

The Paglees

**BETWEEN
REASON
AND
MADNESS**

**EXHIBITION
GUIDE**

The Paglees

Fawzia Khan

Indrani Nayar-Gall

Monica Jahan Bose

Nirmal Raja

Pallavi Sharma

Renluka Maharaj

Shelly Bahl

South Asia Institute is pleased to present the exhibition, "The Paglees: Between Reason and Madness," in collaboration with the Paglees.

The Paglees is a feminist collective of artists of South Asian origin living across the United States. *Paglee* or *pagli* means crazy woman in a number of South Asian languages.

In their debut exhibition, The Paglees investigate – with fierceness, beauty, and wit – the impact on women of generations of patriarchy, religion, white supremacy, colonialism, violence, capitalism, and environmental plunder.

The title of the exhibition derives from Rosa Parks' words: "There is just so much hurt, disappointment and oppression one can take. The bubble of life grows larger. The line between reason and madness grows thinner." (Rosa Parks: Writings, Notes and Statements, 1956-58).

Featuring mixed-media works on paper, fabric, and canvas, sculpture, performance, photography, installation, and moving image, *The Paglees: Between Reason and Madness*, questions and reframes the labeling of non-conforming women as crazy and the marginalization of immigrant women of color. This collective exhibition presents new decolonial narratives that center the reason and wisdom of brown women of the Global South and diaspora, and provide pathways to a creative feminist future. The Paglees believe in working in collaboration with other marginalized communities to build bridges and demand social, environmental, and legal justice for all.



FAWZIA KHAN

Fawzia Khan is a multidisciplinary artist based in Minneapolis, MN, who was born in Lagos, Nigeria to Pakistani parents and emigrated to the U.S. at the age of 12. A former obstetrician-gynecologist, she holds a BFA from the University of Minnesota. Fawzia creates socially conscious bodies of work that engage viewers and open a space for dialogue and reflection, acknowledging our shared humanity and creating the opportunity for empathy and resolution. As an immigrant woman of color, physician and mother, she is concerned with issues of marginalization, gender inequity, and the balance between safety and freedom. Fawzia has participated in solo and group shows in the Midwest and her work is included in many public and private collections.

INDRANI NAYAR-GALL

A multidisciplinary feminist artist, Indrani Nayar-Gall weaves global narratives of marginalization, patriarchy, and misogyny through her practice in installation, 2-D/3-D media, and moving image. Social justice themes stem from influences in her mixed north-south Indian background, parental modeling of community engagement, helping marginalized women survivors, and socio-political activism. In a career spanning over thirty-five years, including teaching, Indrani has exhibited nationally and internationally and founded Yes She Rises LLC. Indrani has an MFA in Experimental Printmaking, Graduate Certificate in Contemporary Non-toxic Printmaking, and a Diploma in Education. She continues expanding her knowledge in moving image and digital processes.



MONICA JAHAN BOSE

Monica Jahan Bose is a Bangladeshi-American artist and climate activist whose work spans painting, printmaking, film, performance, and installation. Her socially engaged work highlights the intersection of climate, racial, gender, and economic injustice through co-created workshops, art actions, and temporary installations and performances. Her ongoing decade-long collaborative project STORYTELLING WITH SARIS with women farmers from her ancestral island village has traveled to eight countries and 11 US states, engaging thousands of people. Monica's paintings, saris, and archives are in the Smithsonian collection.



NIRMAL RAJA

Nirmal Raja is an interdisciplinary artist living and working in Milwaukee, She lived in India, South Korea, and Hong Kong before immigrating to the United States 30 years ago. She holds a BA in English Literature from St. Francis College in Hyderabad, India; a BFA from the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, and an MFA from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. She has participated in solo and group shows in the Midwest, nationally, and internationally. She collaborates with other artists and strongly believes in investing energy into her immediate community while also considering the global.

PALLAVI SHARMA

Pallavi is a multidisciplinary artist and independent curator. Her socially engaged art practice addresses migration and notions of memory, marginalization, and patriarchy. Her practice and research interests concern Asian American women's cultural production and activism. She received her BFA and MFA from the Faculty of Fine Arts Baroda and a Ph.D. in Art History from the National Museum Institute of History of Art, Museology, and Conservation in New Delhi, India. She is the founder and director of Inner Eye Arts and served on the Asian American Women's Artist Association (AAWAA) board from 2009 to 2021. Pallavi's recent publications include two poetry collections in Hindi, 'Kacha Rang' (2018) and 'Koltar ke Paer' (2022).



RENLUKA MAHARAJ

Renluka Maharaj was born in Trinidad and Tobago and works between Colorado, New York City and Trinidad. She attended the University of Colorado, Boulder where she earned her BFA, and her MFA at The School Of The Art Institute of Chicago. She has received numerous awards including Martha Kate Thomas Fund, the Presidential Scholarship at Anderson Ranch Center and the Barbara De Genevieve Scholarship. Her works are in institutional collections including The Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, Joan Flasch artist book collection, Los Angeles Center for Digital Art, Flaten Museum, Bank of America, Special Collections at the University of Colorado, Boulder as well as numerous private collections.



SHELLY BAHL

Shelly Bahl is an interdisciplinary artist and decolonizing art trailblazer. She has been leading and participating in BIPOC and feminist artist-run culture in Toronto and NYC for 30 years. Her art practice explores the strange and surreal aspects of cultural hybridity and old and new forms of colonization. She is interested in the global transmission of iconographies and other forms of visual culture. She also investigates the surrealistic experiences of women who lead enigmatic trans-cultural lives. These narratives are based in facts and fictions rooted in specific cultural histories, which she then re-contextualizes and re-imagines.



This exhibition guide was published
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The Paglees: Between Reason and Madness
presented at South Asia Institute, Chicago, IL.
January 19 - April 27, 2024

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[@the_paglees](https://www.instagram.com/the_paglees)

about south asia institute

South Asia Institute aims to cultivate the art and culture of South Asia and its diaspora through local and global collaborations, curated exhibitions, innovative programs, and educational initiatives that aim to engage diverse communities. At the Institute, the common heritage and identity of South Asian Americans are showcased while celebrating the common connections and values that are shared with the universal community at large. Art and cultural expression bring together diverse peoples in a shared experience, resulting in a better understanding and greater tolerance for ethnic differences.

It was the passion for South Asian Art that inspired the founders, Shireen and Afzal Ahmad - first generation immigrants from South Asia and longtime residents of Chicago, to assemble the Hundal Collection, over a period of 50+ years. One of the most significant collections of South Asian art in the United States, the collection includes works ranging from early Mughal Miniatures to Modern and Contemporary masterpieces by artists from the region and the diaspora. Having enjoyed living with the works, it has always been their mission to share the collection on a much larger scale and promote South Asian Art and cultural heritage in the United States.

co-founder and president
Afzal Ahmad

co-founder and director
Shireen Ahmad

executive director
Brian Keigher

exhibition manager / design and layout
Andrea Moratinos

communications coordinator
Ankit Khadgi

audience development associate
Nia Oke-Famakinde

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1925 S Michigan Ave.
Chicago IL 60616
www.saichicago.org

