GALLERY
WENDI NORRIS

GALLERY WENDI NORRIS PRESENTS EIGHT NEW WORKS BY AMBREEN BUTT

The exhibition marks the artist's third solo presentation with the gallery



Ambreen Butt: I Bear Witness
March 26 – May 9, 2026

Gallery Wendi Norris proudly presents *I Bear Witness*, its third solo exhibition with Ambreen Butt (b. 1969, Lahore, Pakistan). The exhibition features a series of eight new works that mark the culmination of a trilogy she began in 2015, through which Butt has rendered visible the lives, names, and stories that acts of violence erase. This final chapter builds upon her series *Say My Name* (2015–2023), which memorialized children lost to drone warfare, and *Lay Bare My Arms* (2023), which interrogated American gun culture.

Throughout this new series, Butt casts the maternal figure as both subject and witness, an active vessel of testimony rather than a passive symbol of loss. Drawing on religious and cultural traditions that cast the maternal body as a bearer of memory—particularly the icon of the Madonna and Child—Butt positions witnessing as an act of holding and carrying forward fragments of grief, displacement, and care. In works such as *Awladi (My Children)* (2026) and *Awladna (Our Children)* (2026), maternal figures confront the viewer directly, their bodies delineated through repetition, framing, and the collaged text of a poem. In *Silence!* (2026), the figure, deftly rendered in urgent red threadwork, cries out, her call reverberating across the surface as a sweeping field of florals disperses outward.

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Across the series, body and ground become inseparable, each absorbing and carrying the traces of what has been endured. The land—figured here as the ultimate manifestation of the maternal—functions in this series not only as material but as collaborator and witness. Butt cultivates walking irises from her own garden, which reappear throughout the series as meditations on ephemerality and resilience. The keffiyeh, integrated into each composition, extends its history of protection and resistance into a woven emblem of memory and endurance.

“To witness without the power to intervene is an act of endurance; this endurance in itself is a form of resistance,” says Butt.

About the artist

Using techniques rooted firmly in tradition, Ambreen Butt (b. 1969, Lahore, Pakistan) creates works that explore the complexities of contemporary global politics, female identity and living as a Muslim in the United States. Employing actions including staining, stitching, cutting, ripping and tacking with repetitive urgency, Butt's painted and collaged works on paper and large-scale resin installations espouse the radiant aesthetics of sacred geometries and Islamic ornamentation. Often using text-based source materials that include the names of children who lost their lives to war, transcripts from terrorism trials, and quotations from news media, Butt's work is built upon some of the most challenging moral questions of the 21st century, tackling issues ranging from drone warfare and gun culture, to forced displacement and mass migration. Rather than offer answers, her artworks exist as laborious meditations on humanity.

Butt's work has been featured in solo exhibitions at institutions including the Dallas Contemporary, TX; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC; Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA; among others.

Butt has been the recipient of numerous awards including the Anonymous Was a Woman Award, Brother Thomas Fellowship from the Boston Foundation, Maud Morgan Prize from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant, and a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario, Canada. In 1999, she was the first recipient of the James and Audrey Foster Prize from the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston in addition to being an artist-in-residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum that same year.

Her work is collected by public institutions including the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN; National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington, DC; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Worcester Art Museum, MA; Hood Museum at Dartmouth College, NH; DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA; Newark Museum of Art, NJ; and U.S. Art in Embassies, Islamabad, Pakistan, among others.

Butt lives and works in Southlake, TX. She received her BFA in traditional Indian and Persian miniature painting from the National College of Arts in Lahore. She earned her MFA in painting in 1997 from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston.

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About Gallery Wendi Norris

Gallery Wendi Norris champions visionary artists of the 20th and 21st centuries. Grounded by its decades-long relationships with these luminaries, the gallery represents those artists whose nomadic, intuitive, and intellectually rigorous practices interrogate the aesthetic, scientific, and philosophical movements of their time and whose work flows across disciplines, continents, and generations.

The gallery is committed to advancing the legacies of historically significant estates while cultivating the current generation of artists, including María Magdalena Campos-Pons, Leonora Carrington, Chitra Ganesh, Enrique Martínez Celaya, Wolfgang Paalen, Alice Rahon, Dorothea Tanning, Remedios Varo, and Peter Young. Through its landmark exhibitions, museum collaborations, scholarly monographs, public programming, and meticulous stewardship, the gallery has been credited with recontextualizing art history by ushering artists into the canon. Working in concert with major museums and private collectors, Gallery Wendi Norris builds expansive and enduring collections for its array of international clients.

Gallery Wendi Norris was founded in 2002 and is headquartered in San Francisco's historic Jackson Square.

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Image:

Ambreen Butt, *Silence!* (detail), 2026. Fabric, stitching, gold leaf, vegetable dyes, watercolors with white gouache on eco-printed and tea-stained paper, 22 x 31 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Wendi Norris, San Francisco. Photo by Kevin Todora.