

Punj-AB A Sublime Terrain

Faiza Butt

Curated by
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About the Artist

Faiza Butt was born in Lahore, Pakistan in 1973. She received her BA with honours from the National College of Arts in 1993, and was awarded the Berger Gold Medal for outstanding student of the year. She holds a Master's degree in Painting with a distinction award from the Slade School of Fine Art in London. In 1995, Butt was awarded a UNESCO-Aschberg Bursary and was an artist in residence at the Bartle Arts Trust (BAT) in Durban, South Africa where she produced a solo show at the BAT Centre. Faiza holds extensive experience in community engagement globally. She has worked with underprivileged social groups through her teaching career and has collaborated with various organisations to make art a medium of social consciousness and justice. Her work has been exhibited at various art fairs, such as Frieze London, Art Dubai and the Hong Kong Art Fair, and extensively in solo and group exhibitions in Europe, the Middle East, South Asia and the United States. Her work can be found in private and public collections, including the British Museum, the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, the Burger Collection, and more. Most recently, Faiza was nominated artist of the month for October 2025, by Bradford City of Culture, UK.



Punj.AB – A Sublime Terrain

Beatriz Cifuentes Feliciano

Taking Punjab — “the land of five rivers” — as both subject and structuring principle, *Punj.AB – A Sublime Terrain* unfolds as a transhistorical proposition. The exhibition approaches Punjab not as a fixed geography or singular narrative, but as a terrain continually shaped by movement: of people, materials, belief systems, and power. Across the pavilion, the same conditions that enabled prosperity — fertile land, agricultural surplus, and strategic location — also produced cycles of invasion, extraction, and transformation. What emerges is not a fixed history, but a layered and often contradictory one, where continuity and rupture coexist.

Rather than presenting a chronological account, the exhibition is structured through a series of visual “chapters” that move across time while remaining materially grounded. These chapters do not isolate historical periods; instead, they allow forms, motifs, and materials to reappear and shift meaning. Cotton, cultivated in the region for millennia, runs throughout as both material and metaphor. It carries within it questions of labour, trade, colonial extraction, and contemporary global economies, binding together otherwise distant temporal moments.

At the centre of the pavilion is the tapestry series *Memory of a New Age*, in which Butt works with artisans, students, and textile practitioners across Punjab. Each tapestry proposes a moment in history, yet none are treated as closed or self-contained. Architectural forms, including shrines, forts, administrative buildings, or their absence, become entry points into broader systems of governance and belief. Around them, fragments accumulate: coins, medals, vegetal forms, inscriptions, and ornamental structures. These are not illustrative details but indicators of how power circulates economically, politically, and symbolically.

The series begins with the earliest known formations of the region, where material evidence is partial and often contested. In the Indus Valley work, artefacts such as the *Dancing Girl* and the *Priest-King* are re-situated within a composition that acknowledges both their iconic status and their instability as historical markers. Their

repetition and framing suggest that meaning is not inherent, but constructed and continually reinterpreted. The Vedic tapestry, by contrast, operates in the absence of architecture. Here, cosmological symbols, most notably the *Dharmachakra*, structure the composition, while fire, funerary objects, and inscription point to ritual, language, and oral transmission as primary carriers of knowledge.

As the series progresses, the emergence of empire is traced not through heroic narratives but through systems of exchange and cultural encounter. The Mughal period, for instance, is articulated through motifs tied to trade — cotton, indigo, and opium — foregrounding economic networks rather than purely aesthetic or devotional legacies. Similarly, the Sikh period is marked by a moment of local sovereignty that is both historically significant and materially complex, where courtly culture reflects a high degree of hybridity.

This complexity becomes more pronounced under British colonial rule, where communication infrastructures — postal and telegraph networks — reconfigure the movement of information, capital, and authority. In this context, the architecture of governance operates in tandem with systems of extraction, while the incorporation of Sikh regiments into the colonial army links one historical moment to the next. The shift from handmade to mechanised production begins to surface here, anticipating the industrial conditions that continue into the present.

That transition is made explicit through the inclusion of machine-woven works and moving image. A jacquard-woven denim tapestry, produced in an industrial facility in Jorhah Town, mirrors the handmade tapestries while operating through entirely different means. Its material — denim — retains a connection to the region through indigo, yet its production situates it within global manufacturing systems. The accompanying film further extends this dialogue, juxtaposing the Urs festival in Shergarh, a site of communal and devotional gathering, with the interior of a textile factory. Through visual correspondences rather than linear narrative, it traces how cotton moves from cultivation to commodity, linking ritual, labour, and industry within a single continuum.

Collaboration is not simply a method of production but a structural condition of the work. Across rural and academic contexts, inherited techniques are not preserved as

static traditions but activated through translation and scale. The involvement of women weavers from Havelicrafts, alongside artisans and students, situates knowledge within lived practice as much as within institutional frameworks. In this sense, the exhibition proposes multiple modes of continuity: through hand, through pedagogy, and through adaptation.

Portraiture introduces a parallel mode of visibility. In *Women of Punjab – Weavers*, Butt brings into view the women whose labour is embedded in the tapestries, acknowledging them as subjects and creative participants rather than anonymous makers. In *Men of Punjab*, she draws on figures from everyday life, using gaze, surface, and colour to examine masculinity, social authority, and the politics of representation. Elsewhere in the pavilion, this investigation of form, labour, and history extends across media. Embroidered works drawing on Gandharan sculpture translate three-dimensional form into thread. Presented as lightboxes, they introduce another register, where illumination and translucency evoke the divine while foregrounding the labour of each stitch. Sculptural medallions —Shadow Relics— engage histories of military honour and empire, condensing them into objects that are at once ornamental and charged, where local and European iconographies coexist.

Painting operates differently again. In the *Phantasmagoric* series, human figures recede, replaced by animals, particularly birds, whose migratory nature unsettles the idea of fixed borders. Architectural fragments appear in states of decay, while signs of environmental and human disruption complicate the visual field. These works extend Butt's ongoing interest in how beauty and instability coexist, and how the image can hold multiple, sometimes conflicting, realities.

Throughout the exhibition, questions of sustainability remain implicit but present. The use of hand-spun fibres, low-energy processes, and locally embedded practices foregrounds slower modes of production at a moment of environmental precarity. Yet the exhibition resists positioning these as nostalgic alternatives. Instead, they are presented as active, evolving systems of knowledge that continue to shape how materials are understood and used.

Punj.AB – A Sublime Terrain ultimately proposes a way of thinking about history that is neither linear nor fixed. It is carried through materials, through gestures, and through the people who sustain them. What is foregrounded is not the monument alone, but the conditions that produce it, and the traces that remain long after.

At the centre of this proposition is craft, not as a peripheral or inherited category, but as a critical mode of contemporary practice. Butt repositions textile making — its labour, its temporality, its collective intelligence— as a site through which complex histories can be articulated and reimagined. In doing so, she challenges the hierarchies that separate fine art from craft, and the monumental from the everyday. This approach resonates closely with the Biennale's theme *In Minor Keys*, where attention shifts toward what is often overlooked: the minor, the marginal, the unassuming. Here, the unmonumental becomes monumental, and the act of making itself emerges as both subject and structure.

Beatriz Cifuentes Feliciano is a curator specialising in South Asian & Himalayan art and architecture. Besides working in an independent capacity, she is currently part of the curatorial team at Tate Modern. Previously, she also worked with the South Asian collections in the V&A and the British Museum.



Faiza Butt
Memory of a New Age 10
2026, Pakistan
Jacquard-woven indigo denim with laser imaging
365 x 275 cm

Produced at the US Group facility in Izmir Town, this jacquard-woven tapestry was conceived by Butt and developed in collaboration with the factory. It represents an industrial counterpart to the handmade works in the exhibition. Drawing on the Arab period of Punjab's history, it depicts the Shah Gardez Shrine in Multan.

Woven in denim, the work foregrounds indigo as both material and chromatic reference. Its deep blue recalls the ceramic tilework of Multan's shrines, linking industrial textile production to architectural and devotional traditions.

"Here, a connection emerges between industry, the product, colour as a symbol, and multiple narratives that coexist to create a tapestry." – Faiza Butt



Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab - Weavers
Acrylic on stainless steel paper,
2026
Each 30 x 21 cm

Butt's portraiture has long used the human figure to examine power and social identity. This pairing brings together two portraits drawn from larger series in the exhibition: *Men of Punjab* and *Women of Punjab - Weavers*.

The male portrait continues Butt's engagement with everyday men whose public presence, gaze and social roles have shaped her understanding of gender in Pakistan. The woman, by contrast, marks a rare turn in her practice. Having resisted the female figure because of its long history of objectification in Western art, Butt paints her here not as muse, but as one of the weavers whose labour is embedded in the exhibition.

Seen together, the portraits place the ordinary man and the woman collaborator on equal ground, shifting attention from heroic or symbolic figures to those through whom Punjab's social and cultural life is lived.



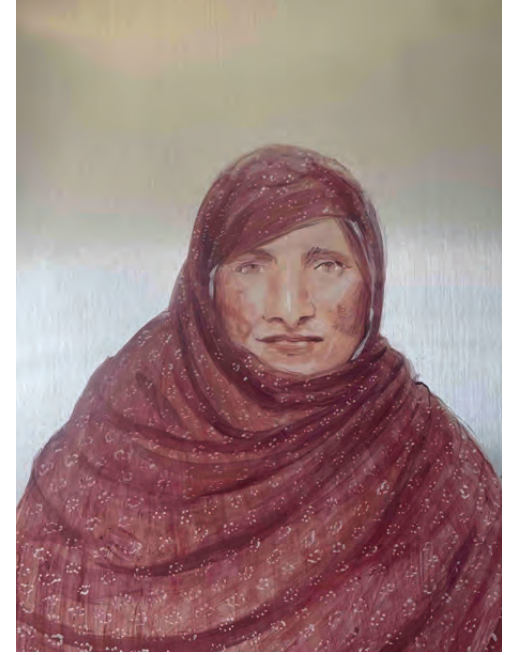
Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab – Artisan 2
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab – Farmer 9
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab – Weaver 1
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm
Reserved



Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab – Weaver 3
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm
Reserved



Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab – Weaver 4
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab – Weaver 5
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab – Weaver 6
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab – Weaver 7
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab – Weaver 8
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Women of Punjab – Weaver 10
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm

“I had, on principle, resisted painting women because women are often presented in art history as nudes. The history of the nude was so off-putting to me as a student that I decided never to paint women. However, this is an interesting break in my principles: I decided to paint the women of Punjab, capturing their psychological state rather than painting women as spectacle. These are weavers and my collaborators.”
– Faiza Butt

Nine portraits from the series *Women of Punjab – Weavers* represent the larger cohort of women from Havelicrafts who worked with Butt. Their labour is present in the tapestries, while their portraits bring the weavers into the exhibition as visible subjects. Painted individually, the women are not anonymous artisans, but creative participants whose inherited skills and shared experimentation shaped the textile works. The series foregrounds intergenerational knowledge and the central role women play in sustaining and extending Punjab's textile traditions.

Men of Punjab draws on real figures from everyday life —drivers, gardeners, students, kite makers, carpenters, shopkeepers, bank managers— rather than heroic figures from history. The series emerges from Butt’s experience of growing up in Pakistan, where gendered distance and the authority granted to men shaped her understanding of public life. Each sitter faces the viewer directly, returning the stare that Butt associates with male social entitlement.



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Shopkeeper 1
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Kite maker 1
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Student 1
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm

“The world is itemised in colour, and I find it fascinating how the human skin gradient is marked. I remove the skin gradient of the brown man and paint them in what is available as flesh tone—a very biased tone in the Western colour palette—and set them against an industrial, stainless steel background. The work is pared down, almost colourless, where the use of colour becomes political.”
— Faiza Butt



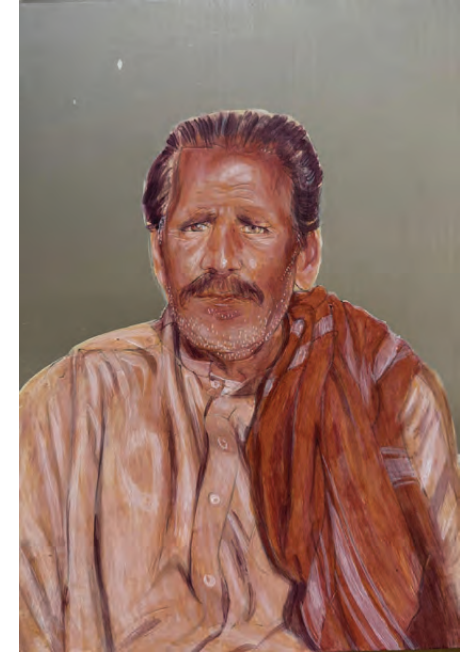
Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Brick layer
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Student 2
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Fruit Seller
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Carpenter
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Weaver
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm
Reserved



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Bank manager
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



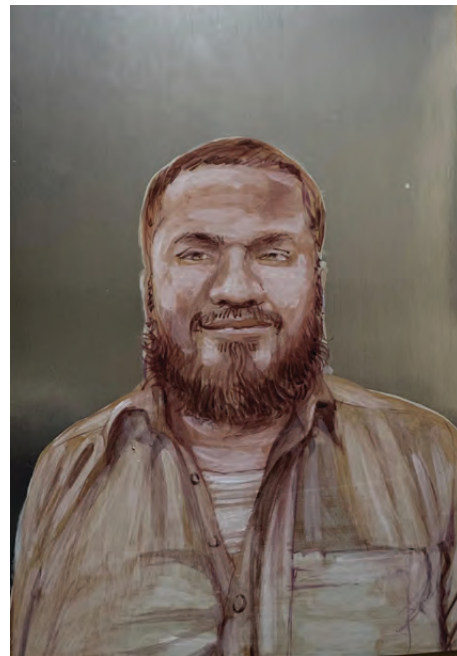
Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Labourer
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Student 3
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Street Vendor
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Dairy seller
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Religious clerk
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Driver
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



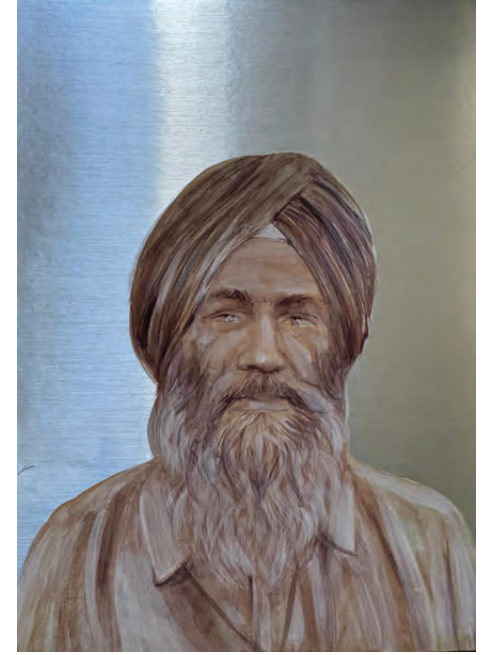
Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Pharmacist
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Security guard 1
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Plasterer
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Governmental official
1
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Sweet vendor
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Governmental official
2
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Street cleaner
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Janitor
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Bank official
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Potter
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Vegetable seller
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Security guard 2
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Army official
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Hotel manager
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm



Faiza Butt
Men of Punjab – Musician
2026
Acrylic on stainless steel paper
30 x 21 cm
Reserved

The portraits correspond to a range of professions drawn from everyday life, presented without hierarchy or fixed order: shop keeper, kite maker, student, brick layer, fruit seller, carpenter, weaver, bank manager, labourer, street vendor, dairy seller, religious clerk, driver, pharmacist, security guard, plasterer, government official, sweet vendor, street cleaner, janitor, bank official, potter, vegetable seller, army official, hotel manager and musician.

In Memory of a New Age 1-9

Tapestry series in varied textile techniques and materials, 2026

Each 365 x 275 cm

Developed in collaboration with Havelicrafts artisans and Rubab Akbar; artisans with Attiya Javed, National College of Arts, Lahore; and students with Aiman Gillani, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore

In Memory of a New Age brings together nine large-scale tapestries, each conceived as a visual chapter in Punjab's history. The title points to Butt's understanding of history as cyclical: each age imagines itself as new, yet is eventually absorbed into memory. Each composition is unified by a symbolic colour, with architectural forms acting as anchors around which fragments of material culture gather—coins, medals, birds, cotton flowers, borders, and ropes—tracing histories of governance, trade, belief, and power.

Collaboration is central to the series, not only as a method of production but as a way of allowing different systems of knowledge to meet. By working with artisans, textile practitioners and students, Butt brings together two ways of preserving knowledge: through rural communities where inherited techniques remain part of lived practice, and through academic settings where they are studied, taught and reimagined.





Faiza Butt
Memory of a New Age 1
Indus Valley Civilisation (3000–1500 BC)
 2026, Pakistan

lkat technique – natural and synthetic died pure cotton yarn
 12 x 9 ft (365 x 275 cm)



Faiza Butt
Memory of a New Age 2
Vedic Age (1500–500 BC)
 2026, Pakistan

lkat technique – natural and synthetic died pure cotton yarn
 12 x 9 ft (365 x 275 cm)

These two tapestries were developed by Faiza Butt in collaboration with Aiman Gillani, faculty at the Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, and textile students. Extending Butt's practice into a pedagogical context, the collaboration foregrounds another mode of preserving and transmitting inherited textile traditions through making. The works respond to some of the earliest historical "chapters" of Punjab.

The Indus Valley tapestry engages one of the world's earliest urban civilisations (c. 2600–1900 BCE). A central stupa —built during a later Buddhist period atop the archaeological remains of Mohenjo-daro, an ancient Indus Valley city— reflects the layering of histories onto the site. It is framed by doubled figures of the Dancing Girl, an iconic yet contested artefact, and punctuated by the Priest-King. Seals, bangles and cotton motifs reference systems of trade, identity and material culture, while pointing to ongoing debates around ownership and interpretation.





Faiza Butt
Memory of a New Age 3
Alexander the Great in Punjab (326 BC)
2026, Pakistan
Tapestry weave – hand died wool on cotton wrap
12 x 9 ft (365 x 275 cm)

Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE) advanced into Punjab in 326 BCE as part of his campaign to expand Macedonian power. He left behind generals and settlements that initiated exchanges between the classical Greek world and South Asia, laying the foundations for what would later develop into Gandharan culture. This Alexandrian chapter remains less foregrounded in regional histories.

At the centre of the tapestry is the double-headed eagle stupa at Taxila, one of the few surviving architectural markers of this period. Around it, Butt assembles a wreath of elements: cotton flowers, coins bearing classical iconography that signal systems of governance and circulation, and a marble bust of Alexander the Great. These fragments evoke a period marked by invasion, erasure and cultural fusion, where little material evidence remains. The composition is unified through a deep purple, historically associated with aristocracy and military standards, and often linked to Alexander's army.



Faiza Butt
Memory of a New Age 4
Gandhara
2026, Pakistan
Tapestry weave – hand died wool on cotton wrap
12 x 9 ft (365 x 275 cm)



Faiza Butt
Memory of a New Age 5
Arab Sultanate (713 AD)
2026, Pakistan
Tapestry weave – hand died wool on cotton wrap
12 x 9 ft (365 x 275 cm)



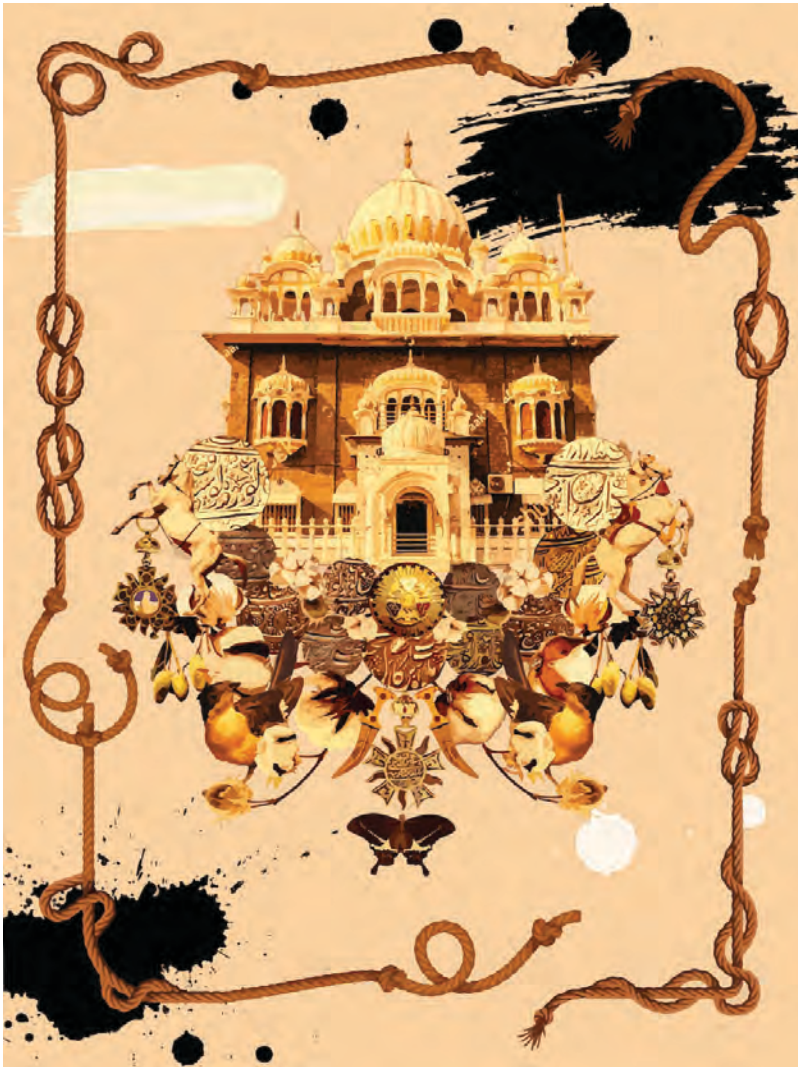
Faiza Butt
Memory of a New Age 6
Mughal Era (1526 onwards)
2026, Pakistan
Tapestry weave – hand died wool on cotton wrap
12 x 9 ft (365 x 275 cm)
Reserved

These two tapestries consider early and later Islamic periods in Punjab through architectures that mark authority rather than primary sites of worship. Placed in dialogue, they foreground Islam not as a fixed system, but as a set of evolving political, economic and cultural encounters. Each work centres on a different moment of arrival and consolidation, tracing how belief systems are shaped through exchange, governance and adaptation.

Memory of a New Age – Arab Sultanate takes as its point of departure the early Arab incursions into Punjab in the 8th century CE. At its centre is the tomb of Sheikh Sadan Shaheed, an early Islamic figure associated with the spread of Islam in the region, inspired by Central Asian carved-brick architectural forms. Surrounding motifs —inscriptions, flowers and coins—point to systems of governance. The composition is unified through a deep blue, recalling chromatic traditions associated with Islamic art and architecture.

Memory of a New Age 6 – Mughal Era shifts to a later period, centred on the Lahore Fort as an emblem of political authority and Indo-Islamic hybridity. Rather than devotional space, the fort signals administration, diplomacy and military power. Indigo-dyed hands, cotton flowers and opium pods mark key exports, pointing to the trade networks and resource economies that underpinned Mughal wealth and the empire's role as a centre of exchange.





Faiza Butt
Memory of a New Age 7
Sikh Sovereignty (18th–19th century)
2026, Pakistan
Tapestry weave – hand died wool on cotton wrap
12 x 9 ft (365 x 275 cm)

The Gurdwara Panja Sahib in Hasan Abdal, a site associated with the imprint of a Sikh Guru's hand and a key marker of Sikh presence in Punjab. It situates the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule (c.1801–1839), when Punjab was governed locally. Sikhism is a monotheistic faith that emerged in the region, drawing on both Hindu and Islamic influences.

Butt develops the work through a collage-like composition characteristic of her practice. Here she assembles architectural, numismatic and ornamental elements into a single field. Coins and medals associated with Ranjit Singh's reign are interwoven with patterns drawn from multiple traditions, including wreaths and floral motifs that reflect the Sikh court's engagement with European aesthetics. The work traces a moment in which cultural hybridity was at its height.



Faiza Butt
Memory of a New Age 8
British Punjab
2026, Pakistan
Tapestry weave – hand died wool on cotton wrap
12 x 9 ft (365 x 275 cm)

The General Post Office is an emblem of British imperial power, where communication infrastructures —postal and telegraph—enabled the movement of information, capital and authority across the empire. This network marked a shift toward modern systems of exchange, laying early foundations for global capitalism. A hierarchy unfolds: at its apex, the architecture of the state; at its base, worn chappals or sandals, evoking labour and poverty. The inclusion of Sikh insignia reflects their incorporation into the British colonial army.

The tapestry is woven using the dhurrie technique, a Punjabi flat-weave traditionally made for the floor, here repositioned onto the wall. Rendered in vivid pink, the composition adopts a medallion-and-border structure drawn from manuscript and miniature traditions. It is disrupted by a rope that encircles the field —knotted, fractured and rejoining— suggesting histories that are continuous yet ruptured.



Faiza Butt
Memory of a New Age 9
Contemporary Punjab
2026, Pakistan
Tapestry weave – hand died wool on cotton wrap
12 x 9 ft (365 x 275 cm)

To represent contemporary Punjab, Butt turns not to a metropolis, but to Shergarh, a small town where Havelicrafts is based and where she worked with local weavers. The tapestry's central motif is a 15th-century shrine associated with the Urs, an annual gathering marking the death anniversary of a saint. For Butt, the shrine represents Punjab through living culture: spirituality, celebration, and the search for meaning within everyday rural life. The composition is flattened like a map, recalling miniature painting traditions.

Around the shrine, birds evoke movement beyond fixed boundaries, while rolled banknotes, plastic bottles and cotton flowers point to exchange, environmental concern and cotton's complex legacy. Woven in Pakistan green through an off-loom technique newly introduced to the weavers, the tapestry extends their existing practices through a new scale, method and artistic collaboration.



These sculptural works reference Sikh and British colonial military honours, drawing on the visual language of medallions, regalia and ornament that recurs throughout the tapestry series. They reflect the medals awarded to Sikh soldiers of the British army who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars. Their forms highlight a hybridity in which local motifs —such as elephants—coexist with European imagery, including dragons, wreaths and Christian iconography. The title *Shadow Relics* points to these jewels as traces of histories that persist beyond their original context, carrying the weight of memory and empire.

“My artistic inspiration comes from what I call non-fine art sources —literature, poetry, craft, songs, folk art, urban pop, historic architecture, textiles, and other forms of human aesthetics that fall outside the domain traditionally considered fine art, such as medallions, here reinterpreted as jewellery-like sculptures.”

– Faiza Butt



Faiza Butt
Shadow Relic 1
2026
Sterling silver and black tourmaline,
2026
7 x 4.5 x 1.8 cm



Faiza Butt
Shadow Relic 2
2026
Sterling silver and gold
5.6 x 5 x 2.1 cm



Faiza Butt
Shadow Relic 3
2026
Sterling silver, gold and rubies
6.2 x 5.2 x 2.1 cm



Faiza Butt
Shadow Relic 4
2026
Sterling silver, gold and rubies
6.1 x 5 x 1.8 cm
Sold

All developed in collaboration with
Mohammed Umer

Faiza Butt
Shergarh/Izmir Town
2026
2 channel video
approximately 8:30 minutes
Produced by Murtaza Ali



Here we encounter two sites: the town of Shergarh, where Havelicrafts is based and the Urs festival takes place, and an industrial textile factory in Izmir Town. The Urs, marking the death anniversary of a Sufi saint, unfolds as a space of gathering and devotion in rural Punjab. By contrast, the factory presents a mechanised interior for processing and manufacture. Between them, the film traces interconnected modes of textile production and consumption —handmade and machine-made— from the cultivation of cotton to its transformation into global commodities.

Rather than a linear narrative, the work moves through visual and sensory correspondences —colour, rhythm, gesture and sound—linking the two environments. Indigo, historically cultivated and traded in Punjab, recurs as a thread, connecting denim production to regional craft histories. Developed with digital artist Murtaza Ali, the film brings into dialogue two locations where the works in the exhibition were produced.



The central figures, based on two Gandharan-style sculptures in the Musée Guimet's collection, represent a Buddha and a Bodhisattva respectively. Gandharan Buddhist art, dating from the 1st to 5th centuries CE in present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, produced some of the earliest figurative representations of the Buddha, shaped through exchanges between South Asia and Hellenistic traditions. Displayed as lightboxes, the works incorporate references to the cosmos, drawing on astronomical imagery to evoke the divine and frame the embroideries as luminous devotional objects.

Developed in collaboration with women artisans, the works build on inherited embroidery techniques, including tar pashi, in which woven threads are withdrawn and reworked with the needle to create open, lace-like structures. Filler and running stitches, alongside hand-dyed threads, are used to construct volume and tonal variation. The materials themselves were spun in Shergarh with minimal reliance on electricity, foregrounding a process rooted in manual skill and sustainability.



Faiza Butt
Relic Dream 1
2026
Hand spun cotton and organic threads
365 x 275 cm

Developed in collaboration with Havelicrafts artisans
and Rubab Akbar



Faiza Butt
Relic Dream 2
2026
Hand spun cotton and organic threads
365 x 275 cm

Developed in collaboration with Havelicrafts artisans
and Rubab Akbar





The *Phantasmagoric* series draws on the Dutch menagerie painting tradition, where nature and still life replaced religious imagery as primary subjects. Butt adapts this visual language to construct densely layered compositions in which the natural world and human intervention collide.

Characteristic of her practice and executed with meticulous precision, these paintings are populated not by human figures but by animals —most prominently birds— whose migratory nature unsettles fixed ideas of territory and belonging. In the background, architectural forms from Multan appear in states of disrepair, embedding local histories within a broader pictorial tradition.

Across the surface, moments of beauty are disrupted by signs of ecological and human-made disturbance — debris, fire, collapse— suggesting a world shaped as much by consumption and neglect as by coexistence.



Faiza Butt
Phantasmagoric 8
2026
Acrylic glaze on board
168 x 128 cm

Reserved



Faiza Butt
Phantasmagoric 9
2026
Acrylic glaze on board
168 x 128 cm



Faiza Butt
Phantasmagoric 9
2026
Acrylic glaze on board
168 x 128 cm