

Large print guide

Chila Welcomes You



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Chila Burman's playful and subversive artworks draw on her Punjabi heritage and upbringing in Liverpool. In this new commission, Burman responds to events including Indian independence and the Partition of India in 1947, and individual and collective histories of migration after the Second World War.

Burman's family history is woven through the space with the family shop reimaged in vivid neon. Her father, who emigrated from India to Britain in 1954, appears in his guise as a magician, and his voice is heard describing his memories of India after the Second World War. Elsewhere, Burman depicts the Rani of Jhansi, a key figure in the history of resistance to British rule, and fills a wall with activist statements.

Both joyful and defiant, *Chila Welcomes You* is a warm and personal invitation from the artist to explore Indian migration to Britain in the twentieth century.

Prayer Hands

Lenticular print on lightbox, 2024

Throughout her career Burman has worked with drawing, printmaking, and collage, layering images to explore her cultural identity. Here she is glimpsed in her studio, the image flickering between her portrait and a bright, kaleidoscopic pattern.

Portrait © Mary McCartney

Jhansi-Ki-Rani

Etching, 2024

Lakshmibai Newalker, the Rani (Queen) of Jhansi, is a key figure in the history of resistance against British rule in India. The Rani trained her own army and died in battle during the Indian Rebellion in 1858. In this print, Burman overlays a popular image of the Rani on horseback with line drawing.

Our Dad The Magician Eating A Lightbulb

Print on lightbox, 2024

Burman has embellished this photograph of her father performing a magic trick. A tailor who

provided army uniforms during the Second World War in India, Mr Burman also worked for Dunlop and later had a successful ice cream van business in Liverpool.

Cosmological World

Cotton, wool, lurex, gold thread, rayon, and bamboo, 2024

Burman frequently combines traditional and religious iconography with pattern, colour, and images from pop culture. In this tapestry, the Hindu god Krishna plays his flute alongside a pair of flamingos, outlined in vivid pink and green.

Corner Shop

LED neon lights, 2024

A stalwart of the British high street, selling everything from newspapers and magazines to herbs and spices, the corner shop has provided a livelihood and a social hub for many immigrant communities. Many of Burman's cousins were shopkeepers and her mother had her own clothes shop on a street corner in Waterloo, Merseyside.

Mr Burman's Story

Sound recording, 1993

Listen to Burman's father as he recalls his experiences during the Second World War and the events which led him to emigrate from India to Britain. Mr Burman shares his views on the political and social context of the Indian independence movement and the Partition of India in 1947, which saw the creation of the new state of Pakistan.

A selection of Burman family photographs and memorabilia is displayed on the wall nearby.

Sound Recording Transcript

Man, come, you know, choose the, you know, come the village. Choose that boy you want to come join the army? They said, OK, get the line on the measurement, just length. This one is the fit length right height, height and chest main thing chest right? Doesn't matter height.

Main thing chest, you know. You have 36 chest pass, 34 chest number then reject then boy you know. Healthy boy.

Interviewer: Did they pay the family for the boys?

No, they paid, they paid at that time Indian with this

10 shillings a month. So 10 shilling month, that good money that time, 10 shilling, 30 shilling for British soldier. 30 shilling a month, British soldier, that time, and 10 shilling for Indian soldier.

Interviewer: And who paid the Indian soldiers, the British?

British people, British - British Army, British everything control – the British people.

(Interviewer) So British soldiers were on three times more money.

Three times the more money because they are come abroad, abroad allowance, you know, leave the England, they go abroad. They have special lunch. But Indian soldiers, they have less money. They take 10 Rupees, is called 10 Rupees, yes, that means 10 shilling 10 Rupees is Indian soldier and 30 Rupees British soldier. Their monthly wage, either in English, you pay the weekly or monthly, but they are waged like that.

When the Second World War 1939, Hitler declared the war or Second World War declared. That time I work on telecompany in India. That time, war time, I don't know how to call the war 1939 midnight, Sam, come in the factory, big that he whistle, very strong whistle. Then I asked the poor man, I said, excuse me, Sir, what [inaudible] this big loud whistle? He's told me, he said.

Second World War start. I said, what do you mean war? He said fighting these two other people fighting these two others.

I said who fighting, he said, German fight to British. I said, how? He said, I don't know Mr, don't try to tell me the question, wars start because they want to little want to occupy onward. I said he can't bloody do anything this is it, you know? Everybody, peaceful life, everybody want to peace, but they they really want to, fight with the British or fight with any other country. Why he did that at Poland, this one, that one.

That time, war time. War start 1940 very big war. Big war all over the world, people, you know, scared. Then, in one Indian leader is the name Subhas Chandra Bose, he run, he don't want to support the British Army, British people, Second World War. He runaway, to go to meet Hitler, and he want to ask the Hitler, can you come in India, throw British people out? And he said, I'd try do best. And they said, Hitler said, the Mr Subhas Chandra Bose he was Bengali. He is belong to India but he is [inaudible] Bengali people. He is a Bengali, they said. He sent to - Subhas Chandra Bose to in Japan. When he go to Japan, Subhas Chandra Bose asks goes to the Japanese people, can you throw my British people, throw off India? I want independent, I want, I want my country back!

Subhas Chandra Bose, Gandhi, Mr Jawaharlal Nehru

and other leader big leaders, they don't want to fight with the British because the war time. And that, Mr Gandhi say, if I support you in the Second World War, my soldier, I support my own - all people A-Z - support to you. Can you make a free my free country, and British people said OK.

After the 1947, war finish 46, war finish. Then after, Gandhi, Mr Gandhi said now Mr you make a promise with us, yeah, you can't, you make a free country. Then they said OK, I'll make you free. Then Indian people have two powerful leaders, one called Nehru, powerful leader, one called Jinnah. He's a leader, he's named Jinnah, he's a Muslim. Jinnah ask the British if you make independent India, if you make a free on India, I want my people, Muslim people, one side [inaudible] there, Muslim people here, I want to part to my Muslim people have own place and Hindu people have own place, and they said you can't do it

But no, Jinnah not agree, after Nehru, Gandhi and saw the leader Indian leader, they said, OK, make a free. What Jinnah want, they give him. Main thing I want to free. Mr Jinnah make a Partition. On Pakistan, one place is called Pakistan, he divided the India, and he make a Pakistan there's a Muslim population, he make a Pakistan, never mind, Gandhi said.

My two, my I had two son. Two son, one Hindu son,

one Muslim son. I'm a father, but when their father want to give divide, give the share to give the two son. He said, look, Jinnah, you, my son, Gandhi said, Nehru you my son, you take Hindu please people. You take Muslim people doesn't matter. And Gandhi said OK, British people please leave us, then I give them my two son, I give the one son to Muslim people place, I make a share, don't worry. And that time 1947, British leave on India, and come back to England, and India free country.

But now, in India, um 1954, I'm decide after world war, I'm always since 1938 to 53, I'm with the British people. I talk English, I walk English, I eat English, I sleep English, but I'm stay in India. When in 1954, I decide in corrupt. In India, insight, I fully understand, fully grow then I still inside feeling, British people not make me harm.

I'm my business over there, I mastered, I you know, I learned on a tailoring work, my job. I open the shop, my working people, my 10-15 employees, they're working. I, my shop name, Bombay Tailoring - Civil and Army Outfitter.

I decide, go to England, leave India, because I miss my people, I miss the language I make English language, nobody talk to me English! I love English, nobody talk

to me English. I try to, you know, and I miss. Then I decide to come in England. Then I apply the passport. Then I had gave the address to make [inaudible] and get passport.

1954 in March, I come under England. Since 1954 to today, 1993, 39 year come into England. In England had, I had two children in India born, three children in England born. My wife come, she looked after me very well. She very good to me. I very good to her. She looked after me. I look after her. She like a turn to like an English. I am turn to like a Indian. But is she that now I am. So I miss in India English people. I'm not miss English people, but I am a miss on my own people. I'm not a miss Indian people. I miss my relation in India. I have one sister India. I had my brother-in-law, sister-in-law, all my relative, India. But I missed these people. But I don't miss to the very head people in India because they're still very big head and working class in India still same boat and same place.

Interviewer: Was England as you expected it when you came? Was it the way you thought it was going to be?

Not my opinion. I'm a working class in India. I like. I'm sorry to British people live in India. I don't know what, rich people in India were the leader in India. All, we always lead in a rich, rich people leaders. We need

working class, so 1 in 100 and once 1001 leaders say. But rich people all born the leader, born the doctor, born the solicitor, working class never born, working class still working-class England, still working-class India. See rich people always rich. Poor people always poor.

And I live on England with the British. I born in India, I grow with the British. I still on the with the British people, but are we just say that? British people, not good to everybody, good and bad everywhere, good and bad in England, good and bad in India. But I so much good to me, I only say that, but my life and a young life with the British people, I am always happy. I'm happy in here.

My, my all day, all my children free, born here. They have well as I worked so hard working – I'm non-educated by my children, some PhD, some MA degree, some have 1 A level, some have a 2 A level. They all healthy and healthy, they good our God give them more health to my children. I am very happy, my children. My wish? Success. I don't. My God gave me everything. God may make my children happy. I am wife and husband. Sometime wife, my shout, my wife, she said, I'm English- you very Indian, you go back, I said, why you can't? She said no, my children born here you go, very Indian. That's our, that's the life.

A Way of Life

Found objects, 2024

In this display Burman combines her personal possessions with items purchased in Southall, an area of west London with a large South Asian community. Nestled amongst jewellery, bindis, Sikh crests and Hindu deities, a framed passenger manifest notes her father's arrival in Southampton on the MS *Batory* in 1954.

Disobey

Born digital film, 2024

Incorporating animation and collage, *Disobey* journeys through Burman's childhood and cultural identity, taking us from the terraced streets of Bootle, Liverpool, to the rides at Southport Pleasureland. Images from Burman's archive of drawings, prints and photographs are layered with animations of the Hindu goddess of war, Durga, and a charging tiger.

Disobey has been created by graduates of the School of Digital Arts (SODA), at Manchester Metropolitan University in collaboration with Chila Burman.

Duration 5 minutes

Projected statements above in English and Punjabi

'Self-defence is no offence.'

'We are here because you were there.'

'Disobey - their power comes from our obedience.'

**Disobey –
Their Power Comes From Our Obedience**
LED neon lights, 2024

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Credits and thanks

Exhibition design	Anna Montgomery
Graphic design	IWM
Construction and decoration	Eastern Exhibition & Display
Graphic production	Eastern Exhibition & Display
Lighting design	Luminance Lighting Design
LED neon light production	Blackpool Illuminations
Tapestry production	West Dean
Lenticular production	Hive Associates
Object installation	IWM
Audio Visual	IWM
Sound design	Niraj Chag
Film production	Jessica Lippa
	Amirhossein Razvanipour
	Jayden Crooks
	School of Digital Arts (SODA)

With thanks to Southport Pleasureland

Paint generously provided by Little Greene

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An IWM 14–18 NOW Legacy Fund Commission



This exhibition has been made possible by the provision of insurance through the Government Indemnity Scheme. IWM would like to thank HM Government for providing Government Indemnity and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.

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