



**NUTKHUT**  
Presents

never set  
eyes on  
the land...

[nutkhut.co.uk](http://nutkhut.co.uk)

**NOTKHUT**

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The story of the  
largest mass  
migration in the  
history of the world.

**Front Cover:** A child looks out onto a field of mustard flowers, at dusk, to a land she is deeply connected to, but may never see – evocative of the mood and landscape of Punjab and the reflective nature of this project.

## Overview

The Partition of India in 1947 resulted in the largest mass migration in human history. 14 million Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, were displaced, lighting the fuse for a series of events that not only changed the Sub-Continent but also Britain forever. Partition carries a living legacy in the UK and across the world and this is one of the last opportunities to hear and learn directly from the generation who experienced this climatic upheaval.

Nutkhut's **Defining Moments** projects aim to mark significant historical anniversaries and moments in time which reflect on the rich and complex inter-relationship between Britain and South Asian communities. **Never set eyes on the Land** is the second in this series following the 2016 production of **Dr Blighty** exploring the story of wounded WW1 Indian soldiers who convalesced in the Royal Pavilion Brighton.

**Never set eyes on the Land** takes its name from a line in W.H. Auden's caustic poem, 'Partition', written 20 years after the boundary lines of the Sub-Continent were drawn up by a British civil servant.

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nutkhut has worked with Partition survivors, community groups, schools, heritage volunteers and artists to create this installation that captures a part of this momentous event in 20<sup>th</sup> century history.

## Why now?

**My grandfather's rice bowl, the only surviving heirloom from Sargodha, the ancestral home and lands from which my father's family lived for centuries, became the catalyst for this project. Seven metals were used to make this bowl... Iron, copper, zinc, brass, mercury, gold and silver, over 100 years old, it is a symbolic reminder of the past.**

I was struck by how little was known in the UK about this moment in history, which has shaped so many people's lives and how little was being covered in our arts and heritage institutions. At the heart of this project is an ambition to bring this story to a wider public through personal testimony and individual stories.

Growing up in London, I was familiar with my family's contribution to the Quit India movement, yet I was surrounded by the silence of Partition, the refugee status and the optimism and hope for the future. The silence spoke of the trauma and pain of this global event and I wanted to ensure that this period of history was not forgotten or swept under the carpet, like many aspects of British colonial history.

We opted for a broad creative approach, by asking ourselves questions about the future of museums, the future of the telling of history

and embarked on a process of oral history interviews of partition survivors, the training of a new generation of volunteers, a travelling installation of a lived-in space to places where people naturally gather, a digitally animated film, a soundscape and finally an education toolkit for schools and colleges. We were clear from the onset, that the project should have *meaning* and speak to *many*.

'Never Set Eyes on the Land' brings together a multi-disciplinary team of leading artists, pre-eminent UK outdoor arts festivals, academics, specialists in participatory arts, heritage experts, archivists and educationalists, working towards a shared objective.

**Ajay Chhabra – Director**

## The work

**The project has been a work of discovery for us: honestly, we did not know what Partition was before we began this project, and we are sad that our school curriculum's left such a gaping hole in the understanding of our history.**

It is so important for everyone to know where they've come from; what our country stood and stands for – and to own and learn from the time and people that have come before us. We wanted to create the environment as a whole, tactile artwork: a space that could be engaged with as a different moment from

the one you came from. Our key themes were food, water and migration, and our research led us through the National Archives; 1930's/40's Bollywood; Train to Pakistan (Khushwant Singh); the photos of Margaret Bourke-White and many Indian food blogs until we landed in the 1947 Indian kitchen inside a train carriage you are about to enter. Left as if in a hurry we aimed to tell the history through the personal stories you will hear and the objects you will see. We have left a trail of our research for you to discover on your time: this space is for you (audience) to engage with as you see fit.

**Abby And Alice – Installation Artists**



**Partition by WH Auden**  
**Written in the mid 1960's**

*Unbiased at least he was when  
 he arrived on his mission,  
 Having never set eyes on the  
 land he was called to partition  
 Between two peoples fanatically  
 at odds,  
 With their different diets and  
 incompatible gods.  
 "Time," they had briefed him  
 in London, "is short. It's too late  
 For mutual reconciliation or  
 rational debate:  
 The only solution now lies in  
 separation.  
 The Viceroy thinks, as you will  
 see from his letter,  
 That the less you are seen in his  
 company the better,  
 So we've arranged to provide you  
 with other accommodation.  
 We can give you four judges,  
 two Moslem and two Hindu,  
 To consult with, but the final  
 decision must rest with you."*

*Sbuted up in a lonely mansion,  
 with police night and day  
 Patrolling the gardens to keep  
 the assassins away,  
 He got down to work, to the task  
 of settling the fate  
 Of millions. The maps at his  
 disposal were out of date  
 And the Census Returns almost  
 certainly incorrect,  
 But there was no time to check  
 them, no time to inspect  
 Contested areas. The weather  
 was frightfully hot,  
 And a bout of dysentery kept  
 him constantly on the trot,  
 But in seven weeks it was done,  
 the frontiers decided,  
 A continent for better or worse  
 divided.*

*The next day he sailed for  
 England, where he could quickly  
 forget  
 The case, as a good lawyer  
 must. Return he would not,  
 Afraid, as he told his Club, that  
 he might get shot.*

**Timeline**

*Freedom آزادی স্বাধীনতা आज़ादी आज़ादी*

**20<sup>th</sup> February  
 1947**

British Prime minister  
 Attlee states that the  
 British intend to grant  
 independence not later  
 than June 1948

**March  
 1947**

Widespread  
 destruction in  
 Lahore and  
 Amritsar

**3<sup>rd</sup> June  
 1947**

The plan to  
 partition India  
 is made public  
 via radio

**8<sup>th</sup> July  
 1947**

Cyril Radcliffe  
 arrives in India: the  
 first time he has set  
 foot on the land

**1<sup>st</sup> July  
 1947**

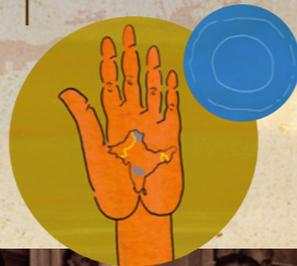
The Partition  
 Council is formed

**15<sup>th</sup> April  
 1947**

Gandhi and Jinnah  
 appeal for peace



"The National Archives holds a wealth of material covering the period up to and including Partition. Nutkhat's Never Set Eyes on the Land has created a unique opportunity for people to access this extraordinary but largely hidden history through the National Archive's collection. We are delighted to have been able to support this exceptional project."  
 Iqbal Husain, The National Archives



**14<sup>th</sup> August  
 1947**

Independence Day  
 in Pakistan

**15<sup>th</sup> August  
 1947**

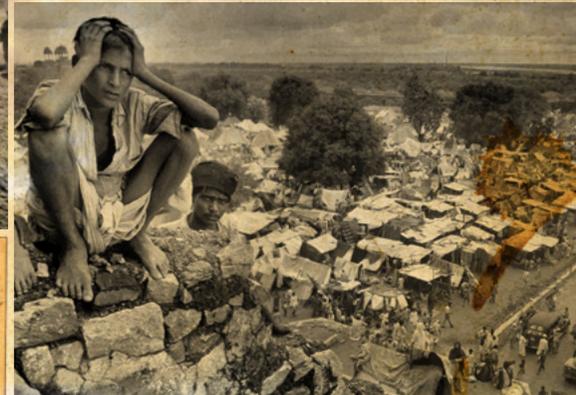
Independence Day  
 in India

**17<sup>th</sup> September  
 1947**

First British Troops  
 sail from Bombay

**21<sup>st</sup> November  
 1947**

Numbers of evacuations  
 in Punjab alone exceed  
 eight million people



"The partition has often been studied as a key moment in South Asian history but its global significance is sometimes overlooked - not least in Britain. Partition is rarely taught in schools and few people understand how the events of 1947 were shaped by British imperialism, or how the partition and its after-effects influenced patterns of migration to Britain.

Partition helps us to see how connected communities in South Asia and in Britain are - and to remind us of the dangers of dividing communities and peoples. . .

Dr Gavin Rand, University of Greenwich

## About Nutkhut

Nutkhut creates highly quality work, which takes unique stories and compelling narratives and presents them in the public realm, making them accessible to a wide range of audiences. Multi-faceted, mixing media, mischief, humour and spectacle, Nutkhut's work exists to delight all those who encounter it.

Nutkhut was founded on the creative vision of Simmy Gupta and Ajay Chhabra, and has grown to involve a large and diverse group of artists. Working predominantly in the outdoors, Nutkhut is an ideas-led, art focused performance-company, creating work by mixing genres and styles.

Find out more about Nutkhut's 'Never Set Eyes on the Land' online at our website [nutkhut.co.uk](http://nutkhut.co.uk) We would love to hear from you if you have further questions, comments or ideas please do not hesitate to get in touch via email [connect@nutkhut.co.uk](mailto:connect@nutkhut.co.uk)

### Find out more about Partition:

[nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk)  
(The Road to Partition 1939-1947)  
[1947partitionarchive.org](http://1947partitionarchive.org)  
[partitionmuseum.org](http://partitionmuseum.org)

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#neverseteyes



## With special thanks to

**Never Set Eyes on the Land** has been created through the incredible work of our project team working with the help of our Hosts, Partners, Supporters and Funders.

Nutkhut would like to thank all those who have contributed towards the making of this project.

### Never Set Eyes on the Land team:

Ajay Chhabra *Director*  
Matthew Jones *Producer*  
Rajpal Pardesi *Project Manager*  
Ellie Newland *Education and Community Manager*

Eleanor Harding *Heritage Engagement Coordinator*

Abby and Alice *Installation Artists*  
Charlie Ockmore *Sound Design*  
Georgia Akbar *Animation*  
Imogen Stanley *Animation*  
Dr Gavin Rand *Academic Consultant*  
Sarah Lowry *Oral History Trainer*  
Kiran Thapar *Education Consultant*  
John Francis *Graphic Designer*  
Uzair Sayeed *Social Media Coordinator*  
Ed Inglis *Film Editor and Documentation*

Kois Miah *Photographer*  
Wendy Smithers *Critical Friend*  
Kate Pontin *Project Evaluator*

### Nutkhut team:

Simmy Gupta *Co-Artistic Director*  
Ajay Chhabra *Co-Artistic Director*  
Emma Dyos *General Manager*  
Matthew Jones *Consultant Producer*

### Installation Hosts:

Greenwich+Docklands International Festival  
Croydon International Mela  
Luton Mela  
London Mela

### Partners:

The National Archives - Sara Griffiths and Iqbal Husain  
University of Greenwich  
National Army Museum  
Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust  
British Red Cross Archives

### Supporters:

London Borough of Brent  
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London Mela  
Museum of London  
Remarkable Productions  
Mela Partnership

### Funders:

Heritage Lottery Fund  
Arts Council England

### Volunteer Oral Historians:

Zahra Qureshi  
Remmika Wilson  
Simi Kaur Raud  
Shefa Jahan

### Camera and Sound Operators:

Imran Perretta and Rajpal Pardesi

**Thanks** to all of our heritage volunteers, community groups and schools who have engaged with this project, Sam Bompas at Bompas and Parr; Lionel Knight and Joya Knight, who as a Partition survivor has made London her home and given so much to this project.

**Special Thanks** to Vinod Chhabra and all our partition survivors who shared memories and stories of life, family and friendship. Without you, this story would not have been told - you have been listening to the voices of - Mrs Joya Knight, Mr Malak, Mr & Mrs Husain and Mr Misbah-ul Islam.

**Images Time/Life used for educational purposes only.**

Freedom آزادی স্বাধীনতা आज़ादी आज़ादी

BY AIR MAIL  
PAR AVION



*The story of the largest  
mass migration in the  
history of the world.*

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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**