

In the contemporary art world, critics and connoisseurs seldom pay enough attention to the role and function of art in local and global politics. Artists have and continue to play with notions of power. They may comment on the horrors of war, or pay homage to powerful figures, in the critically overlooked forms of monuments, presidential portraits, war memorials or religious icons. Art can function not only to critique but also to uphold power structures, and a work of art can become not only a vessel of expression or a force of change, but also a site of dialogue.

Many artists produce visual interpretations or representations of ideas or events grounded in social and political contexts. Their subjects position them as participating critics within their culture, while their aesthetic archives might be likened to the reports of a spectator observing that same culture from the outside. *Art in Pursuit - Exploring Social and Political Issues in Public and Other Spaces* compiles artists, critics and cultural commentator's perspectives on a series of public art projects - *Loudspeaker* and the exhibition - *Contemporary Anxieties - The Body and it's Politics*, to unravel the complex relationships between artists, art, ideologies and the audiences who view their work.

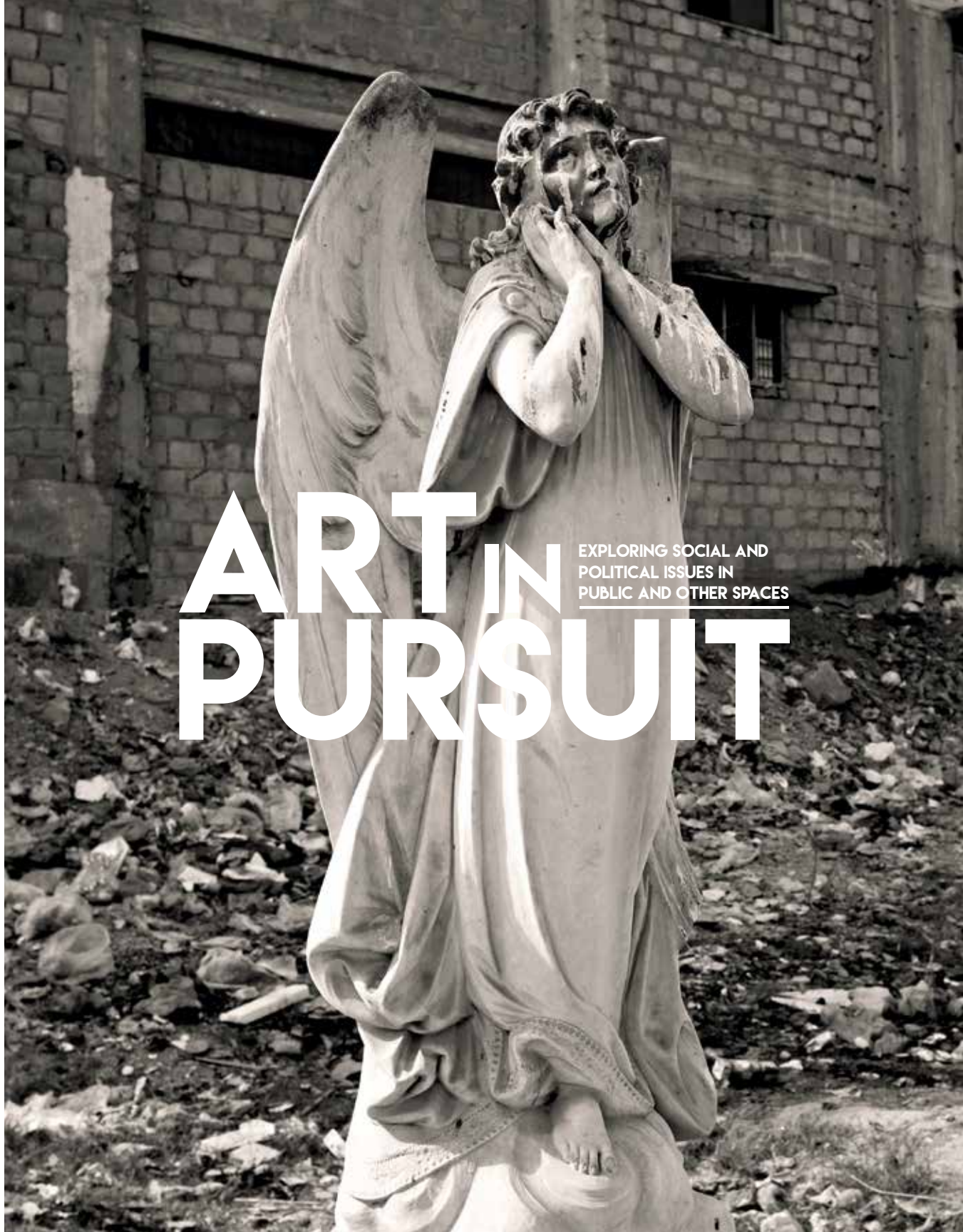
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Karachi, Pakistan

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ART IN PURSUIT | EXPLORING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES IN PUBLIC AND OTHER SPACES

VASL ARTISTS' ASSOCIATION



# ART IN PURSUIT

EXPLORING SOCIAL AND  
POLITICAL ISSUES IN  
PUBLIC AND OTHER SPACES



**Art in Pursuit: Exploring Social and  
Political Issues in Public and Other Spaces**

by Vasl Artists' Association

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*saat daryaon ke paani se dhuli meri rooh,  
phir bhi rahi gadli, 2019*  
Performance Film, Natasha Jozi & Mavera Rahim,  
Seaview Beach, Karachi

PART I

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**Zambeel Dramatic Readings** was founded with a view to present texts from Urdu literature in a dramatized form to a live audience, creating a dynamic collusion between literature and performance.

Referencing traditions of storytelling and the contemporary form of the radio play, the productions traverse time and geographical boundaries to interpret and enliven narratives through sound and recitation.

The Zambeel performers imbue texts with a poignant expressive quality and perform narratives that are supported by a soundscape, enriching the aural experience of the audience through acoustics and narration.

The group's title alludes to the legendary tales of the Hamzanama, where the Zambeel is a furry bag of tricks that belonged to Umar Ayyar (also written as Amar), a trickster and loyal companion to Amir Hamza, the hero of the Hamzanama.

Alluding to the magical properties of this bag that yielded boundless possibilities, the choice of the word Zambeel suggests not just its infinite nature, but also its relationship to the enduring tradition of storytelling.

Zambeel Dramatic Readings was founded by Mahvash Faruqi, Asma Mundrawala and Saife Hasan in 2011.



Supported by  
Abdul Latif Dorai,  
Haji Abdullah Haroon Vocational Training Centre



# Qissay Kahaniyaan

## قصے کہانیاں

by Zambeel Dramatic Readings

# In the Heart of the Tale

Essay by Asma Mundrawala

**Asma Mundrawala** is a visual artist and theatre practitioner with a DPhil from the University of Sussex, U.K. She is a Professor in the Department of Fine Art at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi. She has been associated with the arts and education and has been represented in national and international exhibitions.

As part of her research practice Asma has published in Pakistani and international books and journals. She is a member of the Editorial Board for Hybrid, Interdisciplinary Journal of Art, Design and Architecture, published by Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, and was editor for the first issue in 2017.

Apart from a visual arts practice, Asma has a background in theatre since 1997 when she began work with the Karachi-based theatre group Tehrik e Niswan. She is a co-founder and Director for Zambeel Dramatic Readings (2011), a group that renders Urdu and English texts in dramatic form for live audiences. As part of this initiative she has conceptualised and directed several projects comprising of texts by eminent authors from the subcontinent. She has conceptualised and runs Zambeelnaama, a monthly online audio channel for Zambeel Dramatic Readings. Asma lives and works in Karachi.

Vasl-led project *Loudspeaker* enabled Zambeel Dramatic Readings to interact with the community from Karachi's Lyari area, and to present to them, dramatic readings of selected texts from Urdu literature. The audience, comprising largely of women, assembled at the Abdullah Haroon Vocational Training Centre in Khadda Market Lyari. Many of them were part of the technical short courses organised by a local resident at the Centre.

In contrast to the volatile reputation that Lyari has held for many years, the courtyard of Vocational Training Centre presented a serene ambiance, fit for an evening of storytelling. Rugs laid out in front of a low stage and mildly glimmering fairy lights welcomed the audience. For the women who gradually filtered in with children in tow, this was an occasion to find some relief from an otherwise stringent existence in their respective households. For Zambeel, the challenge was to capture the attention of an uninitiated audience through the stories that were to be presented.

As a practice in theatrical performance, Zambeel Dramatic Readings has been, now for more than seven years, presenting texts from Urdu literature in a dramatised form to a live audience. Referencing traditions of storytelling, the renditions are supported by a soundscape, bearing resonance to the form of a radio play. Audiences have varied from children to adults, spanning a range of social and economic backgrounds. While it is imperative to keep the Urdu language alive as one of its motivations, Zambeel is also keen to advocate storytelling as an effective medium of communication and engagement.

صورتیں سب کی ایسی ہیں گویا سوانگ بھر رکھا ہے۔ کسی کے منہ پر مٹی پڑی ہے۔ کسی کے بال ٹیالے ہو رہے ہیں۔ کسی کے کپڑوں پر جالے لگے ہوئے ہیں۔ بچا چارپای پر بیٹھے ایک کپڑے کا معائنہ فرما رہے ہیں۔ ہر کپڑے کو انگلی کے سروں سے اٹھا کر دیکھتے ہیں۔ کبھی بچوں کو کوستے ہیں کہ کم بختوں کو کپڑا پہننے کا سلیقہ بھی نہیں آتا۔ کبھی دھوبن کو ڈانٹتے ہیں کہ خیر دار جو ایک داغ بھی باقی رہا۔ کہیں بیچ میں وہ بُنیاں بھی ہاتھ میں آ گیا جس سے آپنے بوٹ پونچھے تھے۔ خیال نہ رہا کہ یہ اپنی ہی کارروائی ہے۔ برس پڑے۔ ”اب دیکھو تو اس کی حالت۔ یہ انسانوں کا برتا ہوا معلوم ہوتا ہے؟ اللہ جانے بدتہذیب کہاں کہاں...“

داغ اچھی طرح دیکھنے سے بچا کو یاد آ گیا کہ یہ بُنیاں ان کے اپنے کمرے کے آتشدان میں سے برآمد ہوا ہوگا۔ چنانچہ فوراً کپڑوں میں ملا دیا اور ارشاد ہوا۔ ”چلو اب جو ہے سو ہے۔ لو اب کپڑوں کو الگ الگ کر دو کہ کونسا کپڑا کس کا ہے؟“

The text is an excerpt from *Chacha Chakkan nay Dhaban ko Kapray Diyay*, (translated: Uncle Chakkan dispatches clothes to the washerwoman), by Imtiaz Ali Taj (1900-1970). Taj wrote a series of humorous stories about the character Chacha Chakkan, loosely based on Jerome K. Jerome's character 'Uncle Podger'. With a temperament exuding self-importance and superiority, Chacha finds himself in all kinds of scrapes in his household. In this excerpt, a simple task of listing clothes for the laundry is more monumental than he imagines, and sends the entire household in disarray.

Imtiaz Ali Taj was known for his short stories, novels and plays, most notably 'Anarkali', and contributed to several literary journals, such as 'Tahzeeb-e-Niswan', 'Kehkashan' and 'Phool'.

The selection of texts for this performance was based on the accessibility of language, given that the literacy level of this audience group was not advanced. Of the four texts selected, two have, in the past, been part of the primary school Urdu syllabus and theoretically bore the potential of familiarity with the audience. The other two, written more than half a century ago for an adult readership, engaged nevertheless with ideas that are significant in our lives even today. The underlying factor that brought them together was their humorous approach and light heartedness that would ensure listeners to ease into the text effortlessly. In this array *Chacha Chakkan's* scrapes from Imtiaz Ali Taj's repertoire of stories on the meddlesome Uncle *Chakkan* draw peals of laughter as listeners inevitably relate to everyday skirmishes in the household. Ismat Chughtai's *Meethay Jootay* (Shoes for Dessert) embraces sibling rivalry with endearment, while emboldening children to maintain their mischievous innocence even when they enter the world as adults. Ashraf Suboohi Dehvi's *Nani Basti* takes the audience into the wondrous world of an elderly woman who embarks upon a train journey for the first time and is horrified at the prospect of accosting men in an enclosed train compartment. The story also significantly speaks of industrialisation as the steam engine train succeeded the horse carriage, the bullock cart and the palanquin. The train journey is also central to the final text in this collection; *Aik Shauhar ki Khaatir* (For the Sake of a Husband) by Ismat Chughtai, which despite being written in the 1940s, holds true for many women today.

In this narrative, an educated single woman boards an empty train from Jodhpur to Bombay for an interview in her destination city, and prays for company, only to be subsequently surrounded by women, children and copious amounts of luggage. As her fellow passengers assume that she is married, their inquisitive questions lead the protagonist to offer a series of falsehoods that eventually backfire. These hilarious exchanges very often resonate with women in the audience as they find their own lives entwined with the fate of every single woman in south Asian culture.

The performative genre of dramatic reading stands apart from theatrical performance in its singular reliance on the voice as medium. Stripped of the seductive artistic details a theatre performance has to offer, a dramatized reading demands unique attention from the audience. It allows listeners to



”کہاں جا رہی ہو؟۔۔“ بے چاری ہم سفر نے گھڑیوں کی طرف سے غیر مطمئن ہوتے ہوئے بھی نہایت فکر مند ہو کر پوچھا۔ میں نے جلدی سے بتایا اور پھر ان کی توجہ اس وزنی گھڑی کی طرف منعطف کی جو شاید برتنوں کی تھی اور ذرا سی ٹھیس سے گرنے کو تیار تھی۔ اگر اتفاقاً ذرا ہاتھ لگ جاتا تو برتن اس تیزی سے آپس میں ٹکراتے کے جی گھبرا اٹھتا۔

”کہاں سے آ رہی ہو۔۔؟“ میں نے ذرا کم مستعدی سے بتایا۔

”میکے جا رہی ہو؟“۔ جب تک شادی نہ ہوئی ہو تب تک جگت میکہ ہی ہے اور کہیں بھی نہیں۔ یعنی میکہ اور سسرال کا سوال ہی نہیں۔ لہذا میں چکرائی۔ سوچا اندازاً کسی صوبہ میں شادی ہونے کا خطرہ ہے۔

”میاں کے پاس جا رہی ہو؟“۔

”نہیں!“ میں نے چاہا موضوع بدل جاتا تو اچھا ہوتا۔

خواہ مخواہ ہمدردی وصول کرے۔

”تو پھر سسرال جا رہی ہوگی۔۔۔ کیوں؟“

ذرا ان سوالوں کے جواب بہت فلسفیانہ ہوتے ہیں۔

”نہیں۔۔۔ تو۔۔۔ میں پہلی جا رہی ہوں۔۔۔ شادی۔۔۔“

شادی تو نہیں ہوئی۔“

The text is an excerpt from *Aik Shauhar ki Khaatir* (translated: For the sake of a husband), by Ismat Chughtai (1915-1991). Written in the 1940s, the story traces the experiences of a single woman on board a train from Jodhpur to Bombay. Inevitably the subject of everyone's attention in the women's compartment, the protagonist faces innumerable queries about her husband and in-laws, all based on the assumption that she is married.

Ismat Chughtai's body of work consists of five collections of short stories, seven novels, three novellas, radio plays, essays as well as innumerable contributions to literary journals and film scripts. Her greatness as the grand dame of Urdu fiction and as the indomitable spirit of the Urdu *afsana* is continually affirmed by the interest in her writing today.

own the act of storytelling in a distinctive manner as they reference their own experience of storytelling practically and from memory. They are free to allow their imagination to drive the narrative, making the journey more personal and individual. The genre is more accessible and inclusive, motivating listeners to engage in dialogue cerebrally with the text and literally with the storyteller.

Given the diverse thematic nature of texts offered at this performance, audience reception centred on personal responses to the narratives. In conversations with the storytellers following the performance, it was evident that apart from the sheer pleasure the audience derived from the act of listening, the stories struck a chord with listeners. While teachers in the audience were delighted to hear texts they had taught in the classroom, women recognised the underlying seriousness of Chughtai's text that articulates the social pressures of remaining single in a Pakistani society. The hilarity of the last story was validated in the audience's response as they found ways to relate to it in lateral ways.

While these intuitive responses to the performance were largely from an audience uninitiated to this performative genre, it is here that the power of storytelling comes into play as it combats a fast paced and over informed world in the digital age. When attention spans dictate the length of time a storyteller has to capture his audience, his task becomes all the more arduous to reign in and freeze time for just a little longer. In his seminal text *The Storyteller*, Walter Benjamin speaks of the oral tradition of storytelling dying a sudden death with the coming of industrialisation and the printed text. The digital age informs the listener/viewer/reader of everything that occurs around the world within minutes, and newspapers convey stories that make raconteurs redundant. Storytelling competes with ever-accessible information, but the art of a storyteller lies in allowing the listener to create his own interpretation and thus lend the narrative with amplitude that mere information lacks. In a world steeped with an abundance of choices, the storyteller holds the unique position of nudging the imagination, offering escape from the real world, enabling critical thinking and creating human connections. The power of storytelling lies in its ability to allow freedom to reflect, challenge the mundane and create a space for dialogue.

**Natasha Jozi and Mavera Rahim** are an artist-and-writer duo who create performance-based work that explore public spaces - urban, secluded, abandoned, imagined, ignored, lived, subaltern. Their work aims to engage with the culturally and historically informed identities of spaces and the respective identities of the performative body within them.

Jozi is a performance artist and curator: She has performed and exhibited her work nationally and internationally; Tetley, Switzerland, Delaware, New York, Chicago and Sri Lanka to name a few. In 2017 Jozi founded House Ltd., an independent initiative dedicated towards generating a discourse around performance art in Pakistan. Her most recent curatorial projects include Body Becoming and We Are All Mad Here.



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saat daryaon ke paani  
 se dhuli meri rooh,  
 phir bhi rahi gadli

سات دریاؤں کے پانی  
 سے دھلی میری روح،  
 پھر بھی رہی گدلی!

A Performance Film directed by Natasha Jozi  
 and assisted by Mavera Rahim

*Belonging/Alienation*

*Purity/Impurity*

*Active/Passive*

*Self/Other*

*Death/Life*

*Death/Birth*

*Singularity/Union*

*Absence/Presence*

*saat daryaon ke paani se dhuli meri rooh,  
phir bhi rahi gadli, 2019*  
Performance Film, Natasha Jozi & Maveria Rahim,  
Seaview Beach, Karachi

# saat daryaon ke paani se dhuli meri rooh, phir bhi rahi gadli

by Natasha Jozi and Maveria Rahim

This project seeks to re-examine our place in a constantly shifting, commodified, urban and increasingly compartmentalized lifestyle. While these aspects of our lives may seem to negate the body's relationship with nature, they in fact, create new ones that are often left unexplored. It is this illusion of alienation which makes nature and our bodies appear to us as benign or static.

This performance aims to explore the dual relationship between the human body and nature characterized by a shifting balance between belonging and alienation. Through a series of six scripted and spontaneous acts, we look to explore the persistent need of human beings trying to belong and leave a mark in a vast expanse. By reacquainting ourselves with natural materials like water, air, sand, and dyes, we look to take an internal journey and resituate the body in nature.



*saat daryaon ke paani se dhuli meri rooh,  
phir bhi rahi gadli, 2019*  
Performance Film, Natasha Jozi & Mavera Rahim,  
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# Modalities of the Performative Body and the Heightened Experience

*The body rises as the orange droplets of dew fall*

*It obliterates, inches its way through the crest*

*Picks off thousand particles one by one*

*It breathes,*

*a little*

Essay by Natasha Jozi

The performing body activates parameters that allow it to perceive, ponder and react to its presence. While the body performs, the relationship of the performer and the viewer initiates on multiple levels. The performer gets charged which heightens the sense of being of the body, while activating the surrounding environment. The performing body exists among the dichotomies of voyeurism. Where one sees accounts of artists questioning the act of probing into the space of the other, performing body invites the other's gaze, often instigating a collective voyeurism.

Performance in public space manifests itself on multiple levels. Chance plays a great part in defining the parameters of engagement with the performer/performance. There is an intersection of plethora of stimuli that engages and activates the body of the performer as well the body of the viewers, intermittently charging up the space. This phenomenon manifests itself in various degrees or modes; which I call 'The Modalities of the Performative Body.'

What are the modalities of the performative body? Modalities can be identified as state of being of a body at a particular time for a particular duration. Through my work, I have been able to identify two modalities of the performative body.

The moment of transition from a body to a performing body creates an impact on the physical as well as psychological connection of the performer to the performance space. The first modality is that of 'departure' experienced by the performative body as soon as they enter into the performance space. It is the moment experienced when the performer's self detaches from the body, elevating and often vacating the body. The

**Natasha Jozi** (b. 1988, Islamabad, Pakistan) is a visual thinker, performance artist and writer, interested in the performative self, collective experience and Eastern philosophy. She is a Fulbright Scholar with a Masters in Studio Arts, majoring in Performance Art from Montclair School of Art, USA and a Bachelors in Fine Arts from Fatima Jinnah Women University, Pakistan. Jozi has worked on various national and international platforms and currently resides and works in Lahore, Pakistan.

In 2017, Jozi founded House, an independent initiative that explores that notion of city as a performing organism and works towards generating discourse around performance art in Pakistan. She is also a recipient of the Prince Claus Mobility Grant '19.

moment the body of the viewer starts looking outwardly, it enters into a third space. This third space is a psychological space experienced within the performer's mind that charges the body to the point of numbness. This numbness directly impacts the sensory modalities of the body cancelling out some or all physical sensations from the performative body. The third space may even create a vacuum around the performative body in such a way that positions the body of the performer becoming the 'other'. The performative body begins to view itself as the 'other', looking at its own body through the eyes of the other, the voyeur. All the actions it performs during the performance are not being performed by the body, they are being performed by a body which has been vacated, and is now being exposed to the experience, environment and the bodies of the viewers to inhabit it.

The other modality is called 'inhabiting'. This is the moment of re-affiliation of the tangible-living body to itself. It is initiated when the performing body experiences danger, insecurity, anger, fatigue and disturbance. These bodily and psychological experiences puncture the trans-like third space and brings the body back inside the performing body, combining the two bodies into one. This combination of the bodies and its intermittent relationship with the space situates and re-identifies the politics of the body in space where now the viewer positions back as the 'other' reinforcing the split between the performing as well as the viewers body.

Performance in a public space navigates between these modalities of the performative body. It is therefore plausible, that the materiality of the performative body acts as a highly charged tool for engagement. The materials for a performance in a public space are not but only limited to the objects used in the performance. This exchange of energy between the performative body to itself and the performative body to the viewer act as active materials for the experience.

The exchange of energies in the moment of time and nature of the location dictates the course of the performative experience and the modalities of the performative bodies. The nature of this relationship that the performative body creates with its being, the third space and the materials of the perfor-

mance get defined, negotiated and re-negotiated throughout the performance.

While the myth of the need for preparation of the performance often dictates a very scripted performance, the scope and experience of a performance can never be possibly outlined or rehearsed. This remains true not just for the nature of the engagement, but also the modalities of the performative body. Time and space within which the performance happens provides sufficient charge to guide and inform the course of the performance and allows for an experience that cannot be predicted or rehearsed for entirely.

It is charged moments during a performance where the reality of the experience gets redefined into hyper-reality, heightening the perception of every sensory experience of the body. It amplifies the presence of the viewer's body, intensifying their energy as it comes into contact tangibly or intangibly with the performers body. It is due to this exchange of energy and the intensification of perception that the presence and intermittently the gaze of the viewer functions on a heightened psychological level. The body of the performer becomes the fulcrum of energy, perception and experience, and the phenomena of the third space.

Performance is a trance-like experience, meditative, perplexing, and often hallucinatory. It allows for the performative body to perform actions that it may not be able to perform otherwise in reality. It may also elude time and space, pushing the limits to perform at a stretch for a longer duration of time and react to stimuli unpredictably.

The extent and parameters of a performative body cannot be mapped as it allows to cultivate a space of chance, risk and urge. The exchange of experience that happens at the moment of contact can never be fully quantified, reproduced or shared, it can only be experienced, momentarily.

**The Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP)** is a non-profit organization dedicated to cultural and historic preservation, operating in Karachi and Lahore. CAP seeks to educate the community, foster an awareness of the nation's history and instill pride in Pakistani citizens about their heritage. Their vision is to develop CAP as the foremost museum and heritage centre of Pakistani history, photography, culture, literature and historical documentation demonstrating the strength and spirit of Pakistan from the perspective of a citizen; communicating stories about the country and to provide an engaging and thought-provoking window into the nation's past, present and future.



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 Design: **Arisha Channah, Faizan Syed**  
 Animation: **Shahbaz Ali**

**TOS Pakistan (Theosophical Order of Service)** is a branch of Theosophical Society, and was established in 1908 by Dr. Annie Besant the prominent Social Reformer and Activist. Its purpose is to "form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of mankind without distinction of race or color; to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science and to study the unexplained laws of nature."

TOS Pakistan is involved in several educational and cultural activities and functions from the 100 year old Jamshed Memorial Building which was renovated in 1956, which houses the Jamshed Memorial School, Theosophical Library and Jamshed Memorial Hall.

The Jamshed Memorial Hall is the only memorial dedicated to Jamshed Nuserwanjee Mehta in the city of Karachi. The hall is the venue for cultural activities, literary gatherings, musical performances and art exhibitions. The location of the hall in the middle of Karachi's old densely populated areas functions as a bridge between old and new parts of the city makes it ideal for the promotion of harmony, and mutual respect for all citizens.



# Adaptation, Alteration, Variation

A project in collaboration with  
 The Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP)  
 and Jamshed Memorial Hall

# Adaptation, Alteration, Variation

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*Adaptation, Alteration, Variation* was a reflective show on the history of religious minorities in Pakistan and the imminent need to advocate for their diminishing rights. At the time of partition in 1947, religious minorities formed 23% of the national population in Pakistan. With waves of religious persecutions and subsequent mass migrations by religious minorities over the past seven decades, their populations have fallen to just 3%. Through a demographic and cartographic lens, artists reflected on the continually shifting dynamics of inter-communal relations in Pakistan.

The project showcased notable contributions by non-Muslim Pakistanis – the collective memory of which has been systematically washed out from the national consciousness. The show included quotidian narratives, records that showed the changed names of buildings and roads that were once named after non-Muslim figures, ordinances banning their public festivals and archival data of demonstrations by religious minorities.

*Adaptation, Alteration, Variation* was a show curated by Vasl Artists' Association in collaboration with The Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP) and Jamshed Memorial Hall.

Re-Imagined Map of Old Karachi, 2019.  
Illustrated by Tooba Shahbaz,  
Adaptation Alteration Variation,  
Jamshed Memorial Hall, Karachi



Nadirshaw Eduljee Dinshaw (1863 - 1922), son of Eduljee Dinshaw, was a well known philanthropist of his time. Much like his father, his countless contributions to the city are next to those made by the likes of Jamshed Nusserwanjee, the father of Karachi, himself. He is responsible for establishing a majority of the medical dispensaries as well as multiple hospitals, such as the Lady Dufferin Hospital which is still functional today. He is also known for his work in helping build schools - The land for The Mama Parsi school was also one of his donations. In addition to healthcare and education, the father son duo were in the coal import business and set up multiple factories dealing in cotton and wool grinding. The Dinshaws continued to serve Karachi long after the passing of Nadirshaw Eduljee Dinshaw and his father, generously providing financial help to various educational institutes as well as initiating hospitality management companies.



Eduljee Dinshaw, father of Nadirshaw Dinshaw, was also a well-known philanthropist - the father and son spent much of their fortune helping Karachi become what it is today.

Image Source: LinkedIn

#### About Nadirshaw Eduljee Dinshaw (1863 - 1922)

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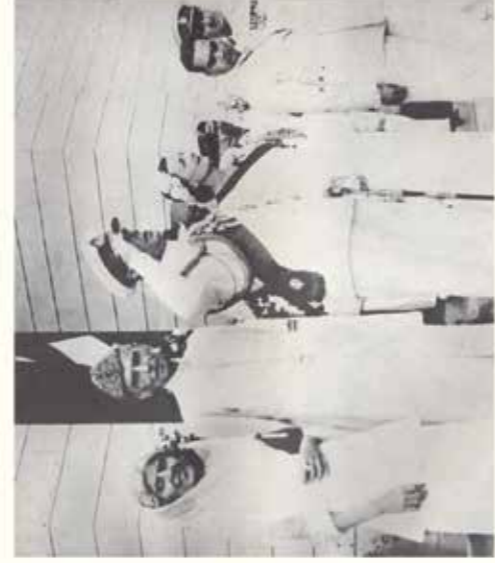
#### Video Still, Designed by The Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP), 2019,

Adaptation Alteration Variation, Jamshed Memorial Hall, Karachi



7th August 1947 - A week before the Subcontinent was officially divided between India and Pakistan, the photographer captured Quid-e-Azam landing at the Karachi International Airport.

Image Source: FE. Chaudhry | The Citizens Archive of Pakistan



14th August 1947 - Here FE. Chaudhry captured the last Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten accompanied by Lady Edwina Mountbatten. The two came to Karachi to transfer power to the leader of the new nation Pakistan. This image shows Lord Mountbatten taking the salute before the transfer of power ceremonies in the presence of the Quid-e-Azam and Miss Jinnah.

Image Source: FE. Chaudhry | The Citizens Archive of Pakistan



14th August 1947 - A historic moment documented by F.E. Chaudhry - Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan signs the register as the first Prime Minister of the newly created state of Pakistan.

Image Source: FE. Chaudhry | The Citizens Archive of Pakistan

#### About Austin Elmer (FE) Chaudhry (1909 - 2013)

One of Pakistan's most well known and celebrated photographers. Based in Lahore, he is fondly remembered for his sense of humour and was lovingly nicknamed "Chacha" for his role as a mentor to many youngsters whom he helped excel in their selected fields. He served as a wing commander in the Pakistan Air Force but remained devoted to photography for a majority of his life as a result, documenting a large number of historic moments in the history of the Subcontinent and then ultimately Pakistan. He also contributed a great deal to photojournalism, introducing an array of modern photography techniques to the field. He was conferred with 27 awards for his services and commitment, among which were Pride of Performance, Sitara-e-Imtiaz, Tamga-e-Imtiaz, and the Tehreek-e-Pakistan.

#### Video Still, Designed by The Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP), 2019,

Adaptation Alteration Variation, Jamshed Memorial Hall, Karachi

#### About Diwan Bahadur Seth Harchandrai Vishandas (1862 - 1928)

He was actively involved in providing healthcare to citizens and during the outbreak of the plague in the city he, along with his cousin, set up temporary medical facilities of which he took complete responsibility. A lawyer by profession, he was elected as the president of the Karachi Municipality in 1911 and held this position till 1921.

#### Video Still, Designed by The Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP), 2019,

Adaptation Alteration Variation, Jamshed Memorial Hall, Karachi



Seth Harchandrai's statue now stands heedless and forgotten in the Mohatta Palace.

Image Source: Ahsan Karachi



1860 - Karachi in the 1860s - a simple fishing village on a small portion of the subcontinent's coast. Much of the groundwork responsible for its transformation can be traced back to Seth Harchandrai Vishandas. It could, perhaps, then be said that Karachi would not be as developed as it is now if it were not his efforts to kickstart these improvements.

Image Source: LinkedIn



Seth Harchandrai's statue now stands heedless and forgotten in the Mohatta Palace.

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Image Source: LinkedIn

#### About Jamshed Nusserwanjee Mehta (1886 – 1952)

He was a businessman born to a well-off Parsi family from Karachi. He was perhaps most well known for his roles as the president of the Karachi Municipality, the first mayor of Karachi, and the man who was at the forefront of transforming Karachi from a tiny fishing village to the bustling metropolis that it has come to be today.

#### Video Still, Designed by The Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP), 2019,

Adaptation Alteration Variation, Jamshed Memorial Hall, Karachi



Projection on Custom made Flag,  
Adaptation Alteration Variation,  
Jamshed Memorial Hall, Karachi



Projection on Custom made Flag,  
Adaptation Alteration Variation,  
Jamshed Memorial Hall, Karachi

**Sibte Hassan Azad** graduated in 2016 from Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in communication design. As a child, being raised in a conflict zone, Hassan is a silent observer of the chaos around him. In this project, using film and photography as his tools of communication, Hassan documents the lives and culture of the Hazara community.



# The Hazaras

by Sibte Hassan Azad



Film Still, *The Hazaras*, 2019,  
Sibte Hassan Azad



Film Still, *The Hazaras*, 2019,  
Sibte Hassan Azad

the aching power of centuries of persecution  
vibrates under and over every inch of you...

the weight of your history falls delicately on your shoulders  
and adds cracks of lightening to you

- mks (excerpt from "in the shadows you prosper")

# The Hazaras

by Sibte Hassan Azad

The film, *The Hazaras*, a special commission for Loudspeaker, is a reflection on the lives and culture of the Hazara Community of Pakistan, clustered largely around the border city of Quetta. There are close to a million Hazaras in Pakistan – a vulnerable ethnic and religious minority with a long history of persecution. In the last twenty years in Pakistan, besieged by anti-Shia violence, more than 4,000 Hazaras have been killed by sectarian attacks and terrorism.

The Hazaras are a group of Turko-Mongol people. Their name 'Hazara' means thousand in Persian, derived from the Mongolian word 'Ming' or 'Mingan', originating from Chinggis Khan's strategy of dividing his army into divisions of 10, 100, 1000 and 10,000 soldiers.

During the 12th century, after the Rise of Chinggis Khan and the subsequent consolidation of the Mongolian Empire under him, the Hazaras moved along the Silk Road, with the trade and the armies, and eventually settled in Eastern Persia, what is known as modern day Afghanistan. After adopting Shia Islam, the Hazara's Turko-Mongol relations and lineage faded through the centuries.

The brutal sectarian persecution of the Hazaras began mid 19th century in Afghanistan. At that point in history, the Hazaras were the largest Afghan ethnic group constituting nearly 67 percent of

the total population of Afghanistan. From the 1880s onwards, and especially during the reign of the Pashtun, Amir Abdul Rahman (1880-1901), they suffered severe religious, political, social and economic persecution. Their homeland in Afghanistan's central highlands was invaded and an estimated 60 per cent of the Hazara population was wiped out. A significant number fled to then British India, which is present day Pakistan.

Hazaras speak a dialect of Dari and Farsi called 'Hazaragi' and have a rich, unique tradition of music and poetry. Their food, games, music and culture still reflect nomadic Mongolian lineage. The Hazaras today are among the most educated communities of Baluchistan in Pakistan, committed to education of their young men and women.

In the recent past, the relentless targeted killings of Hazaras have created an acute sense of insecurity and vulnerability in the community. There is not a single Hazara family that has not lost a loved one. This has effectively ghettoized the community in two localities in Quetta's eastern and western sides: Marriabad and Hazara Town. Over 70,000 Hazaras in Pakistan have left their homes for Australia, Europe or Malaysia, leaving behind the lives that they and their forefathers had painstakingly built.

# The Problem with Representation

Essay by Natasha Japanwala

**Natasha Japanwala** is a writer and teacher, based in Karachi. Her features, essays and reviews have appeared in publications at home and abroad. She is passionate about developing and implementing bespoke arts programming in schools in low-income communities. She holds a degree in English literature from Princeton University, and will begin a degree in international education policy at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in the fall of 2019.

Words are important: the words we choose to denote often impossible-to-condense phenomenon shape the way those phenomenon are imagined. The word minority means the smaller in number of two groups constituting a whole. It's a proportion, a ratio: a divide represented firmly on Pakistan's flag. However a population that is smaller proportionally can be massive in number: estimates vary greatly, but Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Parsis, among others, live in the country in bands of millions. The Hazara and Pashtun communities are routinely silenced and persecuted, and hundreds of thousands of refugees from Afghanistan are effectively stateless. Their representation in history, society, memory, culture, politics and art is relatively faint. This is where their marginalization is emphasized: through the erasure of their stories in spaces and mediums of visibility, their legacies are harder to access and their identities hidden.

What is identity? Not a set of characteristics that distinguish a person, as the dictionary definition suggests, but the myriad traditions, mythologies, memories, and experiences that are grounded in place and in family: these root us and colour us, become our skin. Any space — whether a city, country, or continent — is filled with multiple identities, but not all identities win equal representation.

Culture is rarely created intentionally: the forces that shape it are always apparent only in retrospect. This is because artists, writers, filmmakers, musicians — storytellers of all shades and stripes — often create work in vacuums and can not predict what will and will not resonate, or how it may or may not travel either online or offline. The ability and platform to create culture is

a privilege in every society: when certain populations, through a combination of circumstances (ranging from education background to familial income) do not have the freedom to tell their stories, and then when those stories are glossed over, or ignored, or missed altogether — these populations miss the cut. And culture, which shapes both national history and identity, becomes a misrepresentation of reality.

A massive question, then, is how culture can be made to represent every nook and cranny of reality. Even though the percentage of minorities in Pakistan has shrunk from 23% in 1947 to 3% in 2012 (according to Farahnaz Ispahani, in her book 'Purifying the Land of the Pure: Pakistan's Religious Minorities'), their persecution and erasure is important: not only because it is happening, but because through asking why it is happening, we bring to the surface hard, ugly truths about our society. In fact, even the word "representation" is an uncomfortable one to use: it suggests visibility for visibility's sake. Art has many purposes, but we should be wary of focusing too much on documenting and archiving minorities' experiences in the past, or their current experiences on their behalf.

To create an artistic landscape and community that reflects the reality of our society, that is inclusive of its diversity, we need to find ways to empower members of silenced or forgotten communities to tell their own stories. And we should be wary too, of codifying these opportunities as special ones: the term 'minority' itself marginalizes. Instead, we need to create spaces that are free in ways that our society is not: spaces where expression and collaboration happen. At the end of the day, this is one of art's greatest gifts: the healing it offers to the artist. To express is not merely to speak or speak out: it is to know what you want to say, it to have the time to understand how to say it. The time spent "figuring out" is the heart of the artistic process: the questioning, the collaging and the carving that precede the final making. Giving artists from "minority" communities the elasticity to make on their own terms is to give them an elasticity that they are perhaps denied in life. Which is to say: it should not be necessary for a "minority" artist's work to "represent" their community. What is necessary is that they represent their self, which they create outside of labels and boxes that condense and package their experiences

into digestible bites for the majority to consume.

An ideal society is not a demarcated society. It is one where we wear our various identities with pride, but where these identities are not all that define us; where our differences are fuel for music and laughter and conversation and learning — but never any semblance of war; where we are known less by our demographic markers and more by our passions, our spirits, our souls — the very stuff art is born from.

**Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture** is a not-for-profit degree awarding institution in Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan. The university was established in 1989, thereby empowering it to award its own degrees and was the fourth private institution of higher learning in Pakistan to be given a university status.



**M. Noman Siddiqui** was born in Karachi and is a 2005 graduate of the Central Institute of Art and Craft, Karachi, Pakistan. He is a multidisciplinary artist who has exhibited in many national exhibitions. He also assists many international and national artists. He currently lives and works as a freelance artist in Karachi.



# The Throwaway Culture

by M. Noman Siddiqui



The Throwaway Culture, 2019,  
M. Noman Siddiqui, Sculpture Park,  
Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi



The Throwaway Culture, 2019,  
M. Noman Siddiqui, Sculpture Park,  
Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi

# The Throwaway Culture

by M. Noman Siddiqui

People are living in a 'throwaway society', using things temporarily and then casting them away. What are the causes of this? What problems arise from this behavior?

Nowadays, it is common for people to frequently buy new things. This inevitably promotes throwing away old but usable things. This trend has a negative effect on the environment and the ecology of the city. People are inclined to buy new things mainly because of the lure of advertisements that encourage consumption. Manufacturers promote their new products rigorously and capitalize on the needs and desires of people. For instance, every year companies launch a new model of smart phones. Even though it would have nearly the same functionality as the previous model, people are attracted by the enticing promotions to buy it. Additionally, in a fast paced urban life, people often don't have time to fix things that have stopped working. Buying new things becomes easier than having things repaired.

Admittedly, this trend has become a serious threat to our environment. Excessive production of goods leads to the depletion of natural resources and the accumulation of castaway things in the

environment. For instance, many trees are cut down to produce various household items, causing deforestation and draining our natural reserves. Many consumer goods have non-recyclable parts that will remain in the soil forever. By throwing away goods that can possibly be recycled, we are unwittingly causing damage to the environment.

My recent work, *The Throwaway Culture* is a reflection of our disposable mindset. We have little regard for nature or natural resources. Considering the irreversible damage it would cause to our environment, this practice needs to be discouraged. The government should launch campaigns to create awareness about the dangers of throwing away non-biodegradable materials and also enact laws that can create infrastructures and make recycling mandatory.

# Permanent Public

Essay by Quddus Mirza

**Quddus Mirza** is an artist, art critic and independent curator. He is currently the Head of the Department of Fine Arts at the National College of Arts, Lahore, where he studied a BFA, before acquiring MA (Painting) from the Royal College of Art, London.

Mirza has shown extensively in numerous important group exhibitions, along with several one-person exhibitions, held in Pakistan and the UK. Mirza is an art critic with a regular weekly column appearing in Pakistan's major newspaper, 'The News', and a regular contributor to both local and international publications.

"In principle I mistrust all group acts and, therefore, those of artistic movements or schools. We know that a movement can be artificially implanted and maintained, with little or no meaning, without exercising the slightest influence on reality, which follows other conduits."

Antoni Tapies

Nazi information minister Goebbels used to say that whenever he hears the word culture, he wants to reach for his gun. In a not too dissimilar manner, whenever someone says 'public art', one wants to search for something -- perhaps its meaning in our context. Like every other trend, borrowed and imported from outside (mainly the West), the idea of public art is gaining popularity in our art world. So much so that if you try to disagree with it, question its relevance, or critique its practice, you are bound to be seen as 'public enemy' number one.

Not only are you perceived to be against public, but against art, democracy and citizens' participation. On one level, these acts and activities add into the small world of art practice in Pakistan, provide an opportunity to reflect on important questions on art, and extend a space for people to interact with art. On another level, these invoke the need to examine a phenomenon that is growing in our midst.

To start with, the question emerges about the need for public art in Pakistan, compared to other regions in particular:

In Europe, North America, Australia, Japan and several other countries from Asia, Africa and South America, states spend huge amounts in building art museums,

public galleries and introducing art in elementary education. In those countries, a visit to a museum on Sundays (a ritual that has replaced going to Church on weekly holiday) has become a norm. Along with that, news of exhibitions and programmes on art are given ample space on electronic and print media. Important names in art are familiar figures among the general populace.

In a situation where the value of art is established and supported by public and private funding, many artists seek to move away from this circle of state approval and private consumption -- beyond the world of galleries, collections and market. Thus one finds graffiti artists and performance artists who try to defy the established system of art and produce something that can not be purchased by a museum or private buyer. There have been numerous names in this regard, ranging from Keith Haring to Banksy, and Marina Abramovic to Tehching Hsieh, who in their works approach art as a temporal experience rather than a permanent object. (Although the works of Haring, once a graffiti artist, ended up as expensive pieces sold through the gallery!).

In Pakistan, we do not have an art establishment to match with other places, so a gallery selling art works or an artist producing paintings and sculptures are still operating on the periphery of culture. Artists or sculptors doing any kind of work are credited for making people aware of the need of looking and appreciating art.

In that context, it seems extraneous to step out of gallery space and focus on public art because, in actuality, here the public space is a carefully chosen arena where remnants of artists' interventions are only valid and effective when these are documented and presented in a discussion on art at a gallery, art institution, seminar, conference or biennale. Otherwise in most cases, these efforts are wasted to oblivion, as today everyone appreciates Asim Butt's stencilled scripts on the walls in Clifton, Karachi, primarily when these are printed in magazines and books; a passer-by on those roads hardly notices the existence of art works, notwithstanding their meaning or impact.

There are a few other examples of these public art pieces made by artists who are otherwise known for their works in acceptable genres. They en-

joy great fame and prestige as successful artists after marketing their works through galleries and dealers, but feel compelled to do public art works as part of their 'civic duty'.

However, the matter is not so simple. Because what is created for private buyers is well thought out, cleverly composed, carefully constructed with meticulous details while what is produced for the public is clearly a 'comedown' from the artist's pictorial vocabulary. Though it is not worth purchasing largely because of the format, it is not valuable in terms of aesthetics quality. This difference of strategy is a recent phenomenon because, if one recalls, the major artists of this country in the recent past did not differentiate between private and public art projects. Hence, Sadequain's paintings on small canvases and his murals in Mangla Dam and other public buildings are hardly different in terms of imagery or painterly treatment.

Yet it is ironic that the mural of Sadequain at Mangla Dam, which is supposed to be at a public venue, thus for public viewing is located -- rather locked, in a room, with turbines and other machinery that cannot not be accessed without the prior permission of engineer in charge.



Vincent, Oil on Canvas, 84x58cm

This is not the only case of public collection, because if one investigates, one comes across innumerable surprises. For instance, a canvas of yellow sunflowers, signed by Vincent is at the Prime Minister House Collection in Islamabad. The painting is not the original work on loan from the National Gallery London, but a pathetic reproduction of Van Gogh's Sunflowers, probably forged by some immature painter, who managed to have his painting in the PM House collection.

This painting, apart from a piece of forgery, represents the way public collection is built in the Islamic Republic, a public collection that is not 'public' at all. Works of art purchased from various sources are installed at prestige locations, normally

hidden from general population's eye. At some 'security sensitive' and important places such as the President House, PM House, Prime Minister Office, Senate, National Assembly, Foreign Office, Governor Houses and Chief Minister Houses of all provinces, Karachi's National Museum, Museums in Lahore, Peshawar and Taxila, Sindh Museum Hyderabad, Bhit Shah Museum, Shakir Ali Museum Lahore, Pak Army Museum Rawalpindi, Pakistan Maritime Museum Karachi and several other government buildings.



Jamil Naqsh, 1989, Oil on Canvas, 136x178cm

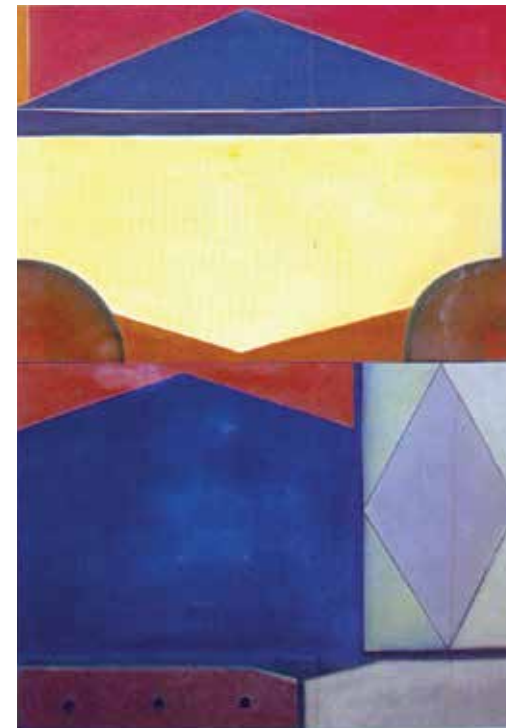
Not only in Pakistan, but all over the world, the houses of power and public collections are equated with standards. The Queen's Gallery at the Buckingham Palace regularly showcases works from the Royal Collection. Likewise, other important institutes have attained pieces, which represent not only art of a nation, but a wide-ranging taste in art across continents and centuries.

Searching for these works part of public collections, one finds A. R. Chughtai, Allah Bux, Zubeida Agha, A.J. Shemza, Sadequain Jamil Naqsh, Gulgee, and other significant artists displayed at government houses and national organizations; but by and large, there are works and names, mostly, if not completely unknown in the mainstream art. Copy of Vincent van Gogh is the worst example, still you see landscapes, figure compositions, calligraphies and abstract surfaces either imitating styles/canvases of well-known artists, or bearing names, alien in Pakistani art.

Through their inclusion, and by excluding other big names, there might be a new history of art written on the basis of public collections. Even if not a book, yet a visitor – being the Royal Saudi Prince to a retired police officer of Sargodha – who happens to be at the President House or Lahore Governor House, would formulate a view of Pakistani art on his observation. There may be a few donations, but most of these works are accumulated through recommendation of politicians, public servants and personal friends of rulers. In



Mussarat Mirza, 1996, Oil on Canvas, 44.5x59.5cm



Unver Shafi, 1996, Oil on Canvas, 182x120.5cm

different periods, a few individuals have been instrumental in expanding these public collections. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was one prime minister, genuinely interested in art, often buying works for her personal residence from private galleries; she supported Bashir Mirza, thus you see a number of his works at the PM House.

During her period, Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali (a practising painter) in his position of Pakistan's Foreign Minister (1993-1996) was actively acquiring works by major artists for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Interesting to know that an original canvas by Peter Paul Rubens, once owned by an Embassy of Pakistan, disappeared. Perhaps in the same way the painting of Amrita Sher-Gill disappeared from the possession of Pakistan National Council of Arts). Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali's involvement resulted in purchase of paintings by Khalid Iqbal, Ijaz ul Hassan, Ghulam Rasul and Iqbal Hussain. Another such enthusiast in the corridor of power was Kamal Azfar, the Governor of Sindh (1995-1997) who collected works by artists such as Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Tassadaq Suhail, Salima Hashmi, Musarrat Mirza, and Unver Shafi for Sindh Governor House.

Apart from these and other such works, the majority – from Peshawar to Karachi is a mixed variety. Shamefully, the Sindh Civil Secretariat owns 7 works, paintings prepared in China with scenes of Paris and Venice that you can easily/cheaply buy in any market in Pakistan. Notwithstanding the level of these canvases, or the identity

of other artists, most of our public collection is derivative, substandard or just mediocre, even though produced by some commercially successful and currently fashionable painters. But these would stay in history – since these are documented in books and put on walls. These would forge a parallel narrative of Pakistani art.

Having works of art at public places, may those be government buildings or state galleries is not merely a matter of who to oblige and who to reject; it concerns more than that. It is like writing the local history of art in objects. One understands that it is not the President, Prime Minister, a Governor or Chief Minister, who chooses what to adorn the walls of their official residences, but some bureaucrats or a minor functionary; yet his decision has a far-reaching impact on the future of art of this country, and consequently, internationally.

Even if this cannot be controlled, still some action towards permanent collections is required. Everywhere state institutions purchase art, but they make them relevant by rotating, rehanging, and rearranging, based on exciting themes. This is possible in Pakistan, considering that the country still has a substantial number of works at places, visited only by a select few. With the present government's policy of opening up doors of state houses for public, perhaps another step would be to curate exhibitions based on works from official houses at public places.

In that way, even if we cannot diminish the divide between exclusive and *awami* art, or clear the Houses of President, Prime Minister, Parliament, Governors from what has been accumulated over the decades; we can still argue for the future of public art and permanent collections at various locations in this country. By turning them more public and less permanent!

Perhaps, this aspect of the painter's position, in offering the same and profound imagery for public and private eyes, is the reason why the public is still connected to Sadequain's art even though he never did a 'public art' project. He never made a distinction or segregation between his audiences, so his work regardless of its size, material or place, remained relevant for his wider audience.

Artists who take this role upon themselves to reach a large population always focus on a political message through their public projects. Somehow they believe that if they are not going to 'educate' people about gender equality, growing violence, sectarian intolerance or importance of peace, their efforts in going to public arenas would be seen as futile and frivolous.

In most cases, these artists are conscious of conveying a political and social message. They don't know that if they try to be true to their ideas (which could be about issues other than politics) in their complex format as seen in the galleries, the public will respond to them eventually, in due time. Only when an artist tries to 'descend' to the level of people and produces a politically-charged work, it becomes a wasted endeavour. One can draw a parallel of this from the realm of poetry. Habib Jalib wrote politically-laden verses in a diction that was easily accessible to the public while Faiz Ahmed Faiz, in contrast, remained committed to high art, with its political undertones and sophisticated language. The discerning reader prefers Faiz over Jalib because like the lovers of beauty, the lovers of art are not loyal or kind.

# Artist versus Public: Navigating the Problematics of Art in Public Spaces

Essay by Nimra Khan

**Nimra Khan** is an independent art writer and critic. She graduated from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture with a Bachelor in Fine Art in 2012. Her writings on the contemporary art of Pakistan have been published in Dawn EOS magazine, ArtNow Pakistan, Youlin Magazine, The Friday Times, Newslines, and Nigaah Art Magazine, as well as various exhibition catalogues and books. She most recently curated "Becoming a Woman", a solo show by Pakistani American artist Qinza Najm, at Chawkandi Art Gallery. She is also part of the Karachi Biennale South South Critical Dialogue, and the KB Discursive Committee for KB19.

Artists in Pakistan have had a complicated relationship with public art; we yearn for more public art in our cities, yet lament the state of the public art that currently does exist, and the lack of consideration given to our own efforts and the roadblocks our expressions face in the public realm. There is a thin line that limits the extents of what public art can be, and navigating it defines a lot of the art seen in our public spaces for us. While we stress the need for bringing art out of the white cube, the problem arises when art, the way we see it in the gallery space, is not always welcome in the public realm.

History has not been kind to the public art of Karachi. Post 1947, attempts to erase our colonial past and embracement of twisted religious values meant that our wealth of public statuary from the Imperial era was removed from public spaces. Damaged in the process, they now reside on the grounds of Mohatta Palace, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB), and even in the quarters assigned to some of their workers.<sup>1</sup> Attempts by artists to bring art to the people have also not borne much fruit in the past. Public art murals by Sadequain disappeared without trace, as did *Forgotten Text*, a public sculpture by Amin Gulgee at Bilawal Chowrangi. Public murals by artist Asim Butt, such as *Five Ways to Kill a Man* (2003) near Abdullah Shah Ghazi Mazaar, have been victims of vandalism and erasure. A series of 13 sculptures by Anjum Ayaz placed at different points at SeaView have also succumbed to not only theft but the unforgiving ocean breeze. While Defence Housing Authority (DHA) absolved themselves of blame<sup>2</sup>, one

1) Naqvi, Zahra, Karachi: *The Dead Statues Society*, Herald, Dawn Newspaper, 15 March 2019, <https://herald.dawn.com/news/1398828>

questions the wisdom of placing metal next to the sea in the first place. One of the few pieces of public art by known artists that have survived in the city is perhaps the abstract fish by Zahoor ul Akhlaq, which lies under the protective eye of the Pakistan Navy at the entrance of the Maritime Museum.

Yet, there are artists who still make the attempt to push boundaries and assert their presence in the public realm. However, the reasons for their lack of survival are at times self-motivated. One of Naiza Khan's iconic works, *Henna Hands* (2003), depicted silhouettes of the female form executed in henna pigment and addressed multivalent issues relating to women's agency and rights over their bodies, especially in relation to the public space. Yet, by design the work was perishable, and its presence in the public favored its narrative more heavily than it did public needs, tastes or sentiments. The city then becomes more of a surface from which to launch critique back at it and adds contextual relevance to the argument rather than catering to its inhabitants, and in this way works like *Henna Hands*, as also specified by the description on the artist's website, are more site specific than public art. The purpose of art in the public realm then becomes an important consideration. In contrast to his bold public murals, Asim Butt's political activism was, for the most part, disguised in harmless symbols, and used the visual language of the streets, compelling the public to question systems of oppression and senseless political violence. The use of covert language is understandable considering the sensitivity of the message, need for quick and easy reproducibility, and for the message to endure and resonate, yet, by design it excludes a large portion of the population in need of this very awakening. While the art world still celebrates these now mostly lost works, it might be an interesting exercise to test the memories of a non-art audience to glean their impact.

What we are left with in terms of public 'art' are then mostly underwhelming roundabout ornamentations. These are in large part either government funded or sponsored by large multinationals and thus cater to their narrative, designed to exploit, validate and manipulate public sentiments, conditioning minds for their own benefit. Pacifying imagery and benign abstractions play to the misplaced religiosity of the masses, ensuring their own survival in the

2) Mansoor, Hasan, *Another Sculpture Disappears From Seaview*, Dawn Newspaper, 28 February 2007, <https://www.dawn.com/news/235031>

process. The *Allah Wala Chowk* designed by Ozir Zubay in Pakistan Employees Cooperative Housing Society (PECHS), now removed, was an iconic structure, a visualization of the Arabic 'Allah' in 3 dimensional form, almost a national symbol uniting the public. The contradictions layered into it, and its disconnect with its surroundings are perfectly encapsulated by art critic Amra Ali in her essay on the roundabouts of Karachi<sup>3</sup>, and are typical of the other public monuments we see around the city. *Charminar Chowrangi* with its arches and minarets resembling a mosque is another example, and has even made it to an international list of most beautiful roundabouts, perhaps due to its overt cultural markers believed to represent our collective identity.<sup>4</sup> Abstract architectural forms bearing the names of Allah, such as the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) Roundabout, are aplenty, acting as amulets in and for themselves.

Beyond the refuge of religious symbolism, nationalist and military monuments, and displays of patriotic values also see a longer public life. Submarines, fighter jets, talwars, bombs and canons stand as testaments to our military might while propagating and normalizing war and militancy. Monuments like the *Nisahan-e-Pakistan* glorify violence and aggression, invalidating the traumas of innocents caught in the crossfire. In DHA, a series of random abstract monuments use juvenile logic as conceptual reasoning to indoctrinate certain patriotic values. The *Happiness Monument* takes its 'D' shape from the smiley emoticon, made using capital 'D' [:D], according to DHA administrator Brigadier Zubair Ahmed, while the *Solidarity Monument* somehow represents our 360 degrees of *Pakistaniyat*.<sup>5</sup> In other instances, public monuments serve certain political agenda. A brightly colored statue of former Prime Minister, late Benazir Bhutto near Mai Kolachi, waving to the unamused passing traffic, is aesthetically questionable at best, but fits in with the narrative being propagated by the nearby public monuments leading up to the home of the current leaders of her

3) Ali, Amra, *Iconography of a City Under Siege*, Nukta Publication No. 1, May 2005, 44

4) The roundabout is located in Bahadurabad, Karachi and is a replica of the Charminar Mosque of Hyderabad, India. It ranked 6th on the list of the top 12 roundabouts of 2015 compiled by UK based Roundabout Appreciation Society. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/7415-karachis-charminar-chowrangi-among-worlds-most-beautiful-roundabouts>

5) Ali, Rabia, *Monumental Change: Take A Round Of Dha's Roundabouts In Karachi*, Express Tribune, June 18, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1125354/monumental-change-take-round-dhas-roundabouts/>

political party. *Mukka Chowk*, a long standing symbol of power for the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), became a casualty of the campaign against the party. The image of Liaquat Ali Khan which replaced the fist – originally meant to symbolize the former president – was also defaced in the political turmoil that followed.

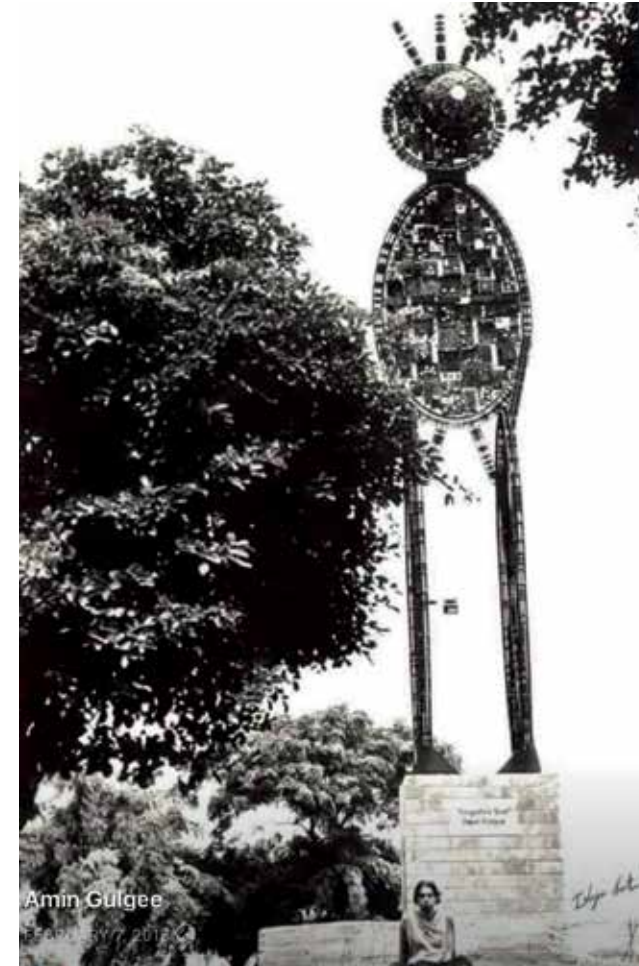
The propagation of such themes relies on the reverence the public holds for the institutions being promoted and the mechanisms of fear they adopt to keep the public in check. Yet this reverence is also a product of decades of political and social developments, specifically during the Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haq eras in the 70s, manufactured by various factions in attempts to assert their own power.<sup>6</sup> Thus, a meaningful and memorable visual experience has never been the goal, and the role of the artist has been systematically suppressed, leaving little room for them to exercise their own agency in the public realm. The reasons why figurative murals by Asim Butt have been scraped away yet a statue of Benazir Bhutto stands firm go beyond our assumptions of censorship then, and need to be understood contextually, according to Amra Ali. It becomes more a matter of power dynamics and control, and whose aesthetics are being catered to. Perceptions of beauty are subjective and what artists and art critics might not visually or intellectually respond to might be what resonates with the public at large.

Keeping this in mind one must ponder the efficacy of continuing to place art in the public's vicinity and expecting a different result; isn't that the definition of insanity? For things to change for the better; a different approach is required, with an understanding of these mechanisms at play in relation to the purpose of public art. Perhaps the most basic definition of public art is, "art placed in public places and spaces," which are "open to everyone to use and enjoy."<sup>7</sup>

It is such oversimplifications that become problematic, however; reducing an expansive and complex practice to mere geography. Cher Krause Knight's

6) Ali, Amra, *Iconography Of A City Under Siege*, Nukta Publication No. 1, May 2005, 40-43.

7) Bach, Penny Balkin, Fairmount Park Art Association, *New Land Marks: Public Art, Community, and the meaning of Place*, Editions Ariel, 2001, 153.



**Forgotten Text, Amin Gulgee, 2004**  
Copper, computer motherboards, steel, mirror, glass,  
40'x18'x18', Karachi



**Henna Hands (detail), Naiza Khan, 2002**

Henna pigment on the wall, dimensions variable.

Site-specific project near the Cantonment Railway Station, Karachi.

(Image provided by the Artist)



**Benazir Bhutto Monument, Clifton, Karachi**

Photograph by Sibte Hassan Azad

Mukka Chowk, Azizabad, Karachi  
Photograph by Fahim Siddiquie, White Star, 2004



Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Maritime Museum, Karachi  
Photograph by Sibte Hassan Azad



definition alternatively puts things into better perspective, seeing public art as an “extension of emotional and intellectual, as well as physical accessibility to the audience.”<sup>8</sup> As art moves into the public realm, the purpose of art must resonate with the needs and concerns of this new audience.

Perhaps then, the kind of public ‘art’ that we see around us is a reflection of what the public really wants and is ready to accept. While the artist yearns to express himself freely, when it comes to public art, an artist’s own voice then becomes secondary to public perceptions. No matter how much an artist would like to believe he creates art for himself, as soon as it is placed in front of another living being, this ceases to be true. The audience becomes an equally essential ingredient in completing the artistic experience and a failure to engage it would render art meaningless. As Knight further iterates, “we can best understand art’s public functions when we consider the interrelationship between content and audience; what art has to say, to whom it speaks, and the multiple messages it may convey.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, the public’s sentiments become as important as the artist’s intent, and it becomes essential for the artist to work within certain parameters defined by this complex and diverse public audience, so that their message can be absorbed rather than repelled by those it is created for.

The issue with most public art then seems to be that while it seeks to bring art to the common man, there is little effort to actually understand who this common man is, and what he wants. “The public is, of course, not a monolithic mass. It is as heterogeneous and varied as the number of people it includes, and it’s aesthetic as volatile as the moment it inhabits,” says late muralist and graffiti artist Asim Butt.<sup>10</sup> Placing art in an uninitiated and uninterested public’s line of sight is both unwise and ineffectual, without preparing the grounds and making it more receptive to what is being proposed. It becomes essential to investigate the concerns of the people, their experience on a day to day basis and their struggles in navigating the metropolis, to understand why the public

8) Knight, Cher Krause, *Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2008, x.

9) Knight, Cher Krause, *Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2008, viii.

10) Baig, Amina, *Public Art From Karachi*, Jahane Rumi, March 2, 2008, (originally published in *The News*), <http://www.razarumi.com/public-art-from-karachi/>

responds to the *Allah Wala Chowk* enough to spawn countless replicas of it, and perhaps build a reciprocal relationship based on empathy. Only then will the social and cultural shifts be created that might lead to greater acceptance for the art that is currently being rejected.

For this to be possible, the public itself needs to play a more active role in the process of art. *Karachi Ka Manzamama*, a project by Vasl Artists’ Association in collaboration with Azme Naujawan, was a series of exhibitions of contemporary art about the city of Karachi, which were held in six community centers in different low-income areas of the city. The project went beyond mere exposure and engaged community members in the curation process, discussion of works, and drawing workshops. This two-way dialogue allows for the public to see art in a non-threatening way and to shift from passive onlookers to patrons of art. *Mera Karachi Mobile Cinema* (2012-2015) by the Tentative Collective was a similar project that activated members of the community and involved them in the art making process, removing the sense of otherness and allowing them to take ownership. Members of ethnically and economically diverse colonies of Karachi were asked to use a mobile phone to create videos exploring everyday life in their communities. This public-sourced media was then projected onto various public spaces within the city via a projector-fitted rickshaw — a mobile cinema — incorporating the city’s architecture and infrastructure into the work. The project made the public not only the audience but the makers of art, encapsulating the true essence of accessibility.

Projects like these, however, address half the problem. Another project by the Tentative Collective, *A Pakhtun Memory* (2011), invited members of a Pakhtun migrant colony to dance to a Pakhtun folk song at an abandoned roundabout, giving a new meaning to roundabout art that actively involved the public. However, its interruption by local policemen is indicative of the controls placed on public spaces in the city. “This is not a place to celebrate happiness,” they are heard saying in the video documentation of the performance. Creative expression is restricted with a lot of red tape, and one cannot even play a musical instrument on a roadside without a No Objections Certificate (NOC). “The problem is that we have restricted our public places,” says



Mera Karachi Mobile Cinema, The Tentative Collective, Video Projections on City Infrastructure, 2012-2015



Rehearsing for *A Pakhtun Memory* (still from video documentation)  
The Tentative Collective, Performance work, 1 hour, 2012



*A Pakhtun Memory* (still from video documentation)  
The Tentative Collective, Public Performance, 1 hour, 2012



*I AM KARACHI Walls of Peace*, implemented by Vasl Artists' Association, Press Club, Saddar, Karachi, 2016  
Above: Before Below: After



*I AM KARACHI Walls of Peace*, implemented by Vasl Artists' Association, MT. Khan Road, Karachi, 2016  
Above: Before (Image courtesy Naila Mahmood) Below: After





*Karachi ka Manzarnama*, Exhibition and Workshop conducted by Adeela Suleman, Azme Naujawan Center, Sakhi Hasan, 2018



*Karachi ka Manzarnama*, Exhibition and Workshop conducted by Adeela Suleman, Azme Naujawan Center, Ibrahim Hyderi, 2018

curator, art historian and CEO of the Karachi Biennale, Niilofur Farrukh<sup>11</sup>, and this is what perhaps hits at the heart of the issue with public art in cities like Karachi – if the public does not own public spaces, how can it take ownership of the art they contain?

These attitudes of apathy, intolerance and policing are re-enforced by the way the city is laid out and the art that eventually adorns it. During a conversation with Turkish architect Gonca Pasolar who was visiting Karachi as part of the jury panel for the Architecture | Design | Art (ADA) Awards, she remarked how her experience of Karachi consisted of 'driving from one pretty place to another pretty place'. "It's important to design the void in a city. The best cities in the world are where you can walk freely on the roads, where the city on the ground level belongs to the public for urban use."<sup>12</sup> There are no communal spaces for the public to come out, interact and engage with each other. "There is a disconnect in our society...we have broken all avenues — social spaces, cultural spaces, intellectual spaces — nobody talks to each other," says Farrukh.<sup>13</sup>

Parks, public squares, plazas and city centers, spaces that can house public art and become points of public congregation and activity sans walls and fences are sorely missing from the city. Karachi itself is barely planned and in the absence of effective policies or official bodies, public art efforts are unable to assert their presence and sustain, becoming a random misplaced exclamation point in an otherwise drab and droning monologue. Large scale public art exhibitions like the recently initiated Karachi Biennale propose new ways of looking at public spaces through art interventions and have helped revitalize the public sphere for disengaged audiences, and perhaps in the future will source art works that are meant to endure. *Reimagining the Walls of Karachi* by I AM Karachi and similar projects that replace politicized, dirty, graffiti ridden walls with colorful artwork offer a small glimmer of hope to a frustrated populace, yet their purpose is to throw a lifeline to a drowning city rather

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11) Khan, Nimra, *The Present and Future of Public Art*, Nigaah Art Magazine, vol. 282, 2018

12) Khan, Nimra, *Contextualizing Design*, EOS Dawn Newspaper, 10 February, 2019, [https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=10\\_02\\_2019\\_525\\_001](https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=10_02_2019_525_001)

13) Khan, Nimra, *The Present and Future of Public Art*, Nigaah Art Magazine, vol. 282, 2018

than being catered by a thriving one, and in the absence of a conducive environment or infrastructure, end up going down with it instead. Authorities that are barely equipped to keep a city afloat can hardly be expected to maintain public art installed as an afterthought.

The problem that artists currently face with public art is a complex one, and the most obvious solution isn't always the most effective one. The current public mindset has evolved over decades of conditioning by successive governments and might take decades more to unravel, if at all possible. Rather than sudden bursts of subversion, a slow and steady coercion of public sentiments through inclusive public projects and interactive works may develop a more receptive environment for art beyond roundabout monuments. Lawlessness, ecological concerns, general lack of respect for public property, political and religious extremism; the problems of Karachi are manifold and trickle into every facet of its physical and social being, effecting public art both directly and indirectly. Art goes down to the bottom of the priority list for an overwhelmed and mostly inept government, without the active involvement of which any permanent public art projects on a massive scale are next to impossible. Approaching these issues from a wider angle rather than working on small pockets will help create the conditions needed for the freedom of expression that we so crave, and enduring public art that can perhaps speak to us all.



Gora Qabrustan Sculpture -3, Farooq Soomro,  
Print on photo paper, 22.5X32",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi

PART II

# Contemporary Anxieties The Body and it's Politics

An Exhibition Curated by Seher Naveed and Omer Wasim

Supported by

 IVS  
GALLERY

# Contemporary Anxieties The Body and it's Politics

Essay by Seher Naveed and Omer Wasim

**Omer Wasim** earned his BFA in Interdisciplinary Sculpture and an MA in Critical Studies from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, USA. Wasim is a Lecturer in the Liberal Arts Programme at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi where he teaches art history, theory and criticism.

Born in Quetta, Pakistan, **Seher Naveed** completed a BA in Fine Art from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi, in 2007, and an MA in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (University of the Arts London) in 2009. She has exhibited her work in various local and international shows and is currently teaching as a senior lecturer in the Department of Fine Art at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture

During several meetings with the Vasl team leading up to the opening of the exhibition, we realized, fairly early on, that the scope of the exhibition had to be contained for it to articulate, in a complicated way, notions surrounding freedom of speech, socio-political realities and futures. Both of us, among many roles that we inhabit, are also studio practitioners, and know that most of the work that we make and engage with has the potential to be understood and deciphered socio-politically, lending itself to become a tool or vessel through which we can understand the space-time continuum that we find ourselves in and that which we inhabit. As capitalist, neoliberal, and coercive tendencies and powers sweep through the landscape in Pakistan, disenfranchising and dispossessing further the already marginalized; and those that are nonaligned, on the margins, find themselves on the brink of dissolution. With perpetual everyday wars and increasing visibility of the military all over our cities and towns, big and small, the studio could not remain a site of production that denies these ever-present phenomena; this refusal, not-denial, manifests in art that is situated, anchored, and political in multifarious ways, challenges power, and brings into focus our complicities within systems—and this politicization of and in the studio happened after decades of solitary studio practice where artists, mostly cis-gendered men, churned out apolitical or de-political artworks that were quite profitable in the art market.

The task at hand for us was to make visible these anxieties, polarities, yet not put up an exhibition that would be read as a survey of the same; through research, we narrowed down the scope of the exhibition by bringing together a group of artworks in which the human

body is visible, or implied, to communicate, problematize, and make visible our current epoch, tensions that are inherent within and beyond. Thinking through the body, the works that are included in the exhibition communicate with each other to complicate everyday readings that are steeped in violence, erasures, capital, indifference, excess, and gender inequality; all the while pointing towards a future that is queer, challenging, and plural.

It is not unusual in Pakistan, a country created on the ideology of religion, for public displays of animated forms to be violated and posters of women to be defaced. According to one type of thought, Islam does not allow the depiction of any living beings subjected in paintings, drawings and sculptures – others argue that such representations are permissible as long as the visuals are not meant for worship. In this context, we felt it was important to include in the show Farooq Soomro's photographs, which document statues in Gora Qabaristan, with broken wings and limbs, and red paint splashed across them. Farooq has been documenting the cemetery for some time now and is interested in its unnatural decay due to governmental negligence and lack of maintenance. For this reason, the background in each photograph becomes significant – as each image presents an unruly landscape with heaps of garbage littered by neighboring building complexes. In essence thereof, these works not only give off a sense of violence but also suggest abandonment. One can then also say that they are symbolic of Pakistan's Christian community – a minority population, often subjected to escalating discrimination, religious persecutions, and violent erasures from the public sphere.

Based on a very specific understanding of islamization, the persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan has intensified in recent years and emboldened extremist groups – even non-violent sub-sects. Their increasing presence has been highlighted in Saba Khan's work and inspired by her documentation of recent rickshaw backdrops, which were once decorated with images of secular, apolitical and sublime landscapes and more recently have become spaces for mass advertisements of banned and other smaller, non-violent sub-sects of Islamic groups. These posters often show in hierarchy portraits of bearded men and are colorful and decorative with the intention to lure more followers. (figure 1)

Khan mimics these posters by making three-dimensional portraits—a grotesque belly made of black polyester fabric protruding outwards from the wall and displayed next to three unruly beards made of wire and beads, each with

a personality of its own. By transforming images from a poster into meticulously produced objects the impact of these works largely derives from its apparent demand to be taken seriously and the human form here is used to unsettle, and at the same time affirm the established presence of religious propaganda.

In a similar sense, Ayesha Jatoi's performance titled, *Clothes Line*, chooses to highlight the abundance of state sponsored,



figure 1:  
Saba Khan, Photographic documentation of rickshaw backdrops (image part of the artist's rickshaw series)

military monuments, such as submarines, tanks, jets and missiles, in cities in Pakistan. Performed at China Chowk, a roundabout in Lahore where a fighter

jet has been mounted – Ayesha is seen washing red garments while hanging them one by one on the jet – a gesture which challenges official state histories and meant to literally expose a nation's dirty laundry – the red, wet and limp clothes suggestive of blood-drenched bodies of those who fell prey to the vehemence of war and bloodshed. The fact that this was a public performance throws light on the public's casualness towards war, state censorship and misuse of political power.

Ainne Muqtaadir's drawings of newspapers suggest a kind of deliberate censorship, mulled over and calculated in its approach to show protesting bodies that register only as patterns; communicating in turn the proliferation of such imagery in newspapers and media, hinting at their ineffectiveness to bring about any real change. Newspapers in Pakistan have many second lives—such as oil absorbents for roadside food vendors—where its content fails to bring us to a halt, and renders these bodies and demands invisible in process. Where there is so much to protest and complain about and for, making room for such demands is then perhaps too much to ask of the attention economy that we find ourselves in.

Whereas, Nausheen Saeed through her sculptural work draws attention to how the female form in Pakistan is perpetually objectified and reduced to child-rearing. Here, the problem is rooted not in their invisibility; rather it communicates the dilemma women have to navigate throughout their lives where their individuality is often compromised and they are read as nothing more than the roles that cisgendered men assign to them. To communicate this, Syed's milk vessel forms, reminiscent of times when milk was delivered to Pakistani households before the advent of tetra packs, precisely performs this reading. Milk cans were—largely mass-produced with no visible markers of individuality; Syed's sculpture calls upon that mass-produced language, stripping the individual from the body.

On the other hand, we see no human figures or bodies in Zahra Asim's paintings but their presence is implied. As Pakistani cities become increasingly congested, living conditions of the working-class people deteriorate. In these paintings, Asim shows us the ways in which people live in cramped spaces,

saturated with belongings, where washed clothes dry in the kitchen; these are scenes of domesticity, of spaces that largely women of the household author and make function—relegated to remain inside, and perform their roles, while cisgendered men navigate cityscapes to earn. Asim's work opens an intimate portal—referencing the scale of the paintings here as well—for us to peak inside living spaces that are not in the imaginary of the gallery-going crowd.

Lastly, we turn to Zulfikar Bhutto's work in which he uses Islam to mobilize “futuristic imagination[s],” referencing its “mythos, mysticism, and the evolution of its politicization”. The work traces histories of revolution, anti-imperialism, and guerrilla warfare through archives, both familial and otherwise, and source material from Asia and Africa, lending it a visuality that is queer to the core; parodying machismo in complex ways, subverting immediate readings surrounding notions of hero worship and religious symbolism—where, for example, the muscular body of a pehlwan is adorned with feminine embellishments, and where two pehlwans fighting, one on top of the other, reads as intimate, not-violent.

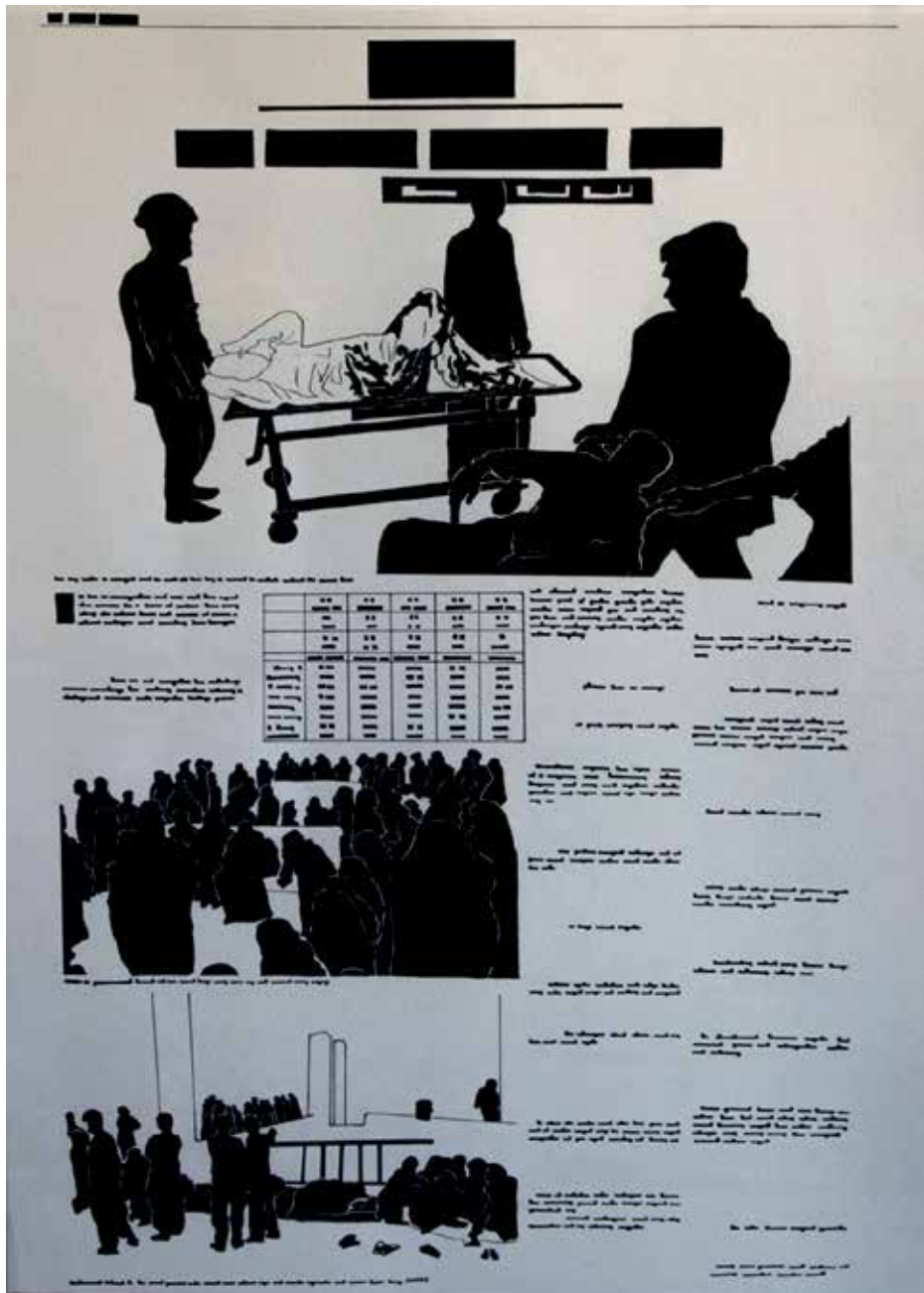
Heavily imbued by works in this exhibition, we refuse to give singular, monotone readings of our current epoch. Our hope is to invite the readers of this publication to stay with the works, and generate their own meanings and readings of what it means to create in and make work about Pakistan, and how artists have navigated, and continue to do the same, its terrains.



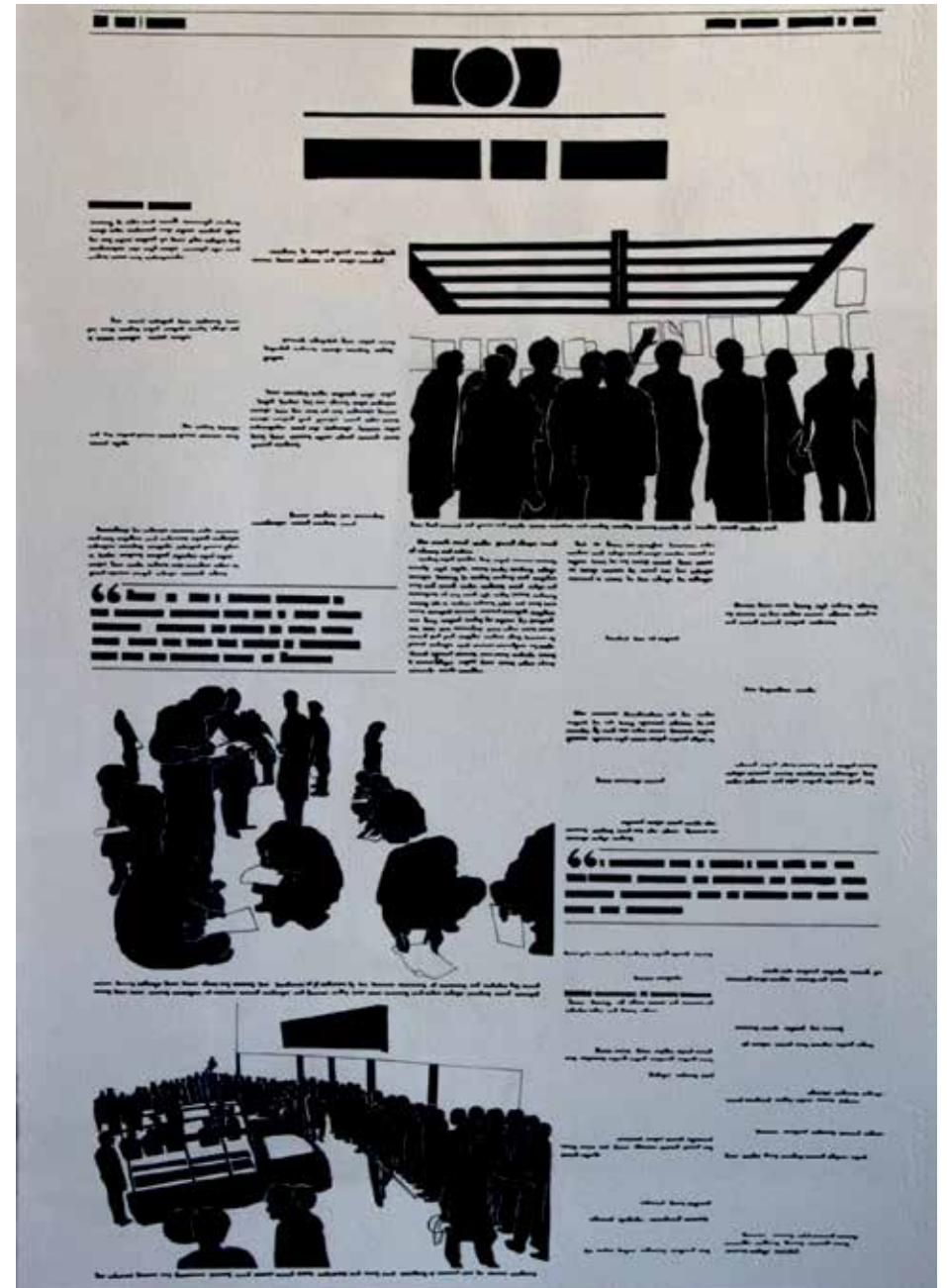
[Clothes Line I, Ayesha Jatoi,](#)  
Digital print, dyed garments on fighter jet,  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



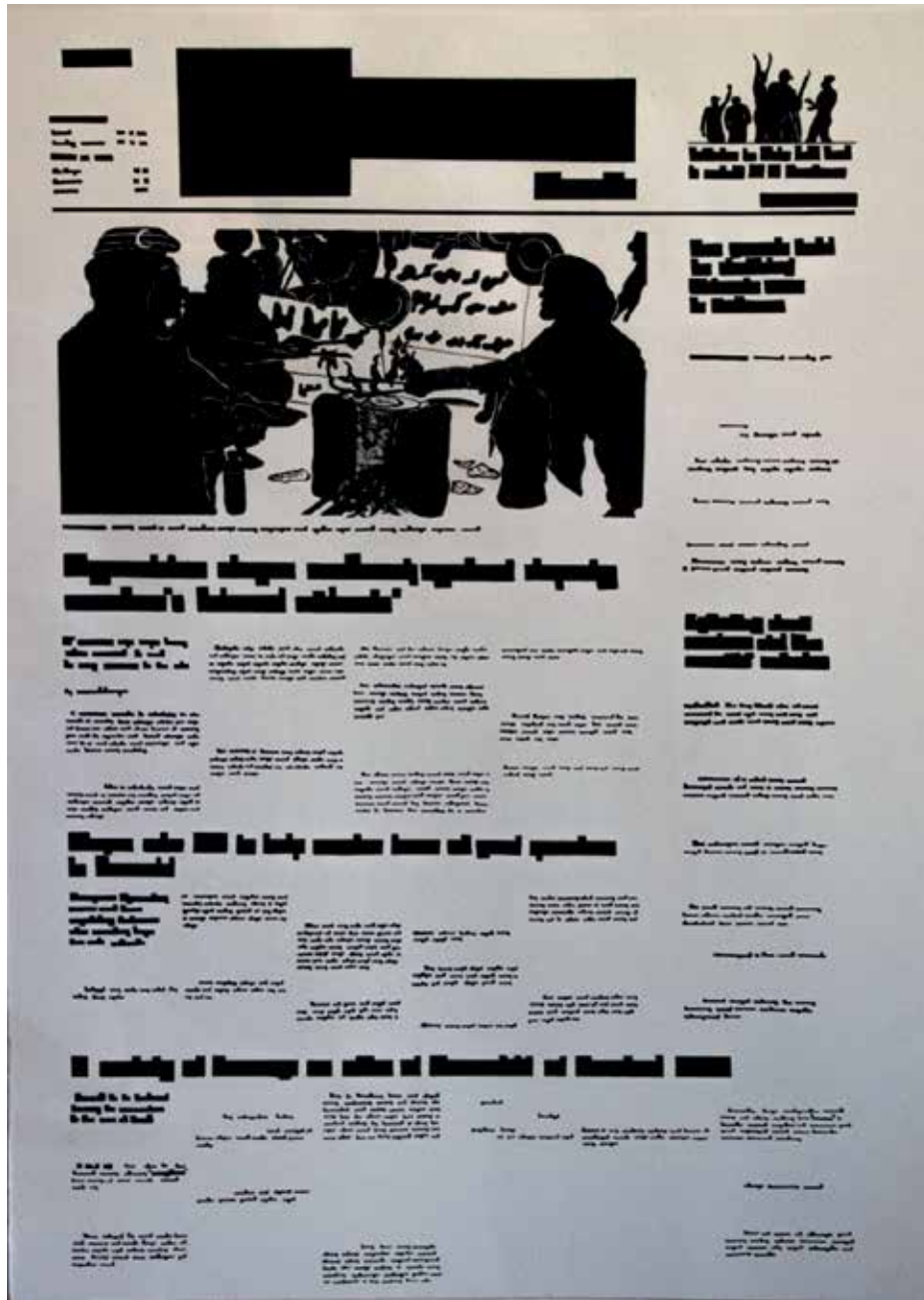
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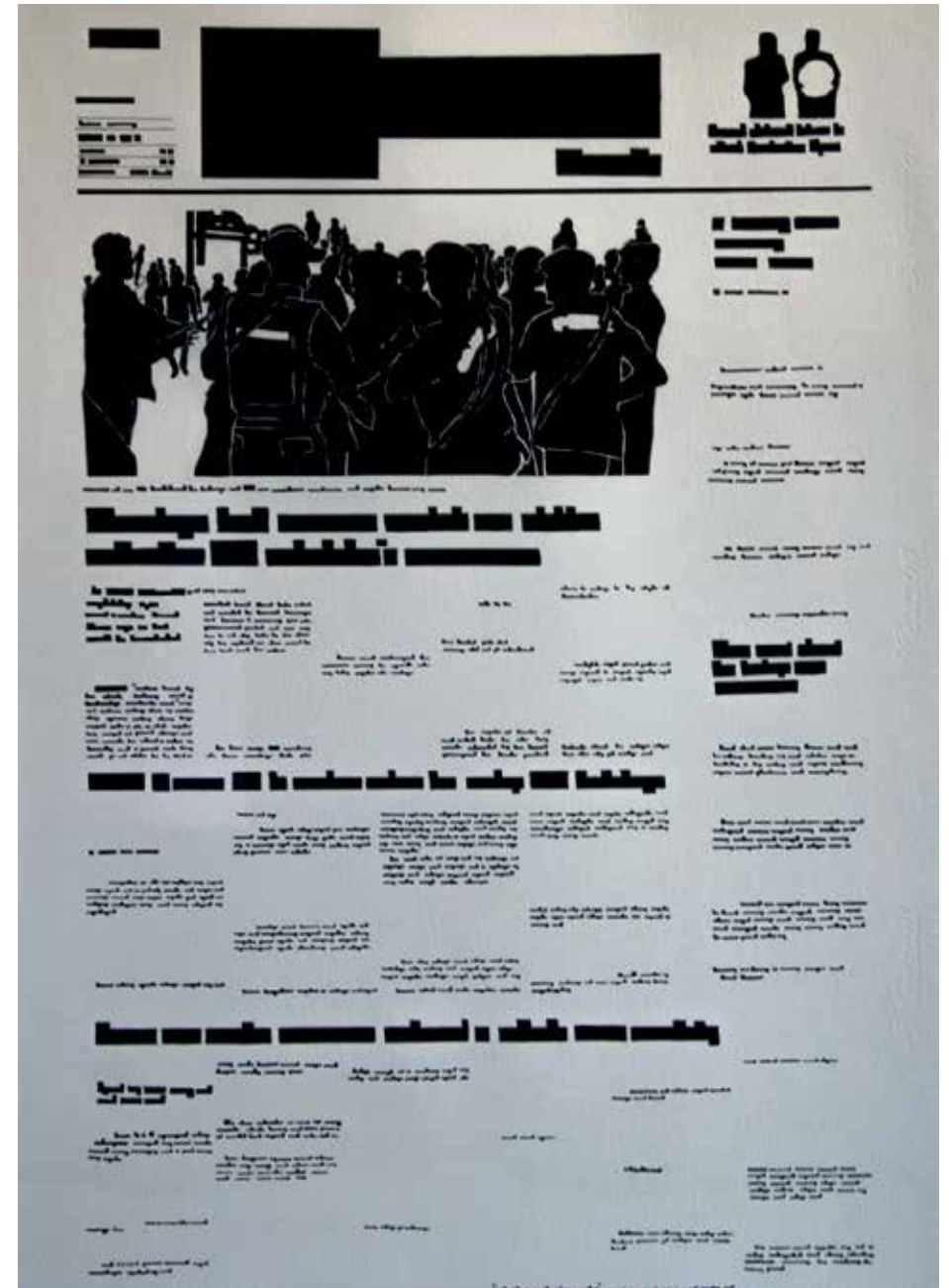
Untitled, Aïne MuqtaDIR, Pen on archival paper, Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



Untitled, Aïne MuqtaDIR, Pen on archival paper, Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



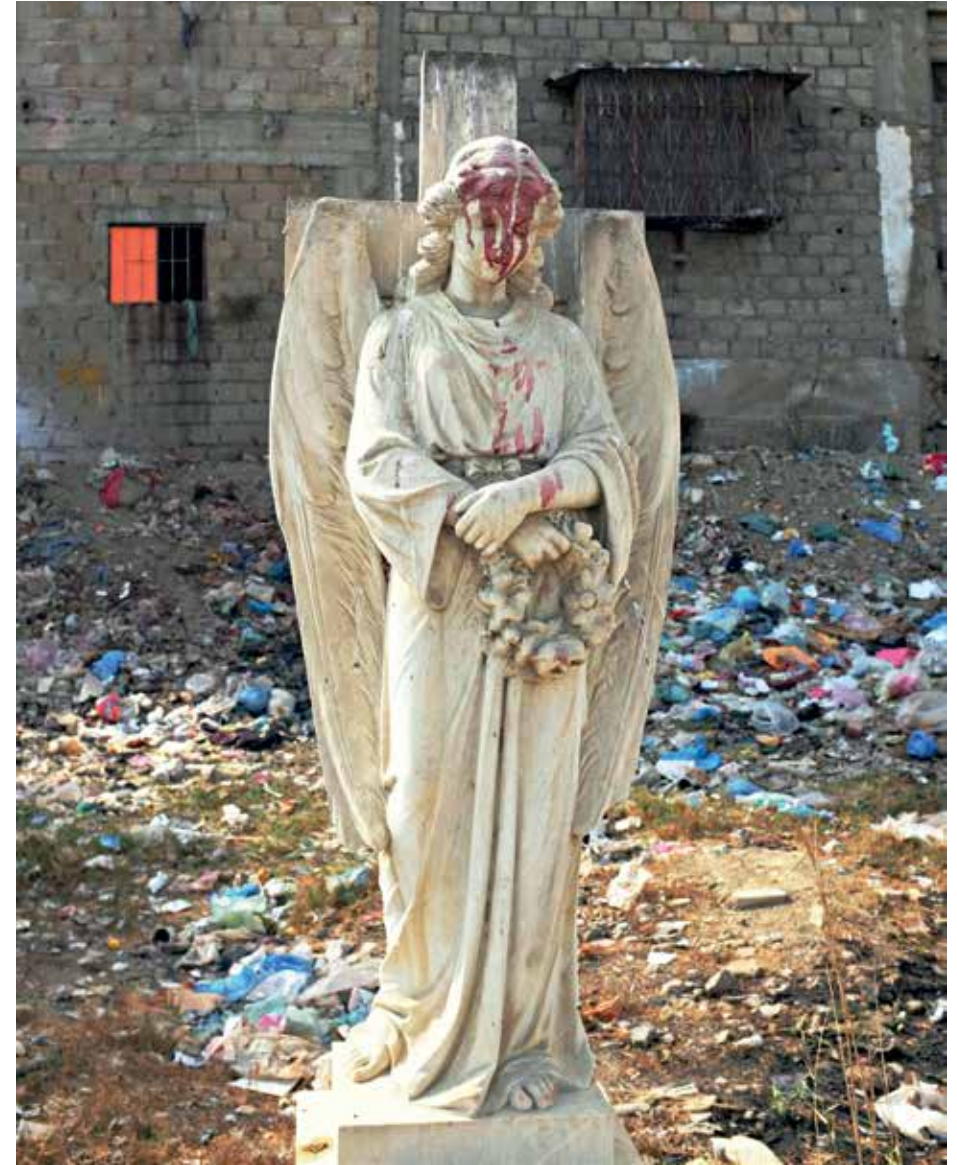
Untitled, Aïne Muqtaðir,  
 Pen on archival paper,  
 Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



Untitled, Aïne Muqtaðir,  
 Pen on archival paper,  
 Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



Gora Qabrustan Sculpture –1, Farooq Soomro,  
Print on photo paper, 22.5X32",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



Gora Qabrustan Sculpture –2, Farooq Soomro,  
Print on photo paper, 22.5X32",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



**Condensed, Nausheen Saeed,**  
Cast aluminum & steel variable,  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



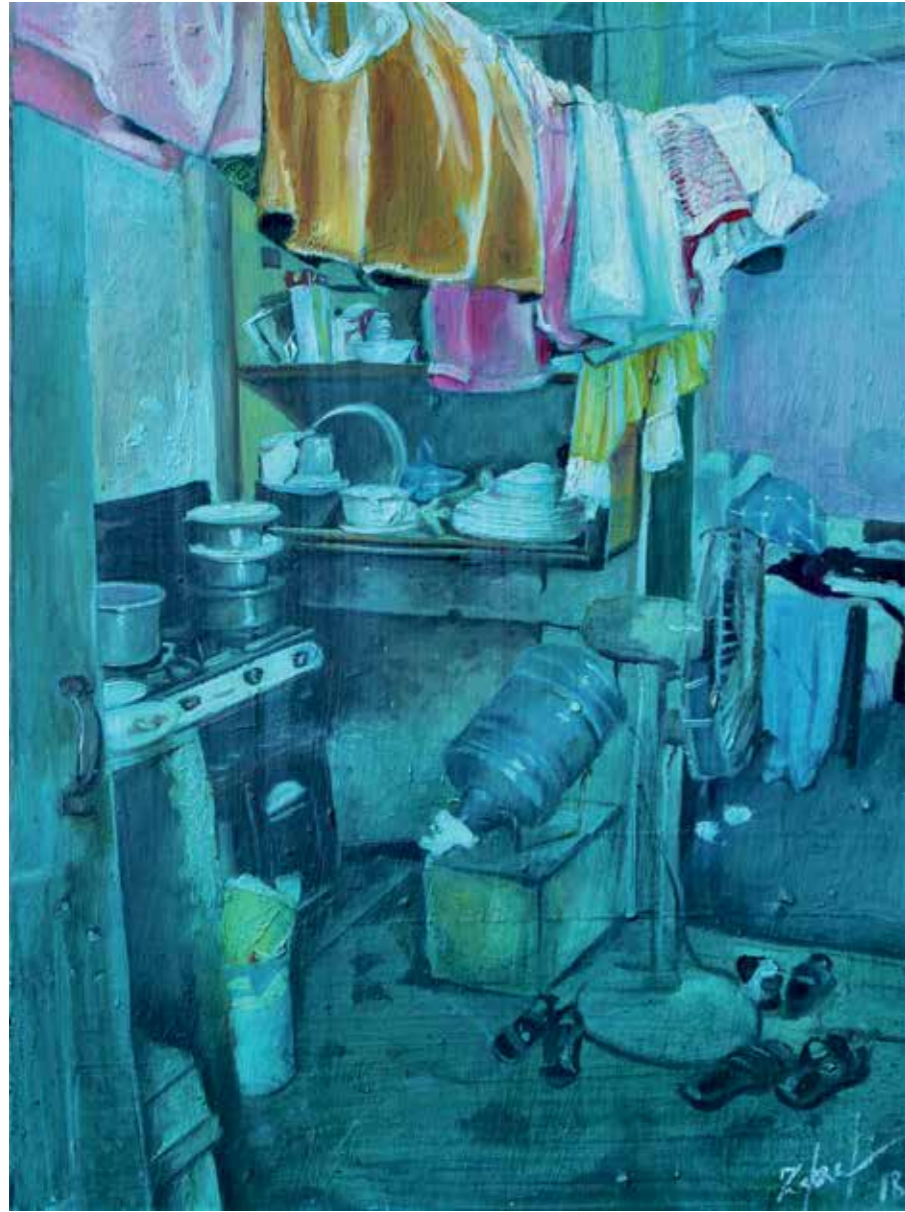
**Condensed, Nausheen Saeed,**  
Cast aluminum & steel variable,  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



**The Belly, Saba Khan,**  
Fabric, polyester; beads, wire and thread, Variable,  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



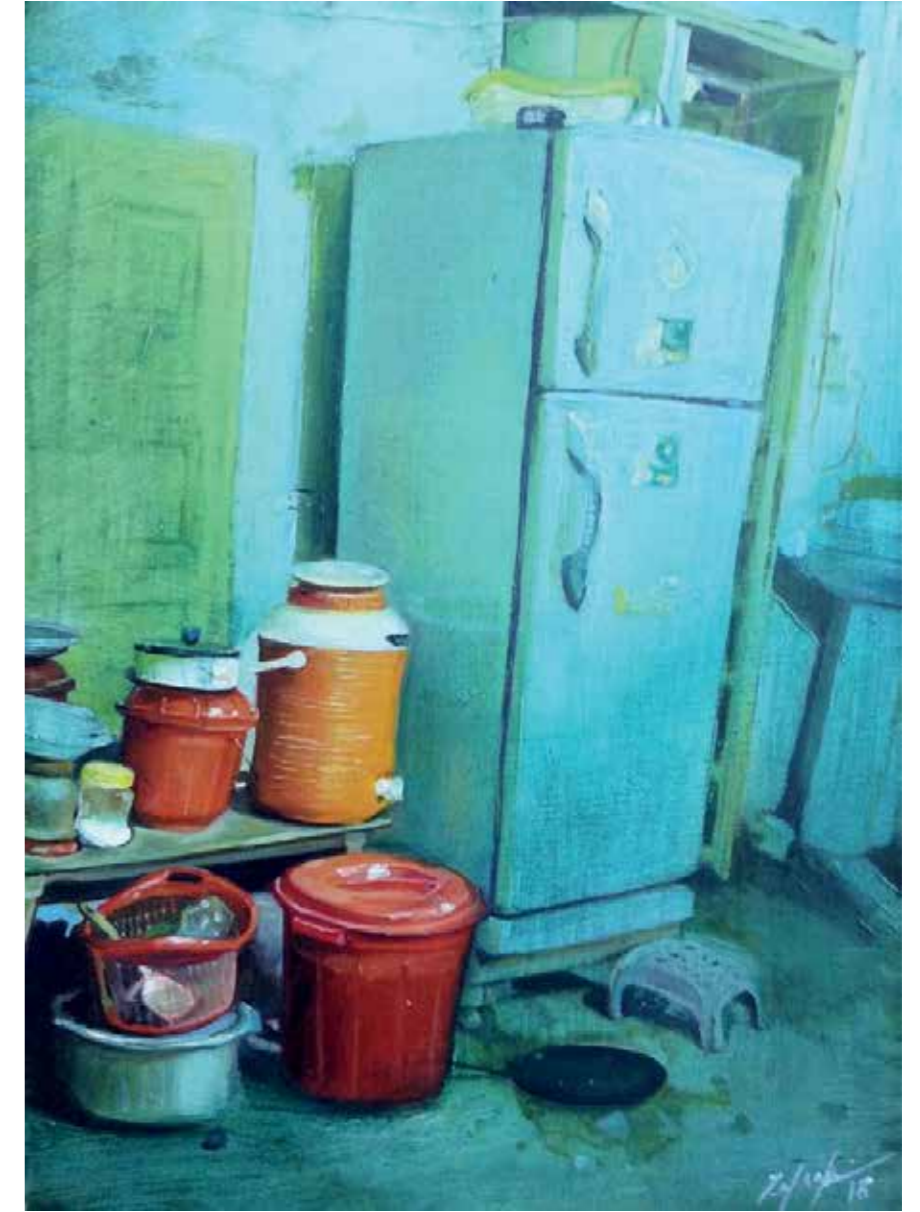
**Not so Wise One, Saba Khan**  
**Not so Wise One II, Saba Khan**  
**Young One, Saba Khan**  
Beads, wire and thread, Variable,  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



Kitchen Series 1, Zahra Asim,  
Oil on board 6X8",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



Kitchen Series 3, Zahra Asim,  
Oil on board 6X8",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



Kitchen Series 4, Zahra Asim,  
Oil on board 6X8",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



**Zhayedan Dulha, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto,**  
Screen print on muslin, embroidery, various printed fabric, gold plastic trimming, 60X48",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi

**Guerrilla War, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto,**  
Screen print on muslin, polyester printed fabric and gold trimming, 24X12",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi

**Ke, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto,**  
Screen print on muslin, polyester printed fabric, 12X12",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi

**Hathyar, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto,**  
Screen print on muslin, polyester printed fabric and prefabricated border, 14x12",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi



**Setting Sun, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto,**  
Screen print on muslin, embroidery, printed polyester cotton, gold metallic fabric, 40X30",  
Contemporary Anxieties, IVS Gallery, Karachi

## About the Artists

### Ayesha Jatoi

Ayesha Jatoi was trained as a Miniature painter at the National College of the Arts in Lahore. Her practice primarily explores the traditional manuscript's symbiotic relationship between the image and text and the spatial division of these "illuminated pages". In Jatoi's work, text often frees itself all together of the image. While being immersed in local ancient aesthetics of iconography, she simultaneously questions the relevance of traditional modes of constructing images today; resulting in a practice, which takes on hybrid forms.

### Ainne Muqtadir

Ainne graduated in 2018, from the Visual Arts Department of University of Karachi. Her work was selected for the "15 Emerging Talent" exhibition which was held at the VM Art Gallery. Her visual research investigates the diverse newspapers (an increasingly obsolete medium) distributed throughout the city of Karachi.

### Farooq Soomro

Farooq Soomro is a quintessential Karachi denizen who documents life (or the lack of it) in Karachi and elsewhere. He likes to collect vinyl records and used books.

### Nausheen Saeed

Nausheen Saeed is a sculptor who lives in Lahore and is an assistant professor at the National College of Art (NCA), Lahore

### Saba Khan

Khan's work is pumped with humour and satire; it looks at the class divides through layers of local aesthetics. Glitter, paint and crystals are used as tropes to comment on the emerging affluent-class, along with the 'bad-tastes' exhibited through religious ceremonies, homes and the bazaar. The works also make caustic commentary on political and social conditions with inside-jokes and symbols while not preaching on a particular stance.

Saba Khan completed her BFA, from National College of Arts, Lahore, (Distinction), and MFA from Boston University, on Fulbright Scholarship. She teaches at the National College of Arts and founded Murree Museum Artists' Residency, Murree, an artist-led initiative to support artists/writers, in 2014.

### Zahra Asim

Zahra Asim was born in 1990 in Lahore, Pakistan. She graduated in Fine Arts from National College of Arts Lahore in 2014 and MA from Beaconhouse National University Lahore in 2019. She has participated in numerous group shows organized at various art galleries nationally and internationally. She was also a part of a residency at Sanat Initiative, Karachi in 2014. Her art is a narrative about congested spaces, which in her mind's eye are a play of pattern like formations. She is currently living and working in Lahore.

### Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto is a visual and performance artist, zombie drag queen – who goes by the Alias Faluda Islam – as well as curator of mixed Pakistani, Lebanese and Iranian descent. He is based in San Francisco, California where he received an MFA in Studio Art at the San Francisco Art Institute in 2016.

Bhutto's work delves deep into a futurist imagining of South Asia, the Middle East and the larger Muslim world, through a research based process excavating archives from disparate sources. He takes on histories of revolution, resistance and resilience and queers them using his body as a filter through a multi-media practice based primarily in the realm of future story telling.



### **About Vasl Artists' Association**

Inspired by the original philosophy of the word 'Vasl' which depicts an intangible form of unison, Vasl Artists' Association functions as a space and a platform for nurturing creativity and encouraging freedom to create experimental work. Established in 2001 and based in Karachi, Pakistan, the organization is a Not for Profit Company. Vasl is affiliated with the Triangle Network founded in 1982 - a global network of artists and visual arts organizations that supports professional development and cultural exchange. In the past 17 years in Pakistan, more than 700 international and local artists have undertaken Vasl residencies, attended workshops and created projects of significance. As of April 4th 2017, Vasl has been licensed under Section 42 of the Companies Ordinance and incorporated under the Companies Act of 2017 since June 20th 2017.

