

# Susan Hobbs

Zinnia Naqvi

Biography

1991 Born in Pickering

2020 MFA, Studio Arts, Photography, Concordia University, Montreal

2014 BFA, Photography Studies, School of Image Arts, Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2024 *the person you don't see in this image is me, the camera-person*, YYZ Artists' Outlet, Toronto

2023 *The Professor's Desk*, Whippersnapper Gallery, Toronto

2022 *It was my discomfort that weighted the camera*, Blinkers Art and Project Space, Winnipeg

*Yours to Discover*, Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal

2021 *The Translation is Approximate*, Dazibao, Montreal

2017 *Dear Nani*, Artspace at the Gladstone Hotel, Toronto

2016 *Heart-shaped Box*, Trinity Square Video (Vitrine Space), Toronto

2015 *Seaview*, The Image Centre, Toronto

Public Projects

2021 *Yours to Discover*, Capture Photography Festival, Broadway City Skytrain Station, Vancouver

2020 *The Border Guards Were Friendly*, Young Artscape, Toronto

2019 *Yours to Discover*, Peel Art Gallery Museum + Archives, Brampton

Selected Group Exhibitions

2023 *Coming into Sight: 50th Anniversary Art Bank Acquisitions*, Art Bank of Canada, Ottawa

2022 Vantage Point Sharjah 10, Sharjah Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates

*Grounded Currents*, Verksmiðjan á Hjalteyri, Iceland

*Related*, Libby Leshgold Gallery, Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Vancouver

*Inherit*, Evergreen Cultural Centre, Coquitlam, BC

2021 *In Keeping with Myself*, Portrait Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

*Gives-on-and-with: Decolonial Moves of the Transcultural*, Or Gallery, Vancouver

*All We Carry*. Study Hall at PrattMWP. Utica, New York

2019 *Reading Silences*, Forest City Gallery, London

*New Generation Photography Award*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

*To see and see again*, Hamilton Artists Inc., Hamilton

2018 *Re Present: Photography from South Asia*, Kamloops Art Gallery, Kamloops

2017 *The More I Look At These Images*, 8-11, Toronto

*Karachi Biennale*, VM Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan

*Archival Alchemy*, Abron's Art Centre, New York

*Ignition 13*, Galerie Leonard & Bina Ellen, Montreal

*Yonder*, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Waterloo

2016 *Mémoires futures / Future Memories*, Article, Montreal

*Found Footing*, Whippersnapper Gallery, Toronto

*Yonder*, Koffler Gallery, Toronto

2015 *NS Photo Exchange*\_MACBA - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Buenos Aires

Photographic exchange project between Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography (Toronto) and PH15 Foundation (Buenos Aires) and OCAD University (Toronto)

## Screenings &amp; Film Festivals

- 2023 Images Festival, *Neither Business Nor Pleasure*, Toronto  
 MassArt Ciné Culture - Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Massachusetts  
 Images Festival, *I Am My Own Ghost*, Curated by Emma Steen, Toronto
- 2022 Gandhara Independent Film Festival (Online)  
 VISAFF Vancouver International South Asian Film Festival, Vancouver  
 Flaherty NYC at Anthology Film Archives. “Out of Sight, Held in Mind” part of the  
 program “Let’s All by Lichen” curated by asinnajaq, New York  
 Flaherty/Colgate Global Filmmaker in Residence Screening at Colgate University, Hamilton,  
 New York
- 2019 In praesentia/in absentia with Momenta Biennale | 37e FIFA, Dazibao, Montreal
- 2018 Broad Topics.06 - Curated by Lauren Fournier & Daniella Sanader - LOMAA - London  
 Ontario Media Arts Association, London
- 2017 *What is Left? What is Right?* Forest City Gallery, London Ontario. Curated by Christina Battle  
 7a\*11d International Festival of Performance Art, Toronto
- 2016 Equitable Bank’s Emerging Digital Artists Award, Presentation Ceremony, AGO Jackman  
 Hall, Toronto  
 Breakthroughs Film Festival, Toronto
- 2015 Regent Park Film Festival, *Shorts: Testaments of Home* program. Toronto  
 Uppsala International Short Film Festival, Uppsala  
 Oberhausen International Short Film Festival, Oberhausen

## Selected Bibliography

- Amos, J., Buis, A., Cavaliere, E.A., Kennedy, J., Smith, S.E.K., & Smither, D. *CanadARThistories: Reimagining the Canadian Art History Survey*. [Open Library](#), 2022;
- Burney, Sarah. *One Piece by Zinnia Naqvi, The Wanderers – Niagara Falls, 1988*. [Kajal Magazine](#), 2020;
- Dubé, Joëlle. *Zinnia Naqvi*. [esse](#), Winter 2023;
- Elzen, Ella den. “Yours to Discover” — *Zinnia Naqvi*. [C Magazine](#), November 2022;
- Konadu, Luther. *Book Launch: 'Yours To Discover' by Zinnia Naqvi*. [Public Parking](#), July 2020;
- Nanglu, Kesang. *Yours to Discover*. [The Asian Canadian Living Archive](#), 2022;
- Sirois-Rouleau, Dominique. *Naqvi the Translation is Approximate*. [esse](#), January 2022;
- Tse, Aysia. “The Professor’s Desk” by Zinnia Naqvi: *Mayworks Festival*. [Femme Art Review](#), July 2023;
- Xu, Cathy. *Ancestors, I Carry You With Me // Inherit at the Art Gallery at Evergreen*. [ReIssue](#), April 2022;

## “The Professor’s Desk” by Zinnia Naqvi: Mayworks Festival

Interview by Aysia Tse



Zinnia Naqvi. *Before the Settlement – Professor Chun’s Desk*, Inkjet Print, 2023.

“The Professor’s Desk” series by lens-based artist and educator [Zinnia Naqvi](#) features archival materials from four specific cases of racial discrimination in or about Canadian universities. Naqvi uses her own student/professor’s desk to frame these cases of systemic racism and considers the impact and legacies of each case, reflecting on the ongoing struggle for racial equity and justice in academic institutions.

As a selected artist for the 2022 Mayworks Labour Arts Catalyst, Zinnia Naqvi worked with the [Asian Canadian Labor Alliance \(ACLA\)](#) with support from [OPIRG Toronto](#) to create the photo-based series “The Professor’s Desk.” The series was co-presented with [CONTACT Photography Festival](#) at the [Whippersnapper Gallery](#) from May 4-31st for the 2023 [Mayworks Festival of Working People and the Arts](#). Mayworks’ Labour Arts Catalyst is a program that helps to facilitate the collaboration between local labour organizations and artists. As Naqvi describes, her creative and research processes for this project came together organically. After connecting with the two ACLA chapters based in B.C. and Ontario, Naqvi accessed an online archive of digitized materials from ACLA’s 20 years of activism which was her jumping-off point for her research.

I spoke in depth with Naqvi about her process, creative and political considerations for each of the six images in the series, and what she has learned from research into Professor Kin-Yip Chun’s case.

**Aysia Tse:** Can you discuss your deeply collaborative and multi-focus research process for this series?

**Zinnia Naqvi:** ACLA hired filmmaker Lokchi Lam to make a video for their 20th anniversary. Lokchi spoke to members and gathered many materials from past events they supported and organized them into five Google Drive folders. One of the folders they made was about instances of anti-Asian racism on Canadian campuses was called “White Fear on Campus.” Lokchi Lam put three events together; Professor Chun’s case, Maclean’s Magazine “Too Asian” article from 2010, and the W5 CTV News segment from 1979, which is what I [made] the project about.

Professor Chun was exploited and wrongfully denied a tenure track position four times at the University of Toronto in a span of 10 years. In 1998, Professor Chun launched a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission for unjust dismissal. His case soon attracted national and international attention.

On the panel, Chris Ramsaroop was one of the founding members of ACLA Ontario, and a student at the time of Professor Chun’s case. He was very actively involved in supporting Professor Chun’s case and there were a lot of student organizers, so he was able to give me insight on the significance of the case from a student perspective. I teach part-time at the University of Toronto and was able to access historical newspaper databases by having institutional access. I found all the Toronto Star articles written about his case specifically and visited their picture collection at the reference library to access images. It was through my own digging that I then found out about OPIRG and the Dr. Chun Resource Library of feminist and critical race theory. Professor Chun donated funds to support the library during his case and it was later renamed after him.



Zinnia Naqvi. *After the Settlement – Professor Chun’s Desk*, Inkjet Print, 2023. Courtesy of the artist.

**Aysia T:** It's great to hear how bits and pieces of the research came through. OPIRG sounds like a cool grassroots organization whose work relates to what you're doing. So that was a great collaboration opportunity.

**Zinnia Naqvi:** Yes, I reached out to them while I was making the project and they generously agreed to support the panel and partner with Mayworks. As a result, we [could] fly Professor Chun to Toronto for the panel. It was interesting looking at this case 20 years after it happened because it isn't part of the collective memory of the current students.

When I came across this research that Lokchi did, what stuck out to me about Professor Chun's case was that someone was able to speak out against such a big institution as the University of Toronto and take them to court for racial discrimination. As someone who teaches sessionally in universities and has recently been a student, I have dealt with instances of racism or prejudice in the institutional space. However, to prove that in a court of law and in front of the Ontario Human Rights Commission is significant. There's a report called the Chun Report that's a very comprehensive study of the case and all the events that unfolded. It illustrated how toxic the environment was and how blatant the racism was that he faced. I realized that it got to a point in which he had no choice but to take legal action from the school because his treatment was damaging his life and career.

After he reached an initial settlement, he received significantly more discrimination or hostility from other people in the department. Journalists like Margaret Wente wrote very damaging articles in the Globe and Mail, saying that Professor Chun was just trying to get attention. Still today, Professor Chun takes care to not call the University of Toronto racist or any specific person racist, but rather he was talking about systemic racism at a time in which people were not used to hearing that term. That's another reason why his case felt so significant because it started to change the discourse and language around these issues.

In the Chun report, there is an account stating that at one point Professor Chun was put in an office that had sewage, cockroaches, and mice in it. That's when the report started to paint a visual picture for me. I started to imagine how experiencing that might look or feel. So that's the approach I decided to take with this project, to frame it within the space of the office. I'm placing myself in his shoes in a way, but it's a flex space that's my imagination of what his desk would be like.



Zinnia Naqvi. *What's Behind the Diversity Numbers?*, Inkjet Print, 2023. Courtesy of the artist.

**Aysia T:** Your desk compositions feature small details including those cockroaches that allude to these important aspects of Professor Chun’s case. What are some of the symbolic considerations you had when curating these pieces? Can you walk me through your thinking about the details you included?

**Zinnia Naqvi:** With “Before the Settlement,” I wanted it to be this space that’s in between balancing his career as a seismologist, who studies earthquakes and teaches physics. He talked about the personal significance of what this case caused him. He is also a father and there’s a family photo on the desk. He’s an incredible scientist – he received a lot of national funding for his extraordinary research. A lot of that got sidestepped because of the case and the toll that the case took on his life and his career.

The second image is called “After the Settlement.” That’s when I’m imagining the case taking over even more of his life. Things start to get messy and unravel even further.

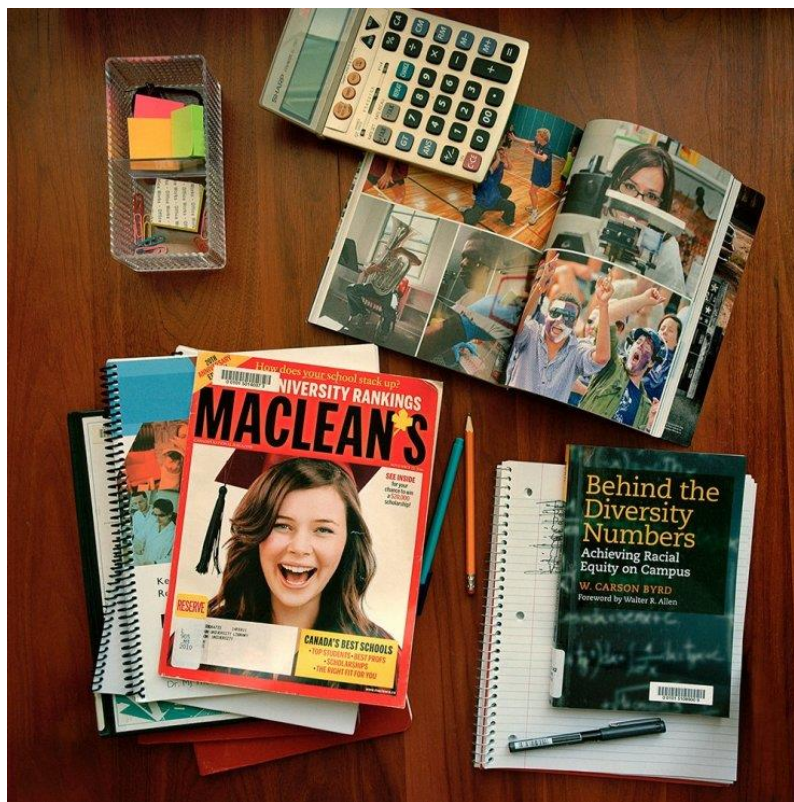
Then there are also the other images that address different instances from ACLA’s archive. With the images of the controversial 2010 Maclean magazine “Too Asian,” I wanted to show the article and then there was also a book that I have placed on top of it, which was made directly in the aftermath of the article in which many scholars address Anti-Asian racism in universities.

The other image shows the cover of the same Maclean’s magazine, and it was interesting to me to see this image of two students with the Chinese flag that was taken, from what I understand, without their

permission. However, the cover image of the magazine is of this very happy-go-lucky white student and the contrast of that was interesting to me.

It also started to make me think about diversity images and when images of diverse people are used for profit. Those images are used to attract students to apply to schools, but then a lot of people who are working or studying within those spaces are not actually supported. This also relates to the other image of the posters; those are current posters that I took from both University of Toronto and Toronto Metropolitan University where I work. It was interesting that I would see a lot of the same posters in both schools. There are a lot of posters about mental health studies, tutoring, and scholarships. It just shows the precarious financial situations of students, especially international students who are brought to these schools and don't have citizenship status and are not able to work or are limited to how much they can work.

The last image I made is about the W5 CTV News segment from 1979. CTV aired a special that was [essentially] saying that international students were taking the place of Canadian students, especially in medicine and dentistry programs. Then there was a rebuttal by the Chinese Canadian Council, saying how that was factually incorrect and very racist, and there were a lot of protests about that. I have included excerpts from that news segment, articles about the protests, and then again, my school materials and other props to situate these issues in physical space. With these three cases from the past, it was significant to see how the rhetoric was so similar from 1979 to 2010 and continues today.



Zinnia Naqvi. *What's Behind the Diversity Numbers?*  
Inkjet Print, 2023. Courtesy of the artist.

**Aysia T:** As a part of the Mayworks Festival programming, you had a public talk with Migrant rights organizer Chris Ramsaroop, moderator Furqan Mohamed and of course Professor Chun about his story and wider conversations about Indigenous, Black, and racialized workers in academic institutions. Can you share more about this discussion or any highlights that came out of that conversation?

**Zinnia Naqvi:** All the materials I took about Professor Chun's case were from public archives. But it also felt like at the end of when I read his report, I wasn't sure where he lived or if he would be interested in the project, but it felt important to me to reach out to him. He originally had said that he would like to be part of a Zoom panel and then later, he said he wanted to come in person. This was significant because it has been 20 years since his case closed and he hadn't spoken publicly about it for a long time.

What I was interested in with research on Professor Chun's case is that I wanted to pay homage to his struggle because now, especially in the arts, we're seeing the flip side of what he had to go through. We're seeing now that institutions are aware of their lack of diversity and are trying to rectify that by holding targeted BIPOC hires. We're aware that there's a problem that's trying to be resolved. There are still a lot of flaws in that process too as it can be tokenizing. A lot of times people are again invited into the institution, but they're not supported once they're there.

But we are at least in a moment where people are openly recognizing that there's a problem and I do think, we [must] thank people like Professor Chun for making that part of the discourse. He sacrificed a lot to shift the public conscience and I wanted to pay homage to him in this project. Now that we're in a different moment that still needs a lot of work, but we are trying to make change. We discussed that he wasn't the only person who had public legal battles with universities in Canada. Many other racialized scholars are still in legal disputes with schools for not being supported or for speaking out against discrimination.

...You're expected to keep your head down and be grateful that you've been given any place at all, even if it's a precarious one.

**Aysia T:** I imagine you've been thinking about your own role or your own experiences within the institution and with your students. How has that informed your thinking about this project?

**Zinnia Naqvi:** I was thinking a lot about my own experience, but also about my students. Although I was and am a minority student and faculty, especially in the arts programs that I was in, I was also born here, and I wasn't an international student. That was one thing I wanted to also be aware of as I was making the work.

We don't always think of professors as workers because there's a certain prestige that comes with the academy. That was another thing that stood out about this case. To me it felt like Professor Chun did everything right, he went to these Ivy League schools, and he did everything that you're supposed to do on paper. Yet you're expected to keep your head down and be grateful that you've been given any place at all, even if it's a precarious one.

I was thinking about the way that my students, especially the ones who are international students, manage work, worry about grades, and all the pressure that the school puts on them. I've had a lot of support from the institutions that I've worked at but again, I feel that has come at the expense of others who have come before me.



**Aysia T:** I think some people dislike when people ask, “What do you dream of?” or “What would be an ideal change?” but I’ve learned to ask it anyway because it’s important. Do you see this work as a call to action for better support for BIPOC artists, students, workers, and staff within academic spaces? What do you hope to see in the future regarding these topics?

**Zinnia Naqvi:** I’m teaching a digital photography class at U of T right now, and I brought my students to the [Professor’s Desk] exhibition on the first day. It’s funny because it’s a photography class, and I’m making this very political work.

It’s always an awkward space because sometimes as professors, we don’t want to push our own work or our own research too hard. But I would hope that showing this work makes students feel like they can talk about these issues within the space of the school. It’s interesting with Chris Ramsaroop and some of the other student organizers who helped Professor Chun’s case, many of them are working in universities now.

I’m not sure if students today would do a one-week sit-in at the president’s office where they slept there for a week in support of Professor Chun. I just don’t think that we protest in the same way as they did in the nineties. But I think it just shows the impact that students have in these cases. I’m not sure if young people feel like they can make that change [through the idea of collective action]. I think this can be an example that they can. It takes a lot of resources and a lot of confidence to be able to do it. I think it’s also amazing and important to remember. They were able to create collective action and Professor Chun really got the most support from his students. I think talking about these issues and feeling like we can also be peers with our students is important.

# herizons



*The Colonial Games We Aren't Meant to Win*  
by Hema Krueger Vyas



Zinnia Naqvi, *Keep Off the Grass—Cullen Gardens and Miniature Village*, 1988, 2019. “It was my discomfort that weighted the camera,” Blinks Art & Project Space, Winnipeg, Man., July 16 to Sept. 10, 2022. (Courtesy of the artist).

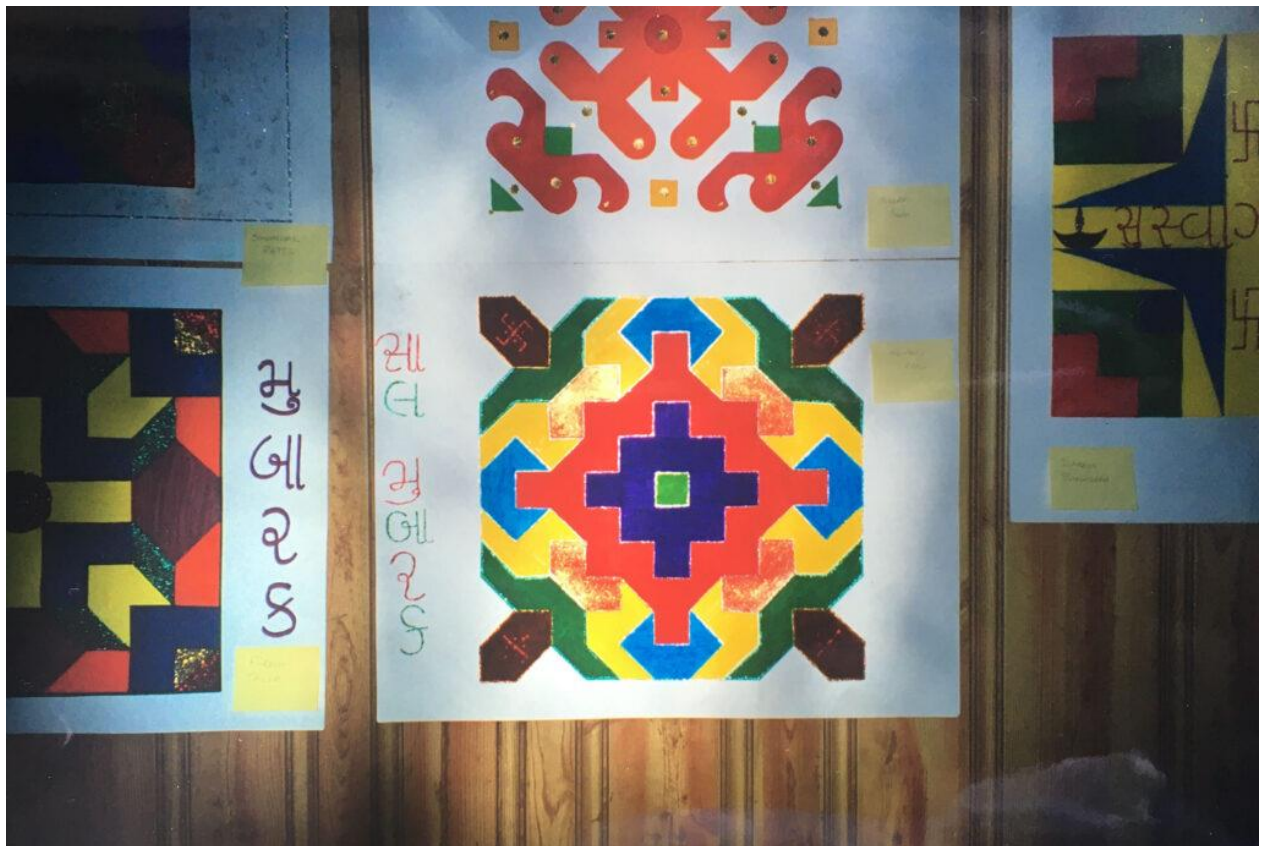
“At last, it’s *Shanivaar!*”—a joyful phrase I heard weekly, signifying that my mother had made it to Saturday. Saturday was a busy day for our little family of three. My father would work two jobs that day—one in the morning at the Freed & Freed coat factory and one in the evening, in the parking lot of the Winnipeg Convention Centre. My mother would take advantage of having the house to herself, cooking her favourite meals for us and watching the Asian Television Network, which aired on cable TV on Saturdays.

I was away all morning at Gujarati school in the West End of Winnipeg. Gujarati school was meant to be a place for diasporic Gujarati children to engage in culture, learn our language, and build community. At ten years old, I was a very shy person and although I sometimes found it difficult to build community, I did learn a passing level of Gujarati. I often found myself alone at both English and Gujarati school. My brownness was too different from my peers at my English or “regular” school and I was an easy target to be picked on. The shyness, largely stemming from the dynamic of English

school, still translated into Gujarati school, so I didn't quite fit in anywhere—a truly diasporic dilemma! What I hadn't realized then was that my shyness was also a gift that allowed careful observation—a certain voyeurism—where people would forget I was even there. Nonetheless, on those mornings, I longingly imagined skipping Gujarati school and dreamt of watching Saturday-morning cartoons while stealing rotlis glistening in butter that my mom cooked.

**I didn't quite fit in anywhere—a truly diasporic dilemma.**

One thing that did keep me engaged on those Saturday mornings was the annual Winnipeg Gujarati School Rangoli Colouring Competition. It was a *big deal*. It was one of the many things that my mom spent the year fretting about. Rangoli is an intricate artform dating back thousands of years throughout South Asia. It is a mathematical, colourful, and creative practice in which a series of geometric circles, squares, and hexagons are placed together in relation to each other. Together they create the larger picture at hand, which are often symbols of ceremony, like coconuts and lit pooja fires. Each year, each age level of children at Gujarati school competed against each other in creating rangoli to celebrate Diwali and the new year ahead. As an only child, play was usually relegated to things I could do alone, ruling out activities like board games or sports—but it made connecting to an arts practice like rangoli very exciting. All of this would culminate with an evening gathering in a rented community hall, showcasing the artwork we had created. The winners received trophies for first, second, and third place in each category.



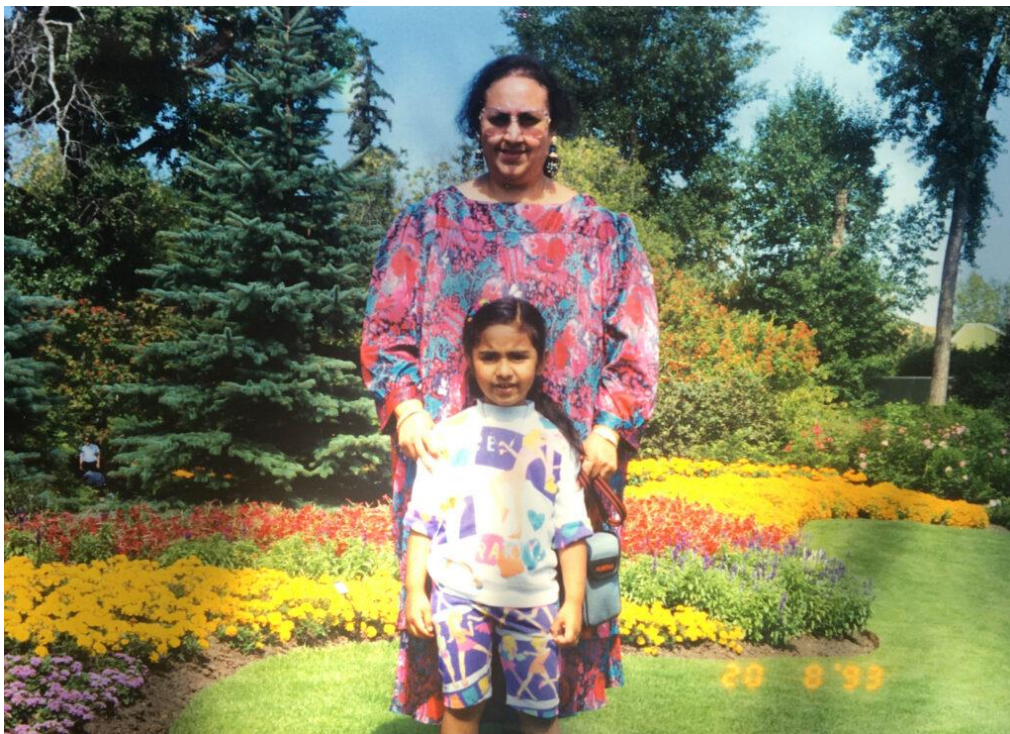
Rangoli is a mathematical, colourful, and creative South Asian practice, in which a series of geometric circles, squares, and hexagons are placed together in relation to each other.

I competed in the contest every year and often came in second or third place—never first. My parents proudly displayed my trophies on top of our television. They watched over my mom as she settled in

for her Saturday mornings of solitude. Every year my mom and I would spend weekends, even precious Shanivaar afternoons leading up to October, working on designs and examining the photos she took of the art of previous years' winners. "Look, beta," she would say. "Look at whose rangoli won last year; we could do it like this. Look at the way the glitter glue shines, how did they do that? Do you think they painted it on with a paintbrush?" Some evenings there would be discussion amongst all the parents—phone calls on landlines, which seemed to bring out my mom's competitiveness even more. On those evenings I would secretly overhear her talking to Feroz's mom: "What kind of game is this? Look, I know you're cheating. It's not fair!" A silent indifference on the other end. After hanging up, she would turn to me with an expression of exhaustion: "Le, jhoto? See, this is why they win every year, Hemali."

My mom offered to help me cheat, but as we thought it through, I couldn't imagine taking her up on the offer. Rangoli is a dexterous artform and I imagined her hands shaking with worry as she tried to pencil in the graph lines. I sensed that in her worry, she would press the pencil down too hard as she drew out each one-centimeter line by one-centimeter line, making them impossible to erase after. Instead, I practiced for months leading up to that special Shanivaar of the competition. I practiced pencilling in gentle, straight lines. I practiced painting on the glitter glue with a small paintbrush, each sparkle shimmering back at me like a thousand tiny mirrors.

The Friday evening before the 1998 competition, I mapped out the graph of my rangoli design while my mom sat in the living room next to me watching the episode of *Days of Our Lives* she had taped while she was at work that day. She would pause every once in a while to check on my progress: "Can I do anything, beta?" That evening as we went to bed, the anxiety in our household was palpable. My mom could barely sleep, counting the hours down to the morning, reciting her mantras over and over again, hoping this would allow her some rest.



Hema Krueger Vyas, seen in 1993 with her mother, Kusum Vyas, who helped her train for the Winnipeg Gujarati School Rangoli Colouring Competition. (Courtesy of the writer).

Finally, as the daylight broke on that fateful Shanivaar, I packed for the most important morning of Gujarati school in my entire life. I gathered my supplies: markers, pencils, rulers, erasers, glitter glue, and a small paintbrush to evenly spread each fleck of glitter. My mom checked over what I had packed several times, glaring at anyone who crossed her path that morning. She momentarily paused as my dad and I headed out the door to say, “Good luck, beta,” before glaring at my father and saying, “And don’t drive like an idiot! It is a special day!”

Looking back, decades later, I can better understand the ways in which the competition grew an artistic and playful connection to my culture, while also normalizing competition within my community. The pressure of competition can be all-encompassing—a pressure that shifts focus from relationships to a personal goal. In a gamelike way, the normalization of competition within every sphere of our lives works as a colonial tool, relying on the strategy of divide and conquer. In growing this understanding, I came to learn that my community is not my competition. The freedom to challenge the idea that they are, has allowed me to lean into the joy of celebrating the people around me. Perhaps, these are colonial games that we aren’t meant to win. I wonder if these are games—or systems—that we could somehow opt out of. Is there a way to cheat the system that has been imposed?

**The pressure of competition can be all-encompassing—a pressure that shifts focus from relationships to a personal goal.**

With these questions in mind, I turn to art. It is compelling that there are diasporic South Asian creatives in Canada bringing forward these ideas and creating opportunities for reflection, while proposing alternative ways of being in relationship on this land. While taking in Zinnia Naqvi’s exhibition, “It was my discomfort that weighted the camera.” at Blinkers Art & Project Space in Winnipeg in summer 2022, I was drawn to the themes of play in Naqvi’s photographs and the ways she highlights how colonial nation-building utilizes diasporic peoples.

Throughout the exhibition, Naqvi draws on colonial mindsets around leisure, play, and the outdoors, which is conceptualized through settlement, competition, and civility. Naqvi illustrates the ways in which diasporic people of colour may adopt tools of colonialism through seemingly innocent activities and, in turn, work towards the ideals of colonial nation-building on this land. The exhibition, which showcased two short films and several photographs incorporating Naqvi’s family photographs, board games, books, and VHS tapes, left me with a deeper sense of reflection around my identity and community.



Zinnia Naqvi, *The Wanderers—Niagara Falls, 1988, 2019*. (Courtesy of the artist).

Naqvi's photographs superimpose her own family photographs from the 1990s onto tiles of popular board games. The board games she has chosen, *Monopoly* and *Settlers of Catan*, are games that center on the idea of nation-building through the monopolization and commodification of land and resources. The Disney VHS tapes displayed in her photographs, like *Aladdin*, *Mary Poppins*, and *Pocahontas* showcase the insidious nature of how colonial myths and ideals of civility are normalized throughout our lives. These images are further contextualized by the books in her photographs, which are critical theory texts like Sarah Ahmed's *On Being Included*, stacked around the VHS tapes and board game pieces.

In contemplating Naqvi's work, I was reminded of Robinder Kaur Sehdev's article, "People of Colour in Treaty." Kaur Sehdev brings forward the question of how we, as diaspora, can move outside of the framework of colonial nation-building, understanding that our relationships to Indigenous peoples and nations have been negotiated through this process, on this land. Naqvi's art creates space to explore the multiplicity of our roles, recognizing how power and privilege dynamics play out for settlers of colour, within all of our relationships here. Naqvi's photographs offer us the question: what could it be like for us to negotiate our relationships ourselves? Her work is a reminder that our lives are worth so much more than being players in a colonial agenda. Through her work, Naqvi presents a critical and necessary dialogue for settlers of colour, particularly South Asian diaspora, to engage in.

The central theme of play is significant throughout Naqvi's work. While her art calls attention to the sinister aspects of leisure, Naqvi also leaves room to explore the beauty within it. Her work reminds us of the importance of play—a sacred gift which can allow us to explore ourselves and others through joy and pleasure. In responding to Naqvi's work, I was grateful for the opportunity to revisit the mindset of the young person I once was.

**Naqvi's art creates space to explore the multiplicity of our roles, recognizing how power and privilege dynamics play out for settlers of colour, within all of our relationships here.**

Last year, my mom passed away—younger than her mother was when she passed. My grief was compounded by the understanding that her experiences of colonialism contributed to her passing at a younger age. However, the spirit of who she was left me motivated to keep trying. In some ways, perhaps she had lost the game, but in other ways she had cheated the system. She fought hard to leave behind so much love and to resist the ways colonialism had impacted her relationships. In many ways, I think she won, if it even was something to be won in the first place. In the end, although the rangoli colouring competitions may not have worked to grow what was an already awkward relationship to my peers, working in collaboration with my mom and strategizing together brought us both irrevocable moments of love.

Back at the rented community hall, my mom and I sat next to each other awaiting the results as my Dad worked his evening shift at the Convention Centre. “And the award for first place in the 1998 annual Gujarati Colouring Competition goes to Hemali Vyas! Shabaash Hemali.” My heart leapt, I could hear my mom elated, cheering beside me, the way she would cheer along to her television shows. My temporary shock surrendered as I felt my mom pushing me to stand up. I walked to the front of the room and there was Mitesh Uncle beaming at me. “Hold on, let’s get your prize, beta,” he said. As he walked away, the realization of what was to come next dawned on me. My heart sank. This year was different and just like the second- and third-prize winners, I would not be getting a trophy with my name engraved on it. As he handed me a box and shook my hand, I looked down and saw, glistening in its plastic wrap, *Monopoly*. I won a copy of the game *Monopoly*. “Now,” I thought, “what kind of a game is this?”

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**Hema Krueger Vyas** is a Gujarati writer and educator living in Winnipeg, Man., in the homelands of the Anishinaabe, Ininiw, Métis, Anish-Iniw, Dene, and Dakota Nations. While Hema’s work primarily focuses on sexual health and anti-oppression, she is re-engaging with an arts practice, carrying a steady hand whenever she brushes glitter glue.



## Yours To Discover

By Kesang Nanglu  
Edited by Melina Mehr

In 1980, the Ontario Ministry of Industry and Tourism launched a campaign titled “Yours to Discover.” Whether heard spoken in a commercial or read across a provincial license plate, every Ontarian is familiar with the now iconic phrase. Its enduring success can be credited to its marketing approach, which was aimed directly at locals and encouraged Ontarians to explore their own province. Evocative imagery highlighted stunning natural landscapes, quaint historical sites and bustling urban areas.

Zinnia Naqvi’s 2019 photo series borrows its title from the campaign, playfully critiquing the fabricated sense of a unified Canadian identity it sought to foster. Centering her still lifes around found images from her family’s photo archive, she subverts the genre of tourist photography to explore issues of colonialism, immigration, and nationalism.

Each work features a well-known tourist attraction Naqvi’s family visited in the 1980s while contemplating moving from Pakistan to Canada. Arranged as centrepieces, the photos are placed among seemingly disparate materials ranging from board games and childhood memorabilia to theoretical texts. Read together, they create new meanings and connections from otherwise



innocuous family photos. Some of these objects are balanced precariously, hinting at the unstable position of immigrant newcomers to Canada living within its rigid societal systems.

*“Tourism Ontario newspaper advertisement, May 1980:*

*“Welcome to the world around you, blue skies and breath-taking Northern vistas, rolling hills, towering forests, 400,000 inland lakes, glorious gorges, thundering falls, and miles and miles of untamed wilds.”*

Printed on a mug in *The Wanderers – Niagara Falls, 1988* is an image of Caspar David Friedrich’s *Wanderer above the Sea Fog*. Painted in 1818, it has since been reproduced widely, evolving into an iconic symbol of exploration and the spirit of adventure. Despite being motivating factors of colonialism, ideas of exploration and discovery are often romanticized in art, contributing to the myth of European claims of ownership over inhabited land and even natural phenomena.

At the centre of *The Wanderers – Niagara Falls, 1988* is a photo of Naqvi’s family visiting the falls. Like the lone figure in Friedrich’s painting, they are explorers in an unfamiliar place. Along with the board game *The Settlers of Catan* in the foreground of the still life, the inclusion of the printed mug serves as a reminder that immigrant newcomers also play a role in Canada’s colonial history as progressive settlers on stolen land.

*“Tourism Ontario newspaper advertisement, May 1980:*

*“Welcome to our gentler nature, fields, and pastures, market gardens, vineyards, orchards, winding by-ways and all our smaller, quiet places.”*

Performance plays a significant role in Naqvi’s practice and this is true of *Yours to Discover*. Each photograph features a game in play, though arranged neatly as if being reenacted for the viewer. Even the way the still lifes are composed evokes the semicircle of a stage.

Performance, in the sense of socially constructed behaviour is also explored. In *Keep Off the Grass – Cullen Gardens and Miniature Village, 1988*, meticulously designed models portray neat homes, gardens and railways. Exemplifying rural and suburban ideals, the gardens leave a wholesome impression, but their underlying motive brings this reading into question. These are, after all, idealized representations, selected carefully to speak to traditional Canadian values like orderliness and civility. These values are again embodied in the work’s title, *Keep Off the Grass*—a common expression found on lawn signage, both on private and public property. Wooden peg dolls painted like soccer players are placed around the open Monopoly board, representing the conflicting priorities of communities versus corporate entities.

For immigrant families, not only public social behaviours, but also personal cultural practices like language are threatened by the demands of assimilation—whether forcibly or subtly imposed— and can be lost in only a few generations. In her book of essays that accompanies the series, Naqvi asks “How do we carry the legacies of our unique identities forward, when our relationship to them might be frail and thin?”

*“Tourism Ontario newspaper advertisement, May 1980:*

*“Welcome to the celebrations, plays, [...] fairs and festivals, and city lights — a feast of cultures, yours to enjoy, Ontario — yours to discover.”*

*A Whole New World – CN Tower, 1988* takes its title from the 1992 Disney movie, *Aladdin* (a VHS copy of which is present in the arrangement). Sung as a duet by Jasmine and Aladdin as they fly through the night sky on their magic carpet, the song is used in connection to the experience of viewing Toronto from the top of the CN Tower. In this context, it speaks to the state of wonder prompted by exploring a new and unfamiliar place, but also the destabilizing feeling this shift can cause.

To move across the world and start a new life means adventure, but also risk, whether it be to financial security, lifestyle, or personal and cultural connections. In a broader sense, there is also significant sacrifice associated with industrial progress that places entire communities at risk. Rice is poured in a curved line along building blocks as a tribute to Chinese railway workers who constructed the Canadian Pacific Railway under inhumane conditions and without basic rights throughout the 1880s. Like the CN Tower, the railway is a significant feat of industrial engineering that had massive implications for Canada’s progress and status as an international power. Long known to be the tallest tower in the world (and later surpassed in 2009 by the Canton Tower in China), the CN Tower remains a symbol of Canadian identity. The concept of multiculturalism, popularized by Pierre Trudeau’s 1988 Multiculturalism Act, is also emphatically accepted by many Canadians as a defining aspect of Canadian identity, despite being at odds with contemporary attitudes towards immigrants and their historical treatment.

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*Yours to Discover* is an ambitious project that tackles complex issues in a way that is accessible and relatable. The photographs from Naqvi’s family archives are ambiguous, but are contextualized through clues and visual metaphors. It is tempting to assign a sense of nostalgia or sentimentality to these works just by virtue of their featuring personal photographs, but their arrangement reveals a methodical approach concerned less with personal memory, but rather with examining shared ideas of place in order to reconcile established notions of Canadian identity with the actual lived experience of immigrants living across Canada.

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## *Ancestors, I Carry You With Me // Inherit at the Art Gallery at Evergreen*



Installation view of Zinnia Naqvi's photo series *Dear Nani* (2017-).

An inheritance bonds those who came before and those who receive, intimately connecting the past and present through acts of passing down and receiving. Curated by Kate Henderson, *Inherit* considers inheritance beyond material objects, instead focusing on the stories, experiences, memories, and losses that are passed down and held by later generations. It invites us to witness the complex and nuanced range of inheritances that can, but do not necessarily, entail a choice or gift, especially in diasporic narratives and colonial histories.

The gallery begins on the windows of the Lafarge Lake–Douglas SkyTrain station, where Angeline Simon's *All that we can carry* (2021) is on display for commuters. Simon's collages of her Malaysian Chinese and German family weave together historical and contemporary photographs. Using Photoshop's algorithm to determine what is included and excluded, Simon allows chance to play a role in her creative process, resulting in haunting compositions of black and white archival photos overlaid with recent, coloured images. The temporal spaces of the past and present are united in each collage, as most of the collages feature figures from old family portraits as mere silhouettes replaced by present landscapes, or occasionally scenes of black and white faces staring back with coloured images creeping into the scenery.

Looking at a winter lake layered on top of four bodies in Simon's *across the lake, beyond the pines* (2018), I wonder if the ghosts of my ancestors also occupy my contemporary landscapes, waiting to be

noticed. I am overcome with a surge of grief and mourning for my unknown ancestors, lost in abandoned archives, lost to the chance of what the mind remembers or forgets and the dominant narratives that dictate what is kept or erased.

It is under such a context that I enter the Art Gallery at Evergreen. The word “Inherit” stands boldly against a deep plum-coloured wall, as the space opens up to walls of photography and a diorama at its centre. Sprawled across the wall to my immediate left is Zinnia Naqvi’s series *Dear Nani* (2017-), an intriguing combination of images of and based on Naqvi’s grandmother. Small original photographs are shown alongside much larger reproductions and captions that create dialogue between grandmother and granddaughter.

Taken in Pakistan, 1948, the images of Nani depict her dressed in her husband’s outfits during their honeymoon. Placed next to an image of a page from *The Children’s Dictionary*, defining “Occident” and “occidentalized,” *Nani with Moustache* (1948) features Nani standing stiffly in western, educated, male clothing with a fake moustache. Her eyes gleam, betraying suppressed laughter. Two generations later, unable to ask her grandmother directly, Naqvi imagines conversations with her, printed as text captions on the wall: “I put myself into the unanswered questions. I try on the role of Nani.” She pictures Nani explaining, “We were young... and just having a good time.” By including these archival family portraits, Naqvi honours Nani’s overlooked form of resistance: her playfulness and joy in the face of British colonialism. Instead of upholding the Occident’s constructed prestige and colonial gender norms, Nani mocks and subverts them by performing what was not meant for her. Nani’s photos are healing and heartwarming; it makes me happy to see Nani happy, and in turn I wonder what brought about mischievous grins for my own ancestors.

There is a similar sense of different time periods and generations, black and white versus coloured, brought into one space as in Simon’s series. However, while Simon’s collages render past and present inseparable, melded together within the same frame, Naqvi distinguishes past and present while connecting them, as her grandmother’s photos are framed and overlap those of her own, which are printed directly on the gallery wall. Naqvi’s own photos include a self-portrait and shots of a garden in which she re-enacts Nani’s pose and outfit, revitalising her family archives. Yet, none of the photos reveal her face. Her anonymity allows space for the faces yet to come, who will inherit the same stories — a promise of bodies that inherit and ancestors who reply.



Installation view of *Inherit*.

In the series *Trisha* (2016), Vivek Shraya recreates old photos of her mother, but her series is both ode and lament. As a trans woman, Shraya inherits her father's physique and her mother's femininity and gender.<sup>1</sup> Shraya also discloses in an exhibited letter to her mother that her mother wanted either two sons or a daughter named 'Trisha,' suggesting that she also inherits the shadows of her mother's unfulfilled desires. In the letter, Shraya reflects that the photos taken before her birth reveal a new side of her mom: "I remember finding these photos of you three years ago and being astonished, even hurt, by your joyfulness, your playfulness. I wish I had known this side of you, before Canada, marriage and motherhood stripped it from you, and us." In each image, the way Shraya's mother holds herself appears valiant and graceful, with the slightest mischief; the viewer can understand the qualities of her mother that Shraya aspires to embody. By dressing as her mother, she enacts what she interprets as her mom's playful past as a young woman free of familial responsibilities and simultaneously embraces her own journey of gender identity and contemplates both the beauty and socialised pressures of womanhood.

In a set of two photos, Shraya's mom speaks on the phone next to an analogue clock, in stark contrast to Shraya's recreation of the photo and the jarring "2:41PM" on her laptop, emphasizing the incongruity between mother and daughter, despite their parallels. In another pair, Shraya's sorrowful gaze at her parents' wedding photo, compared to her mother's scornful expression at the same photo, poignantly captures the nuances and shifts in desire and perspectives between just one generation, heavy with the weight and complexities of an immigrant family's experiences.

Both Naqvi and Shraya use reenactment and clothing to refuse the respective losses of their grandmother's and mother's stories to diasporic journeys in an attempt to recover their maternal figures and resist erasure. Unlike Naqvi's use of anonymity, Shraya asserts herself in each photo, mirroring her mother but emphasising their differences; it is a powerful proclamation of her own personhood, womanhood, and queerness in what I can imagine and can relate to as an enduring

tension between her mother's and her own desires and definitions of happiness, and in the face of intergenerational trauma.

*Inherit* brings into fruition the potential that art spaces offer for revisionist storytelling and history making. The exhibition honours the past through the present, shedding light on often untold histories while amplifying contemporary voices that enrich narratives of diaspora. Moreover, the expanded off-site installation, beginning from the SkyTrain station to the window display, moves art into the world at large, a strategic community engagement tactic and effective attempt at making art more accessible.

As I leave *Inherit* wearing my mother's leather jacket, purchased after immigrating to Canada in the mid-90's, I cannot imagine it upon her now-shrunken frame. I have vague memories of photo albums I found as a kid, treasures encompassing my young mother wearing floral skirts and pastel colours, hair styled in a fashionable bob. The mom I know wears hand-me-downs and cotton that favour housework and keep her lower back warm. She rarely takes photos, but I can tell she secretly enjoys it when I stand her next to the springtime's cherry blossoms, directing her to pose and smile – a slight glimpse for me of my mom not as mother or wife, but simply as herself.

With the wrinkled leather resting on my skin, I embody both first-generation Chinese Canadian and my imagined memories of my mom – of both her youthfulness and pain. The jacket embraces me with the faint presence of its previous owner and sits on my shoulders with the heaviness of her immigrant experience. There is not much I know about that time in her life, and I am hesitant to ask, afraid of discovering the joyous and carefree versions of my mother in the 'before-times' and of mourning the experiences that slowly eroded or concealed them. I yearn to know my mother, my ancestors, and consequently, myself – but asking these questions of inheritance feels daunting. For the time being, I continue to daydream about all the lives my mom has lived that I do not know of, imagine the questions I would ask like Naqvi, draft and revise letters of unspoken sentiments like Shraya's, and explain in response to each compliment that with my leather jacket, I carry my mother with me.

#### Notes:

1. An excerpt from a letter from Shraya to her mother reads, "You had also prayed for me to look like Dad, but you forgot to pray for the rest of me...When I take off my clothes and look in the mirror, I see Dad's body, as you wished. But the rest of me has always wished to be you." See: <https://vivekshraya.com/projects/visual/trisha/>

#### Images

1. Installation view of *Inherit*, exhibition at the Art Gallery at Evergreen, 2022. Photo: Rachel Topham Photography. Courtesy of Art Gallery at Evergreen.
2. Ibid.

**Cathy Xu** is an emerging Chinese and Canadian storyteller, based in Vancouver, British Columbia on unceded xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səfilwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) territories. Her work explores diasporic narratives and knowledge productions, bodies as archives of memory and homeland, and sites of BIPOC and queer resistance and futures. Xu is especially interested in storytelling through food and drawing from mythology and fantasy to imagine and claim identity. Her writing has been published in *SAD Magazine*, and she is the creator of a virtual platform, featuring oral histories and her artwork, entitled *The Imaginary & Love: Women and Non-binary BIPOC Futures*. In her day to day, she dreams of pastries and observing plants.

## Family Photos: Notes on Zinnia Naqvi's 'Dear Nani' and 'Yours to Discover'

Turning to her own family albums, Naqvi's work combs through layered narratives that engage with themes of authenticity, cultural translation, language, and gender.

By Noa Bronstein April 24, 2020



Featured image: Zinnia Naqvi, *Nani in Safari Hat*, 1948. (Reproduction 2017).

Family photo albums have an unusual way of finding their way into unexpected public spaces: galleries, libraries, garage sales, auctions. When untethered from private custody, albums seem to lose some of their personal attachments, becoming instead something to be collected and viewed, handled and looked at by strangers. We see this in Victorian-era album displays in museums or in various artist projects, like *Max Dean: Album*, in which Toronto-based artist Max Dean showcased his collection of over 400 albums in an attempt to repatriate them to new or original owners. Albums shift within these contexts from living documents to detached artifacts and objects. But some albums take another route altogether, remaining simultaneously private and public.

Zinnia Naqvi's *Dear Nani* (2017) and *Yours to Discover* (2019) offer intimate and challenging instances of how the family album can remain firmly planted in the realm of the personal while taking up meaningful space in public. Turning to her own family albums, Naqvi's works comb through layered narratives that engage with themes of authenticity, cultural translation, language, and gender. Her practice combines photography, video, writing, archival footage,

and installation as a means to foreground weighty subjects ranging from migration and memory to colonialism. She further addresses ideas pertaining to identity construction and the ways in which photography in particular can be a useful device in generating counter viewpoints to historical and contemporary notions of place, nation, and self. Although Naqvi does not show the album as such—as a bound collection of snapshots—she does in a sense turn it inside out, dispersing its contents with care and thoughtful intention.

*Dear Nani* (2017) centers around photographs of Naqvi's maternal grandmother, Rhubab Tapal. The images were taken in 1948 by Rhubab's husband, Gulam Abbas Tapal, while the two were on their honeymoon in Quetta and Karachi, Pakistan. In each image Rhubab faces the camera smiling, seemingly happy, playful, and at ease. Rhubab's contented demeanor immediately establishes a way into the images. Her friendly and comfortable appearance suggests that she is happy to be photographed and to have these moments documented and shared. The same can be said of her chosen attire. The photographs show Rhubab dressed in her husband's suits, tunics, ties, and hats, in what at the time would have been considered almost exclusively "men's clothing." The clothes are a little too big on Rhubab, subtly suggesting they may not be hers.

Interspersed within the black and white photographs of Rhubab are colour images of the artist responding to her family archive. In one image, a photo of Rhubab standing in a backyard and dressed in a suit floats atop a larger image of a lushly green garden with the artist sitting in the background, out of focus. The texture of the photograph of Rhubab—the slight discolouration, frayed edges, and minor folds—contrasts effectively with the newness of the artist's more recent

medium-format self-portrait, highlighting the time lapse between the two images. In another particularly captivating work, a grainy photograph of a lone dangling leg is overlaid with an image of Naqvi sitting in a wooden chair with her legs similarly positioned. Faces and full figures are absent in both images, though we do see glimpses of the artist: her green nail polish, her white tank top. There is a likeness, vulnerability, and tenderness to the pairing. This tenderness extends in the project's textual element in which Naqvi carries out a fictional conversation with her Nani. Through this brief back and forth, she is able to collapse inter-generational distance, working to better understand these images. One part of the exchange, for example, proceeds as follows:

*It looks like a proper photo shoot. All the pictures are very posed with props and different outfits.*

*Well his clothes felt like costumes to me so it started to feel like a movie set. I started to pose with props like the heroes or villains in films. We came up with different scenes based on the outfits. Each had a very different look.*

Placing herself in the images and in dialogue with her grandmother creates a space to attempt to ascribe her own political reading to the work.<sup>1</sup> Naqvi explains that the project is not just about attempting to parse out meaning lost to time. The family does not know much about the photos and why Rhubab is dressed as she is. The images were not a secret but were not explained either.<sup>2</sup> Is Rhubab challenging gender norms and expectations? Is she intending her portraits to carry a political charge? Was this simply dress-up? Naqvi is not sure, but the project articulates to the viewer that there are multiple personal and political meanings folded into the images.



Inkjet Print. Image courtesy of the artist; Above: Zinnia Naqvi, *Nani in Garden*, 1948. (Reproduction 2017). Inkjet Print. Image courtesy of the artist.





Zinnia Naqvi, *Self-portrait in the Garden, 2017, and Nani in the Garden (2), 1948.* (Reproduction 2017). Inkjet Print. Image courtesy of the artist.

Several different performances are discernible within *Dear Nani*. Naqvi performs a close reading of the images and re-enacting her grandmother's gender performance. We have less knowledge of Rhubab's intentions: is the performance the cross-dressing, or outside of it? Is it neither, something in-between or both simultaneously? Rhubab is also performing, as Naqvi notes, "colonial mimicry." When writing about the project, Naqvi quotes Homi K. Bhabha who states in his essay *Of Mimicry and Man* that "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite." She explains that in one image Nani holds a Children's Encyclopaedia, produced as an edifying tool for subjects of the British colonies, and in so doing "she is performing not only the role of man, but also an Indian man performing the role of a British man." Perhaps Naqvi's grandfather, who took the pictures and whose clothes she is wearing, is similarly performing gender and race roles by helping to stage these images and their complex depictions. We may be left to speculate on the encyclopedia's meaning, but given that these images were taken in Pakistan in 1948, the year after the nation achieved independence from the British Raj, it seems unlikely that this object is merely a prop.

Zinnia Naqvi, *Keep Off the Grass – Cullen*



Zinnia Naqvi, *Keep Off the Grass – Cullen Gardens and Miniature Village, 1988, 2019.* Inkjet Print. Image courtesy of the artist.

*Gardens and Miniature Village, 1988, 2019. Inkjet Print. Image courtesy of the artist.*

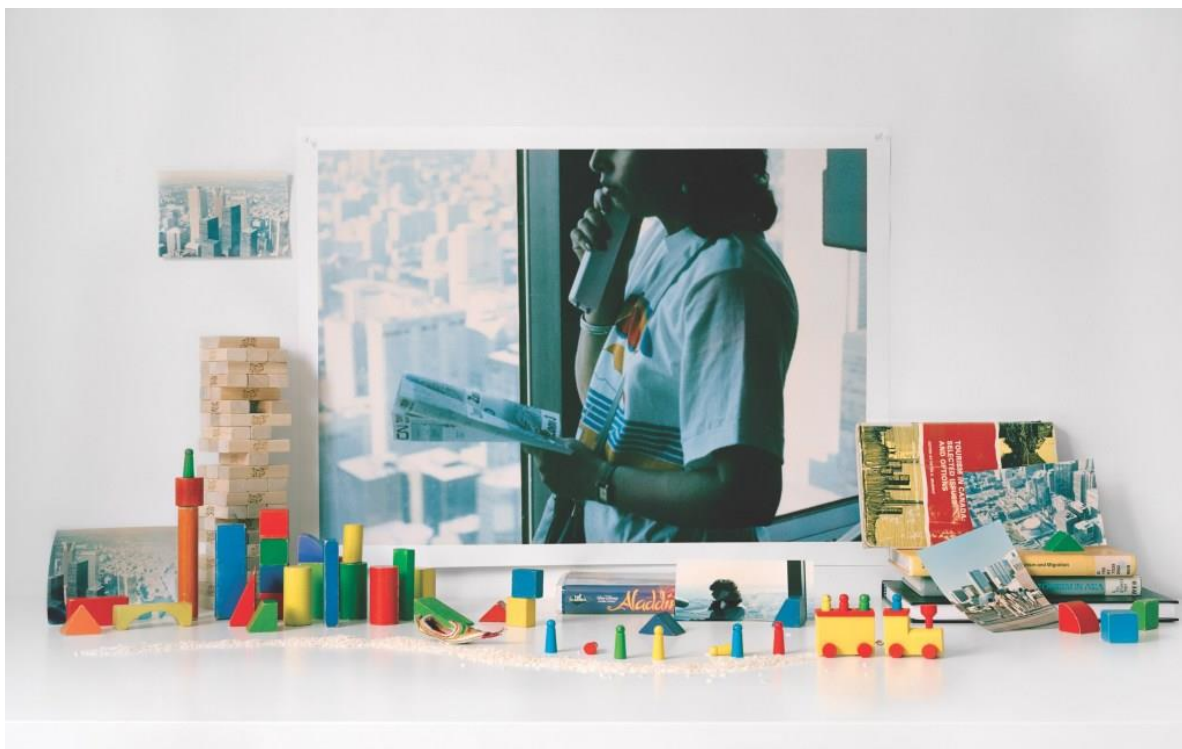
Photography has historically been practiced at establishing and re-entrenching violent separations by documenting and visualizing binaries of man/woman, ruler/subject and colonizer/colonized, to name but a few. The performative gestures in *Dear Nani* seem to complicate these binaries by foregrounding contradictions, ambiguities, and uncertainties. Naqvi's use of intertextuality and double meanings invokes a kind of productive confusion whereby images can be seen through a de-stabilized and de-naturalized lens. Images are always read through the positionality of the viewer, even though so much photography claims otherwise. *Dear Nani* in particular leaves plenty of room to try to read the images by way of our own individual mediations and questions. In this way Naqvi asks the medium itself to function differently and more openly, asking that it retain some of the emotional residue and unexplainable qualities of the personal archive and family album.

Found photos also appear in Naqvi's most recent three-image project, *Yours to Discover* (2019). The project is still in progress, and Naqvi plans to add more images to the work, which focuses on a family trip taken to Canada in 1988. Naqvi describes the images as part of a kind of reconnaissance mission in which her family visited several iconic Ontario sites, including the CN Tower, Niagara Falls, and Cullen Gardens, in order to consider the prospect of immigrating to Canada from Karachi, Pakistan. The project is titled after Ontario's licence plate slogan, which was adopted in 1982 but has since been amended by Doug Ford's Conservative government to *Open For Business*. Resembling still lifes, the works combine family snapshots with board games, VHS tapes of Disney movies, books, and other objects. The props and primary colour palette speak to the era in which the family photos were taken. On first glance the images have a distinctly nostalgic 80s look. Upon closer inspection, however, the performance of nationalism, capitalism, and citizenship and the relationship between them informs the visual traces Naqvi leaves for us to unpack.



Zinnia Naqvi, *The Wanderers - Niagara Falls, 1988, 2019. Inkjet Print. Image courtesy of the artist.*

In *Keep Off the Grass – Cullen Gardens and Miniature Village, 1988*, an image of Naqvi's family gathered around model suburban homes is presented alongside a Monopoly board and stacks of rainbow-coloured paper money. On the face of things, Cullen Gardens<sup>3</sup> and Monopoly are amusing takes on North American modes of living. On a much deeper level, however, these images present cultural expectations that assume Canadians will subscribe to property ownership, wealth accumulation and a devotion to capital. Similarly, *The Wanderers – Niagara Falls, 1988* combines the board game Settlers of Catan with a VHS of *Pocahontas*, a copy of the book *Cultivating Canada* and photos of the artist's family visiting Niagara Falls. The colonial references to forced displacement, land grabs and Canadian history as settler history are made apparent through Naqvi's careful selection and arrangement of objects. During the period in which Naqvi's family made their trip and documented their travels, Canada would have been heavily invested in multiculturalist rhetoric. *Yours to Discover* decodes Canadian mythmaking of togetherness and pluralism. Instead, I see a counterview that accounts for Canada's ongoing denial of Indigenous sovereignty, full equality, and alternative economic systems committed to sharing and reciprocity. By bringing together many different visual elements, Naqvi appears to be pointing to, on the one hand, nationalist fantasies enacted through grand landscapes and architecture, and on the other, the granularities and realities of daily life. The sites that Naqvi's family visits are heavily invested in rendering a specific value and power system that maintains certain ways of being Canadian while excluding others. As with *Dear Nani*, we are encouraged to conduct our own analyses of the works and consider to what extent Naqvi's family is performing Canadianness in these images. What instances of refusal might be quietly revealed here? And how is each family member negotiating their own national identities on and off camera?



Zinnia Naqvi, *A Whole New World – CN Tower, 1988, 2019*. Inkjet Print.  
Image courtesy of the artist.

A question I keep returning to with this work, one that I have posed directly to Naqvi, is: does showing personal snapshots within a gallery context alter the images by turning them into artworks, or does bringing the family archive into the gallery shift the space itself, changing how it operates and for whom? What changes—the images or the space? Ultimately, this is a question that is concerned with

how images circulate and the impacts they have once they leave the privacy of the family archive and take up residency in public space. After spending time in the company of Naqvi's works, I am convinced that the images remain personal and act on the gallery to shift the kind of narratives and subjectivities that are foregrounded within institutional spaces. Dear Nani and Yours to Discover bring self-selective and self-representative archives rooted in family, relationships, questions, and uncertainties into public view. Maybe we can say, then, that Naqvi's practice allows the family album to, in a sense, stay within the family even while being shared far beyond it, and that this sharing helps bend the gallery into a more generous and vulnerable space.

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1. Phone call with artist, August 9, 2019.
2. Phone call with artist.
3. Cullen Gardens and Miniature Village in Whitby, Ontario was a popular tourist site of 160 miniature buildings, cottages and homes. The site was operational from 1980 through 2006.