowerment, and self-definition. For these artists, art--the mediums of painting, sculpture, and printmaking--offered a space for reflection and reconstruction; and for social commentary and critique from within a British social, political, and aesthetic context. Considered collectively, the exhibition case studies demonstrate that while ghettoised in many respects, during the 1980s and into the 1990s, women artists of South Asian origin worked and exhibited collaboratively, curating their own shows in environments that supported their aspirations as artists, as women, and sensitive to the specificities of their identities as South Asian. Comparing *Four Indian Women Artists* (1981) and *Jagrati* (1986), separated by five years, it is evident that there was a shift--not only in how these artists represented themselves as artists, but also in how exhibitions were conceived. By the mid-1980s, it was not enough to simply exhibit and exhibitions such as *Jagrati* were expressions of social activism. By 1990, the *In Focus* exhibitions at the Horizon Gallery

of day at the Hayward. Black male artists are probably threatened by feminist art, said the women artists.

Chila believes that many women artists are geniuses who are kept down by male forces. 'Men don't see or understand the struggles that Asian women have to go through to get even their parents to understand', she says, not demoralised, but as someone who has crossed that hurdle.

She has exhibited many times but sees the exhibitions as temporary exposures which cannot sustain an artist for long. 'When its all over, we are all on our own.'

Shanti, on the other hand, had no problems explaining her profession to her parents, her father is a painter. She has outside pressures to contend with, 'I am fed up of being called an ethnic painter. I am a painter, but you cannot avoid the identity struggle in your work.'

Shanti is chiefly a figurative painter. She says that her paintings address the personal as political, in particular through mythology, psychology and the human drama. Painting to her, is all about releasing life's struggle and portraying it to the world in art form.

Her most beautiful work at the exhibition was the *Sleeping Woman*. The posture of the village woman is an authentic representation, a common sight beside a ploughed field on a hot Indian afternoon.

Her paintings are not all about women straining to get free. 'It is uplifting to me when I balance the good with the bad. But a woman's struggle is important to me, and other women artists. If we do not portray this we are censoring ourselves.'

Prasanna Probyn

The last two shows are on from 7 March - 23 March, and 28 March - 13 April. For further information contact the Horizon Gallery, 70 Merchants St. London WC1N 1AB Tel: 01 837 1431

Looking at the Stars by Shanti Thomas



Figure 46. Prasanna Probyn, "In Focus: Horizon Gallery", *Spare Rib*, no. 210 (March 1990), 42.

sought to demonstrate the depth and breadth of artistic practice among artists of South Asian origin and the four exhibitions collectively extended the narrative of diasporic artistic practice in the UK as presented in *The Other Story*. Nonetheless, while the conceptual drivers of exhibitions may have changed and developed over time, underpinning each was a concern for the ever-present need to promote minority artists in a mainstream (white) art world that was ambivalent to their work.

The Horizon Gallery had intended that the *In Focus* exhibitions be re-articulated as a touring show. Although this plan failed to come to fruition, in 1991, the gallery did produce a loose-leaf catalogue, compiling information about each of the sixteen exhibiting artists, plus information on an additional ten artists.⁷⁶ As mentioned above, in 1991, there were two touring exhibitions of female South Asian diaspora artists; and in 1993, the South Asian Visual Arts Festival took place across the Midlands. It would seem then, that at the start of the 1990s, South Asian diaspora artists were gaining access to, and visibility within, mainstream institutions and were significant in number. But if this was the case, why then, are so few artists of South Asian origin included in mainstream narratives of British art? Why are the same handful of artists discussed in published narratives of Black British art? Why is it that so many artists, exhibitions, and projects have been so emphatically forgotten? My research continues...

Footnotes

- 1 Rasheed Araeen, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* (London: The South Bank Centre, 1989).
- 2 The ten South Asian artists were: Saleem Arif, Avinash Chandra, Avtarjeet Dhanjal, Iqbal Geoffrey, Balraj Khanna, Ahmed Parvez, Ivan Peries, A.J. Shemza, F.N. Souza, and Rasheed Araeen.
- 3 See David A. Bailey and Stuart Hall, "Critical Decade: An Introduction", *Ten.8 Critical Decade: Black British Photography in the 80s* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 4-7.
- 4 Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities", in Anthony D. King (ed.), *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 56.
- 5 Parita Trivedi, "To Deny Our Fullness: Asian Women in the Making of History", *Feminist Review: Many Voices, One Chant, Black Feminist Perspectives* 17 (Autumn 1984), 38.
- 6 See comments by Geeta Kapur and Saloni Mathur made during discussion at the *Showing, Telling, Seeing: Exhibiting South Asia in Britain 1900-Now*, a conference organised by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Asia Art Archive, 30 June-1 July 2016, panel seven: Other Stories, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwskwS4PcLk&feature=youtu.be&list=PLf4F3b0ZQ-HkvRFBRNEQZEy0gcxU6Nels> (accessed 20 August 2019).
- 7 For examples of recent contributions to debates on the constitution of Britishness see, Nikesh Shukla (ed.), *The Good Immigrant* (London: Unbound, 2017); Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); and Afua Hirsch, *Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018).
- 8 See Ian R.G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997).
- 9 See Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Race in Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 78-79, 85-87.
- 10 Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996), Chapter 3, "Gendered Spaces: Women of South Asian Descent in 1980s Britain", 67-83.
- 11 Ambalavaner Sivanandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion: Asian and Afro-Caribbean Struggles in Britain", *Race and Class* 23, no. 2/3 (1981-1982), 116.

- 12 Enoch Powell, *Freedom and Reality*, edited by John Wood (London: B.T. Batsford, 1969), Chapter 13, "Immigration", reproduces the "Rivers of Blood" speech in full, 213–237.
- 13 *The Observer*, 5 April 1970, as cited in Kenneth Leech, *Brick Lane 1978: The Events and Their Significance* (Birmingham: AFFOR, 1980), 8. See Louise London, "The East End of London: Paki Bashing in 1970", *Race Today* 5, no. 11 (December 1973).
- 14 See "Police Against Black People: Evidence Submitted to the Royal Commission on the Criminal Procedure by the Institute of Race Relations", *Race and Class*, pamphlet No. 6 (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1979).
- 15 Leech, *Brick Lane 1978*, 8.
- 16 Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, 43. See also, Anandi Ramamurthy, *Black Star: Britain's Asian Youth Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2013).
- 17 Leech, *Brick Lane 1978*, 10.
- 18 Vivek Chaudhary, "Forty Years on, Southall Demands Justice for Killing of Blair Peach", *The Observer*, 21 April 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/apr/21/southall-demands-justice-killing-of-blair-peach-1979> (accessed 15 August 2019).
- 19 For a useful introduction to the Grunwick strike, see <https://www.striking-women.org/module/striking-out/grunwick-dispute> (accessed 18 May 2019).
- 20 For more on the Imperial Typewriters strike of 1974, see <https://strikeatimperial.net> (accessed 21 August 2019).
- 21 See Brixton Black Women's Group, "Black Women Organizing", *Feminist Review: Many Voices, One Chant, Black Feminist Perspectives* 17 (Autumn 1984): 84–89.
- 22 See Southall Black Sisters, <https://southallblacksisters.org.uk> (accessed 22 August 2019).
- 23 See Evan Smith, and Marinella Marmo, "Uncovering the 'Virginity Testing' Controversy in the National Archives: The Intersectionality of Discrimination in British Immigration History", *Gender & History* 23, no. 1 (2011), 161.
- 24 Anon, "Asian Women Subjected to 'Virginity Tests' at Heathrow", *The Telegraph*, 9 May 2011, see <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/8501872/Asian-women-subjected-to-virginity-tests-at-Heathrow.html> (accessed 26 September 2017).
- 25 See Hannana Siddiqui, "Black Women's Activism: Coming of Age?" *Feminist Review* 64 (2000): 83–96.
- 26 See Minutes of the IAUK meeting 30 November 1978, reproduced in *The Roots of the Indian Artists' Collectives*, exhibition catalogue (London: Grosvenor Gallery, 2019), <https://www.grosvenorgallery.com/usr/library/documents/catalogues/therootsoftheindianartistscollectives.pdf> (accessed 15 August 2019).
- 27 See *Rasheed Araeen: A Retrospective*, touring exhibition initiated by Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2017, and the accompanying exhibition catalogue, Nick Aikens (ed.), *Rasheed Araeen: A Retrospective* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2017).
- 28 See Courtney J. Martin, "Sculptor, Performer, Critic: Rasheed Araeen, Circa 1970", in Nick Aikens (ed.), *Rasheed Araeen: A Retrospective* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2017), 177–190.
- 29 See poster promoting performance of *Paki Bastard*, 29 October 1977, 2B Butler's Wharf, London, included in Araeen's retrospective at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.
- 30 Zoe Sutherland, "Dialectics of Modernity and Counter-Modernity: Rasheed Araeen's Cruciform Works", in Nick Aikens (ed.), *Rasheed Araeen: A Retrospective* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2017), 196.
- 31 Hammad Nasar, "Notes from the Field: Navigating the Afterlife of the Other Story", *Asia Art Archive*, <https://aaa.org.hk/en/ideas/ideas/notes-from-the-field-navigating-the-afterlife-of-the-other-story> (accessed 2 May 2019).
- 32 Rita Keegan, "The Story So Far", *Spare Rib*, February 1990, 36.
- 33 Amal Ghosh and Juginder Lamba (eds), *Beyond Frontiers: Contemporary British Art by Artists of South Asian Descent* (London: Saffron Press, 2001).
- 34 David A. Bailey, Ian Baucom, and Sonia Boyce (eds), *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
- 35 John Holt and Laura Turney, "The Singular Journey: South Asian Visual Art in Britain", in N. Ali, V.S. Kalra, and S. Sayyid (eds), *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006), 329–339.
- 36 Holt and Turney, "The Singular Journey", 339.
- 37 Eddie Chambers, *Black Artists in British Art: A History since the 1950s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).
- 38 Maud Saulter (ed.), *Passion: Discourses on Blackwomen's Creativity* (Hebden Bridge: Urban Fox Press, 1990).
- 39 Melanie Keen and Liz Ward (eds), *Recordings: A Select Bibliography of Contemporary African, Afro-Caribbean and Asian British Art* (London: Iniva, 1996). See https://issuu.com/artslondonlibraries/docs/recordings_-_a_select_bibliography (accessed 15 August 2019).
- 40 Since undertaking this research, the South Asian Diaspora Arts Archive has moved to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. See <https://sadaa.co.uk> (accessed 15 August 2019).
- 41 See Laurel Forster, *Magazine Movements: Women's Culture, Feminisms, and Media Form* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), Chapter 5: "'Our Culture' in a Racist Society": Mukti".
- 42 For a recording of my presentation, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_Ty58l498E (accessed 21 August 2019).

- 43 See Mumtaz Karimjee and Amina Patel, "Aurat Shakti", *Ten.8 Critical Decade: Black British Photography in the 80s 2*, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 62–63.
- 44 Bhajan Hunjan in conversation with the author, 23 October 2015.
- 45 Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (eds), *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970–85* (London: Pandora, 1987), 64.
- 46 Chila Burman in conversation with the author, 10 September 2015.
- 47 Caroline Collier, "Four Indian Women Artists: Bhajan Hunjan, Naomi Iny, Chila Kuman Burman, Vinodini Ebdon (Indian Artists UK Gallery, London: Exhibition Review)", *Arts Review* (UK) 34, no. 2 (15 January 1982), 18.
- 48 Anon, "Indian Artists U.K. Present Four Indian Women Artists' Show", *New Life* (29 January 1982), 10.
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