



Educator & Visitor Guide

SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 2026

EXHIBITION

THE PAGLEES: Between Reason and Madness

Sept. 12–Dec. 12, 2026

OPENING EVENTS

Sept. 12, 5–7 p.m.

Performance

Shelly Bahl will perform *Sisters of Shakti*, an interactive invisible theater performance for a speculative intentional residential community for women.

Artist Talk, 5:30 p.m.

Members of the Paglees will discuss their work.

EXHIBITION EVENTS

Virtual Panel Discussion Oct. 2, 1 p.m.

Join the Paglees for a virtual discussion of their work and their responses individually and collectively to the current U.S. government's anti-immigrant, racist, anti-woman, and authoritarian policies. This event is hosted in solidarity with [Fall of Freedom](#), a nationwide cultural movement uniting artists, institutions, and communities in celebration of creative expression.



SCAN TO REGISTER

All events are free and open to the public. For ASL interpreting or other accommodations, please contact kcarmack597@stcate.edu

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed as a resource for all visitors, especially college educators and their students, who are eager to engage meaningfully with the artwork on view in the gallery. The content in this guide offers a range of learning opportunities and styles, with the goals of building observational skills, encouraging dialogue, cultivating critical thinking and personal reflection, and ultimately, appreciating art as a form of learning, understanding, and creating a pathway for building empathy, relationships and community at St. Kate's and beyond.

The content of this guide is created by Kara Carmack in collaboration with the Paglees. We envision that forthcoming guides will likely change over time, with each new exhibition, and as we learn with and from those who interact with this document.

“MUSEUMS ARE NOT NEUTRAL”: THE GALLERY AS A SITE OF POWER

Historically, galleries (as well as museums and art spaces) are sites where art and power intersect, often at the expense and omission of marginalized communities including women, people of color, LGBTQIA+ people, and people who are disabled. As an institution that collects artwork, displays artwork, and platforms artists in a public gallery space, St. Catherine University is a participant in this history and power dynamic.

Art spaces, and the disciplines of studio art and art history, are rooted in racism and white supremacy. These ideologies have shaped — and have been shaped by — colonization, resulting in histories and institutions that claim to be “neutral,” without responsibility to address, respond to or change the injustice present in their own communities. Rather than relying on past exhibition modes that situate the institution/curator/artist as the expert, we seek to model an art space for the future that invites an exchange of ideas, perspectives and ways of being.

For the most part, museums are products and projects of colonialism. Because the origins and evolving practices of the construct stem from and perpetuate conquest, they are by nature not ‘neutral.’ For decades artists, activists and scholars in the U.S. and beyond have opposed exclusionary modes of institutions, which include favoring works by White male artists for collections and exhibitions, maintaining predominantly White executive staffs and boards, and other practices. Museums Are Not Neutral spotlights actions for change and exposes how the claim of neutrality fosters unequal power relations.

— La Tanya Autry, co-founder of *Museums Are Not Neutral*

GALLERY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Through the public display of art and related programming, students will experience the gallery as an active expression of the University's values: a women-centered, gender-inclusive approach to education that welcomes a rich diversity of students; social justice teaching as lived by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet; and a commitment to and celebration of the liberal arts.
2. Understand the gallery as a community-based space of mutual learning, where all viewers can relate to the artworks, and one another, in some way.

The Paglees

BETWEEN REASON AND MADNESS

ABOUT THIS EXHIBITION

The Paglees are 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 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."

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.

This feminist collective's third exhibition premieres the Paglees' first collaborative print, and several new works by the artists that respond to the current growing authoritarianism in the United States.

The seven Paglees are Shelly Bahl (New York City), Monica Jahan Bose (Washington, DC), Fawzia Khan (Minneapolis, Minnesota), Indrani Nayar-Gall (Charlotte, North Carolina), Renluka Maharaj (Boulder, Colorado), Nirmal Raja (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Boston, Massachusetts), and Pallavi Sharma (San Ramos, California). They are diasporic South Asians with roots in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Trinidad & Tobago.



The Paglees, *She Grew Untamed from an Unknown River*, 2026, monotype, screen-print, hand coloring, and mirror bindi on Arches 88 silkscreen paper, 24 x 18 inches



Indrani Nayar-Gall, *all Red Riding Hoods do not come out of the forest safe and whole*, 2022, site-specific floor installation, dimensions variable



Monica Jahan Bose, *Red & Blue 4*, 2026, acrylic and collaged Harris-Waltz election flyers on recycled canvas, 16 x 20 inches

EXHIBITION LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Discover** the heritage, histories, identities and diversity of the South Asian diaspora in the United States.
2. **Recognize** South Asian artists as established contributors to the contemporary art landscape of Minnesota and the broader United States.
3. **Learn** about the impact of patriarchy, religion, white supremacy, colonialism, violence, capitalism, and environmental plunder on generations of women.
4. **Consider** the perspectives of South Asian immigrants on the U.S. government's current policies around immigration and diversity.

PROMPTS FOR FREEWRITING AND/OR DISCUSSION

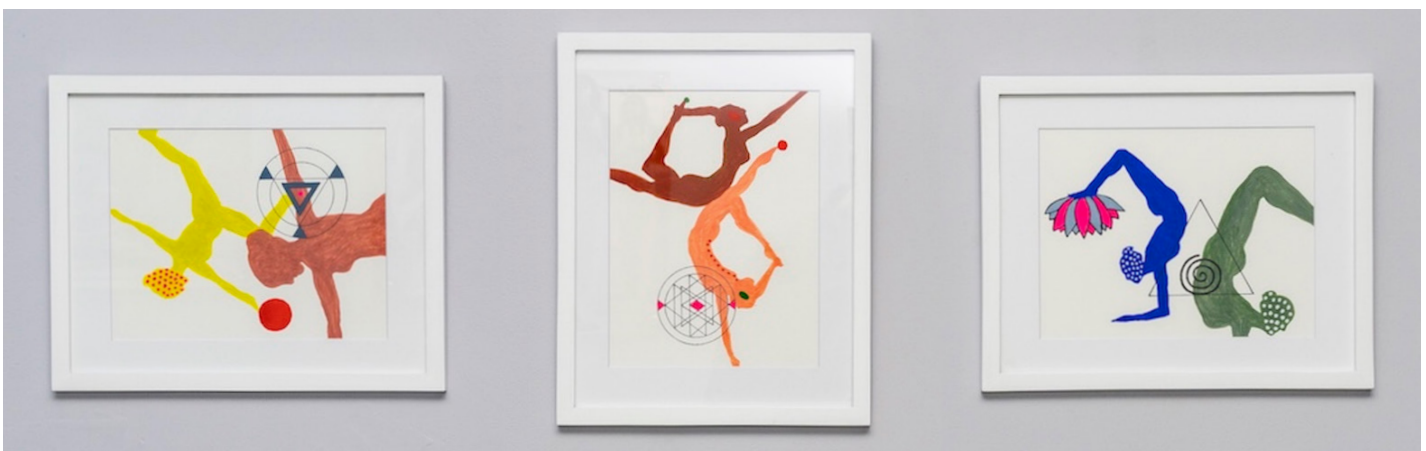
- How do you define the concept of home and what do you think it means for immigrants today? Is it a physical space or an abstract idea? Does it connote safety, vulnerability, or precarity? How is the theme of home similar or different in the works by Indrani Nayar-Gall, Nirmal Raja, and Pallavi Sharma?
- How do the Paglees respond to the current U.S. government's anti-immigrant, racist, anti-woman, and authoritarian policies as a collective, and individually?
- How do the Paglees use text — and its erasure — to attend to discourses around culture, history, inclusion, and gender?
- The exhibition features an array of media, from suitcases and videos to fabric and photography. How does each artist's choice of materials connect to the theme of the work? For example, what associations does hair evoke and how might it relate to gender and the control of women?
- What visual elements do the artists use to address themes of climate justice, gender-based violence, bodily autonomy, family, and religion?
- How do the works engage with the exhibition's themes of madness and reason?



Nirmal Raja, *Untitled*, 2025, found silver-plated platter and synthetic hair, 36 x 23½ x 2 inches



Renluka Maharaj, *Amaya*, 2022, pigment ink print on canvas, cotton thread, cotton fabric, and acrylic rod, 45 x 36 inches



Shelly Bahl, *Sisters of Shakti*, 2024, installation detail



Pallavi Sharma, *Lakdi Ki Kathi*, 2022, fabric, synthetic hair, wire, rice sacks, and wooden riding horse, 84 x 50 x 60 inches

This guide is inspired by and modeled after educator guides offered by [Art 21, Walker Art Center](#) (Minneapolis, Minnesota), [Chrysler Museum of Art College-level Educator Guides](#) (Norfolk, Virginia), [The Whitney Museum of American Art](#) (New York, New York) and the [Perlman Teaching Museum](#) at Carleton College (Northfield, Minnesota).

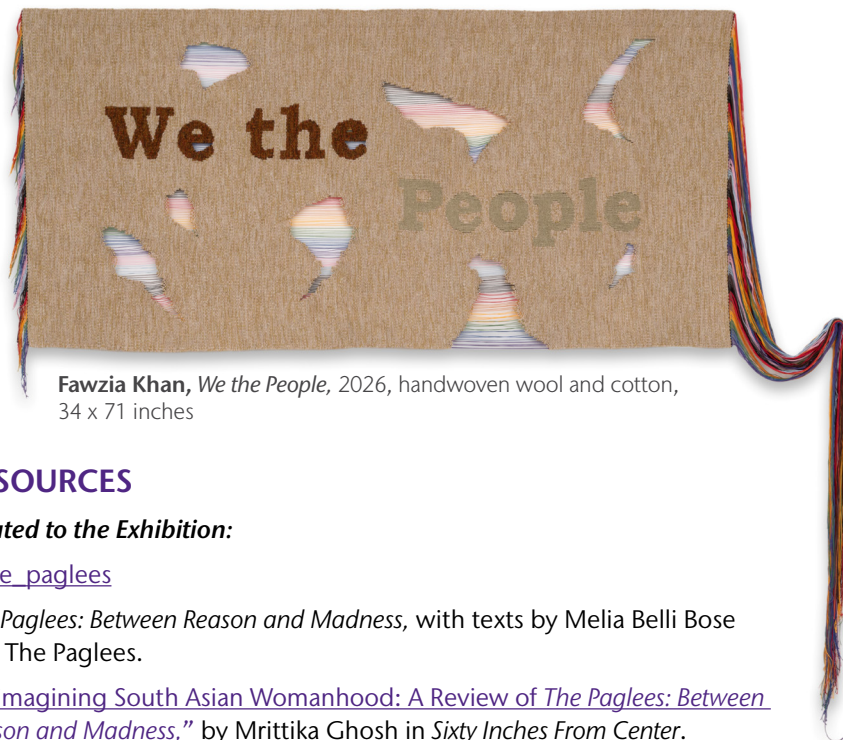
Special thanks to the Mellon Foundation for their support in the creation of this guide, which is part of a [grant project](#) at St. Catherine University to develop an interdisciplinary, intersectional humanities curriculum that incorporates [anti-racist work](#). If you have any questions or would like to provide feedback, contact Kara Carmack (kcarmack597@stkate.edu) or directors of the grant project (mellon@stkate.edu).

Acknowledgements:

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**ST. CATHERINE
UNIVERSITY**



Fawzia Khan, *We the People*, 2026, handwoven wool and cotton, 34 x 71 inches

RESOURCES

Related to the Exhibition:

[@the_paglees](#)

The Paglees: Between Reason and Madness, with texts by Melia Belli Bose and The Paglees.

[“Reimagining South Asian Womanhood: A Review of *The Paglees: Between Reason and Madness*,”](#) by Mrittika Ghosh in *Sixty Inches From Center*.

[“The Nonconformists: A Review of *The Paglees: Between Reason and Madness* at South Asia Institute,”](#) by Regan Dockery in *Newcity Art*.

[“The Paglees Color the Lens of Collective Feminism,”](#) by Wendy Wei in *Chicago Reader*. [South Asian Feminisms](#), edited by Ania Loomba and Ritty A. Lukose.

[Against Purity: Rethinking Identity with Indian and Western Feminisms](#), by Irene Gedalof.

[Fashioning Diaspora: Beauty, Femininity, and South Asian American Culture](#), by Vanita Reddy.

[Eyes of the Storm: The Voices of South Asian-American Women](#), by Roksana Badruddoja.

[Unruly Immigrants: Rights, Activism, and Transnational South Asian Politics in the United States](#), by Monisha Das Gupta.

[Good Girls Marry Doctors: South Asian American Daughters on Obedience and Rebellion](#), an anthology of short stories edited by Piyali Bhattacharya.

[South Asian Voices](#) podcast, hosted by Geetanjali Mittal ([SEWA-AIFW](#))

[MinneAsian Stories](#) podcast, hosted by Julia Gay ([Coalition of Asian American Leaders](#))

[SAADA](#) (South Asian American Digital Archive)

Throughout September, visit the corresponding book display in St. Kate’s library on the first floor of Coeur de Catherine (CDC). Consult the online [One Read for Racial Justice Resource Guide](#) to explore the interconnections between the exhibition and Kao Kalia Yang’s book *Somewhere in the Unknown World*.

Related to the Gallery:

gallery.stkate.edu

Museums Art Not Neutral at *Art Museum Teaching — A Forum for Reflecting on Action* <https://artmuseumteaching.com/2017/08/31/museums-are-not-neutral>

Museums As a Site for Social Action (MASS Action), <https://www.museumaction.org>

Umolu, Yesomi. “On the Limits of Care and Knowledge: 15 Points Museums Must Understand to Dismantle Structural Injustice.” Accessed 25 June 2023.

<https://news.artnet.com/opinion/limits-of-care-and-knowledge-yesomi-umolu-op-ed-1889739>