

It's Nice That

“What if Warhol was Pakistani?”: artist Amna Asghar explores her Muslim American identity

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International Women's Day Work Art

8 March 2017

Artist Amna Asghar fuses pop-style screen-printing with painting to explore identity and culture. A Muslim American Pakistani woman based across Detroit and New York, she wants to visualise these experiences.

“I’ve always been interested in asking what if Warhol was Pakistani? What if Baldessari was a brown woman?” she says. “What sort of images would we see? It’s about inserting yourself into the Western canon of painting.”

Amna’s compositions are an intentionally jarring assemblage of found, corporate imagery and jewel-coloured acrylic painted sections. Often highly graphical or text-based, they reference advertising, graphic design and pop art, and the “factual quality” of printing. “I love the graphic qualities used in advertising – the language of persuasion.”

She appropriates and recontextualises images from popular culture, such as Bollywood films, Pakistani magazines, audio tape album art, and Disney animations, then combines them with smooth painterly backgrounds to hint at hybrid culture, mistranslation and

“gaps in understanding”.

“I’m interested in the way images hit one another, like the gutter of a book or magazine, and how one image inflicts on the other, how their proximity changes their meaning,” she explains. “These slices of images can feel like flipping through a book quickly and connecting snippets of pages to one another.”

“Current events and the political climate of the US are something that play into the work. I go to the print shop, then bring the paintings home to continue working on them. I paint, airbrush, and use stencilling techniques, remixing sources and processes.”

