

YOU MIGRATE, WE MIGRATE
YOU DISPLACE, WE DISPLACE



JHAVERI CONTEMPORARY

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HARDEEP PANDHAL
JAGDEEP RAINA

2 SEPT—
30 OCT 2021

Hardeep Pandhal and Jagdeep Raina are both artists who persistently return to the theme of reinvention, whether of cultural tradition, identity, or historical memory. Their approaches are, however, counterpoints to each other: while Pandhal's work revels in the Dionysian and carnivalesque dream logic of racial history, Raina's work represents a painstaking project of retrieval and reflection. A sense of dangerous play sets the tone for Pandhal's work, while Jagdeep's artwork plumbs the productive capacities of melancholia, lending his works an aura of sober commemoration. Both artists share an interest in the problem of historical repetition, as traumatic symptom and also as reactivation of the past's unrealized potentials.

Hardeep Pandhal works across a variety of media with a playful sensibility that nevertheless engages deadly serious topics such as racial violence, minoritization, and the haunting of cultural traditions. In the simultaneously light-hearted and terrifying worlds depicted in Pandhal's work, empire has ended but the libidinal—even orgiastic—energies upon which it depended have not dissipated. The past keeps returning, distorted in light of the collective desires of the present. Consider the description of the 1980s television series, *Jewel in the Crown*, as heard in Pandhal's 2020 animation piece *Ensorcelled English*: "Basically there's an interracial couple—an Indian man and white woman—who get attacked by local Indians whilst making love outdoors. The man gets thrown into prison and is raped himself by a colonial officer. The woman dies in childbirth... Everything happens in the first couple of episodes. Hardly anything happens in the remaining ones, it's weird." This narration suggests that the excessive elements of *Jewel in the Crown* were not only the lush and glittery surfaces on which the camera lingered, but a narrative element underlying this fetishistic experience of orientalism is sex rendered gothic in its violent excess. Yet the speaker describes this lurid aspect in the deadest of deadpan voices. Her voice lends irony to the description, and such irony has the effect of highlighting the preposterous nature of Raj-nostalgia fantasies but without detracting from the horror of racial terror upon which empire depended, and which is now revealed as the true longing underwriting the nostalgia for empire.

Pandhal's work consistently returns to this kind of irony, rescuing the ironic mode from the degraded forms it often takes in contemporary online cultures: the rhetorics of the meme, the culture of "lulz," the winking admission of all things terrible and profane. Such degraded varieties of irony are the preferred idioms of post-truth culture and the delusional politics to which it leads. Instead, Pandhal restores to irony its powers of critique and critical distancing. At the same time his artworks relish the forms of play that irony makes available, deploying them in the service of an aesthetic experience that investigates the truth of racial history, global as well as local. The hirsute figure of the Punjabi male in the series entitled *Happy Punjabi Gothic* wears the stereotypical expectations of the Punjabi male as opportunities for a variety of trickster performances: striking a pose here, upending expectations elsewhere. The chains and severed body parts that frame these images suggest both the limits of such penned-in performances, but also the sadomasochistic play that might assist in mastering such limits. Such unruliness of unconscious impulses is ever-present in Pandhal's work and thus his artwork has the quality of dreamwork in Sigmund Freud's precise sense: the forms of symbolization and representation available here are condensed manifestations of the psyche's attempts to work through lived social realities.

In *Happy Thuggish Paki*, the figure of childhood nostalgia, Mrs. Pac-Man, repeatedly addresses her husband as “Paki.” A figure similar to the one in *Punjabi Gothic* sits in front of the television screen watching Mrs. Pac-Man ask “Paki? Aren’t you done shaving yet?” and the rest of the phantasmagoric animation is punctuated by the repeated racial slur, “Paki.” For a young Sikh boy in the United Kingdom the demand to shave is a form of assimilative coercion. As the video unfolds, the turbaned figure becomes a condensed symbol: in the dreamwork of a racist society this figure is a Sikh, an Arab, an outsider, both Pandhal and also Osama bin Laden. Crypto-satanic symbols—sometimes in the familiar form of the trickster Punjabi—proliferate in the cultural imaginary of British whiteness. In the dream logic of this piece such majoritarian cultural imaginaries are akin to online platforms, like the browser-based game *Osamagotchi* that offers users the pleasures of either torturing the beturbaned Osama bin Laden figure, or keeping him as a pet. The incantatory rap that accompanies the artwork is confession, prayer, and explanation all at once—yet it remains haunted by Mrs. Pac-Man’s cartoonish refrain, “Paki!” Pandhal’s use of irony extends into the sonic elements of this piece, since this refrain is an interruption that is somehow synchronized into the rhythm of the rap itself. A similar aesthetic strategy is at work in the *Lord Tebbit* series. Norman Tebbit, a conservative law-maker, was most well-known for his “cricket test” which sought out the extent of an immigrant citizen’s loyalty to England by gauging their loyalty to English cricket teams. Pandhal takes cricket jumpers and reworks them with aggressive motifs that could only seem rude to the cultural and political sensibility of the Lord Tebbits of this world. These jumpers are a defiant celebration of the unassimilated immigrant. They also recall the punk aesthetic made high fashion by Vivienne Westwood in the 1980s—rebel yells become ornaments for the elite. Invoking this cultural and sartorial history of Britain, these pieces draw attention to the uncertain status of their defiance in the space of an art gallery.

Jagdeep Raina, too, is interested in the forms of historical survival, and his mixed media works painstakingly reproduce album covers of venerable Punjabi musicians such as Kuldeep Manak and Surinder Kaur. Raina’s reproductions are precisely not photographic, and thus themselves appear as images worked over lovingly by an avid fan. He has explained that this series explores “the birth of Bhangra music” as it flourished in the South Asian diaspora. The loose brushstrokes and the painterly embellishments have an informal quality, suggesting both the informal and fluid ways that communities are bound together, and also the open-endedness of a musical tradition reinventing itself. Still, such seemingly informal paintwork is combined with an obsessive attention to detail: even the record label logos are faithfully reproduced, the smallest of small print on the album cover is given its due. Such labored work on incidental details suggests the importance of historical veracity, prioritizing attempts at the retrieval and recovery of heterogeneous traditions. This comes across most movingly in Raina’s *Arora Archive*, which faithfully renders an assemblage of cassette and VHS tapes. These defunct and obsolete media can and likely have been transferred to digital formats—a reinvention central to their survival—but what does it mean to transfer the image of these defunct repositories of cultural memory into an artwork? *Arora Archive* both depicts a kind of time capsule of a particular cultural and historical tradition at a particular time, and it also seeks to *become* that time capsule. The rest of the images in this series—of album covers that are simultaneously fan art—share this

impossible and magical quality. Raina's work in this series is precisely the opposite of the formally disinterested work of the tradition of Pop art, particularly in the work of Andy Warhol, which aimed at capturing the emptiness at the heart of commodification through the use of silk screens or other methods that reduce the painterly aspect of the finished artwork. In Raina's hands, the surfaces of these images are carefully worked over by the artist's hand, even when he depicts an album cover with a generic corporate design, as in the piece, *You Reappear Again*. Yet, insofar as these artworks invoke Warhol and his contemporaries, Raina's artwork suggests there is another history to be told about the emptiness of the commodity, one inflected by the historical memory of minoritization and difference. After all, in *Arora Archive*, it is clear that many VHS and cassette tapes depicted are copies: the reinvention of a varied tradition like Punjabi music entails an informal—even fugitive—practice. Such commonplace forms of piracy require a rethinking of the usual accounts of commodification and its effects on culture.

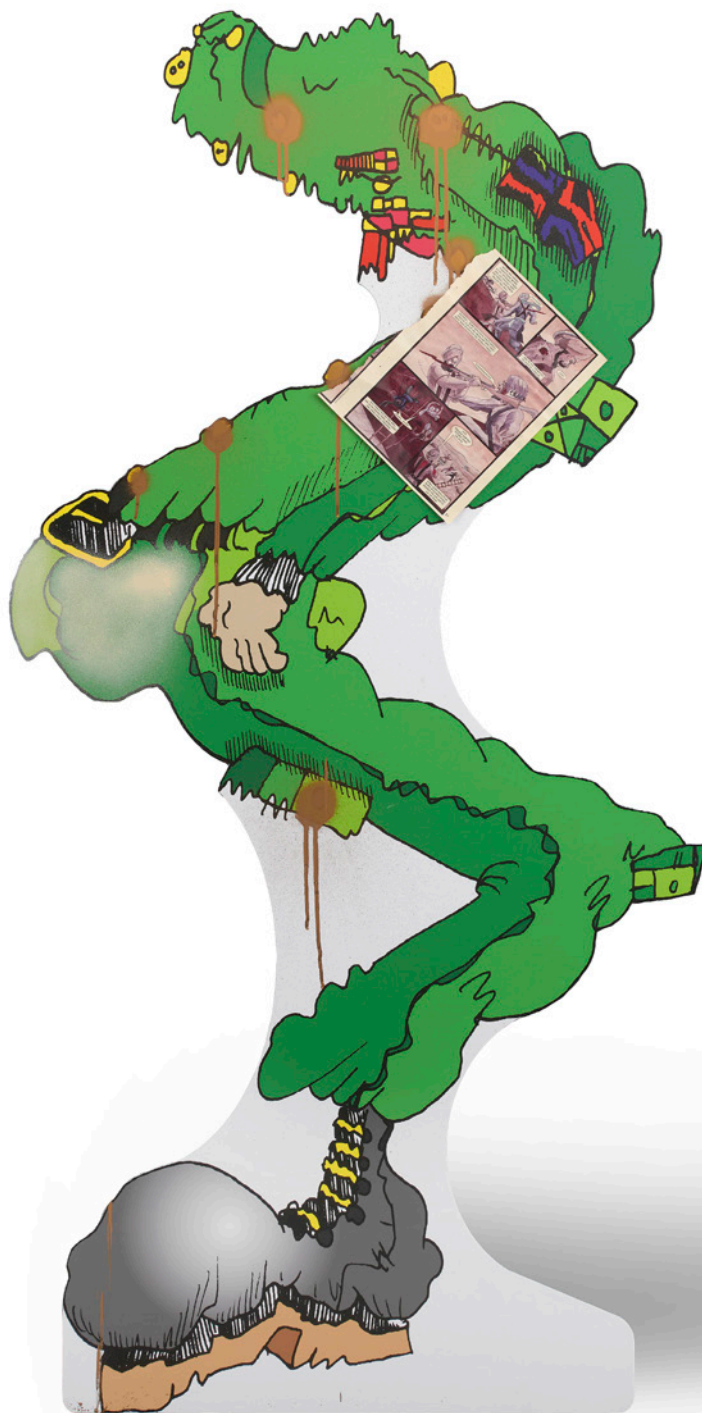
The commemorative and elegiac tone of *Arora Archive* repeats in the two video works by Raina included in this exhibition. *Oh Lahore* intersperses footage of Lahore's Kashmiri Gate, with animated mixed media work, as the voiceover recites a plaintive elegy written by Raina himself, recounting the historical pillage and renewal of the city itself across its Mughal, British, and post-Partition history. The Kashmiri gate is oriented toward Kashmir and was built in a time when a continuous traversal from Lahore to Kashmir was not only imaginable, but was routinely traveled. The piece ends with the line, "Oh Dear Lahore, look at your Kashmir today." The cycle of extraction, violence, and bloodshed that the video recounts and imaginatively reproduces turns out to be an open wound: the Kashmiri Gate is oriented toward an impossibility, and as such is itself not only a portal into the city but also a wound on its side. The melancholia of this piece is simultaneously tinged with a sense of wonder for what remains after the cycles of loss. In *Madhur's Phulkari* this same combination of wondrous melancholia attends an account of a tradition of embroidery that not only survives historical but geographical traversals, becoming an allegory for the reinvention of aesthetic traditions themselves. In Raina's artwork melancholia, historical memory, and cultural retrieval are the very (counterintuitive) means through which newness, insight, and reinvention occurs.

Zahid R. Chaudhary

Associate Professor, English Department, Princeton University



Mother India, 2015
Printed plastic, paper, spray paint, graffiti pen, paper
83 x 65 x 42 cm
32 x 25.5 x 16.5 in



Respect my BAME (name change), 2015
Printed plastic, paper, spray paint, graffiti pen, comic strip
52 x 80 x 34 cm
20.4 x 31.5 x 13.3 in



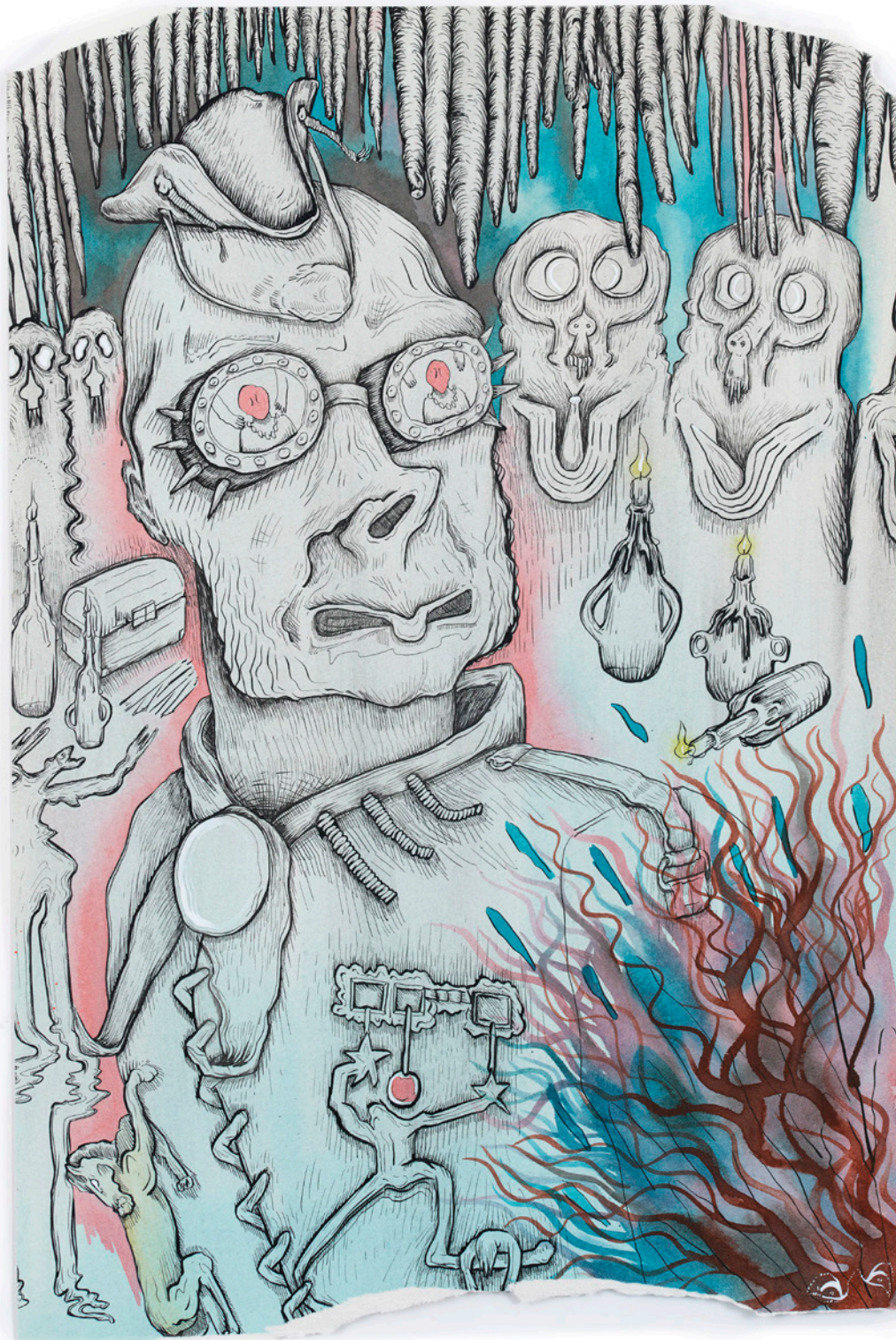
Confident, 2021
India ink, gouache on paper
50.5 x 69.5 cm
19.8 x 27.3 in



Untitled, 2021
India ink, gouache on paper
55 x 35 cm
21.6 x 13.7 in



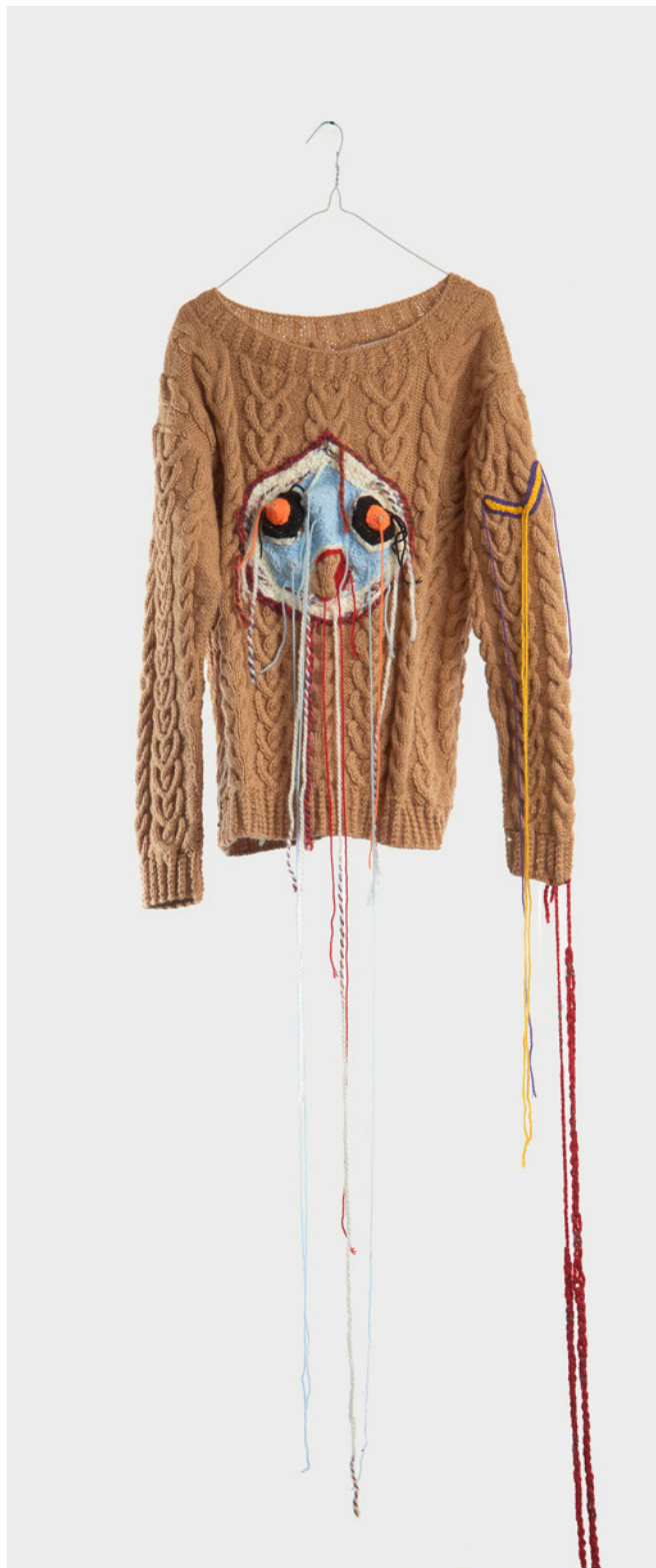
To Let, 2021
India ink, gouache on paper
52 x 72 cm
20.4 x 28.3 in



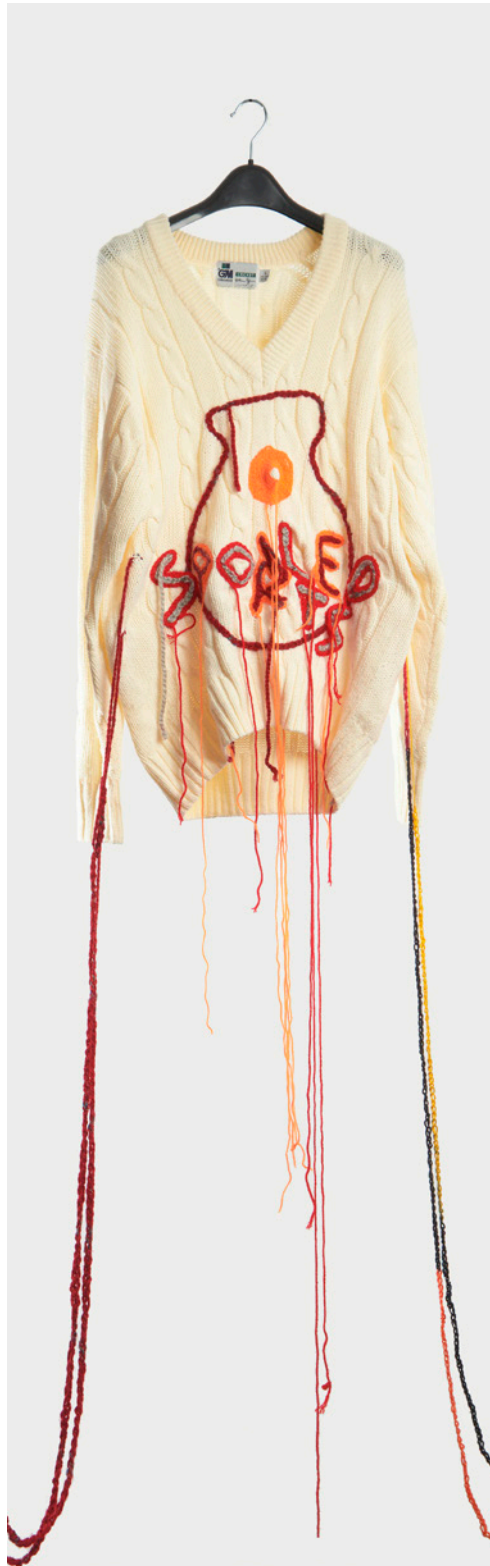
Whitby Goth Festival, 2021
India ink, gouache on paper
49.5 x 33 cm
19.4 x 12.9 in



Harmoniums, 2021
India ink, gouache on paper
50.5 x 32 cm
19.8 x 12.5 in



Untitled (The Lord Tebbit Series 1), 2019
Synthetic wool
69.5 x 52 cm
27.3 x 20.4 in



Untitled (The Lord Tebbit Series 2), 2019
Synthetic wool
87 x 46 cm
34.2 x 18.1 in



Untitled (The Lord Tebbit Series 3), 2019

Synthetic wool

71 x 45 cm

27.9 x 17.7 in



Untitled (The Lord Tebbit Series 4), 2019
Synthetic wool
41 x 35.5 cm
16.1 x 13.9 in



Untitled (The Lord Tebbit Series 5), 2019
Synthetic wool
73 x 40 cm
28.7 x 15.7 in



Untitled (The Lord Tebbit Series 6), 2019
Synthetic wool
76 x 47 cm
29.9 x 18.5 in



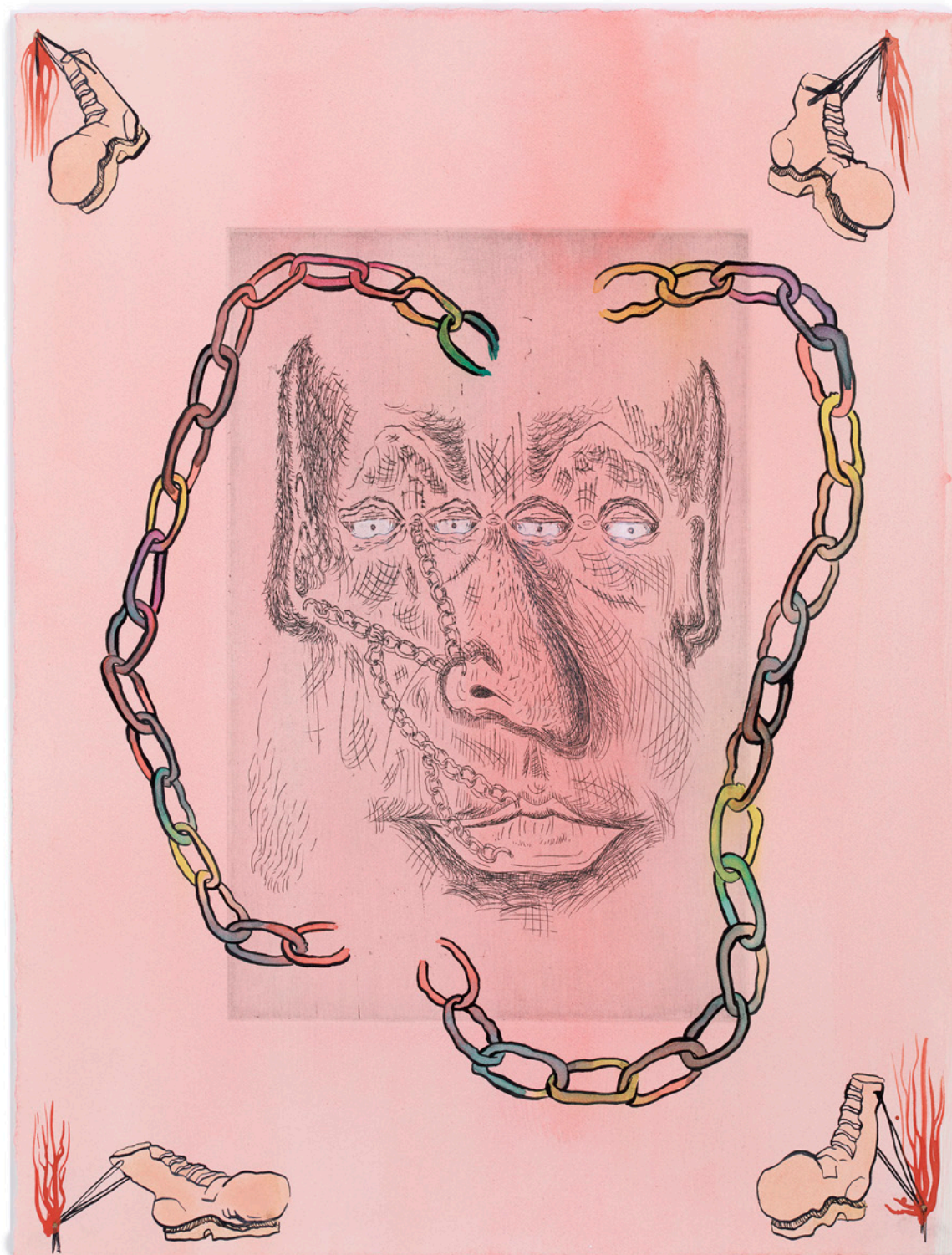
Untitled (The Lord Tebbit Series 7), 2019
Synthetic wool
66 x 42 cm
25.9 x 16.5 in



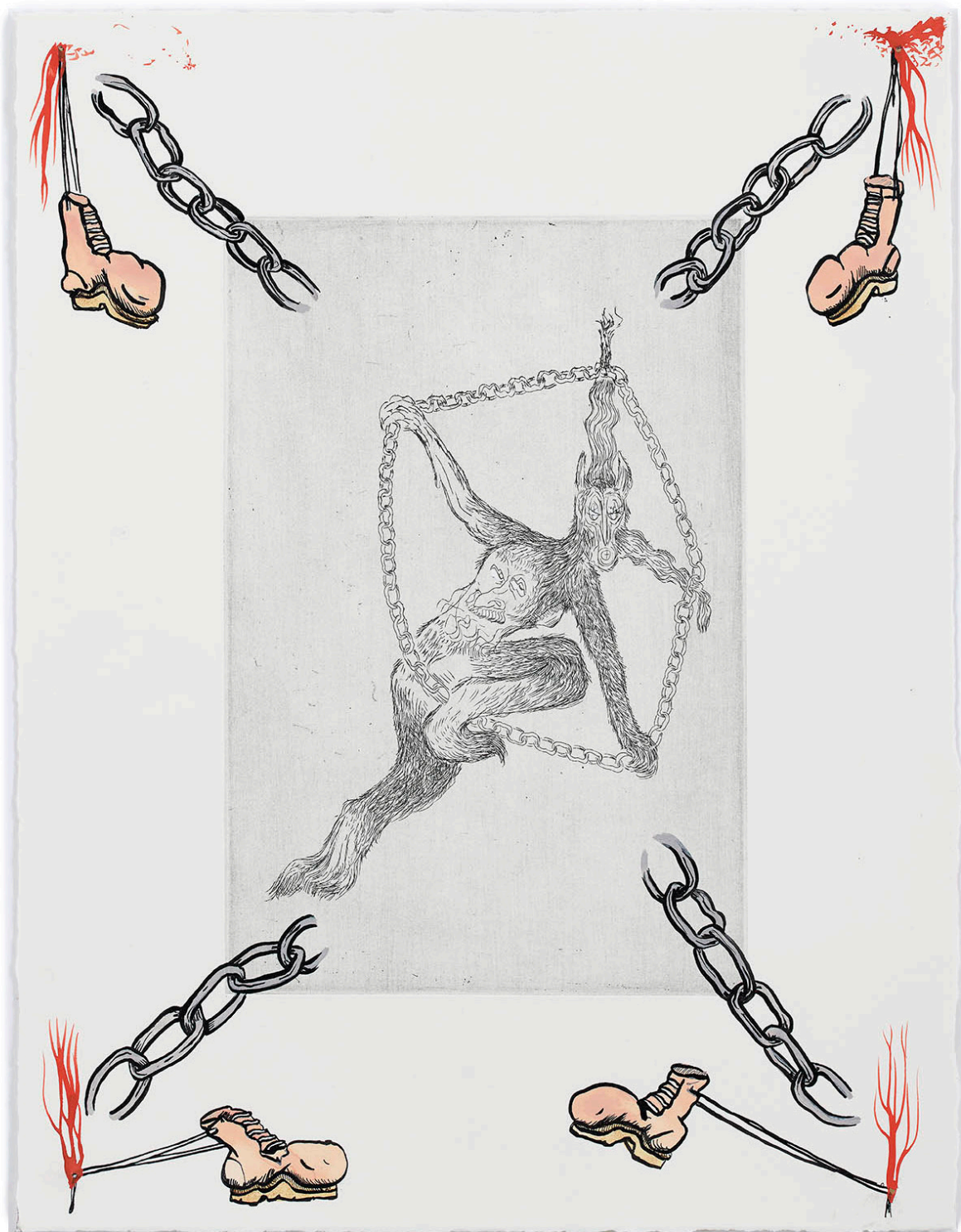
Untitled (The Lord Tebbit Series 8), 2019
Synthetic wool
73 x 37 cm
28.7 x 14.5 in



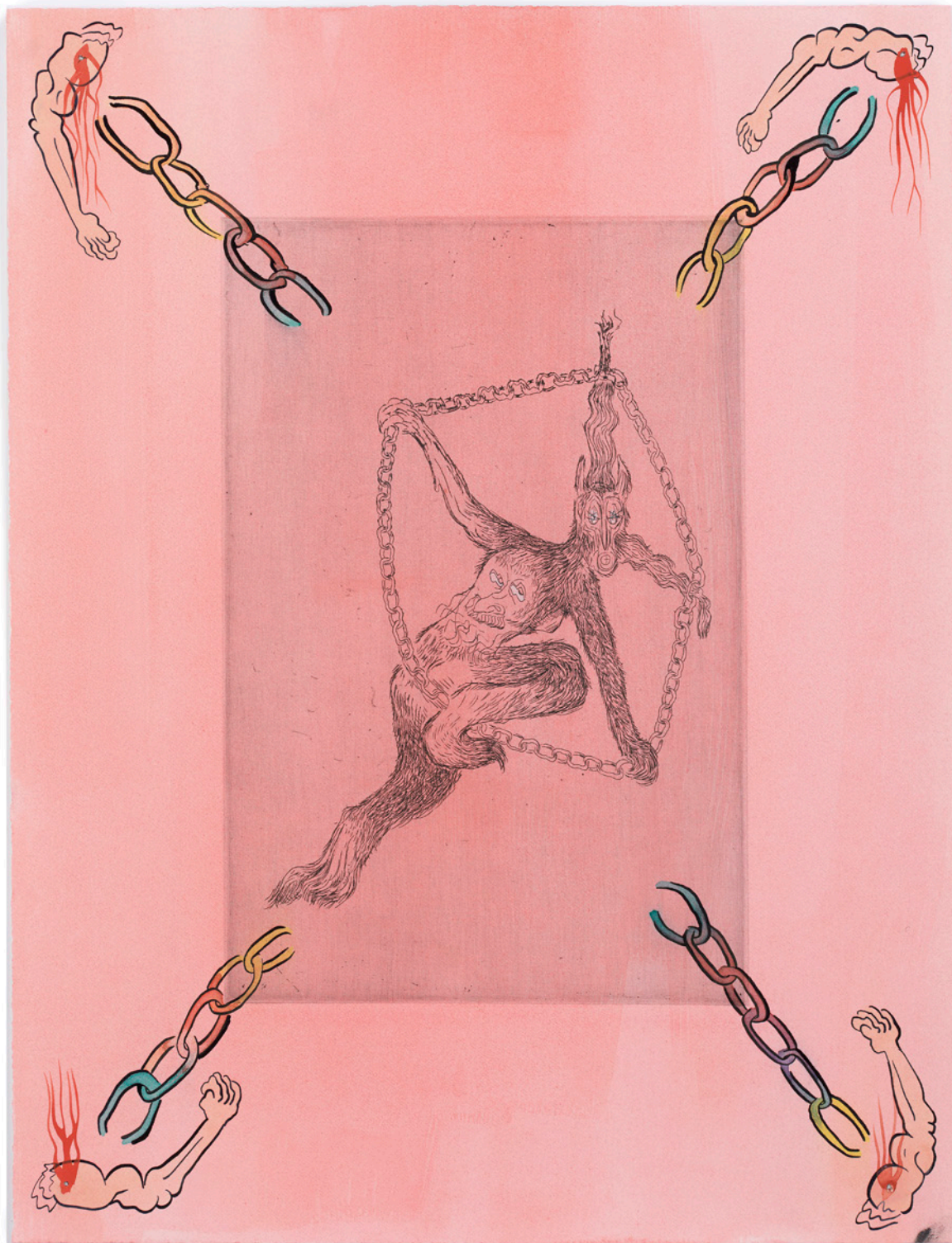
Happy Punjabi Gothic 1, 2019
Etching, India ink, gouache on paper
Edition 1
46 x 36 cm
18.1 x 14.1 in



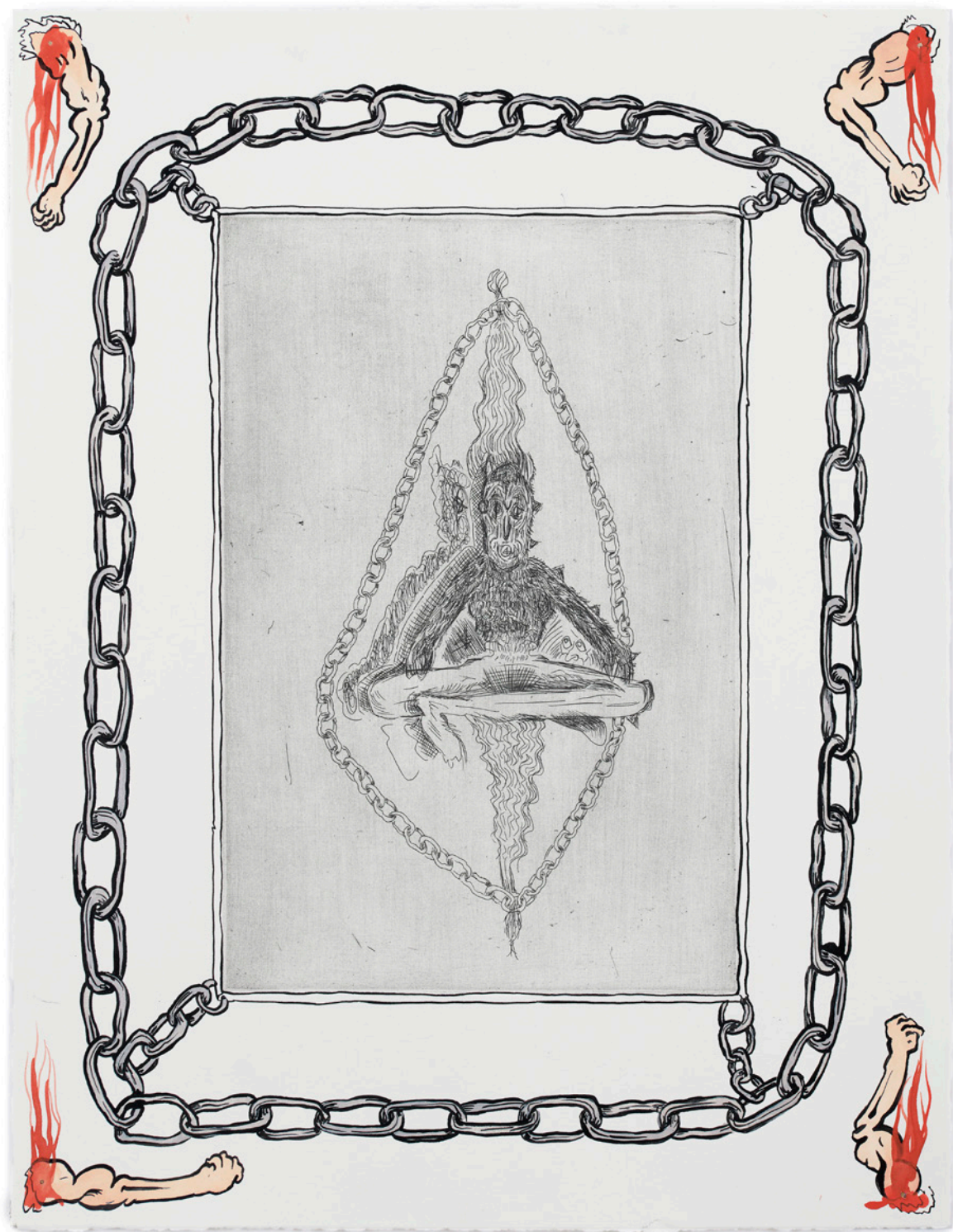
Happy Punjabi Gothic 2, 2019
Etching, India ink, gouache, coloured ink on paper
Edition 1
46 x 36 cm
18.1 x 14.1 in



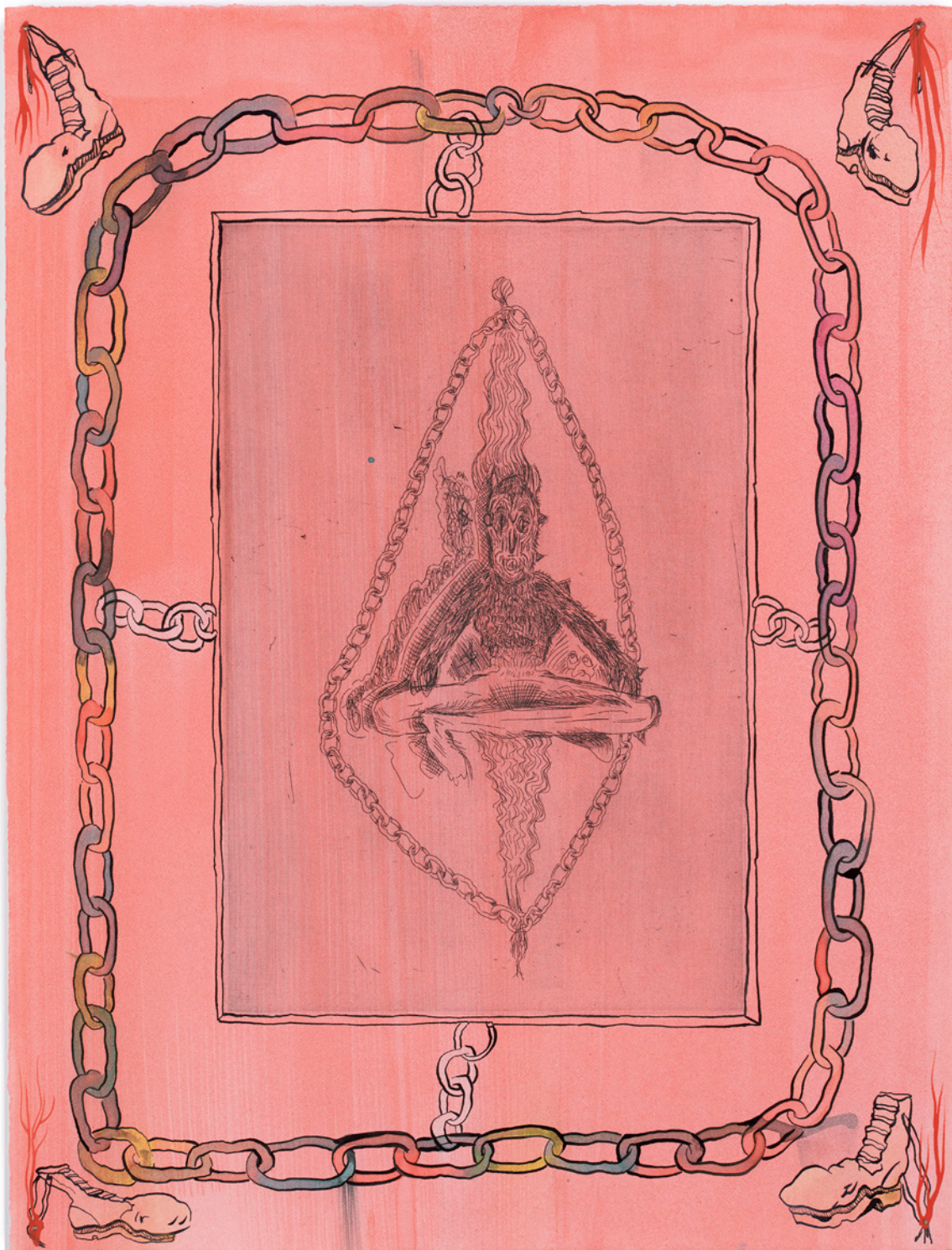
Happy Punjabi Gothic 3, 2019
Etching, India ink, gouache on paper
Edition 1
46 x 36 cm
18.1 x 14.1 in



Happy Punjabi Gothic 4, 2019
Etching, India ink, gouache, coloured ink on paper
Edition 1
46 x 36 cm
18.1 x 14.1 in



Happy Punjabi Gothic 5, 2019
Etching, India ink, gouache on paper
Edition 1
46 x 36 cm
18.1 x 14.1 in



Happy Punjabi Gothic 6, 2019
Etching, India ink, gouache, coloured ink on paper
Edition 1
46 x 36 cm
18.1 x 14.1 in



Happy Punjabi Gothic 8, 2019
Etching, India ink, gouache on paper
Edition 1 of 1
46 x 36 cm
18.1 x 14.1 in



HARDEEP PANDHAL

Hardeep Pandhal (b.1985, Birmingham. Lives and works in Glasgow) works predominantly with drawing and voice to transform feelings of disinheritance and disaffection into generative spaces that bolster interdependence and self-belief. Applying practices of associative thinking, his research-led projects exhibit syncretic strains of post-brown weirdness. Across media, his works are imbued with acerbity and playful complexity; at once confrontational and reflective.

Hardeep Pandhal received his BA from Leeds Beckett University, Leeds in 2007 and an MFA from Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow in 2013.

His work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including, most recently: British Art Show (2021), Aberdeen; Goldsmiths Centre of Contemporary Art (2020); Tramway, Glasgow (2020); New Art Exchange, Nottingham (2019); Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2019); South London Gallery, London (2018); New Museum, New York (2018); Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham (2018); Eastside Projects, Birmingham (2017); Modern Art Oxford, Oxford (2016).

Pandhal's work is part of a number of prestigious public collections, including Arts Council Collection, UK; British Council Collection, UK; Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow.

He was shortlisted for the Jarman Award (2018) and selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries (2013).

JAGDEEP
RAINA



Teamwork, 2015
Mixed media on paper
152.4 x 111.8 cm
60 x 44 in

**JAGDEEP
RAINA**



Club Kali, 2020
Embroidery thread, phulkari border on muslin
86.4 x 30.5 cm
34 x 12 in

JAGDEEP
RAINA



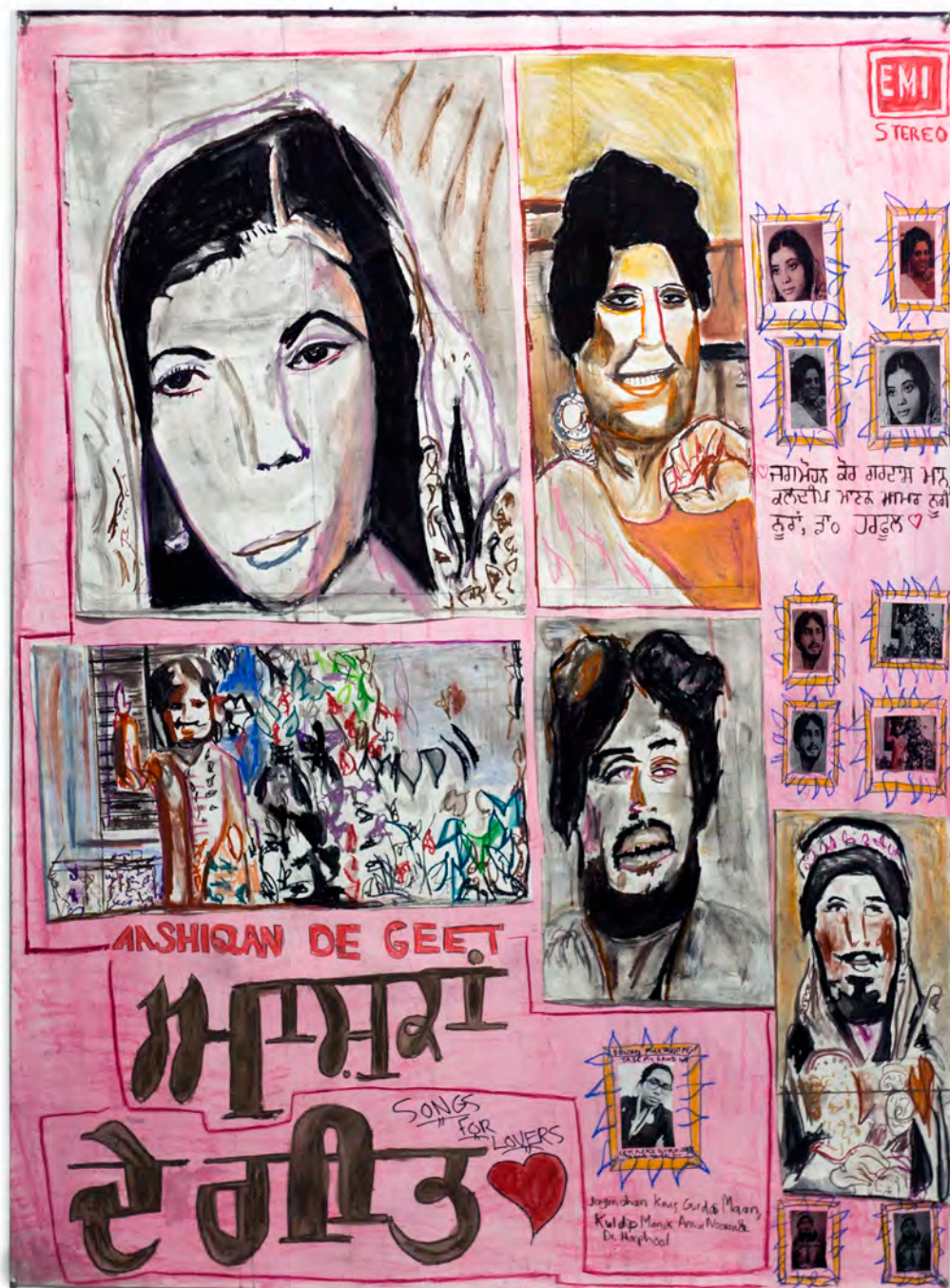
Never say goodbye, 2015
Mixed media on paper
152.4 x 223.5 cm
60 x 87.9 in

JAGDEEP
RAINA



You reappear again, 2015
Mixed media on paper
127 x 152.4 cm
50 x 60 in

JAGDEEP
RAINA



Desi Punjabi Songs for Lovers, 2015
Mixed media on paper
152.4 x 111.8 cm
60 x 44 in

JAGDEEP
RAINA



Celestial Beats, 2019
Mixed media on paper
56 x 76.3 cm
22 x 30 in

JAGDEEP
RAINA



Arora Archive, 2015
Mixed media on paper
55.8 x 76.2 cm
22 x 30 in

JAGDEEP
RAINA



Madhur's Phulkari, 2021
Edition 3 + 2 AP
Animated film
5 mins16 secs

JAGDEEP
RAINA



Oh Lahore, 2020
Edition 3 + 2 AP
Animated film
4 mins 29 secs

JAGDEEP RAINA BIO

Jagdeep Raina (b. 1991, Guelph, Ontario, Canada) has an inter-disciplinary practice that spans drawing, textiles, writing, and, more recently, video animation, film and ceramics. In his work, Raina engages with personal and public archives to examine histories of transnational migration by considering them in the context of fluctuating infrastructures of power. Raina's practice works to conceptually disrupt this fixity and recover heterogeneity. In doing so, the artist reactivates the archive to reveal hierarchies of power that play out across class, gender, caste, race and geography.

Raina was one of the recipients of the 2020 Sobey Art Award. He received his BFA from Western University in 2013, his MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2016, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2017. He has exhibited internationally at Midway Contemporary, Minneapolis (2019); Art Gallery of Guelph, Guelph (2019); Cooper Cole, Toronto (2019); Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton (2018); Rubin Museum of Art, New York (2018); RISD Museum of Art, Providence (2017); Humber Galleries, Toronto (2017); Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown (2017); Camden Arts Centre, London (2016); and Modern Fuel Artist Run Centre, Kingston (2016). Raina lives and works in Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

CONTACT

jhavericontemporary.com

info@jhavericontemporary.com
+91 22 2202 1051

Gallery Address

3rd Floor, Devidas Mansion
4 Mereweather Road, Apollo Bandar
Colaba, Mumbai, 400 001—India

Registered Office

AM art India Pvt. Ltd
26 B.G. Kher Marg
Mumbai, 400 006—India

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