

**Alpesh Patel**

**Queer Desi Visual Culture Across the "Brown Atlantic"**  
**Supervisors: Rajinder Dudrah, Drama, and Amelia Jones, Art History & Visual Studies**



Interior of a restaurant on the 6th Street 'Indian' row , East Village, NYC."

I have been re-working Paul Gilroy's term, "Black Atlantic," strategically as a method to consider simultaneously a number of different power structures —notions of home/"Diaspora," gender, sexuality, class—that are queered (or destabilized) through visual culture (film, art, and public spaces) of the South Asian Diaspora in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Unsatisfied with what he called the "ethnic absolutism" of both Afrocentric and Eurocentric models, Gilroy believed this theoretical framework would allow for an explicitly transnational and intercultural approach to studying the African Diaspora. The "Brown Atlantic," then, represents an imaginary and actual space that recognizes the specific colonial and postcolonial legacies that the South Asian Diasporas of the United Kingdom and North America share.

By employing a queer Desi subjectivity, I am hoping to recover Paul Gilroy's methodology, but as a more exacting tool that helps map the Brown Atlantic inter- and intra-culturally and helps peel away the differences among and tensions within different articulations of power.

I am analyzing film and art, as well as public spaces, such as dance parties and urban clusters of South Asian restaurants. For public spaces, I use a phenomenological approach in which the optical experience is considered part and parcel with the other senses, such as the olfactory.

As part of my practice-based PhD, I plan to organize site-specific art installations in public spaces in both the UK (Curry Mile, Manchester) and the US (6<sup>th</sup> Street, NYC) that interrogate, destabilize, or queer the South Asian Diaspora.

**[alpesh.patel@aya.yale.edu](mailto:alpesh.patel@aya.yale.edu)**