

# Beyond two cultures

ANNA MCNAY MEETS DESI SCouser  
CHILA KUMARI BURMAN

A scouser and a desi. A Hindu Punjabi. Chila Kumari Burman, who grew up helping her dad with his ice cream van on Freshfields Beach, went on to become one of the first British South Asian women to study art at the Slade. Her work – which she describes as challenging the notion of the Asian woman “caught between two cultures”, instead envisioning herself as beyond two cultures – is now held in collections belonging to the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Tate and Richard Branson.

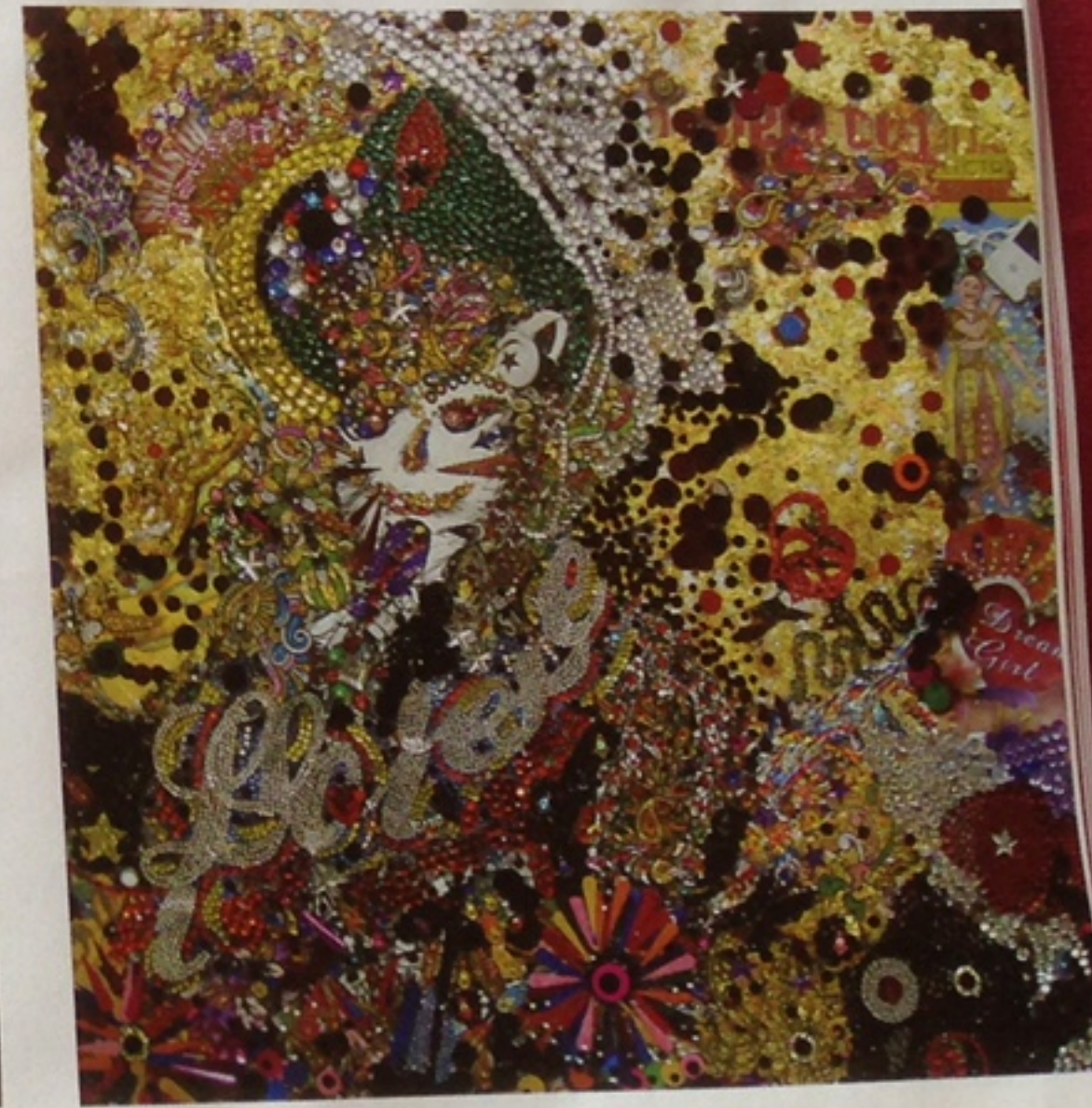
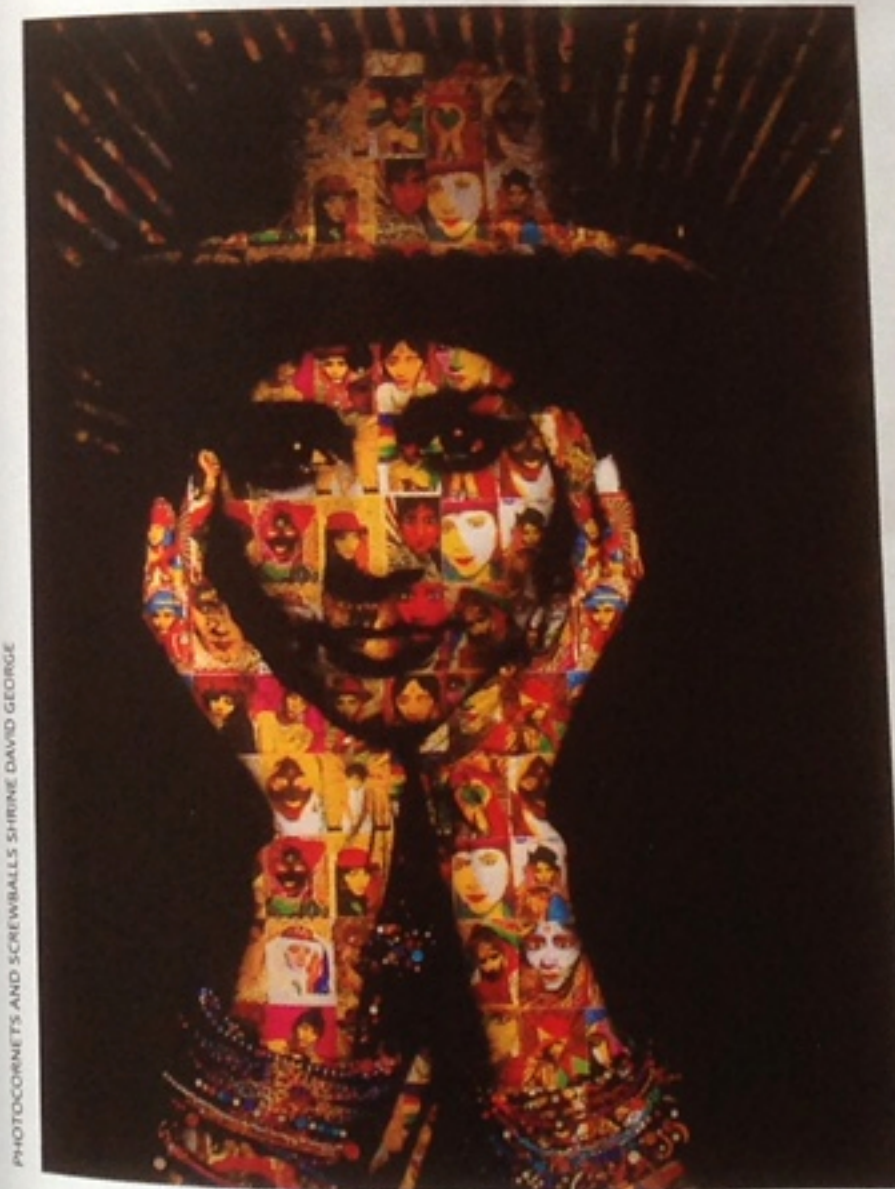
Among her influences, Burman lists Bollywood, Dada and Surrealism, Hindu philosophy, Indian comics, popular culture and her mum. She works a lot with prints, layering and relayering, printing and reprinting. Texture is unimportant; the focus is on colour. The initial image becomes a blur. Burman likes to work with “girly junk” – bindis, make-up, hair accessories, flowers, buttons and beads – as well as pictures of Bollywood stars and Hindu goddesses. Words are superimposed from sources as diverse as an erotic fridge magnet set and the New Internationalist magazine.

Sexuality and forms of female sexual desire are intrinsic to Burman’s work, all of which might be seen as a series of self-portraits, even the larger-than-life ice-cream cone sculptures. Everywhere there is plenty of glitter and sparkle – and there couldn’t really be a better reflection of the artist’s effervescent personality. One grinning black and white photograph of a young Burman is scribbled over with the thought bubble: “Gonna be an artist, y’know?” Well, girl, you certainly made it! ☉

**My Rangila Merry-Go-Round**  
Embrace Arts, Richard Attenborough Centre,  
Lancaster Road, Leicester, LE1 7HA  
Until 19 April 2015  
[chila-kumari-burman.co.uk](http://chila-kumari-burman.co.uk)  
[embracearts.co.uk](http://embracearts.co.uk)

**Clockwise from top left:**  
**Gonna be an artist, Self Portrait**, felt tip and old photo, 2014  
**Blue Apsaras with Family**, mixed media, 2000 (right top)  
**Band of Gold 2 (detail)**, mixed media, 2013 (far right)  
**Autopportrait**, mixed media, 2000-2015 (right)  
**Cornets and Screwballs Shrine**, glitter, plastic and biscuit, 2012

Gonna be an  
artist y'know?  
00p.



PHOTOGRAPHS AND SCREWBALLS SHRINE: DAVID GEORGE

