

Permindar Kaur

Nothing is Fixed

8 June to
7 September 2024

Permindar Kaur is a sculpture and installation artist, whose approach to art is playful. Using childlike and domestic objects, adaption techniques, mirroring and camouflage, Kaur explores fundamental issues of 'home'. Are these safe spaces, dangerous spaces, or both? The works speak to a wide section of society that includes those in transit and those who migrate to make new temporary or permanent homes. In addition, Kaur looks at the intersectionality of identity and how society, family and education inform unique combinations of discrimination and privilege. Through these explorations, Kaur connects sculpture to broader societal conversations, making her work accessible and critically relevant within today's social and political landscape.

Expanding on the concept of 'home', *Nothing is Fixed* has been mapped into several different 'rooms', each taking on a different sense and feel from the other. Kaur creates installations that unlock beyond what is normal by using everyday objects that appear displaced and distorted. Familiar forms such as beds, cots and chairs, together with brightly coloured figures that remind us of soft children's toys, initially may prompt notions of innocence and childhood, and on reflection conjure traces of threat.

Kaur's use of material is masterful, often combining contrasting textiles and metals to heighten their qualities and significance. Moreover, when creating these toy-like figures, Kaur will skilfully make a subtle change in order to alter the reading of the figure. For example, Kaur does this by removing any significant facial features so that they are one step removed from familiarity, without closing them to interpretation.

Gallery 2

On entering Gallery 2, the viewer encounters *Brown Sloth* (2013), which is part of *Camouflage* (2012–24), a series of 2D works covering the walls, reminiscent of a stately home in a style commonly known as a 'royal academy hang'. The shadowy figures contained within these portraits reflect notions of representation, power and inequality. Kaur playfully uses camouflage to hide the figures within the fabric. They hang unstuffed and limp, unable to fight or shield themselves, only their shadow and copper features draw attention to their shape.

Conceived by the artist as a 'room of rooms' a collection of miniaturised furniture has been placed throughout the space, creating multiple levels of questioning and unease. *Room 2 – Tall Short Beds* (2024) depicts a series of beds that one would need to climb up into; whilst one would be safe from ground-level danger, a fall from this height would be harmful. Here, Kaur plays with the

idea of a warm and safe bed, subverting any feeling of security.

A series of twelve line drawings hang nearby, which illustrate dream-like scenes of bedrooms and domestic spaces. These line drawings are a new departure for the artist, shown here for the first time. Kaur explores the many capabilities of possible and impossible structures and arrangements from the artist's imagination.

In close proximity, *Tall Chairs* (1996) and *Untitled: Bed* (2020) also occupy this dream-like space. *Tall Chairs* (1996) comprises two elongated chairs measuring over two-meters tall. Each chair has a small yellow fleece figure sat upon it. Whilst the body of the figure sits full and round, the head and the arms lay limp with its knees and legs tucked up under the arms. These figures portray a sense of aloneness, yet they also beg the viewer to ask – how did they get up there, and how will they get back down? Kaur holds a remarkable talent for allowing the viewer to transfer their own feelings of danger and fragility onto the work, building a highly personal narrative about what they are seeing.

Untitled: Bed (2020) is made up of a narrow shape bedframe without a mattress. A gathering of soft colourful forms sit underneath the bedframe. One might feel a sense of appeal towards these creatures. Are they hiding for protection or are they trapped? On closer inspection, these forms have tiny copper spikes on their backs, so perhaps they are there to protect the sleeper? Or are they waiting to attack? Are they defensive? The work seems to reflect on the privilege that comes with safe sleep, whether that is living in an abusive household, an immigration camp or homelessness. Also in this space is an older work, *Green Figure* (1995–2024), which hangs limp and vulnerable on the Gallery wall, unable to defend itself from possible dangers.

Gallery 3

The work *Hunting Chair* (2024) has been especially commissioned for this exhibition. This brand new sculpture depicts an exaggerated and oversized hunting chair that towers within Gallery 3 and faces the large windows to look out across the public square beyond. The chair sits amongst *Floor Flowers* (2024), a collection of brightly coloured flowers that adorn the gallery floor to create a space that explores the domesticity of outdoor hunting. In the same way that Gallery 2 depicts a patterned wall, Gallery 3 features a pattern reminiscent of a living room carpet. The inclusion of *Antlers* (2016) suggests a contrast between the interior and exterior that provokes unease. Who is hunting and who is being hunted?

Barker-Mill Gallery

A continuing theme throughout Kaur's work is one of protection and defence. The teddies within these spaces are dark in colour and seem to absorb the light. Kaur often uses teddy bears in her work, not as toys but as a tool to reflect on the present. Their identity is unclear but they are alluring and bewitching. A singular teddy on their own is a curious thing, however en masse they become formidable.

On entering Barker-Mill Gallery the viewer encounters *Black Curtain* (2015), which features a collection of black teddies scaling folds of black fabric. These teddies are camouflaged against the black cloth, suggesting two possibilities: are they hiding so that they are not preyed upon, or are they waiting to pounce?

Sharing the space is *Armoured Truck* (2016), which consists of several black teddies piled into a cot-like structure with wheels. In this way, one might be led to believe that these teddies are being detained, as they have been bundled on top of one another seemingly without care. This scene recalls the brutal crossings of borders and seas that

migrants continue to take, where a migrant's life seemingly holds very little value.

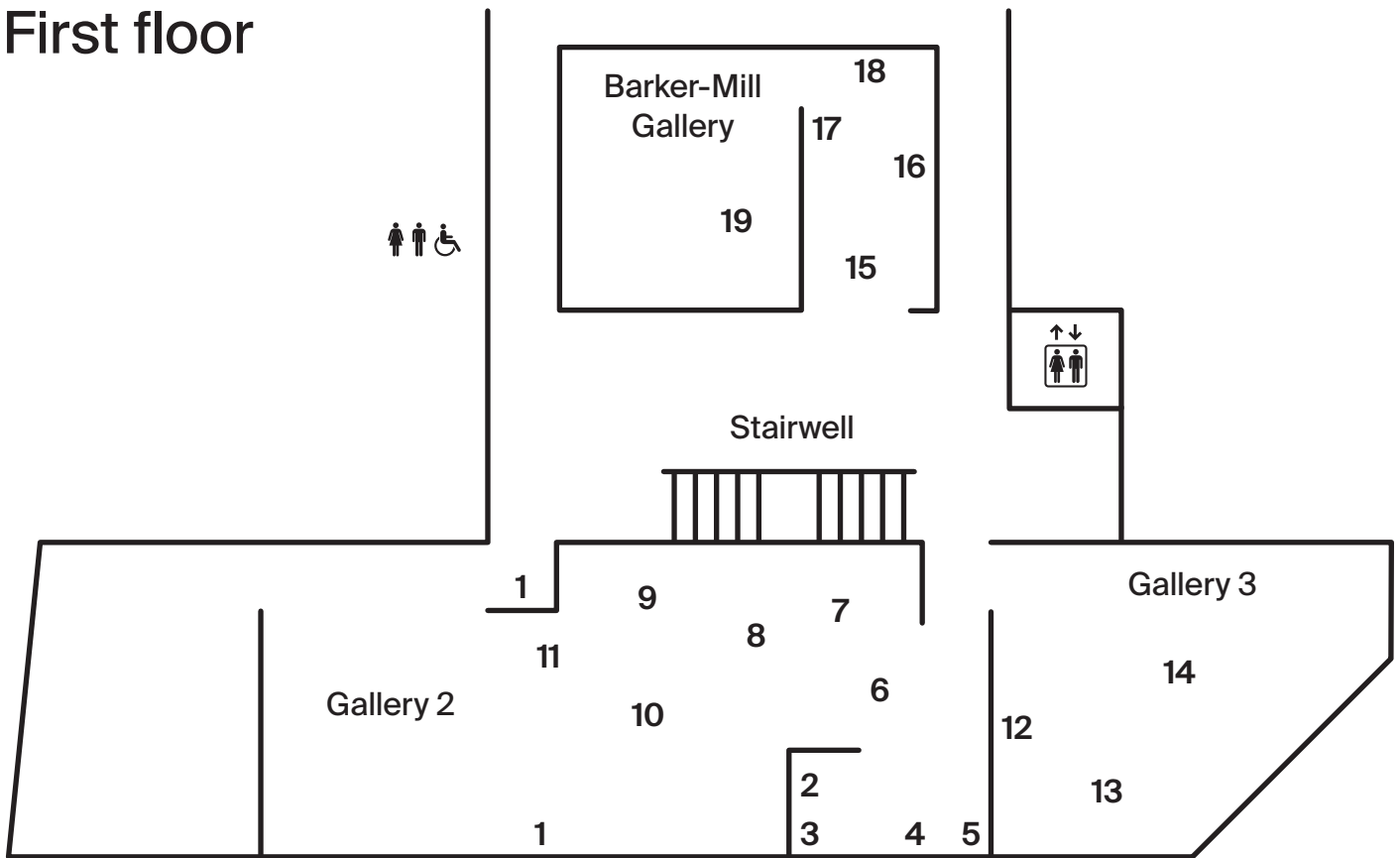
In close proximity, *Classroom* (2016) and *Branch* (2016) are poised at the end of the passage. There is a sense of surveillance here as both teddies sit alone, on guard, waiting and watching.

Dominating the main space is *Ten Teddies & Barrier* (2017), which consists of a large metal framework that bisects the entrance guarding a community of teddies. The teddies are arranged in numerous formations, some are alone and sit on the periphery, and some have formed small cliques. Themes of migration and dislocation emerge in this work as a broad questioning of loss, rupture and the traumatic loss of home. This scenario leads the viewer to wonder if this barrier is designed to protect the teddies or to contain them.

Co-Creating Public Space – Mela Festival

This exhibition has been organised to coincide with Southampton's Mela Festival, where Kaur is extending her work beyond John Hansard Gallery into the public domain. At the Mela Festival Kaur will lead family co-creation workshops and events. This is part of JHG's *Co-Creating Public Space* project, forming meeting points between community interests and artists' work. The result will be the making of a Mela sculpture park along with local artists Rabia Raja and Ren Wooldridge, and with audiences at the Mela Festival on 13 July 2024.

First floor



Gallery 2

- 1 **Camouflage series (2012–2024)**
Fabric and copper
Please see overleaf for a full list of works.
- 2 **Green Figure (1995–2024) ***
Copper & fabric
- 3 **Untitled: Bed (2020) ***
Steel, fabric, copper & stuffing
- 4 **12 Drawings (2024) ***
Pencil on paper
- 5 **Tall Chairs (1996) ***
Steel, fabric and stuffing
- 6 **Room 2 – Tall Short Beds (2024) ***
Steel & fabric
- 7 **Room 4 – Red Skirts (2024) ***
Steel & fabric
- 8 **Room 8 – Hunting Chairs (2024) ***
Steel & fabric
- 9 **Room 6 – Circle (2024) ***
Steel
- 10 **Room 7 – Walking Chairs (2024) ***
Steel
- 11 **Room 5 – Chairs (2024) ***
Steel & fabric

Gallery 3

- 12 **Antlers (2016) ***
Steel & Fabric
- 13 **Floor flowers (2024) ***
Vinyl
- 14 **Hunting Chair (2024) ***
Steel and fabric

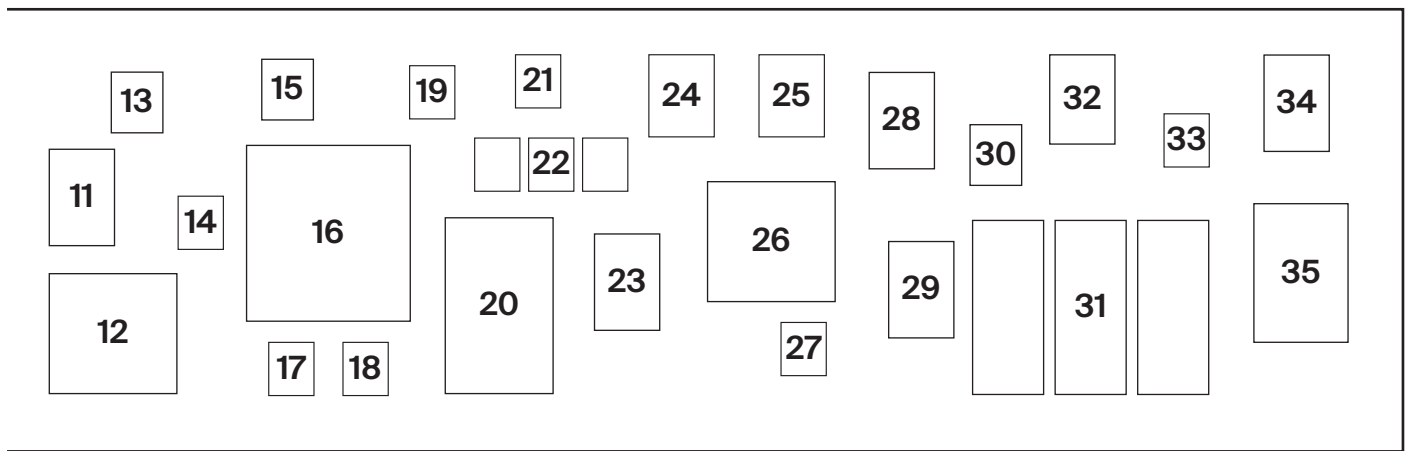
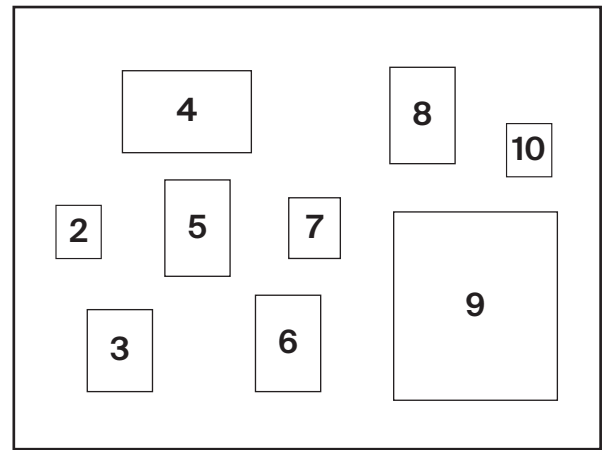
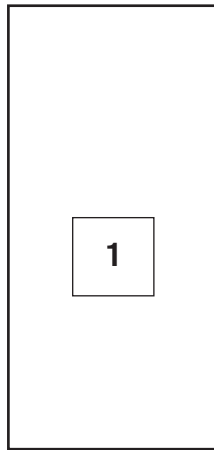
Barker-Mill Gallery

- 15 **Armoured Truck (2016) ****
Copper and fabric
- 16 **Black Curtain (2015) ***
Fabric & stuffing
- 17 **Classroom (2016) ***
Steel and fabric
- 18 **Branch (2016) ***
Copper, fabric & stuffing
- 19 **Ten Teddies & Barrier (2017) ***
Steel & fabric

* Courtesy the Artist.

** Courtesy Jhaveri Contemporary and the Artist.

Gallery 2



Camouflage series (2012–2024)

- 1 **Brown Sloth** (2013) *
- 2 **White** (2024) *
- 3 **Midnight** (2023) **
- 4 **Shades of Blue** (2023) *
- 5 **Green** (2013) **
- 6 **Blue** (2013) **
- 7 **Falling 2** (2024) *
- 8 **Orange** (2013) **
- 9 **Grey** (2012) *
- 10 **Flower** (2023) *
- 11 **Red** (2013) **
- 12 **Climbing Patchwork** (2023) *
- 13 **Indian Boy** (2013) *
- 14 **Untitled Bird Hanging** (2023) *
- 15 **Bird** (2012) **
- 16 **Patchwork** (2013) *
- 17 **Sewing 3** (2023) *
- 18 **Sewing 2** (2023) *
- 19 **Dress** (2022) **
- 20 **Hidden** (2013) *

- 21 **Sewing 1** (2023) *
- 22 **India Spain Sweden** (2012–2013) *
- 23 **Yellow** (2013) **
- 24 **Wallpaper** (2023) **
- 25 **Window** (2023) *
- 26 **Flowers & Bumps** (2013–2023) *
- 27 **Blue Pattern** (2013) *
- 28 **Cells** (2013) *
- 29 **Three Swedish Sloths** (2018) *
- 30 **Brown Pattern** (2013) *
- 31 **Untitled – 3 Figures** (2013) **
- 32 **Untitled – Bug** (2023) *
- 33 **One Swedish Sloth** (2018) *
- 34 **Purple** (2013) **
- 35 **Small Patchwork** (2013) **

All works made from fabric and copper.

* Courtesy the Artist.

** Courtesy Jhaveri Contemporary and the Artist.

Perminder Kaur completed her MA at Glasgow School of Art and lives and works in the UK.

Her *Overgrown House* (2020) is included in Compton Verney's major new *Sculpture in the Park* project for 2024/27 alongside legendary sculptors such as Louise Bourgeois and Helen Chadwick. Major solo exhibitions include: *Outgrown* (2022), The ArtHouse, Wakefield; *Home*, 5 Howick Place, London (2020–21); *Interlopers*, University of Hertfordshire (2016); *Hiding Out*, Djanogly Art Gallery, Nottingham Lakeside Arts (2014); and *Cold Comfort*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham & Mead Gallery, Coventry (1996). Her work was recently included in the major Arts Council Collection show *Breaking the Mould: Sculpture by Women since 1945*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Djanogly Gallery, University of Nottingham, Levinsky Gallery & The Box, Plymouth, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull and The New Arts Gallery, Walsall (2021–23); *If Not Now, When? Generations of Women in Sculpture in Britain, 1960–2022*, Hepworth Wakefield and Saatchi Gallery, London (2023); *At Home with Art*, Tate, London and touring (2000) and *British Art Show 4*, Manchester, Edinburgh, Cardiff (1995). Kaur has exhibited internationally: *Hot Air*, Granship, Shizouka Arts Centre, Japan (1999); and *Pictura Britannica, Art from Britain*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia (1997). Kaur is a selector for *New Contemporaries 2024*.

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Co-Creating Public Space is led by John Hansard Gallery, with funding from Arts Council England, Southampton City Council, GO! Southampton and University of Southampton.

A publication made in conjunction with the exhibition will be published by John Hansard Gallery and will be available in late August. The fully illustrated publication will include newly commissioned contributions by Katharine Stout and Dorothy Price. The publication is supported by Jhaveri Contemporary.

With special thanks to Mark Segal, Amrita Jhaveri and David Southard

#JHGKaur

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