

features of the impressive and immersive installation *nearly hardened cold*, 2025, begin to emerge, though never completely. Cartoonish drawings of mutant figures, or faint anatomical outlines, are rendered on browned paper, and small photographs are placed in constellations on misty Plexiglas, which also features, here and there, scrawls, drips, snatches of text, protruding cutlery.

The total effect of Astakhishvili's installation is akin to a dispersed set of textual allusions and material intensities, or reflections on the past and present of an abstracted biography, all arrested during a process of figuring out (becoming) and captured in form. 'I can't tell if I'm remembering or composing', reads one handwritten line; 'Singing out of doors', reads another. It must be said that my own language, within the set form of the 'critical review', feels not quite up to the task of reproducing the effects and affects of Astakhishvili's work. There is a sense that a certain listlessness is suggested by the closest adjectives I can find and the hackneyed oxymorons I have resisted to fulfil descriptive requirements. The installation is, however, solid: it has quiddity and heft. It spreads like an artful erosion transforming, subverting and sometimes exaggerating the ambience of the Clerk's House: from the external windows displaying odd found objects to candles lining the staircase leading up to the attic room's *From Communion to Cannibalism*, 2018–25, a projected series of slides made in collaboration with James Richards (Interview AM410). There is so much here that it will be hard for most visitors to discover it all.

Looking through Emalin's installation shots, published on its website after my visit, I saw what I had missed. Behind the large Plexiglas panels were shapes, shadows, colours and materials that created the impression of diaphanous figures, objects and materials. In the photographs they looked to be ingenious and crucial crowning elements of the entire work, but in the gallery, on the day that I visited, the external light (grey and overcast) was too faint to illuminate the abstracted shadow-puppet outlines. In much the same way, the interior gloom made it impossible to make out any of the details in *I can't imagine how can I die if I am so alive*, 1998–, a wall collage collaboration made between Astakhishvili and her father, Zurab.

Astakhishvili's star is clearly in the ascendent. Here's hoping the curators and gallerists that next show her work might advise turning up the lights a bit. Then we won't feel so robbed, and the uncanny details of her rich and strange world will be present in all their distinctive and intricate glory.

Morgan Quaintance is an artist and writer.

Jasleen Kaur: Boomerang

Hollybush Gardens, London
7 November to 20 December

On my initial walkthrough, Jasleen Kaur's 'Boomerang' was uncannily reminiscent of my childhood homes. We were both raised in Punjabi Sikh households: interiors commonly lined with lace, shelves stocked with devotional cassette tapes and mantelpieces brimming with religious memorabilia, including temple maquettes and photographs of pilgrimage sites. It was a familiar yet disconcerting encounter.

This exhibition, the first since Kaur's Turner Prize win last year, opens with a washed-out image of Amritsar's sacred Golden Temple surrounded by pools of water, its once shimmering faded surface now sealed under rippling privacy glass – the image submerged as if under a sheet of ice on the cusp of cracking under the slightest amount of pressure. This fraught sensation was emphasised by a glistening set of brass teeth that teetered on top of the photograph's frame while two lifeless iPhones lay precariously at my feet. With its front tooth dislodged, the disembodied mouth gestures to a body amid regeneration, but also the enmeshed ways in which bodies and architectural structures share states of vulnerability – latent pulsations of violence that permeate 'Boomerang'.

The exhibition is also replete with textures lifted from Kaur's home city of Glasgow. In *Small Forces*, 2025, crumpled plastic film coats photographic vignettes that commemorate everyday communal life. Similarly, in *Untitled*, 2023–, an image of Kaur's grandfather is cast behind a skim of resin dyed a golden orange, reminiscent of the Scottish Irn-Bru soft-drink, his face shielded by a torn piece of roti; a floating fragment of food becoming another filter through which visibility is negotiated.

Kaur's highly mediated visual tactic of preservation and protection also recalls the artist Himali Singh Soin's poetic manifesto, *On Translucency*, 2023, in which he writes that 'translucency is both the right to illegibility and the desire for interpretation'. Playing in the murkiness of translucent substances, be they solid, liquid or in-between, Kaur's work evokes 'the slurry of life'. Through this tactile yet ambiguous framework, Kaur tinkers with the material properties of common objects, often supplanting them with incongruous textures or playing with scale to reveal the ways in which social order and power structures are dutifully maintained even in the most domestic and intimate of spaces.

However, in 'Boomerang', Kaur also transforms found household objects into architectural motifs. In works such as *Keystone II*, 2025, she repurposes an assortment of Shabad Kirtan cassette tapes into a solid lintel that ushers the spiritual realm into our material, earthly present. Elsewhere, objects occupy space with less ease: in *Pride*, 2025, a miniscule boxing glove is tied to a foil balloon that butts up against the gallery

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Jasleen Kaur, *Untitled*, 2025

rafters, suspended mid-flight and struggling to stay afloat. The main gallery space is divided by two lace curtains, *Meso*, 2025, a porous border embroidered with familiar floral motifs that, on closer inspection, are juxtaposed with several heavy machinery diggers, symbols of partition and demolition. Any feelings of nostalgia I previously harboured dissipated as I fixated on these excavators woven into the surface like scar tissue. At the base of the curtain is a desk light finished in a brown marbled veneer. It illuminates a radiating green replica of a shrunken Babri Masjid of Ayodhya, the 16th-century mosque that was irreparably damaged when attacked by Hindu nationalist mobs in 1992, which later made way for the construction of the controversial Ram Mandir. The curtain casts a shadow over the maquette, as if foreshadowing its destruction.

Towards the end of my visit, a cacophony of dissonant piano notes suddenly pulled me back through the curtains into the first room, enacting the choreography of the titular boomerang. The discordant sounds were emanating from the now powered-on iPhones playing a film of a toddler excitedly trampling on piano keys as if to make new noises from the ground beneath. As the dissonance reverberated, another screen lit up showing handheld footage of a bank of daisies, a flower often plucked or stamped on rather than acknowledged for its healing properties. The work encapsulates Kaur's exploration of the act of 'treading lightly', directly responding to Fred Moten's affirmation that 'every step you take is a claim to ownership'.

'Boomerang' is filled with passageways, cracks and slippages that present an opportunity for renewal. Kaur's work breaks into the material memories of my own lineage, making once-familiar objects seem illegible and intangible. On leaving, I am saluted by a pearlescent pink token that reads 'DEVOTION' pinned at the gallery staircase beside the exit. It gestures towards a hopeful destination, still not quite yet in reach.

Amrita Dhallu is a curator based in East Sussex.

Claire Fontaine: Show Less

Mimosa House, London, 10 October to 6 December

There have been times when I've felt that labelling myself as white would disavow a part of me. Even though I often feel that I am white, to claim so would mean that many of my relatives would cease, in certain respects, to exist. But then maybe what really matters is not so much where you come from as the fraught relationship between identity – as slippery as that is – and social and political responsibility (in which case, I may as well be white). In their exhibition at Mimosa House, Claire Fontaine – a pseudonymous identity assumed by the artist duo Fulvia Carnevale and James Thornhill – highlight the vexatious nature of this relationship with prankish humour.

Mostly consisting of tinkered readymades, the works gathered here often mock the way identity, whether ancestral, cultivated or otherwise, can be naively invoked as a cop out. The ten framed A3 sheets that constitute *I am free*, 2025, are painted with variations on one sentence: 'If in my family there have been any injustices, I leave to my ancestors the responsibility of whatever happened. I am free.' The word order changes slightly from sheet to sheet, the repetition paradoxically reminiscent of lines doled out as punishment at school, while the blithely multicoloured freehand feigns an innocence that, in turn, matches the text's syntactical frailty. Were these injustices committed or suffered by the family? Are any of us absolved from being accountable, whether as perpetrators, victims or witnesses? A lightbox that pictures a Venn diagram, *Intersections*, 2025, proposes that these roles are not so distinct.

The works encountered enrich each other through juxtaposition. For example, *FATHERFUCKER*, 2025, which we pass on the way in, and which is visible from the street, makes a formal reference to the duo's ambiguous neon installation *Foreigners Everywhere / Stranieri Ovunque*, 2004–24 (the titular work of the 60th Venice Biennale). The work is not only a playful jibe at how misogynistic, sexually derived expletives have become normalised, but it also declares war on patriarchy both by stating an intention to 'fuck it up' and someone of fraternising with it – a duality that could also reflect the patriarchal tendency to glorify the social cohesion it lays claim to while denying any association with ideological violence.

In this context, *Newsfloor (The Guardian)*, 2025, whose wall-to-wall flooring is made from pages taken from the 'left wing' newspaper, seems to be poking fun at the privileged assumption that identifying with



Claire Fontaine, 'Show Less', exterior view