



Arts SU presents

**SOUTH ASIAN
HERITAGE
MONTH '23**

Stories To Tell

Welcome to the Arts SU 'Stories To Tell' exhibitions for South Asian Heritage Month 2023!

South Asian Heritage Month first began in 2020, and runs from 18th July to 17th August every year. It seeks to commemorate the South Asian cultures and communities of the diaspora, and acknowledge the link between the UK and South Asia.

It is something that I have wanted to add to the UAL and Arts SU calendar ever since I first joined UAL as a student in 2022, and have made it my mission to get it on there the moment I was elected into my role.

A dual national of Great Britain and the Maldives, I moved to the UK from the Maldives a month before my 12th birthday. Going from a hot, tropical island nation where I had been living in a household full of aunts, uncles and numerous cousins, swimming in the ocean daily and eating the most deliciously spicy food to the UK was a culture shock, to say the least.

Although I am half White British, I have always first and foremost considered myself Maldivian. Even after 18 years of living in the UK, I have never lost a single ounce of pride in being South Asian, and the word 'home' has always meant the beautiful azure blue of the Indian ocean to me.

That's my story to tell, and I am so grateful and happy to be able to give our wonderful students of South Asian heritage the chance to tell you theirs. I hope you appreciate and enjoy them!

Sophia Nasif
London College of Communication Officer & Curator

Cover Artwork: Katie Cray

Photograph: Orion Hall-Turner





The Jaffna House Friday Tradition: The Making of Puttu

**Bhairavi Yogasivam
BA (Hons) Architecture**

'The Jaffna House Friday Tradition: The Making of Puttu' depicts the significance of a weekly tradition in one (my) Sri Lankan Tamil household, where Lechumi prepares Puttu, a traditional Sri Lankan food made of rice flour and coconut, every Friday. It highlights the meticulous process of coconut scraping and its incorporation into the recipe, which has been passed down to and through generations, including me.

This tradition not only serves as a reminder of the importance, beauty and richness of family and food in South Asian culture but also represents the significance of cultural preservation and heritage.



Tapestries of Imagination

Anusha Meenaz Ali MA Illustration

These pieces are an attempt to capture the many layers that manifest in the telling of folktales of South Asian region, ones for which origins are too difficult to pin.

The diptych works in sync, depicting the way 17th century poet Bulleh Shah layered his own image and realities upon those of Hir, a heroine from an old popular folktale of Punjab, and used her character to allude to journeys of love, longing, spirituality and the self.

Together, the images I present capture the ethos of movement and cultural consciousness that manifest through time and space in varying narratives.



My Desi Girl

Kosha Baldota
MA Applied Imagination

“Elegance is beauty that never fades.”

This artwork depicts the lovely get up of South Asian girls, and portrays the beauty of our traditional clothing.

After coming to the UK, I now realise how deeply I am connected to my roots, and how it is a large part of my identity. My art represents my personal journey to accepting myself as a desi girl, and being proud of my heritage.

INDIAN
FOOD
IS NOT
ALWAYS
SPICY

Misconceptions of Indian Food

Zainab Goriwala
BA (Hons) Graphic Communication Design

Every time that I told a peer in the UK that I'm unable to handle spicy food, I got a puzzled look from them because I am Indian. Thanks to sitcoms and movies, the idea of Indian food only being spicy is the popular yet stereotypical opinion.

Since letterpress has almost a set-in-stone look and feel, I decided to print the sentence 'Indian food is not always spicy' (which is honestly true!) with the hopes to set the record straight.



Queer Divinity

Kaavya Shankar
MA Illustration & Visual Media

This artwork is a retelling of South Asian folklore and mythology as well as an attempt to disrupt the modern gender binary with the non-western spiritual understanding of gender as something impermanent and mutable.

The imagery in this illustration is inspired by gender fluid characters in Indian mythology and depictions of queer intimacy in traditional South Asian artwork.

The figure in the foreground is an interpretation of one of the forms of the deity Shiva combined with his consort Parvati, a co-existence of masculinity and femininity.



south Asian Alndian

Jetha BSc (Hons) Creative Computing

I used stable diffusion to see how text-to-image AI saw Sikh people. I discovered that if 'Sikh', 'South Asian' or 'Indian' were used in the prompt then traditional clothes and jewellery would be used. As a 4th generation British Sikh I felt this did not accurately represent me, and that I got a more accurate representation when I removed those words.

Throughout my life I have been told that I wasn't Indian enough, Sikh enough and also not British enough. I gathered nicknames like coconut and Findian. I was expected to know every single thing to do with being Sikh and Indian. My identity is being defined by others, and AI agrees with them that 'South Asian' heritage has certain markers.

Even if I don't define them, the world defines them for me whether I agree or not. No matter how many generations I am in an adopted land.



Henna: A Love Letter

Photography:
Sonia Abbas
BA (Hons) Fashion Photography

Creative Direction & Henna Art:
Ruqaiyyah Patel
BA (Hons) Fashion Styling & Production

Creative Direction & Fabric Printing:
Ace Rahman
BA (Hons) Graphic Communication Design

Ruqaiyyah's portrait draws inspiration from her unique henna practice that uses organic henna in a conceptual way.

This shoot is featured in Azadi, a print zine and online community founded by Ace Rahman and collectively brought to life by Sonia Abbas and Ruqaiyyah Patel - All of South Asian/Muslim heritage.

The zine seeks to uplift and highlight alternative/ counter-cultural ways of being in the WANA+SA diaspora. Challenging not only others but also our own communities perspective on how we are supposed to 'look' 'dress' or 'act'.

Intersectional, undivided and decolonised at its core.

'Stories To Tell: Through Our Eyes', London College of Communication.
'Stories To Tell: Through Our Textiles', Central Saint Martins Kings Cross.



Sea of Milk

Mahija Mandalika MA Art & Science

The work "Sea of Milk" explores the idea of mythological depictions by inverting the horizontal into the vertical. Through this process, a new perspective is achieved to contemplate mythological abstractness by virtue of physical forces of nature.

The symbolic mark-making and the gestural movement suggests the depiction of processions and wars, which were the main subjects of historical paintings and tapestries. Extracting the essence of this idea, the work "Sea of Milk" showcases an attempt to create modern mythologies and mythopoetic ideologies in the current landscape. The title also alludes to the cosmic ocean 'Ksheer Sagar', where Lord Vishnu rests in peace.



Poonji

Manveen MA Fashion Artefacts

Through my work, I have tried to showcase a representation of a dowry trunk in its true size and form. This trunk can be broken apart into separate entities reflecting an ideology of breaking apart from this custom. Efforts have also been made to shed light on what inheritance might mean from a cultural aspect. Inspiration has been taken from the harmonium, an Indian reed musical instrument, used to both depict its importance in culture, and mirror the movement of collapse and expand embedded in the structure of the trunk.

Materials like the elements of wood have been sourced from an old household door owned by my grandfather, to further attach values of inheritance into the project. The exterior of the trunk is carefully handcrafted in the patterns of Phulkari, an important embroidered craft handed over to the bride at her wedding. The inside of the trunk has been left hollow and dark, to comment on the inherent materialism attached to the societal norm of Dowry.



Euphonious Seasonality

Sugandh Makwana MA Design (Jewellery)

Bringing in the spatial understanding of the language we all speak despite our differences in race, colour, class or religion - i.e. the language of food. The project delves into the delicate sensibilities of rice all across Asia and blends it with Kathak, an Indian classical dance form. Capturing the fluidity of hand mudras (meaning the various hand gestures) which hold great importance in the chosen dance form, it brings in the harmony & energy of Kathak.

An unforeseen narration of rice and dance, the work serves as reminders of my home country, India through the hand crafted creations that entail warm toned gemstones which metaphorically signify the warmth dance holds in my life.



Portrait of My Mother

Kate Neil MA Photojournalism & Documentary Photography

This quilt honours the life of my mother, Emilda Lobo (b.1937 -), who was born in India, raised in Singapore, educated in India and Scotland, and worked in the Middle East, Africa and South-East Asia before retiring to England.

It acts as a personal and public restitution, recognising the dignity, the value and the beauty of her life while acknowledging how the British Empire framed and shaped both her experiences and her mind. It marks some of the moments of violence that she encountered in a structurally racist and misogynist world and also honours those incidents of resistance that a woman of fierce spirit was forced into by the injustices of her lifetime.

Finally, this quilt alludes to the power of understanding and intergenerational healing through family, symbolised by my mother's home and her grandchildren whose love and joy is a legacy and an affirmation.

These incredible exhibitions wouldn't have been possible without the help of some wonderful people. There's quite a few thanks to be given, but firstly, a huge thank you to those who funded them - Kene Igweonu (**Head of College, London College of Communication**) and his EDI team, and Jonathan Carson (**Associate Dean of Student Experience and Enhancement, Central Saint Martins**).

A huge thank as well to:

Aisling Ward and Katie Hughes
Arts Programmes Team, Arts SU

Vinesh Kurup, Fiza Murtaza,
Nivetha Tilakkumar and Zoe Campbell
Communities Team, Arts SU

Nyasha Takawira, Orion Hall-Turner and Katie Cray
Comms & Marketing Team, Arts SU

Meher Shiblee
Postgraduate Intern, Arts SU

Amy Huntingdon and Amy Melling
**Events & Exhibitions Team,
London College of Communication**

Mia Cormack and Jamie Johnson
Exhibitions Team, Lethaby Gallery

London College of Communication Print Technicians

Lethaby Gallery Technicians

And thank you as well to all who have shown their support; the Arts SU Senior Leadership Team, the Sabbatical Officers, UAL Libraries, PostGrad Community, South Asian Heritage Month UK, and all those of you who have visited and shared about them.

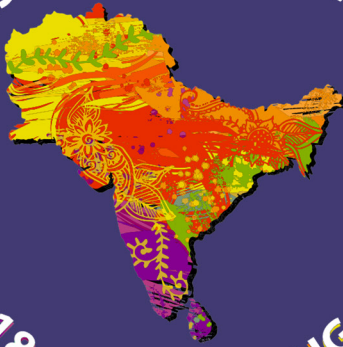


Stories To Tell: Through Our Eyes
Typo Cafe Windows, London College of Communication, Elephant & Castle.
Photography: Sophia Nasif



Stories To Tell: Through Our Textiles
Lethaby Gallery Windows, Central Saint Martins, Kings Cross.
Photography: Jamie Johnson

PAKISTAN : SRI LANKA : AFGHANISTAN : BANGLADESH : BHUTAN : INDIA : MALDIVES : NEPAL : SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH : 18 JULY TO 17 AUG



Arts
Students'
Union

ual: university
of the arts
london