

RA



Entangled Pasts

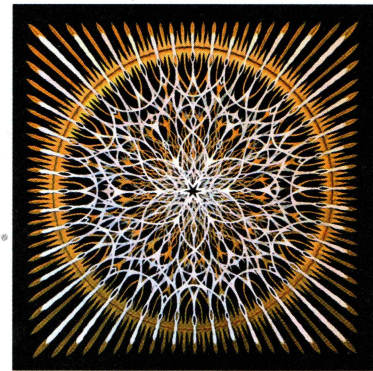
Special issue guest edited by Hew Locke RA

Out and about

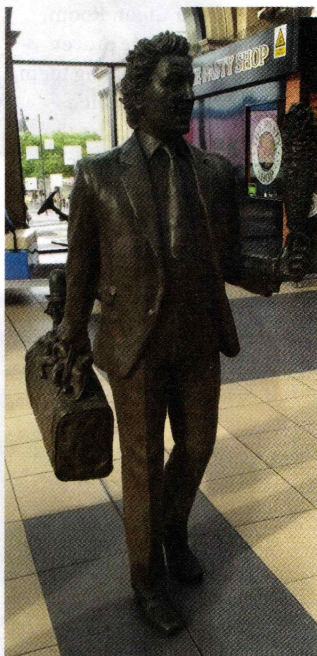
An alternative trail through Liverpool

Artist *Chila Kumari Singh Burman*, a lifelong Liverpudlian, tours the city's cultural hangouts

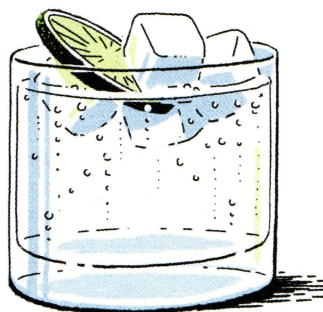
1. Start out from **Freshfield** on the Sefton coast, home to red squirrels and acres of pristine sand and dunes, where my mum and dad sold ice-cream for over 40 years from the 1960s; all us siblings would help, and my dad would have lovely chats with John Moores, Liverpool's famous businessman, who lived nearby.



2. Get on the train to elegant **Southport** with its wide boulevards and attractive arcades. It's where I went to art school for my foundation year. I spent half of my time at the funfair, but often popped into The Atkinson, the fabulous art gallery whose winter programme this year includes a solo show by paper artist Suhail Shaikh (*Gold Mandala*, 2017, above; 25 Nov–24 Feb 2024).

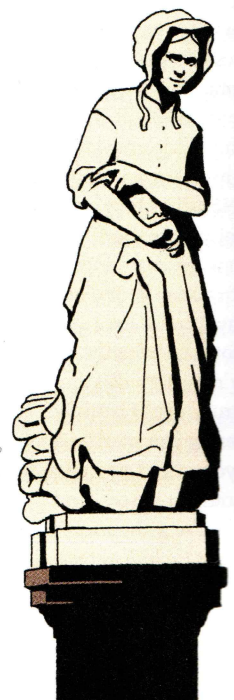


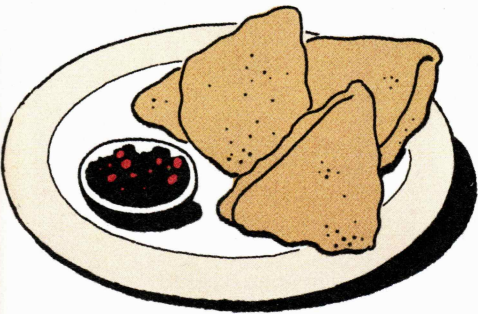
3. Take the train back to **Lime Street Station** and say 'Hiya' to Ken Dodd's sculpture on the concourse. The comedian is celebrated by the Museum of Liverpool in its 'Happiness!' show (until 3 Mar 2024).



4. Turn left outside the station for the **Crown Hotel** and down a glass of gin at one of Liverpool's famous Victorian Gin Palaces.

5. Cross over the road to famous **St George's Hall**, the best Neoclassical building in the world, and blow a kiss to the statue of Kitty Wilkinson, a Liverpool hero known as the Saint of the Slums. I dressed and decorated the sculpture temporarily in 2021 for an art project – I wanted to celebrate her as one would a Hindu goddess, for all that she did for the people of Liverpool.

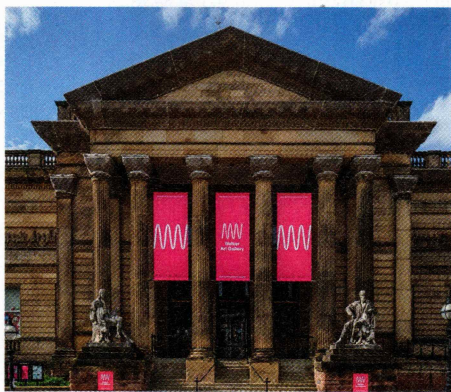




8. Walk five minutes over to Bold Street and have a plate of samosas at **Bundobust Indian Street Food**. They did the catering for my recent year-long installation show at FACT, 'Merseyside Burman Empire'. It was staged as a kind of living-room filled with my influences, with some of my neon works on show.



7. Next door, the **World Museum Liverpool** has done a lot of work with local communities on its vast 'World Cultures' collections (thangka painting of Buddha Sakyamuni, early 20th century; above), whose objects can be traced back to the city's time as one of the major ports of the British Empire.



6. Cross the road to the **Walker Art Gallery**, currently showing the John Moores Painting Prize, one of the UK's best-known painting awards, for which I was one of six judges this year (until 25 Feb 2024). In the Walker's sculpture court there's a display about the Sandbach family, a Liverpool family who were connected to the transatlantic slave trade.

9. Walk up to **St Luke's Bombed Out Church** which, as the name implies, was decimated by the Blitz. It is now a venue for independent arts events, record fairs and film screenings. While in the area, look out for gigs at District, 24 Kitchen Street, The Grapes on a Sunday night, and Kazimier Garden. All sorts of culture happens at 455 Smithdown Social Arts Hub, The African Caribbean Centre, The Florrie and Bridewell Studios. If you want a laugh there's Bongo's Bingo and a comedy night.

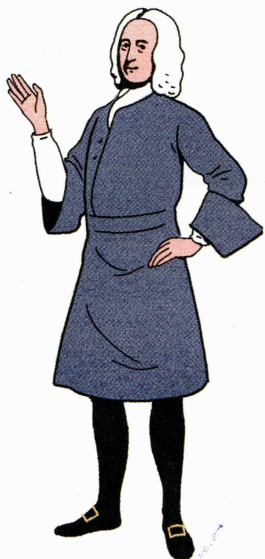


10. Go to **Chinatown** because Liverpool has the oldest settled Chinese community in Europe. We would go there as kids in the 1960s to eat in Chinese families' homes and cafes.

11. Check out the **two cathedrals** on each end of Hope Street: the Crypt of the Catholic Metropolitan Cathedral has amazing Lutyens-designed architecture and was built in the 1930s. The Lady Chapel in the Anglican Cathedral Church of Christ has one of the few First World War memorials dedicated to women.

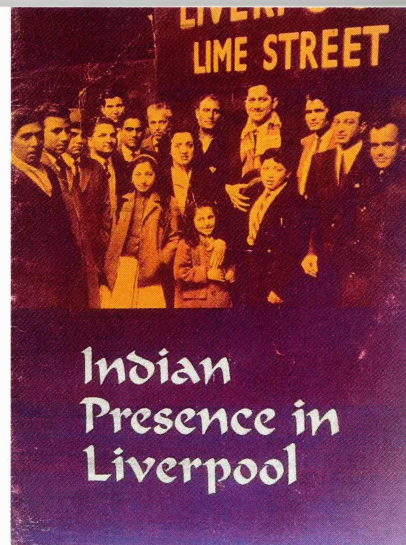


12. Take a look inside **Liverpool Town Hall** for its masterful 18th-century architecture. I once covered its façade with my neons and collages on the front pillars, with a Punjabi soundtrack playing (*Liverpool Love of my Life*, 2021; left). »



13. Walk across to **The Bluecoat** arts centre, which has been looking into its history as a charitable school with links to slavery through its merchant patrons, such as founder Bryan Blundell (above). I had my first retrospective there in the late 1990s and it still houses my archive material.

14. Head down to Albert Dock, the largest group of Grade 1-listed buildings in Britain, home to world-class attractions, including **Tate Liverpool**. The gallery closes soon for renovation over the next couple of years – my next solo show will follow the revamp.

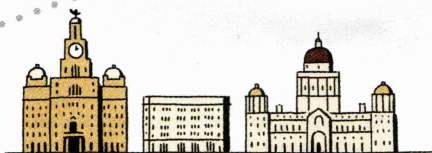


15. Other museums exploring stories of the city's communities are the **International Slavery Museum**, busy planning its own multimillion pound expansion, and the **Museum of Liverpool**. The **Maritime Museum** is where my Dad Bachan Singh Burman, my brother Ashok and late brother Magic put on a show in 2002, making a brochure called 'Indian Presence in Liverpool' (above). It recounted stories of the first Indian families to move to the city from Calcutta in 1954, through photographs, personal possessions and people's recollections.

16. You can't miss **The Three Graces**, consisting of the Royal Liver building, the Cunard Building and domed Port of Liverpool Building on Liverpool's Pier Head. Now take the Dazzle Ferry (decorated by Peter Blake) from Pier Head across the river – a perfect way to see Liverpool's famous skyline.



17. Or go 'over the water' to the **Lady Lever Art Gallery** by taking a short train ride under the Mersey from the city centre to Bebington. The gallery is in Port Sunlight Village, which is beautifully laid out – it was originally built for workers, as was the gallery, which has amazing collections. It was funded with William Hesketh Lever's money made from Sunlight Soap.



18. Last and not least are prayers at **Shri Radha Krishna Temple** on Edge Lane, formed back in 1957. Join my mum and dad and community relatives for a palm full of Halwa Prasad and Jarnamath almond milk! Nameste Ji!

Chila Kumari Singh Burman is a Punjabi Liverpoolian artist. Her work appears in shows including 'Women in Revolt! Art and Activism in the UK 1970-1990' at Tate Britain, London, until 7 April 2024