

Lujane Pagganwala Interview with Beverley Harrison,
March 22, 2026, while conceiving the installation.

L.P.

A few years before, I moved here, my practice was quite large and quite material intensive. It still remains to be, but when I came to London, I feel my idea of space sort of transformed. I look at space as not just a necessity. Over here, it's something more of a luxury.

Then, I think the idea of space became more ephemeral. That's when it became more transitional, more mobile. I started to make wearable spaces, almost something like I did in my degree show, so you could get inside the space, and it was on wheels.

So, a lot of these spaces that I create are both, I guess. They're hybrids between childhood spaces, yet also the urban today, post structural spaces. I really want to explore the idea of Dens, and different kinds of tents, different kinds of these transitional spaces, spaces that are safe havens, yet not. I had this visual where, I don't know if you'd be able to tell, but it's a bit, like just a scribble (Lujane shares her drawing). I wanted to sort of acquire different kinds of tents, but I want to keep it all in white, in that space. I probably have some images on Google. I would obviously get one in complete white, and then there was this...

B. H. That is also a beautifully elongated tent, with flowing drapery.

L.P. Yes, it is. Exactly. And it's like a sheer fabric. Yeah, almost. And then there's Teepee tents. And so, I was just thinking to get these different forms of spaces and have them suspended in the space, at different heights. I have to still decide what I would have within each of these spaces.

I really want to work with light as well. I think I've decided that it will still be, it'll probably still be blue light. Because blue remains a prevalent colour in my practice. And, I have a sound piece that I think, really would fit well in that space as well. I'm also doing this performance at the Hayward Gallery. I'm not sure if you've seen the show, Chiharu Shiota. You know, the room with the beds in it. I'm one of the performers in the beds.

So the curator is actually going to be donating those beds, and I thought the structure is quite interesting. I was thinking of all of these, trying to re-envision the spaces that we would create when we were children, and what all we would use, and many times it would be just using a fabric, or a sheet over beds, as well. And as children, as siblings, we would sometimes just turn over our beds and then put a blanket or a sheet on it. And I was considering how actually innocent and raw and crude these spaces might look when you put them into a white cube space. It is almost so vulnerable that it becomes, that it feels like an interrogation almost.

And then I really wanted to work once again with... pieces of muslin fabric, on which I had printed out my text. And I quite enjoyed, in past works how that has looked. Basically, it was those pieces of muslin fabric, on which I had printed my images and my writings on it. And, I've been thinking of expanding that, because the space is so, it's so vast. I might want to take it over into a corner, to wrap it around and just sort of have it scattered almost, disperse as it goes along the walls. Again, it would be very subtle, almost as if it's not there until you actually - look.

Every time I do my installations, or I transform a space, there's always these little pockets of discoveries, where, at first glance, you wouldn't be able to tell, but you sort of have to go through this process of discovery, and then you realize, well, there's this in this corner, and there is that in that corner. I like to add these nuances in these spaces.

L.P.

I think I just really enjoy disrupting the functionality of objects. I mean, for instance, how I use my chair, the whole idea of the chair motif, in my work is because - I work with the idea of space so much. *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How we Experience Intimate Places*, by Gaston Bachelard, 1958, trans. 1968. That was actually my initial point of research, how I actually started to come into my investigation. I quite love how there was this parallel between, the 3 levels of space, to the 3 levels of the mind. So, it's almost like the conscious, subconscious and the unconscious to the main floor, the attic and the basement. And I thought that was such an interesting idea, because I talk about these *abstract existences*, and this was the perfect way for me to sort of find this bridge between the abstract, the tangible and the intangible. I started to lean towards how we're constantly consumed by these intangible spaces, in my practice.

Unfortunately, I've not found in language, any such word. In these spaces, for instance, while I'm speaking to you right now, I'm also simultaneously thinking about what I'll have for dinner, for instance. I'm thinking this bench reminds me of my grandparents' home. I'm constantly in memory, anticipation. I'm thinking about how I'm feeling anxious at the same time.

So, these are all different. Like I mentioned, they're all different pockets of existences. Yet, they don't have physical form. I believe there are these existences or these versions, they're almost like a species of the Self. It's sort of like the idea of entanglement. What does the idea of entanglement become in the discourse of just the Self? How we tend to be so consumed by these existences, yet we don't know how to acknowledge them. There is no such word.

These existences start and they finish within less of a millisecond even. I like to pluck them out of their abstract existences and just give them material form. These are the spaces that I like to create. I like to superimpose them onto the viewer, almost as if, for a few seconds, they're transported somewhere into a space, where there are hints of relatability from our reality over here, yet as a whole, it doesn't make sense together.

Going back to the topic of the book, when I moved to London, I sort of started to critique that book, only because it broke down home, or a space, in a very Western perspective. And I couldn't quite connect to that, because that isn't how our houses are divided in Pakistan, or in my city, Karachi. And so, what I did was a self-investigation.

I took my own home, and I divided that into what the floors are. We don't really have any basements, and we don't have the concept of attics back home, but what we do have is the ground floor, the first floor, and then we've got a roof, which we use a lot. To these three levels, what I did was, I tried to map the 3 levels of the mind to these 3 levels of space from my own home. I realized that the roof actually used to be quite a communal space in our home, up until a few years ago, when my parents had their surgeries. And so, everybody sort of abandoned the top floor and the roof of the home. So, this roof has now become the unconscious of the mind.

This is the part of the home that is rarely ever used now. Except on the roof, we've got these two garden chairs, metal garden chairs, and there's this glass table on the roof, which still remains in the corner, as if the roof is used. Except their metal chair is painted white, and because Karachi is so coastal, rust gets on quite fast. Every few months, I noticed that the rust takes over the white paint.

These visuals of the rust and the white paint and the white colour as it is on its own, speaks to the futility of it against the rust and this futility is such an imminent part in my practice. And then the idea of the chair, how nonfunctional it becomes, or sort of how it morphs into something of a metaphor, of longing almost, of yearning, of sort of becoming something. And so, the chair has become like this, the symbol for the roof,

the symbol for the unconscious. The symbol for spaces that we aren't really able to find the words for. Which is why I sort of really enjoy, using a chair and spaces where there is no human form.

So, what does the chair become without it being used for its function? What does a greenhouse become without it being used for growing plants? When you switch it into another environment, strip it off its functionality, what does it become? I think also, I think this comes a lot from me personally, as a woman, as well. I think the idea of reproduction and what is a woman without reproduction, stripping her of one of the most primal, I guess, duties of a woman, you can say. What is a woman then?

What is a home then? I guess using all of these ideas of space is stripping them back off their conformities, and then putting them into a bare environment, vulnerable. And, seeing what their function is then.

B.H. - The Poetics of Space was a reference I relate to, as well. I've been playing with these ideas and their analogies in curating. Lihong has mentioned Michel Foucault's Heterotopias and then there are the Jungian psychological spatial analogies that Vince was talking about in relation to his practice. The exhibition will unfold a dialogue, on spatial concepts, and the commonalities between these concepts yet nuanced differences.

L.P. - Exactly. Vince was talking quite a lot about the mind and the psyche, yet with different visuals, and it was just so interesting to me how the psyche can be, once again, an abstract idea, and how it can materialize into his marble or my installations. And it should be quite fun. I feel there's such a contrast between our two materials and medium, because I quite enjoy using reclaimed materials.

I feel again, like I am going on the idea of Hauntology almost that these inanimate objects, or these inanimate materials, sort of hold power over us in a way, where they act as these conduits for memory. It's almost as if, without our permission or consent, or involuntarily, we are being, sort of transported into these worlds. Like I said, I mean, I could sit here, and this inanimate object would instantly take me back to a memory, which is what I feel that reclaimed material has such power in it.

It has so much story in it, all of the scars, all of the stains. It's almost as if all of these energies bleed through my spaces, and it's like this communion between all of these energies altogether. And so, I feel like it almost adds another layer, another very deep layer of political and social - emotional, as well. It adds to the work. And then just putting that so it comes through these reclaimed chairs that I've picked up, it comes through the mud and the soil that I pick up. It comes through, which is what I also really love - working with water.

Since I've been here, when I moved from Pakistan, I actually brought cans of water, of sea water with me, as this tiny little performative exercise of, you know, making a silent comment on political boundaries and carrying forth a piece of my land, over here, without it actually being questioned, without it having any, you know, passports and border control, just the idea of identity. Yet, I'm sort of silently bringing a piece of my land over here without anybody knowing.

And then, I mix that sea water with the river water from the Thames. And what I really, quite enjoyed is actually the fact that sea water and river water will chemically never mix. Just because of different compositions. It was, then again, the idea of these conflicting identities and, you know, going to the personal, of who I've become over here and who I am back at home. One changes so much. Space changes so much geographically. And I would really like to bring in that idea here as well, with a different, different forms of water.

Again, it's quite a subtle, I think. It's a very subtle, but yet powerful comment that I'm making. That would be interesting, too.

Beverley - You know, when you were thinking of condensation. You could have something that was, like a little spray, like under the mist. And keep, every now and then, spraying it.

L.P: Yeah, in a previous show, I had this. I had this aluminium tray, almost like a foot and a half, in which I added these two bodies of water. What I would have wanted would be, in the one that has the mud and the chairs, I would have wanted a tree to be outside of it. So, every time somebody comes out of the greenhouse, they step into the tray and then step out. But it'll be, like, their footsteps have the water on it, so it's almost dissolving into the floor. What if we can do that?

It is a very subtle way of, you know, just disseminating into space and becoming one, but also just carrying forward the remnants of the space through footprints.

B.H. - It might be slippery; that's the only concern. However, it creates an infinitesimal participatory performance for visitors – a performative space.

L.P. It's just a tiny little... Oh, okay. Like, just an inch. It's just not even an inch. So, it would just be as if, we're walking in rainwater on the ground. It's just that, it's *really nice*. I think it's a very subtle performance.

And I believe some spaces are always quite performative, in the way I create these abstract spaces. I think there's this direction that the viewers walk through, and there is always a part of the piece that goes with them. A lot of times, I add elements of taste, or this water, or there's always pieces of the work that sort of go with them. It is quite performative in the way that the viewers are my performers, without them knowing it.

So, there's this, I guess, this... insidious comment of agency, as well, that we're sort of so stuck in the world of today. I mean, who has agency anymore?

I really feel like, at least 70% of my work is thinking, because it's so heavy philosophically and so heavy conceptually based that then the execution seems to be quite easy, once all of this is planned out. I do a lot of on-scale drawings, because I'm quite material intensive. So, if I know exactly what I'm using, it's all in the planning of it.

I'm quite happy that I've got this time to, you know, just plan out, straighten out all of the creases, so that execution is quite simple, just fast.

B.H. - I like planning ideas as well. You know, in curating, and it's all planned out ahead of time, so you know where the artworks go and it's just smoother to execute.

L,P. - Yeah. I mean, it's just fun when you're executing it, instead of being stressful.

L.P. - This is a drawing, ...this is just a top view. I mean, they are on scale as well. So, these would be the two structures. These are the two chairs inside. This would be the tray of water. This is sort of like the washing line with my muslin fabric texts, and this is the tiny table fan blowing at these fabrics inside. Then, on the walls, on either end, would be those bubble machines. I probably have a visual for that as well, if you need.

So, just bubbles like these (emanating from the machine) sucking in and blowing out into the air. It's changing, and very subtly transforming the space – diffusing and dispersing transparency into the space, like the texts.

L.P. Exactly. It's just a very subtle intervention. They go up, and they're gone, but they're there.

Once again, the idea of this transparency, the translucency is just a very light tint of colour, of reflection. Yes, it is just to intervene on the space, but not disturb the integrity of that beautiful gallery, as well.

B.H. - It introduces a serendipity – chance.

L.P. - Exactly. Exactly. Is it going into the other artist's space? It might stick onto somebody's clothes. I mean, it'll go on the floor. It might go on the plant above. It's just, very spontaneous as well. Then maybe, on this corner of the wall, I'll have some bits of my texts, printed on muslin (like they're floating along the wall). It's very spontaneous, as well.

B.H. - So basically, the idea of spontaneous dispersion...

L.P. Exactly, exactly. It's like just scattered around. I've got this interesting thing that I've been doing, since I've come to London. I've sort of created this, like - word bank. I do a lot of experimental texts. So, every time I exhibit, I've got these experimental texts. Every time, whatever I'm doing, if a line pops up in my head, or somebody gives me a good reference for a book or something, I've got this notes page that has been continuing on for three years now. And I just add everything to it.

It's almost like a stream of consciousness, which, again, I think, works really well with my concepts, because it's giving power to these levels of the psyche. My whole idea is to imbue innocence again, to reinvent innocence, as we did when we were children, and how actually difficult a process that is, to completely obliterate everything that you know of yourself and everything around you, then become a child once again. And that is a process I sort of did at the RCA as well, like I completely had to unknow myself, to know myself again.

I realized it was through innocence that I was able to do this, this sense of purity. And I think that's why I really like to bring hints of this into my spaces as well. I think stream of consciousness, while writing, is such a great way of mirroring that in writing.

And so, now, every time I read through my word bank, there's so much of knowledge in this; there are little lines that I add into my poetry, or into my text, and it becomes, - it's a timeless sort of a thing. So, this is what I do; I pick up these bits of texts, from this whole notes page and print them on my muslin fabric, or on my papers. So, then it's this dispersal of time, of the psyche, I guess.

Again, these spaces are so self-confrontational that this seems to be another space that we confront. And another space of my own that I'm putting out. I believe for the longest time, I was not confident to put my text into my work. I was always writing it next to my work, but I never really used it within my installation, because I was always hesitant. I was always afraid. I guess it was too confrontational. I guess my writings been quite transparent that way. It's like a mirror that is quite too obvious. But now, when I put it into my installations, it's almost as if I'm actually standing there, in these 'flash spaces' that I'm creating. And it's a whole other... performance for myself - silently, I guess.

B.H. - Yes, this is interesting, this idea of... the self yet selfless within these abstract spaces, and then also just the transparency, and how that links with this dispersal of time and sound, these silent intonations into space, like water, bubbles.

L.P. - Yes, water, bubbles ... It's as if you're just letting it take its own life, which my installations do on their own, I think.

My way of thinking is always a process in reversal, in a way where I look at the space, and then the space tells me what it means, as opposed to me bringing something into the space. I think, it's inevitable, because my practice is so, it's so heavily based on space as an idea, and on phenomenology, that I can't disrespect it in a way, where I impose my idea on it. I allow the space to dictate to me what materials need to be there, what forms need to be there. Which is why, when I instantly saw this exhibition space, I'm unable to get it out of my mind, because I almost feel what it's calling. It's like, I surrender to the space, when I'm creating, which is really a great process, a way of working. I think that's going back again to the idea of innocence. So, it's a way to not let the spaces be tainted, I think, in that way.

B.H. - Chiharu Shiota also says she lets the space speak to her when she creates her installations.

L.P. - Yeah, she also comes in, she talks a lot about the space, especially during the sleep performance that you'll come to see. She talks a lot about the idea of sleep, and the idea of death, and how the edge of death, in so many cultures and relations, is basically just sleep. She even talks about Islam. As well, because I'm Muslim, death is actually just a form of sleep. It's a transitional period between one space to another space. This interests me as well, how you transport yourself within these spaces. I mean, I guess even the realm of dreams.

I'm thinking of hauntology, Jacques Derrida's philosophical concept. It's a concept coming from the word haunt, which talks basically about how these inanimate objects sort of haunt our existence; they act as these conduits for memory, without our control. He calls them, a really great word, 'inorganic demons'. You've seen it on television. But, it must make more sense when I talk about reclaimed materials. So, reclaimed materials hold memory. It's as if I'm surrendering to them, because they hold more power than I do over them.

B.H. - I see, I was thinking more in terms of ontology - how do we know what we know, as it's embedded in our memory and embodied in memory architectures and memory objects? But, it's hauntology, how objects hold memories within and we surrender to them.

L.P. - And then it's just really lovely to have conversations with people about it. I think so it's self-reflective. At times, you don't always tend to speak about your practice. Like, you don't contextualize it so formally all the time. So, I believe, when you do, suddenly, it's like a mirror, and you reflect. Then suddenly, it's like a trail of breadcrumbs, it makes sense again, and you find new meanings. It's almost as if you really realize this is why you're doing it. This is what it means to you, again, and every few months, and every few years, I believe it changes. Of course it does, as you change. It's brilliant, it's so evolving. It is. And sometimes we forget how much of a reflection it is of what we're feeling inside as well. It's great. I'm so happy that we did it over here, in such a perfect space, as well (Garden Museum courtyard, Lambert Palace, London) I think it was meant to be here. I don't think it would have been this lovely, or this intimate, on Zoom.

B.H. - No, I don't think so, either, because it's all about space, we're talking about these ideas of space. And it's just such a fantastic space with cascading trees, with the birds fluttering.

L.P. - And, you hear the church bells, and you hear the birds, and the children - the footsteps and you see - innocence. When you sit in spaces like these, you do this deep listening... Have you heard of Pauline Oliveros?

B.H. - Yes, I have, dealing with sound and sound artists and ideas on collaborative curating. I've wanted to explore her work.

L.P. - She's brilliant. I definitely recommend her concept of deep listening as well. It's such a subtle act, what I was doing here, at least while I was speaking to you, I was sort of just thinking about the furthest

sound that I could listen to, whether that was a bell, a cycle, or that was a dog barking at the other end of the road, and suddenly, these sounds transport you to where it is spatially. And it's like, again, talking about spaces, talking about these spaces where, like constantly, you're not physically there, but you were in some form, you are transported to these origins of sound. And I think if you just listen, it's also quite meditative, it is. You just sit in a space like this, and you just try to think of all the sounds that you can listen to. And it becomes a sound bath, almost.

We always think of globalization and industries, you know (as opposed to water ecologies). But it's true, it comes through even in nature. And water is honestly such a transportive thing. It probably travels around the world before it touches you. It's so interesting. I really, really enjoy working with the idea of water, water bodies, and the forms that it can take, and the moulds that it can make.

Hence, your subtle water intervention in your installations.

Interview continues June 4, 2026

Lujane Pagganwala

So, we are making spaces, creating spaces that go beyond physical existence.

Beverley Harrison

Yes, and I know what you mean from your spaces themselves.

LP. - I think, it's also good not to explain too much, in a way, as well. I would be speaking about this more in the artist talk, as well. It's because it's such an abstract idea. It's not something that people usually do think about.

But, I do have to make it digestible, because it's such an abstract idea. I sort of have to really condense it in a way that can be relatable to people. So, I explain abstract existences, because if I didn't know what it was, I would not understand.

If somebody said to me, abstract existences, I would ask, what is an abstract existence? So, these abstract spaces that I mean are sort of all of the spaces that are present in our minds, almost. They're psychological spaces. They're emotive spaces.

They are spaces guided by memory. They are spaces guided by retrospect or anticipation. And to explain it in the most mundane way, it would be simply something like, for instance when I'm talking to you, I am reminded of a relative of mine, and this also goes off on the idea of hauntology, without my consent or without my will, I guess, input, I am instantly taken back to a memory of somebody that I knew in my life by just looking at you.

This is what memory does. It sort of acts as though you don't have control in that way. So, when I look at you and I'm reminded by somebody else that I knew, that whole process, that whole procedure of me thinking, of me reminiscing, that, in itself, is a space.

That in itself is an existence, a version of myself is present in. It does not have a physical body. It has an abstract body, therefore an abstract existence.

Now, for example, I am thinking about, I'm constantly thinking and I'm manifesting and I am trying to envision this show, for example. In my head, I am imagining visually everything, every detail of what I want the installation to look like. Has it existed yet? It has not.

But in my head, it is completely present there in the space. It does not have a physical body. It has no temporal standing.

But this is what I mean. These abstract existences, the space that is created off this installation - all of these abstract spaces, go beyond spatial temporal conformities. They almost exist at the same plane.

The wavelengths are intersecting, interluding, intermingling. Therefore, they are, I feel, in a way, they hold a higher ground, as they are not held back by physicality, hence they are floating beings, they are floating spaces. But the funny thing about these spaces is that they do start and they do finish in almost a millisecond.

It is from one space to the next space and constantly we are moving between a multitude of these spaces in a day. So, I almost like to call it, it is like there is a species of the Self that is standing behind this physical form of myself. This is what I mean when I talk about how and what we mean by entanglement, when we are talking about it, in the discourse of the self?

I feel this in itself, but there is no science, because this is not a quantifiable phenomenon. This is not something that science can prove statistically. Science can only go so far when it comes to the mind. Yet, this is a universal truth that we all as humans experience.

This is a human experience that is universal. It is unanimous. Hence, we know that its existence is very much present. But that's what I find so intriguing to talk about and to make work about it, because we are so lacking in coining any language for it. Linguistics, unfortunately, can only go so far as well. Hence, why I had to, because I had such frustration with the fact that there was no way to read about it, to talk about it, to understand it, is why I came up with the idea of presenting these spaces.

BH – We've talked about hanging the tents and how the Isomalt plates or tablets, need a certain temperature, so that they don't degrade. I now want to speak about the performance.

LP - I have gotten this mould, which makes these semicircles; it's like a dome shape candy mould, like a semicircle dome. I will make these candies, about three centimetres in diameter. I will make a bunch of these to mirror structure of my plates.

I will be doing my reading - a five to six minute reading of the text that I write. While I'm doing the text, I will give these candies out. It's my offering to the public to sort of, it's like this weird dialogue where what I'm saying, my words are sort of going into them, through these candies, they are eating. It's like this offering that I'm providing. From there we can go on to the artist talk. I just thought that it would be a really great way to start, you know, something that can be quite serious as an artist talk.

(Before the artist talk, a poetry reading became part of a performance; wherein, white cards with words from the poem were placed, like place-settings. People randomly took their places, perhaps choosing a particular word on the paper. Pagganwala ceremoniously placed glowing transparent candy, globe-like on the place card, using long tweezers. The candy radiated a coloured beam of light as she did so. She wore a traditional dress from Pakistan. The word was visible through the domed candy, like a portent).

I thought it could be quite interesting to activate that space. And I do, because I'm talking, because 80% of my installation is edible. I want the audience to be able to sense, to activate taste as well. That is the one sense that will come through; the Isomalt moulded plates on the floor are edible, but they're not for the audience to eat, obviously. So, this would be another way to offer them actual taste.

BH. – So, it is a way for the audience to embody the installation and its spatial aura, and vicariously embody the reflective Isomalt images' poetic references, reminiscences and associations.

LP - I somehow always do write an experimental text with my art. I've only recently started to read it out loud into my practise, which is because it's a very vulnerable state where you're reading, you're writing. But I feel I quite enjoy that space.

BH – The space of poetic imagination.