

The accompanying
essays were written
by students from
Carleton University,
Ottawa, Canada in
response to *Print
Pals: Then and Now*,
a collaborative
printmaking project
between the Slade
School of Fine Art
and National College
of Arts Lahore,
Pakistan.

Print Pals: Friendship as Method

By Emily Putnam

The onset of the global pandemic caused by a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in early 2020 significantly impacted communities around the world; it has both created and exacerbated individual barriers and structural disparities globally. Moreover, the pandemic has produced a degree of disconnection and isolation in our lives. How we communicate, connect, and build relations has been altered: distance has become commonplace and in certain instances, an expression of care; our reliance on digital technologies to keep us connected has become a necessity. Out of our ability to connect digitally emerged a renewed investment in the ways we might create deeper connections with each other utilizing the possibilities offered by a digital means of communication, even across great distances.

Print Pals: Then and Now is a collaborative project between printmaking students and professors at the Slade School of Fine Art, London, UK, and the National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan (NCA) that grew from the realized possibilities of connecting through digital technology during the global events of 2020. Growing out of an ongoing historical inquiry that unearths the transnational encounters and entanglements between the city of London and the continent of Asia through the Paul Mellon Centre's *London, Asia* project, instructors and old friends Naazish Ata-Ullah at the NCA and Susan Collins at the Slade sought to rekindle connections between the two institutions. Historically, a key connection between the Slade and NCA was Bartholomeu dos Santos, known as Barto, a Professor of Printmaking at the Slade. During his life, Barto developed an ongoing relationship with the NCA through the artists from Pakistan who studied with him, as well as through trips that he made to the NCA in 1985 and 1989. Naazish Ata-Ullah (1984-85), who founded the printmaking program at NCA and later became Principal of the college was one such student. Ata-Ullah founded the Cowasjee Printmaking Studio at NCA in 1986, along with Afshar Malik (1986-1988), another Slade graduate and Anwar Saeed, a graduate of the Royal College of Arts, London. The connection between the Slade and NCA continued in the decades that followed with artists such as Laila Rahman (1991-1993) and Ali Kazim (2009-2011) from NCA receiving postgraduate degrees from the Slade and returning to teach at NCA, developing new idioms and techniques in the creative space opened between the two institutions.

Print Pals: Then and Now took place over the course of several months in 2021, spearheaded by Laila Rahman and Lesley Sharpe. After a series of online meetings between staff at both institutions, *Print Pals* was envisioned and signals to a return to a former concept at the Slade of the collaborative portfolio.¹ *Print Pals*, from inception to execution, is built upon collaboration and was co-developed with the involvement of Collins, Sharpe, Dryden Goodwin, and James Keith at the Slade, and Ata-Ullah, Rahman, Atif Khan, Abdul Musawir, and Fatima Saeed from the NCA. Students and instructors from NCA and the Slade were split into pairings where they were invited to respond to each other's work with the aim of contributing a print-based work for this volume, which is also an exhibition. The prints reach across time and space, offering reflections on some of the prevailing themes that speak to, from, and about realities of being human in a vastly global and diverse world: Home, the Built Environment and Landscape, Bodies in Space, Storytelling, and Language. Other themes explored by the participants of *Print Pals* that are perhaps less evidently manifest but filter throughout the overall collaboration were Print Culture, and Community.

In the pages that follow are the prints that emerged from this unique project paired with essays written by students from Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. The essays offer both expansive summaries and reflections on the thematic categories in which the print pals collaborated, and close readings of some pairings. The writers, like myself, come to this collaboration through a graduate-level course taken in May to June 2021, London, Asia, Art Worlds, taught by Dr. Ming Tiampo. Tiampo, a professor at Carleton University, who is a research fellow for the *London, Asia* project whose work considers how artists from Asia attended the Slade and "endeavoured to co-constitute worlds alongside their professors and fellow students."² The deep entanglements that exist between NCA and the Slade are exceptional examples of how worlds become co-constituted.

What I might offer as a meditation is that *Print Pals: Then and Now* is not simply about the prints in these pages although each one is stirring and many will resonate deep within our hearts long

1. Details provided by Susan Collins, August 1, 2021.

2. Tiampo, Ming. "Slade, London, Asia: Intersections of Decolonial Modernism," public lecture, November 10, 2020, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London, UK.

after we cease to look upon them.

Instead, the immense value of the *Print Pals* project is that its genesis allows us to consider what is found in friendship, in kindness, and in care for those with whom we build relations. In other words, *Print Pals* is not about a result, but about what we owe to each other along the way. *Print Pals*, as with the development of historic links between NCA and the Slade, is a creative enactment of friendship as method, which seeks to decolonize historic relationships through affect.

Friendship as method, a term attributed to Lisa M. Tillmann, is an emerging method of inquiry that is open, multi-vocal and seeks to engage in practice “with an ethic of friendship, a stance of hope, caring, justice, even love.”³ Friendship as method allows us to move beyond an outcome-oriented understanding of *Print Pals: Then and Now* and instead engage with the work that is being done during the journey. While Tillmann’s friendship as method is a form of research fieldwork in sociology and anthropology, it is also a premise that speaks to collaborative modes of artistic engagement. Friendship as method “offers a way of welcoming and implicating oneself with others while foregoing a sense of reciprocity. It acknowledges the impossible debt that we owe to the world, to each other, while structuring that relation in a particular manner, framed by the parameters of a given project.”⁴ *Print Pals: Then and Now* is an exercise of friendship as method precisely because it not only seeks to close the distance across geographic and cultural boundaries, but also reflect upon entangled global histories through a shared investment in printmaking.

While not every pairing produced a set of prints for publication, where *Print Pals* finds incredible depth and meaning for the moment we are all presently living through is the collaborative process that it earnestly set forward. In February 2021, participants from both institutions met digitally to determine their interests, motivations, and explorations as part of *Print Pals*. Once the overarching thematic categories were established through group zoom discussions, participants were paired with an artist from the other institution where they then exchanged work and ideas in their collaboration. Regardless of outcome, what grew from

3. Lisa M. Tillmann, “Friendship as Method,” *In Solidarity: Friendship, Family, and Activism Beyond Gay and Straight*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 287-319.

4. Heather Davis, “Distance in Proximity,” *Third Text* 29, no. 1/2, (Mar 2015): 58.

the collaborative process that defines *Print Pals: Then and Now* is the generative space of friendship across distance. As Heather Davis has written in *Third Text* regarding community-engaged art practise, “the structure of friendship allows for a certain openness to the other, to oneself and to a critical space in-between. The distance in friendship is what paradoxically also makes our ties stronger and generates proximity.”⁵ The development of friendship through collaborative process becomes foundational to forming connections across difference and difficult histories, of sharing our lives across distance, and of reaching out with kindness to foster creative expression.

5. *Ibid.*, 56.

Home

By Prabhroop Chawla and Haruka Toyoda

Artists:

Hadia Amjad

Naazish Ata-Ullah

Gabriele Ciulli

Mannat Gandotra

Fiza Ghauri

Abdul Ali Hyder

Fatima Kaleem

Noel E. Khan

Mahrukh Khizar

Anai Salem

Talha Shams

Lesley Sharpe

Latifah A. Stranack

Home comprises so many extensions of our lives. Here, the artists depict home not only as the place where they feel safe or the place where they grew up, but also as their past, family, surroundings, and as a place to imagine where they want to travel. Lockdowns and quarantines due to the COVID-19 global pandemic provoked various emotions about home. While some artists' prints convey a sense of longing for travel, others express their desire to rest peacefully at home.

In this section, six pairs, Abdul Ali Hyder and Mannat Gandotra, Hadia Amjad and Fiza Ghauri, Talha Shams and Gabriele Ciulli, Fatima Kaleem and Anai Salem, Mahrukh Khizar and Latifah A. Stranack, Lesley Sharpe and Naazish Ata-Ullah, as well as Noel E. Khan shared their stories of 'home.' The print pals connected by having long conversations via social media, chatting on Instagram, or meeting virtually on Zoom to exchange images that inspired them. By sharing thoughts about family, their favorite literature, music, and artists, and the materials they use to create art, they experienced a connection with someone they had never met before on an emotional and human level, which helped the artists to receive new inspiration. They went on journeys in their imaginations or memories and thought about what they are made of and how they grew up.

Hyder and Gandotra's prints address home and perceptions of space. Hyder's print, *Divine*, depicts feelings of unreachable memories that have fallen apart. The cloud of dots calls to mind how memories are knots of joy and sorrow, and the telephone pole in the background reminds us how those dots only coalesce in the present. Gandotra's drawing's title is in Hindi, translated by her as:

A flying bird

Doesn't have inhibitions about direction

Leaving borders, boundaries and markings redundant¹

The colorful lines act as a map that reflect her idea of boundaries, horizons, and borders. The conversation with her pal, Hyder, made her think about how India and Pakistan were one country in the early 20th century. Her artwork is a series of three pieces and expresses the feeling of a bird, how it can fly across boundaries

1. Mannat Gandotra, Artist Statement, 2021.

without inhibitions, and the hope that the boundary will slowly free itself.

Shams and Ciulli worked on the concept of home and detachment, aiming to depict a sense of home in an abstract form. For Shams, home has a sacred yet intangible meaning – the presence of his loved ones around him, the chaos in the city, or the quiet seashore. Shams’s work, *A Journey*, depicts a journey he undertook in his imagination – remembering the time he spent at his grandparent’s empty home, where he had no electricity for hours and spent time just sitting or having a walk in the neighborhood. The raining shoes and the adventurous lizard, fish, and cat that appear in his work are a depiction of a walk he took through a monsoon. During the several lockdowns, Ciulli has been archiving household dust in transparent vacuum bags, and arranged it into imaginary cloud forms. Ciulli’s artwork, *Dust Cloud*, is comprised of house dust that forms a cloud depicting the ambivalence of home. The dust conjures the home as a safe but sterile haven which became a “claustrophobic cell”² during the pandemic, and the shape of the cloud expresses his feelings of longing to travel.

Amjad and Ghauri’s conversation made Amjad realize that her perception of home is stability. She thinks of her body as an old home, which houses all her good and bad experiences. She views the stretch marks on her body as a symbol of fixedness and solidity, qualities reminiscent of a concrete structure. *Concrete Self* reflects upon those qualities she discovered in the marks on her body. Ghauri connects her feelings for home with a sense of displacement, and it reminds her of how she used to encourage herself to build a feeling where she could feel at home anywhere. Time and place are reconnected with memory in her print through a kind of stamp, a physical embodiment of personal memories where she feels like home. The four stamps in the background also look like a window, a window that she can look back through to find her home.

Kahn’s work, *Pascal’s Daydream*, is an exploration of regret regarding the choices we make in life and the plans that do not work out as we hoped. His print captures the feeling of anxiety, breathlessness, and despair of living in a state of disorientation for a long time. Kahn depicted himself in an aquarium, in the tank with a killer whale. Although he finds it hard to breathe in the water

2. Gabriele Ciulli, Artist Statement, 2021.

where he has no clue where he is, his fixed pose seems as if he is determined to find a way out of the tank. – H.T.

Print pals Naazish Ata-Ullah and Lesley Sharpe began by discussing their different perceptions of scrim; their two distinct takes on the same material highlight the different emotions the printmaking process can evoke. Ata-Ullah's print, *Pause*, reuses an image of a scrim that she had worked with previously as part of an artwork from the eighties, which expressed the limiting and claustrophobic feelings she experienced as a woman during Zia ul-Haq's regime. Recalling a time that felt limiting, she employs the same scrim she used earlier as a base, and on top of it, she layers the word "pause" as well as the pause symbol that we see on digital devices every day. This symbol represents the lockdown when all is caught within a pause: within this pause, Ata-Ullah found herself spending a lot of time on her terrace, where she worked on her prints and artwork. The use of the word "pause" rather than "halt" implies a temporary stop, within which we still find hope and optimism that there will be new beginnings.

While Ata-Ullah's print embodies the restrictions and the pause that she felt, for Sharpe, the scrim is a reminder of a mesh or expanding honeycomb structure symbolic of protection and home. As opposed to Ata-Ullah, Sharpe discovered a feeling of liberation during lockdown as this time allowed her to explore the outdoors and to go on walks or bike rides. Being out in nature frequently Sharpe created a print using soil samples from underneath her house. Sharpe's printmaking process is called soil chromatography; through this process, the soil permeated from the centre to the edges of the filter paper, creating the patterns and colors we see in the print. The soil sample used from her home expressed the idea that "this is where I stand during this pause."

Mahrukh Khizar's print, *Spiral Suitcase*, was inspired by the many feelings she felt during lockdown – including a desire for departure. Although she could not travel, the luggage is symbolic of the "feeling of flight, of being outside one's body as it remains anchored and stationary."³ The imagery of submersion into water, while partly outside of it, depicts the feelings of "being between

3. Mahrukh Khizar, Artist Statement, 2021.

two planes, the splitting of reality and imagination.”⁴ The wings are inspired by the Buraq, a creature often depicted in Islamic and South Asian art. The process of making this print offered an escape from technique. Given the lack of access to a studio and limited materials, Khizar necessarily had to challenge herself when making this linocut reduction.

Latifah A. Stranack’s print, *The Melody*, is a part of a series of twelve prints. This particular print is monochromatic, and the colour scheme – using oil paint, oil bars and pigment stick on canvas – alludes to the emotion of feeling blue during these times. She shows a few women sitting with each other, bonding over music; one of them is playing a lute and they provide each other with companionship. Feelings of understanding, compassion, and community are evoked in this print. Within Stranack’s twelve print series, she wanted to make her colour scheme match that of her print pal Khizar, and thus decided to use a similar colour palette. She also made a few drafts using other hues such as orange, but after a long process of exchanging drafts and sketches with each other, Stranack’s final draft matched Khizar’s colour range.

Fatima Kaleem’s linocut print shows herself in multiplicity, the many different versions of herself that she had the chance to meet and connect with while being at home during quarantine. Like many others during this time, she focused on her artwork and getting to know herself better. Her artwork is a reminder that in life, the person that you spend the most time with is yourself. Having a healthy relationship with yourself – your many versions – learning, growing, unlearning and birthing new parts of yourself is transformative. Fitting here is a realization that Sharpe shared with Ata-Ullah during their conversations: Sharpe had been reflecting on the terms “home” and “house” and remarked that while the first two letters are the same for both words, their endings are the words “me” and “use” respectively, pointing to their roles. While a house is typically used to describe a building, and therefore “use,” home is almost always used to describe the sense of protection, coziness, and familiarity that one feels in the building itself. A house is made of physical materials but a home is made of people. The “me” aspect of home is well suited to describe the role of home in individual growth as depicted in Kaleem’s work.

4. Ibid., 2021.

Similarly, Anai Salem's print, *Nest Building*, is a depiction of the different versions of herself that she felt and embodied when she moved to her new apartment in London. She found a spot on her terrace that she could do up as her own, where she hung up her drawings to dry on a clothesline – in fact, this installation is drawn in her print as well. She drew her print using different types of pencils, like an oil pencil, as well as a graffiti pen and whiteout; she drew with both hands, feeling that it allowed more freedom. The different versions she drew of herself are representative of the many different qualities one can possess all at the same time, and the different perspectives through which one can see oneself. Finding and expressing herself in a new home, especially during lockdown, Salem realized that it was possible to be her own friend, her own cheerleader, and to achieve so much by herself.

COVID-19 brought the world to a standstill. We were confined to our homes and experienced feelings of uncertainty. Lockdowns brought to light the multiple roles of the home and the plethora of feelings it can evoke. Everything was happening under the same roof: from work, to school, to interactions with friends on Zoom. Homes from Lahore to London even became makeshift studios; artists shared that without access to their usual studios and presses, they were compelled to come up with creative ways to produce their prints. The home took on a life of its own – a place to look outwardly towards the world, but also inwardly at ourselves in a way we have never experienced before. Though lockdown timings and experiences varied, there was a level of commonality in the impact that our print pals, each located in different parts of the world, felt. These prints will serve as mementos of these times, almost like time capsules for their future selves, but also of the relationships they built with their print pals. – P.C.

Artworks

Abdul Ali Hyder, *Divine*, 2021, Edition #9, artist proofs: 2, etching with top roll and Sumi ink, 33 x 25.4 cm

Mannat Gandotra, *لازوال – शास्त्र*, 2021, pencil, watercolour on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm and 21 x 29.7 cm

Talha Shams, *A Journey*, 2021, woodcut and mixed media on canvas, 45.7 x 60.9 cm

Gabriele Ciulli, *Dust Cloud*, 2021, household dust on laminated plastic, 21 x 29 cm

Hadia Amjad, *Concrete Self*, 2021, Edition #1, phototransfer, 18.4 x 12.7 cm

Fiza Ghauri, *Exotica*, 2021, Edition #5, digital print of 35mm colour film, woodblock print with acrylic paint, 29.7 x 42 cm

Noel E. Khan, *Pascal's Daydream*, 2021, inked drypoint plate, 34.2 x 29.2 cm

Naazish Ata-Ullah, *Pause*, 2021, soft ground etching, 42 x 29.7 cm

Lesley Sharpe, *Then and Now*, 2021, folded soil chromatogram on filter paper, dimensions variable

Mahrukh Khizar, *Spiritual Suitcase*, 2021, Edition #3, artist proofs: 3, 6 layers reduction linocut, 40.6 x 30.4 cm

Latifah A. Stranack, *The Melody*, 2021, oil paint and oil bar on canvas, 50 x 60 cm

Fatima Kaleem, *Away With*, 2021, linocut print, 43.6 x 30.4 cm

Anai Salem, *Nest Building*, 2021, charcoal print and drawing: pencil, oil pastel and Tipp-ex on paper, 21 x 29.5 cm

The Built Environment and Landscape

By Oliver Thorne

Artists:

Imran Ahmad

Susan Collins

Coral Harding

Muhammad Atif Khan

Maryam Ali Moinuddin

Fatima Aamir Mustafa

Seraphina Mutscheller

Grace White

Before we enter this life, we are part of our mother's environment. The womb built just for us.

“Here,” Fatima Aamir Mustafa writes, as she traces the origins of existence, “no one is superior and no one is pre-conditioned.”¹

Seraphina Mutscheller's print response to Fatima on transience, the impermanence of life, captured in cast leaves.

Plants preserved, frozen in plaster, contrasted by the fragility of living flora. The natural environment constantly growing, evolving through time and space.

“The physical neural pathways of memories,” Maryam Ali Moinuddin states, “are similar to maps of cities...they're all linked and constantly evolving.”²

With each new experience, our perceptions of the environment shift, over time evolving into our own landscapes.

Coral Harding, captivated by the geometric ceilings of the Wazir Khan Mosque, molded her sculpture, putting straight lines and angles in conversation.

Assimilated, perched in Slade London, demanding to be heard, voicing its striking outlook.

London and Lahore, entangled histories, divided physical landscape, the lasting lines of *Colonisation*.

Unforgiving, glaring, resisting: characteristics of drypoint. Imran Ahmad gouges out inherited regions, engraved borders, and dividing lines that cannot be easily erased.

The etching, *Peeling planes*, echoes the exploration of landscape, space and borders through lines and silhouette, contemplating the disorientation of London's pollarded trees.

Pandemic distance, space, and landscape through cyberspace. New lines created.

Through the online environment of Zoom, Atif Khan and Susan Collins traced each other's silhouettes.

The patterns within, envisioned from their homes, framed by the arches of NCA and Slade.

Sitting face to face, eliminating the time and space between them, only to be reminded of the different environments through the layering of the London skyline and Khan's tiled driveway.

1. Fatima Aamir Mustafa, Artist Statement, 2021.

2. Maryam Ali Moinuddin, Artist Statement, 2021.

Artworks

Fatima Aamir Mustafa, آغازِ یکساں (Aghaz e Yaksaan or The common beginning), 2021, 7 monotype layers and drypoint on plate, 35.5 x 43.1 cm

Seraphina Mutscheller, *Response I*, 2021, acrylic paint, plaster and MDF, 40 x 50 cm

Seraphina Mutscheller, *Response II*, 2021, plant material, pigments, clay and cardboard, 43 x 50 cm

Maryam Ali Moinuddin, *Memories are Maps*, 2021, Edition #1, graphite drawing with digital overlay, 21.5 x 27.9 cm

Coral Harding, *Assimilated*, 2021, plywood, 70 x 50 cm

Imran Ahmad, *Colonisation*, 2021, Edition #7, artist proofs: 2, drypoint, 40.6 x 60.9 cm

Grace White, *Peeling Planes*, 2021, etching, 30 x 40 cm

Muhammad Atif Khan, *Mirroring*, London, 2021, Digital photo-montage, 42 x 29.7 cm

Susan Collins, *Mirroring*, Lahore, 2021, Digital photo-montage, 42 x 29.7 cm

Bodies in Space

By Adiba Aruzia Faizi

Artists:

Saad Ahmad

Alina Javed

Aleena Khizran

Laila Majid

Anushahe Naseer

Scarlett R. Pochet

Fatima Raheel

Sophia Yuet See

This section on Bodies in Space addresses issues of subversion, body politics, and the dynamics of mythological, animal, and human bodies. Through collaboration, the artists working on this theme have conveyed through their artwork what Bodies in Space signifies to each of them, be it gender politics, mythology, sacrifice or the circle of life.

Artists Anushahe Naseer and Fatima Raheel beautifully capture the body politics associated with the female body. Naseer, in her print, a riot, uses herself as the subject and conveys her feelings of confinement within the female body. She draws on her own lived experience as a woman living in Pakistan who is bound by the various limitations the society imposes on her because of her femininity. Whether the limits determine the kinds of clothes a woman can wear outside the comfort of her home, or the family pressure of an arranged marriage when one is not ready for it, they quite literally create a mental riot that she portrays in her work. The overlapping features of the bodies in her print represent both freedom and oppression while also showcasing the confinement of being confined to a particular stencil.

Raheel, on the other hand, portrays another aspect of the female body in her print titled Bide. Rooted in her fascination with creating absurd and odd narratives, her print inserts women into the mostly male milieu of Pakistan's seasonal fishing industry. Women often face invisible barriers in developing countries' fishing industries, not because of a lack of qualifications, but rather because of social conventions. While it is common for women to be in processing roles such as gutting and sorting fish, they are rarely on boats at sea as cultural tradition dictates that women should stay close to home and take care of the family. Raheel challenges this narrative and focuses on creating characters and imagined relationships through her art. She narrows in on a scenario of only female bodies being at sea. Through her print, she imagines a nostalgic and cherished bond women form effortlessly with one another.

While the female body in space was beautifully captured by Naseer and Raheel, print pals Alina Javed and Laila Majid also had a unique take on the theme of Bodies in Space that brought fantasy, mythology, and the lunar cycle to their artwork. Javed's print, Beginning, is a manifestation of her ongoing interest in fertility,

astrology, and myth. She explores her connection to the moon and how it affects the mind and emotions. She uses the horoscope of Iskander Sultan as the base of her image and adds wings to the figure representing Buraq, the winged horse in Islamic tradition that transported the Holy Prophet (*pbuh*) to the seven heavens. The lunar cycle is set in conjunction with menstrual cycles, and the artist depicts the elder-tree (an autumn plant) and the daisy (a spring plant) – both called herbs of Venus.

Similarly, Javed's print pal Laila Majid's *Eclipse* addresses the themes of Bodies in Space in the context of celestial spaces and lunar cycles. For her, the winged body can be commonly found in a wide range of mythological and religious contexts such as Pegasus, the winged horse in Greek mythology and angels in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam that are popularly depicted as having wings. In her elliptical composition, the central illuminated image of the winged deer is set against a dark, void-like background. It bears a resemblance to brightly lit celestial bodies suspended in space. The inclusion of this oval-shaped area of light also resembles a spotlight and can be viewed as a theatrical device used to aid the construction of a spectacle.

Delving deeper into the theme, print pals Saad Ahmad and Scarlett Pochet explore the context of body subversion, materiality, sacrifice and rituals. Pochet, in her print titled *A Celebratory Gaze of Sacrifice*, manipulates the themes of sacrifice, loss, and beauty in conjunction with body and space. Working collaboratively with her print pal Ahmed, she takes inspiration from the symbol of the camel from Ahmed's initial etching. The camel is sacrificed by Muslims world-wide during the annual festival of Eid al-Adha, which honors the willingness of Prophet Abraham to sacrifice his son Ismail as an act of obedience to Allah. Before Abraham could sacrifice his son, Allah provided a lamb instead and this act of intervention is celebrated by Muslims in what is also known as the 'Feast of Sacrifice.' During this festival, everyone's gaze is on the sacrificial animal as it is tended to and cared for. Pochet takes the images of a carcass she took from a butcher and represents it in a way that is both visceral and beautiful. She creates a leather skin border around the print that emphasizes the ritualistic value of the print. She categorizes her work as "grotesque," but it is also celestial and like most subversive art, it challenges how we see ritualistic animal

sacrifice.

Saad Ahmed, working collaboratively with his print pal Pochet, takes inspiration from Pochet's work in the themes of body subversion and exploration of materiality. Ahmed's print, *Conversations*, uses smoke as a reference and portrays its ever-changing form. His print represents a group of figures engaged in dialogue and the potential that a stimulating conversation can have on changing one's mental and emotional state. It is also a clever reference to the nature of the collaborative project of *Print Pals* that has made it possible for artists to collectively be inspired by each other and enable their artwork to evolve.

Finally, print pals Sophia Yuet See and Aleena Khizran take the theme of *Bodies in Spaces* and manifest it in the context of the cycle of life and death in their artwork. Khizran's print visualizes the sequence of life and death and its inevitability. In her print titled *Eternal Home*, she addresses her perspective of what a home is. For her, home is a place one returns to, a permanent destiny at the end of life, and the journey to this eternal home is always made alone. A significant aspect of her work addresses the inevitable decaying process of bodies that every living entity must eventually go through. She captures the impermanence of the physical body, which after the life cycle, decays away while the soul makes its way to an eternal home.

Sophia Yuet See, in her print *Loop*, also addresses the cyclical nature of life. Her print explores the repetitive cycles of trauma that weighs the body down. The text in her print, "Weight of The Loop" is charged by the images of knotted and looped rope and metal hoops that form a chain. Yuet See shares that the loops in the background of the print are not carved into the woodcut but instead are created by the repetitive motion of pressing her kitchen spoon against the paper form when she was applying the ink. Much like the emotional and physical scars repetitive trauma can leave in and on our bodies, this rough texture embodies the messy knotted feelings the body carries of trauma.

These eight artists have explored the theme in highly subjective ways by bringing forth their versions of what *Bodies in Space* means to them. While the primary inspiration for Anushahe Naseer and Fatima Raheel's artwork is the female body and its

underlying politics, print pals Alina Javed and Laila Majid take the theme in a different direction by bringing together bodies with elements of fantasy and the lunar cycle. Saad Ahmad and Scarlett Pochet expand upon the theme of bodies in space by incorporating themes of ritualistic sacrifice and materiality, while Aleena Khizran and Sophia Yuet See explore the cyclical nature of life and death that makes the body an impermanent entity which also carries the weight of trauma.

Artworks

Anushahe Naseer, *a riot*, 2021, Edition #2, 4, 9, 11, artist proofs: 14, linocut reduction, 27.9 x 37.8 cm

Fatima Raheel, *Bide*, 2021, Edition #2, artist proofs: 4, linocut print on textured sheet, 29.7 x 41.9 cm

Alina Javed, *Beginning*, 2021, Edition #5, artist proofs: 4, etching with top roll and embossing, 41.9 x 29.7 cm

Laila Majid, *Elipse*, 2021, digital image

Scarlett R. Pochet, *A Celebratory Gaze of Sacrifice*, 2021, etching on latex with leather skin cuts, 49.9 x 49.9 cm

Saad Ahmad, *Conversations*, 2021, Edition #5, artist proofs: 5, intaglio, 27.9 x 37.8 cm

Aleena Khizran, *Eternal Home*, 2021, Edition #2, artist proofs: 4, screenprint and mixed media, 30.4 x 45.7 cm

Sophia Yuet See, *Loop*, 2021, woodcut print, 20.8 x 29.4 cm

Storytelling: Printmaking as an Allegory of Visual Perception
By Evangeline Mann and Gigi Wong

Artists:

Oscar Boyle

Roshail Gilani

Niki Kohandel

Penelope Kupfer

Abdul Musawir

Fatima Saeed

Shi Yun Teo

Iram Wani

The global Covid-19 pandemic has drastically shaped our lives. The stories that each of us holds are coloured by our thoughts as we experience living through the pandemic in different places and in different ways. Stories, and listening to each other's stories, are crucial to sharing knowledge and fostering solidarity. The potential of storytelling rests upon its capacity to bringing diverse voices and perspectives engaging with the multifaceted challenges of a global health crisis to the fore. Pluralities of perspectives are interweaved with different storytelling mediums. *The Print Pals: Then and Now* project, in this sense, explores how we can use storytelling to create openings for dialogue and connecting with people of various cultural backgrounds by reinscribing the narrative of the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to their personal geographies and experiences.

With insightful metaphors, visually inspiring allegories, and palpable imagery, Niki Kohandel, Roshail Gilani, Fatima Saeed and Penelope Kupfer employ a plethora of two-dimensional printmaking techniques in their own tactile landscapes of temporality, selfhood, entrapment, past and present.

Print pals Kohandel and Gilani's prints, *Portrait of a Woman as a Cracked Pot* and *The Forever War* respectively, both use film photography as a creative storytelling method and as a point of departure to rethink perceptions of the past; how presence captivates the present through simultaneous proximity. Kohandel's *Portrait of a Woman as a Cracked Pot* explores how film negatives and personal photography illuminate the liminal space between the viewing subject, the act of viewing, and different modes of storytelling. In this melancholic portrait, Kohandel's late mother's portrait is affixed to a cracked pot which contains a rotting cherry tree. The incorporation of personal photographs in printmaking captures embedded life stories, namely Kohandel's lament for her mother's passing. By reminiscing about their mother's interest in gardening and the memories they shared together, Kohandel documents commemorative moments that cannot be retrieved and how these moments occur even as the shutter clicks. Gilani's print *The Forever War*, on the other hand, embraces the importance of personal photography by examining one's relationship to particular photographs and the powerful and emotional links that those photographs embody. Inspired by the old film cameras

which he collected from his parents and relatives, Gilani uses film photography as a way of entering into dialogue with those personal cameras: what they have seen, and how they intertwine with and continue to tell the life stories of their owners. The print's chaotic and grotesque atmosphere underlines war scenarios of death and destruction, a topic that has long interested Gilani.

Fatima Saeed and Penelope Kupfer consider the ways their lived experiences shape their artistic practices and become a source of storytelling. The irregular sleep patterns that they both encounter shed light on the pandemic situation and the experiences that forge and temper their lives. *Flight* by Saeed depicts everyday objects like a pillow and a clock, which explore how circular narrative forms actualise the totality of our lived experiences. Specifically, she reflects on the notion of time and the ways it has been reimagined over the course of the pandemic. In her work, she narrates and mediates the circular relationship between her experience with insomnia and her struggles as a working parent. Saeed illuminates how the narrating self takes place in a moment of time that fills her psychic space in the lower part of the print where the colour is more saturated, while the faded part of the print signifies how her subjective experience fades into her unconscious. Kupfer's print, *Malina*, addresses questions of selfhood and the interpersonal relationships which affect our emotional states of being through stylised lines and a gestural figurative illustration of a reclining woman. This piece illuminates Kupfer's own personal dealings with opposing psychological impulses and feelings by visualising these experiences with a vocabulary of drawing and printmaking. Her uses of gestural drawing and stylised black brushstrokes evoke the year of pandemic parenting and intensifies interpersonal stress in visual form. Kupfer highlights the reclining woman and the cactus in turquoise colour as if they were the only two living objects in the print. She visualises her inconsistent sleep patterns and the pressure that she endures through outlining an inability to disconnect: the reclining woman is holding a line, which leads to a dark hole on the floor. The dark hole signifies the sense of anxiousness that a working parent experiences and embodies during the Covid-19 pandemic. These two prints tell the stories of pandemic life for working mothers and illuminate how motherhood and social bonding can be shared and developed virtually. – G.W.

Iram Wani and Shi Yun Teo each explore storytelling processes. Wani's print, *The Reconciliation*, presents an infant surrounded by water and pink lilies to depict the environmental beauty of the Kashmir region as Wani learned about it through her mother's stories. The utilization of dry point and resin on acrylic plate to create this print generates the water's swirling appearance, and also helps the work appear to be infused with light to enhance the water's glow. These elements represent spiritual significance of water for Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Muslims who have lived at the site, as well as the region's connections with saints and mysticism. The area is also highly contested between India and Pakistan, and Wani learned about these conflicts from her mother's stories. *The Reconciliation* presents how family stories about complex histories shaped Wani's understanding of the Kashmir region. Teo's window to my childhood additionally signifies the artist's connection with her father, and how observing his actions as a young girl helped her grow. The various items reflect the multifaceted nature of storytelling that draws upon specific, personal memories of the past and familial relationships, as well as experiences in the present. Dried flowers are assembled in a central circular form, which is connected to other areas of the work through curving string. Memories and familial relationships can also bend without identifiable beginnings or endings to create stories that span points in time, as though they are rivers connecting lakes or string linking flowers and cotton fabric.

Project partners Abdul Musawir and Oscar Boyle also depict the distinctive theme of storytelling with combinations of textual and visual elements. Musawir's *Song of an Aggrieved Bird* presents a poem by Muneer Niazi written in Urdu. It describes how a single bird's call travels across an ocean and through trees and is heard by a lone human figure during the evening. Musawir's use of a muted palette, as well as the depiction of himself seated alone and gazing at the viewer, signifies the sadness and beauty of this solitude. In *Song of an Aggrieved Bird*, as in Niazi's poem, the birds are represented in proximity to the artist to represent his admiration for them, and their conflict signifies the artist's own challenges. Boyle also presents a description written in English that tells the story of separation between friends. In his work, a small figure-like form is connected to thick, dark lines at the top of the print while a circular group of lines is shown at the bottom. Merging

text and imagery reflects Boyle's interest in comic-making, and resembles Musawir's use of images and Urdu poetry to tell stories. Boyle's work represents his connection with Musawir, as well as his consideration of other *Print Pals* partnerships. – E.M.

These artists each creatively consider the importance of telling and sharing stories. While Kohandel and Gilani utilize film photography to reflect upon connections between moments in time, the partnership between Saeed and Kupfer highlighted how daily experiences can generate storytelling processes. Wani and Teo consider familial experiences and storytelling, and Musawir and Boyle additionally showcase how stories can be communicated through the textual as well as the visual. These prints represent numerous exchanges during the project, as well as how the pandemic facilitated diverse storytelling processes.

Artworks

Niki Kohandel, *Portrait of a Woman as a Cracked Pot*, 2007/2020/2021, digital print: 35mm expired colour film, black ink monotype on paper, dimensions variable

Roshail Gilani, *The Forever War*, 2021, artist proofs: 9, inked drypoint plate, 19 x 30.4 cm

Fatima Saeed, *Flight*, 2021, Walnut ink, perforation and gold on paper, 46 x 33 cm

Penelope Kupfer, *Malina*, 2021, Oil on paper, 50 x 30 cm

Iram Wani, *The Reconciliation*, 2021, drypoint and resin on acrylic plate, 30 x 42 cm

Shi Yun Teo, *Window To My Childhood*, 2021, ink, Chinese paper, embroidery string, cotton string, dried flowers, butterfly wing, resin, glue, cotton fabric on cotton rag paper, 72.5 x 50 cm

Abdul Musawir, *Song of an Aggrieved Bird*, 2021, drawing and collage, 21 x 29.7 cm

Oscar Boyle, *Untitled*, 2021

Language

By Faranak Arabian and Sisi Li

Artists:

Nisha Ghani

Dryden Goodwin

Yifan He

Lily Petch

Laila Rahman

Murtaza Zaidi

Language constitutes ways of knowing, frameworks which form a community's vision of reality, and embody the cultural differences (and entanglements) between them. It is not out of the ordinary that in such a transcultural project, language obtains an instantaneous space for reflection; especially when Urdu and English have coincided for many centuries, leading to linguistic phenomena such as language-mixing and borrowing. This complexity gave rise to print makers' active engagements with their linguistic repertoires by drawing from entangled colonial histories, literature, and the problematic notion of translation.

Due to the long-distance nature of the artists' interactions, final artworks, with their perfect imperfection, testify to mutual curiosities about daily horizons during pandemic time. The project's unique undertaking in print production aims to portray the world from unimaginable perspectives to a rich riot of shapes, colors and meanings. Of course, what is meant by "world" here, is not the sequence of events that have been troubling our lives on a global level, but a bifold reflection on the most uncertain times in relation to linguistic, psychological, and intimate investigations.

Laila Rahman and Dryden Goodwin's conversations, for example, crystallized in two prints that reflect each other's motifs and symbols, but with nothing that ties the two together seamlessly. Rahman's print features intense, frenetic, and energy-charged lines that are characteristic of Goodwin's drawing and recall unraveling letters from the Urdu script; while at the center, a half pomegranate can be recognized. For Rahman, the fruit resembles the 'Original Sin' because of its intricate structure and seductive color which is also a reference to "the East, in both its beauty and its decaying form."¹ The background calls our attention to the inclusion of two repeated words in the Urdu script, Baghawat and Zabaan, meaning 'Subversion' and 'Language' respectively. These run in embossed lines at the top and bottom of the image and may be read or simply seen as an arabesque pattern.

On the right side, Goodwin has mirrored Rahman's background by faintly reprinting the Urdu words that appear as synapses of energy or incomplete thoughts, and ultimately become a joint space where he laid down his drawings. The pair had multiple conversations during the lockdown and discovered

1. Laila Rahman, "Artist Statement," 2021.

shared preoccupations around forms and ideas recurring in their practices, which include “the circular or the orb, like planets or lenses, huge eyes or tiny heads. Notions of membranes, and a desire to go beyond or through the surface, like portals to different states, different experiences, different places or different people; the need to reach out and attempt to connect.”² When they found intimacy in their unexpected friendship, Goodwin sketched Rahman and her hand gestures as they spoke about language and codes: “Laila’s fingers at moments knitted together, became like joints in a skull, emblematic of the jamming together of two perspectives, traversing the space between us.”³ – F.A.

The works of Nisha Ghani and Lily Petch activate the links between language, memory, and colonialism. Ghani’s thoughts on language were largely based on her disconnection from her mother tongue (Urdu), due to the societal pressure to speak English in the name of eloquence or status growing up in Lahore. Petch was largely inspired by Ghani’s anxiety, and made her work using the illegibility of text as a starting point. Their focus is not only on the erosion of Urdu by English, but also on the identity anxiety resulting from this “invisible” violence, also called “language imperialism.”⁴

Ghani’s work *کیا یہ میری زبان ہے؟* (*Is This My Language?*) is based on the hesitation she felt due to her estrangement from Urdu, her mother tongue. English was promoted in colonial countries through cultural and educational means, which had devastating effects on local languages. Ghani uses tea staining in her work, a key aspect of Mughal Miniature painting, which she employed in order to mimic the visual characteristics of an old, aged manuscript. As such, the faded yellowed surface expresses the fact that Urdu has always been in her memory. She was able to communicate fluently in Urdu; growing up in a post-colonial country, however, Ghani studied in a Catholic school where they were reprimanded for speaking Urdu. Ghani states “now, as an adult, Urdu has become an alien language to me, a part of my identity from which I feel completely disconnected.”⁵

2. Dryden Goodwin, “Artist Statement,” 2021.

3. Ibid.

4. Athelstan Suresh Canagarajah, *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

5. Nisha Ghani, Zoom interview with the author, June 1, 2021.

Urdu used to be a familiar language for her, but due to her English education it has become unfamiliar which has caused her to feel anxious and conflicted about her identity.

The flowers on the right side of the work were a part of a worksheet from her days in kindergarten which she transferred onto the paper. In class, students were free to colour in the flowers however they chose which meant that each worksheet ended up reflecting each student's personality. Ghani wanted this print to have just the outlines of the flowers to emphasize that although these are things extracted from her personal belongings and memories, it no longer feels like her own. One of the texts in the work is a transfer from Ghani's kindergarten practice book where she had to write the Urdu alphabet. The other lines of text are taken from a writing workbook. When put together, the individual alphabets read “کیا یہ میری زبان ہے؟” which translates to “Is this my language?” Juxtaposing the two visuals, she wanted the viewer to feel the same distance and lack of connection she felt from Urdu.

In *Warble*, Petch originally wanted to create this work in response to ongoing conversations with Ghani concerning the anxieties of language formation under societal pressure. Facing the ineffability of language in general, Petch sought to express the arduous transformation of thought into word – a visualization of the intangible construction of spoken words. In Petch's work, the layering technique of compressed, entangled words exists as a translation of thought to external vibration through the threads of matter/air. Hence, Petch chose the title *Warble*, its unusually curved yet heavy consonant sound giving a grounding to the human voice. She wanted to accentuate the physical movement of sound – akin to a chorus of birds or people coexisting in time, memory, and thought. *Warble* also enacts a soundscape of overlapping noise found in highly populated spaces. This work hopes to express the universality of internal thought, existing unspoken in blocks of darkness, picked out and untangled from the impulsive mind. In this way, Petch hopes to bring together symbol spoken in air and symbol compressed onto the heaviness of the etching plate. With a tension of simultaneous lightness and heaviness, she hopes for this piece to embody a visual recognition of the unknown, tapping into the depths of the human subconscious.

In this project, Zaidi and He worked together on questions

of translation, visualising elements from words taken from both Urdu and Mandarin poetry about love and Sufism. Exploring visualizations of text, the artists sought to break the shackles of discourse as power in order to realize cross-linguistic cultural sharing. This work is based on their continuous discussions on Zoom, dividing the Sufi poem *A lover letter of many clichés until they are no longer just clichés* into many subsections and translating them into Chinese and English in a Google doc (Fig.1).

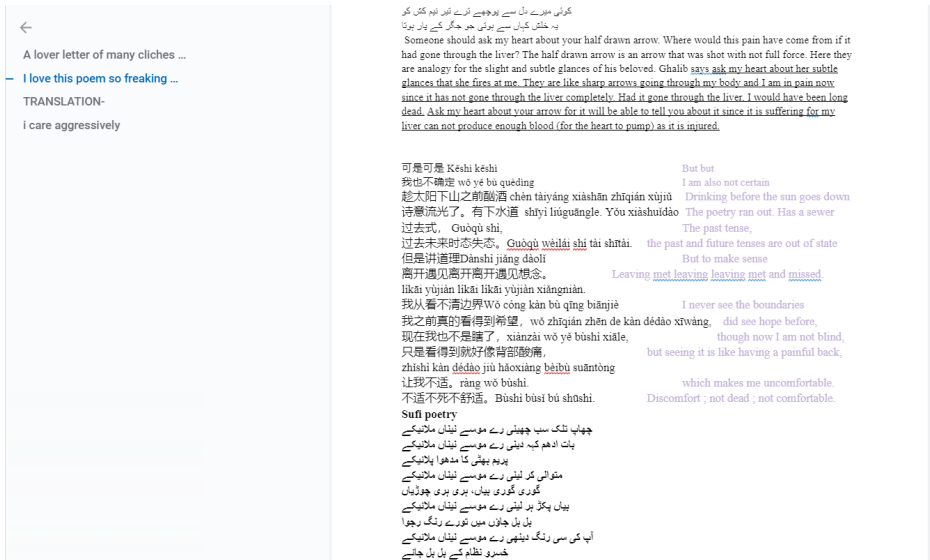


Fig.1: Murtaza Zaidi and Yifan He’s collaborative Google Doc. containing the inspirational materials (sufi poetry, diary entries, and more) that gave birth to the final project. Image credit: Yifan He and Murtaza Zaidi, 2021.

After each sub-section of poetry are their diary entries. These works were inspired by the widespread use of English as a ‘colonial heritage’ by people in non-English speaking countries.

He’s work *绝对有错误翻译的情书 / غلط ترجمہ کے ساتھ محبت خط* / *a love letter that must have been mistranslated in parts*⁶ is a “video collage of awkwardly translated Sufi poetry with moody, scribbled diary entries. With the consent of Zaidi, He remixed both of their print imageries into mutating colours concealed in disguises, blocking the always-too-naked words.”⁷ The images are edited to abstract colours that do not speak the language of representation. He uses this visual language to express the sentiment that love is a quality that cannot be translated.

6. Video link: [绝对有错误翻译的情书 / غلط ترجمہ کے ساتھ محبت خط / a love letter that must have been mistranslated in parts - YouTube](#)

7. Yifan He and Murtaza Zaidi, “google document - SUFI 爱,” 2021. Retrieved July 6, 2021.

Unlike He's work, Zaidi's print *آیا سمجھ نہیں آیا* (Celebration of Love) believes that love is a universal language. According to Zaidi, "the manuscripts and phonetics of language vary across the globe, but share ideas and visual elements. These commonalities/ideas have the power to transform the world."⁸ His work is a linocut print of a traditional Mughal style *baramda* (verandah).

The main body of the print is comprised of black-and-white buildings and bright flowers surrounded by poems about love. The image of the lotus flower in the print is representative of Sufi teachings found in the poems of Amir Khusro and Ghalib. In Chinese culture, the lotus flower is also related to religion, love, and fertility. In the print, a section of lotus root is separated; since clinging fiber remains, relations are not entirely severed. This characteristic is often reminiscent of entangled love. The illustrations of the *char-bagh* (quadilateral garden) running through the floor of the structure are all praises to love.

The two works reflect cross-cultural language research from and through the theme of love. He expresses the complexity of love through glitches, stutters, failed-to-be-referenced quotations, and mistranslations in the video. Zaidi combines Sufi poetry translated into Chinese with visual images and uses the form of the print to express multilingualism and the interculturality of images, showing love as a universal language. If language is regarded as a mode of thinking, its organization, formation, and expression all represent unique cultural systems. However, due to historical entanglements and cultural mixing, the inner meanings of different languages are sometimes interoperable, perhaps making space for love. – S.L.

Whether they evoke poetic mistranslation, illegible layered scrawlings, or ornate language patterns, the prints in this category reap the benefits of aesthetic insight and originality. The artists' approach to printmaking proved to be genuinely synergetic, but also a reflection of their most intimate thoughts and feelings about language. The opportunities afforded by online platforms, on the one hand, allowed participants to effectively engage in real-time feedback on collaborative practice, and on the other hand, to explore personal narratives and metaphors about language diversity.

8. Murtaza Zaidi, Zoom interview with the authors, June 8, 2021.

Readily embraced as a legitimate creative statement, the *Print Pals* project not only expanded the boundaries of printmaking know-how but also nurtured “the co-belonging of nonidentical singularities.”⁹ In other words, friendship. – F.A.

9. Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 26.

Artworks

Laila Rahman, *شروعات (Beginnings)*, 2021, Edition #5, artist proofs: 4, etching with top roll and embossing, 41.9 x 29.7 cm

Dryden Goodwin, *Impression (Laila)*, 2021, drypoint, pen and ink, gouache and digital drawing, variable size

Nisha Ghani, *کیا ہے میری زبان ہے؟ (Is This My Language?)*, 2021, Edition #1, photo transfer, tea stain, graphite, and watercolour, 30.4 x 43.1 cm

Lily Petch, *Warble*, 2021, ink on paper, aluminium plate etching, 50 x 29.4 cm

Yifan He, *绝对有错误翻译的情书/ بالکل غلط ترجمہ کے ساتھ محبت خط (a love letter that must have been mistranslated in parts)*, 2021, video

Murtaza Zaidi, *پیغام محبت کا خط جس کا ترجمہ سمجھ نہیں آیا (Celebration of Love)*, 2021, linocut print with gouache on tea-stained paper, 41.9 x 29.7 cm

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