Los Angeles—The Fowler Museum at UCLA presents *I Will Meet You Yet Again*, a major exhibition of more than 40 contemporary works of painting, textile, soundscape, poetry, and digital media that converge around a Sikh understanding of “home.” An array of conceptual and material approaches reflects generational, personal, and gendered perspectives on the history and vitality of the Sikh community, a socio-religious group hailing from India’s Panjab region.

Works by Sikh and non-Sikh artists find inspiration in legacies of persecution and protest, collective action, environmental advocacy, and the expansive global diaspora of 25 million contemporary adherents. The narratives foreground celebration and strength, running counter to media portrayals of a long-suffering minority. A focus on Sikh women throughout the exhibition spotlights the impact of artists, activists, and homemakers whose contemporary aspirations are expanding the visual lexicon of this relatively young religion—the fifth largest in the world.

*I Will Meet You Yet Again* reflects the Fowler’s 60th anniversary theme, “Creating in Community.” Los Angeles is home to a significant Sikh population, and more than half of 500,000 Sikhs in the U.S. live in California. The Hollywood Sikh Temple, founded in 1969, was the first of nine *gurudwaras* (places of worship) in the LA area. The Fowler’s 2023–24 program spotlights religious diversity in Southern California, and this exhibition runs concurrently with *The House is Too Small: Yoruba Sacred Arts from Africa and Beyond*. Curated by scholars, artists, and local religious practitioners, these exhibitions explore aesthetic dimensions of spirituality, center lived experiences of belief, and promote cultural understanding on a global scale.
The exhibition is divided into themes that have shaped Sikh collective identity and continue to reverberate today. A throughline of “home” is filtered through three key concepts — sangarsh (struggle), basera (home), and birha (longing) — that contextualize the Sikh community’s struggle to exist. While not always explicitly articulated, sangarsh, basera, and birha form the warp and weft of the exhibition.

### 1947 Partition of India
India’s independence from British colonial rule was accompanied by the division of the region into two nation states: India and Pakistan. Displaced Sikhs lost access to their gurudwaras, heritage sites, and ancestral lands in Pakistan, a trauma that endures in India and across the diaspora.

The Partition turned millions into refugees and unleashed horrific violence on people of all faiths. Amrita Pritam by Kanwal Dhaliwal (b. 1960, Mehma Sarja, Panjab, India) depicts the pioneering poet amid a sea of corpses. A bold red line runs from top to the bottom of the canvas, which is filled with her powerful verses in Shahmukhi and Gurmukhi scripts.

### 1984
South Asians refer to the year alone when recalling the state-endorsed genocidal pogroms against Sikhs in India. The government launched “Operation Blue Star,” bombing sacred sites and brutally curtailing civil, political, and human rights. Arpana Caur’s (b. 1954, New Delhi, India), Wounds of 1984, gives poignant expression to the pain of violence unleashed on Sikhs in the aftermath of the assassination of the Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards in October 1984. The perpetrators of crimes against the Sikh community not been held accountable by the law after 40 years, and families continue to fight for justice.

A small work of great impact, 1984 notebook, (2013) by Gauri Gill (b. 1970, New Delhi, India) is one of the few projects that documents anti-Sikh pogroms and the stories of those who survived. Gill took a long-term approach in her work (available to all online), interviewing the affected individuals between 2005 and 2019. Her goal has been to retell this watershed moment in Sikh history, and to encourage conversations about justice.
Sikh Heritage as Artistic Inspiration

Contemporary Sikh artists often incorporate historical, scriptural, and mythological narratives into their work. Artist and architect Keerat Kaur (b. 1991, London, Ontario, Canada) defines her practice as “a response to ancient narratives of Sikh literature and Punjabi folklore.” The ultra-fine detail in works such as Sky Dome 35: an Archi(tech)tural Fairytale (detail above) is influenced by South-Asian miniature paintings and Kaur’s rigorous architectural training. Her surrealist spaces are “inspired by the built environment of Punjab and the various styles that constitute it, including Persian and Mughal.”

Celebrating Sikh Women

In this section the struggles and achievements of women stand counter to male-centric histories and aim to uplift female legacies and construct new narratives that honor a shared past. Contemporary portraits chronicle the activism of poets, artists, and royals.

Two seven-foot tapestries by The Singh Twins (b. 1966, London, U.K.) depict avant-garde artist Amrita Sher-Gil (at right) and suffragette Princess Sophia Duleep Singh, each framed by scenes of political unrest and traditional Panjab decorative arts. The 2017 works are part of the series Slaves of Fashion devoted to upheavals caused by colonization and Indo-British trade.
Building Home

Sikh women have and continue to play a major role in creating spaces of belonging by incorporating familiar tastes, sounds, and décor into homes, whether in South Asia or in the diaspora. While their everyday labor has not made history, the rich interiority of Sikh life evidenced by works in this section (and throughout the exhibition) gives weight and dimension to women’s contributions. The artists featured here tell intergenerational stories, build on personal experiences, and point to imagined futures. Birha (longing) and basera (home) are both centerstage in Past Lives by Rupy Kaloti (b. 1989, San Jose, California, U.S.A.)

Farmers Protest

Artists of varied backgrounds have memorialized one of the largest protests in world history, known as Kisan Mazdoor Andolan (farmers’ and farmworkers’ campaign). Launched in opposition to disenfranchising farm bills passed in 2020, both women and men marched on the nation’s capital, eventually forcing the government to repeal the laws one year later.

The digital posters pictured here were created through a transnational collaboration between Himanshu Dua, a photographer living in India who witnessed the protesters’ camps around Delhi, and Nisha K. Sethi, an activist-artist from Oakland, California. In the artists’ words, the “artistic collaboration serves as a bridge between India and the global diaspora to help build solidarity and continue spreading awareness about what’s happening.”
Sikh History in the U.S.A.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Sikhs have been increasingly targeted in hate crimes. The Sikh community has navigated racial discrimination, violence, and hate speech against its members and places of worship by using legal recourse and advocacy, activism and building engagement through the arts.

The oversize diaphanous linen panels in Rupy C. Tut’s (b. 1985, Chandigarh, U.T., India) *Decoding the Hate Helix* (2019) depict the words “no, stop, out, you, us” in English and multiple South Asian scripts, including Gurmukhi, Devanagari, and Tamil. The calligraphy is intended to be provocative and violent. The brush strokes and paint splatters are meant to agitate the viewers and engage them in an exploration of their own feelings. As a brown female creator, Tut deploys visual aggression in this work to push back against patriarchal conditioning that prescribes a composed and submissive feminine ideal.

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Opening Celebration

Saturday, January 27, 6–9 pm | RSVP

All are invited to the Fowler Museum for performance at 6 pm, followed by a 7–9 pm reception with music and light refreshments provided by Tulsi Eatery–Westwood.

Related Public Programs will be online in February 2024.

Credits

*I Will Meet You Yet Again: Contemporary Sikh Art* was organized by the Fowler Museum at UCLA and curated by Sonia Dhami, president of Art & Tolerance, trustee of The Sikh Foundation, and managing editor of the *Sikh Research Journal*; and Syona Puliady, curator of textiles of the Eastern Hemisphere at the Fowler Museum.

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About the Fowler
The Fowler Museum at UCLA explores global arts and cultures with an emphasis on Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Indigenous Americas—past and present. The Fowler enhances understanding of world cultures through dynamic exhibitions, publications, and public programs, informed by interdisciplinary approaches and the perspectives of the cultures represented. The work of international contemporary artists is presented within complex frameworks of politics, culture, and social action.

Visiting Information
308 Charles E Young Dr N | Los Angeles, CA 90095 | fowler.ucla.edu/visit
Admission to the Fowler is free
Parking in UCLA Lot 4: Westwood Plaza at Sunset Blvd, $3/hr
Hours: Wednesday, 12–8 pm
Thursday–Sunday, 12–5 pm

CAPTIONS
Page 1
Saira Wasim (b. 1975, Lahore, Pakistan), On Road to Gurudwara Kartarpur Sahib, 2023; gouache and gold on wasli paper; Courtesy of the artist and the Khanuja Collection

Page 2
Kanwal Dhaliwal (b. 1960, Mehma Sarja, Panjab, India), Amrita Pritam, 2023; oil on canvas; Courtesy of the artist and the Sidhu Family Collection

Arpana Caur (b. 1954, New Delhi, India), Wounds of 1984, 2020; oil on canvas; Courtesy of the artist and Kapany Collection, Sikh Foundation

Page 3
Keerat Kaur (b. 1991, London, Ontario, Canada), detail of Sky Dome 35: an Archi(tech)tural Fairytale, 2017; mixed media; Courtesy of the artist

The Singh Twins (b. 1966, London, U.K.), detail of Phulkari: Craft and Conflict from the series Slaves of Fashion, 2017; cotton with viscose blend and gold lurex thread; Courtesy of the artists and the Khanuja Collection

Page 4
Rupy Kaloti (b. 1989, San Jose, California, U.S.A.), Past Lives, 2022; oil on panel; Courtesy of the artist

Himanshu Dua (b. 1994, Bahadurgarh, India) and Nisha K. Sethi (b. 1988, Berkeley, California, U.S.A.), Farmers Protests Graphics, 2021; digital files; Collection of the artists

Page 5
Rupy C. Tut (b. 1985, Chandigarh, U.T., India), Decoding the Hate Helix, 2019; acrylic on jute (burlap); Courtesy of the artist