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Art

Jasleen Kaur review – Ford Escort revs up rich tangle of resonant memory

★★★★★

Tramway, Glasgow

Family photos in Irn-Bru resin, tracksuits, sound works and a once-prized car tell a personal and political story of growing up in a south Asian family in Scotland

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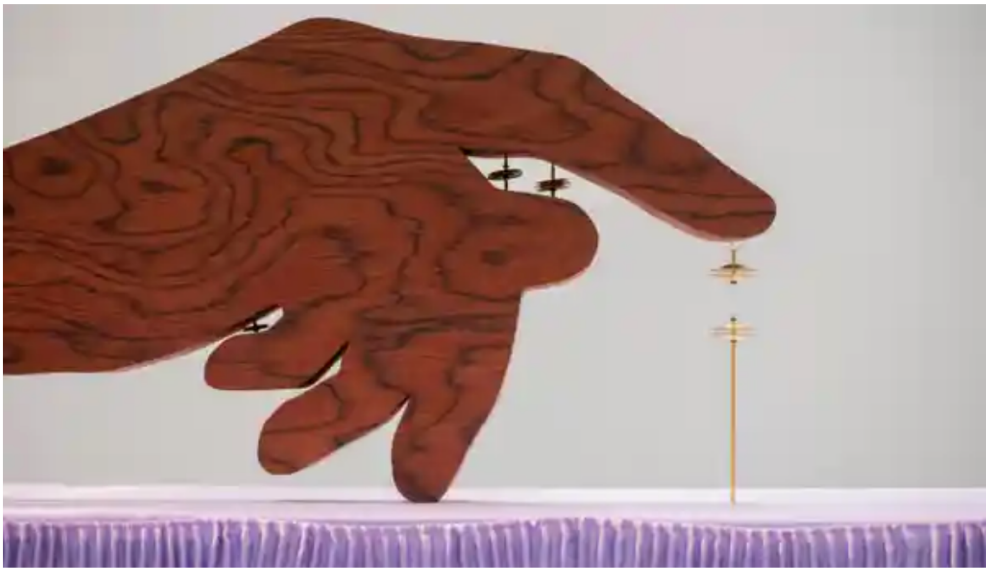
Tramway's cavernous gallery space has been turned into Jasleen Kaur's internal landscape. It is populated with references pulled from her upbringing in her south Asian family in Pollokshields, just round the corner from the Glasgow gallery.

A giant replica Axminster carpet takes centre stage. Suspended above it is a vast print of the sky, expanded from an image taken in nearby Pollok Park. The print, slightly transparent, has objects littered on top, which you catch glimpses of as you look up through the clouds. The objects are debris from Kaur's early life, remade from memory – political flyers, newspaper clippings and images of saints. Snaking across the print is a surreally long football scarf with the word LOOOOONGING knitted into it. A tracksuit lies close by, coloured the luminous orange of Irn-Bru and emblazoned with the words "CAN'T DO IT". Layered choral voices – a sound work made with vocal teacher Marged Siôn – vibrate through the space.

▲ Irn-Bru amber ... Jasleen Kaur, Alter Altar at Tramway, Glasgow. Photograph: Keith Hunter

On the wall, pictures from Kaur's family archive are embedded in more Irn-Bru-orange resin, a reference to the blessed foods Kaur would be given at Sikh temple the Gurdwara, which included Scotland's fizzy orange pop. In the resin are pieces of torn-up rotis, obscuring the people in the photographs. The orange glow makes the images seem even farther away in time. On the floor at the base of the portraits two large images overlap each other: one of the Kenmure Street protest which thwarted an immigration raid in Pollokshields in May 2021, and another of the Indian farmers' protests in September 2020, one of several acknowledgments of cross-cultural solidarity.

There's a Red Ford Mk3 Escort Cabriolet XR3i, covered in an enormous hand-crocheted doily which drapes over the car's windows and wing mirrors, as if trapping it. The Cabriolet is a replica of Kaur's dad's first car from when he arrived in the UK; the doily is a reference to the migration of workers from India to British mills and the work they would produce. Songs played on family journeys blast from the car, music fading in and out as if you're catching them as it whizzes past. I hear Allah Hoo by Qawwali singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan rising out of the subwoofer in the boot, a replica of speakers made by Kaur's brother who would install them in their family's cars.



▲ Automated worship bells … Jasleen Kaur, Alter Altar at Tramway, Glasgow. Photograph: Paul Watt/Paul Watt/ courtesy Glasgow Life

Sound pulls you around this exhibition. At the back of the gallery, large gesturing hands sit on a long table covered with lilac satin, holding automated worship bells whose dings resonate through the space. Nearby an automated harmonium, like the one Kaur's father used to teach her to sing, lets out tones at regular intervals. These tones feel bodily, like the sound a lung might make if given a voice.

As you leave the space, taking one last look up at the sky you catch a glimpse of a sacrum, the large triangular bone at the base of the spine. Translated from Latin as "the sacred bone", in Egyptian mythology this bone represents resurrection and agriculture and is the source of emotions and creativity in the chakra system.

Throughout Alter Altar, Kaur asks us to look at how we activate the things that define us, the objects and traditions we collect as we grow up that have the potential to both define and confine us. Acknowledging that we not only have a responsibility to continue our traditions and histories but also to renew them from the fragments they leave behind. There is a tension that comes with this, especially in our enduring landscapes of enforcement and unrest but by making space to imagine

and reflect she makes space for all these complexities, a sacred space for possibilities to gather.

• Jasleen Kaur, Alter Altar is at Tramway, Glasgow, until 8 October