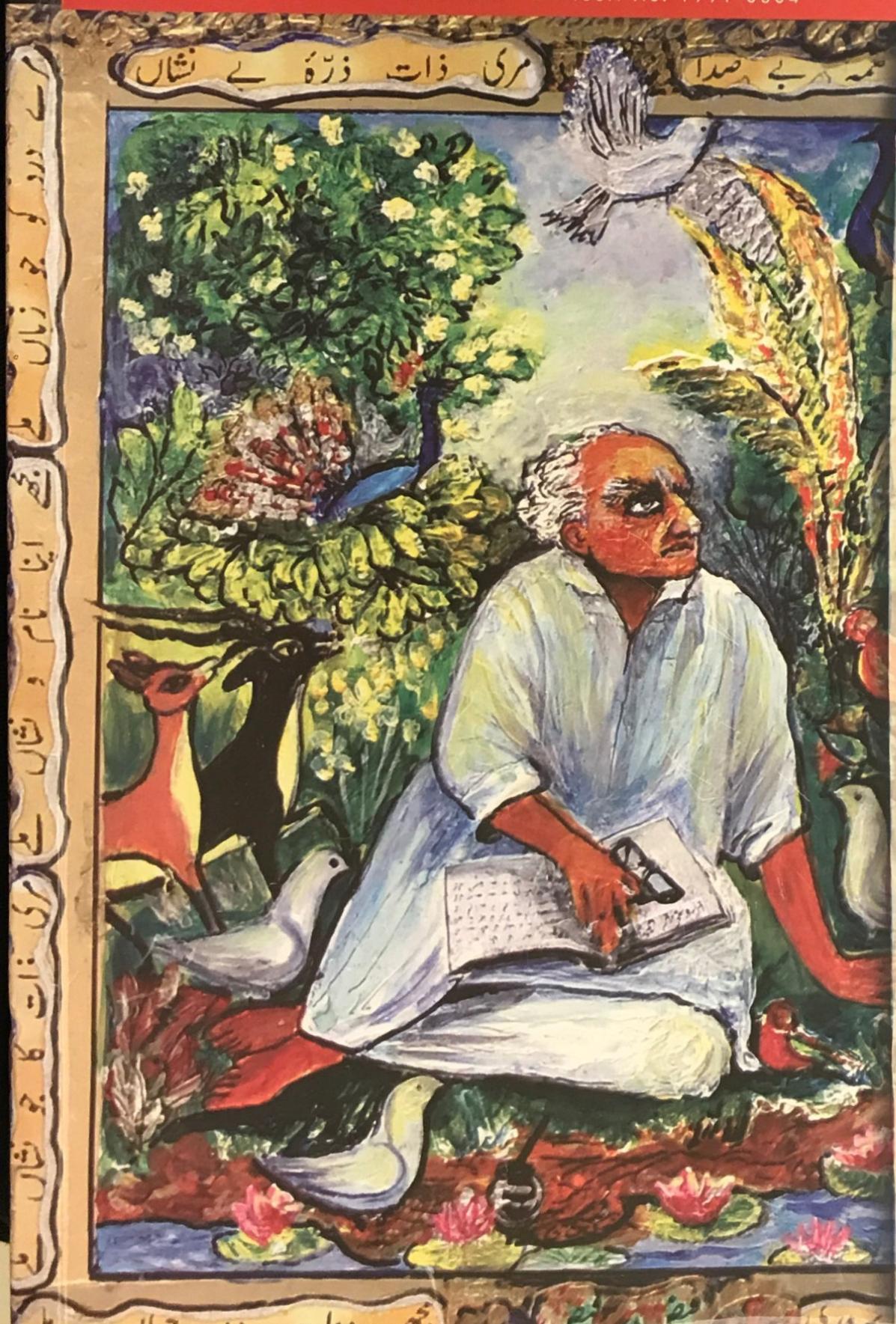
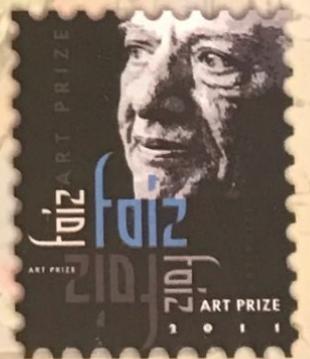


# N U K T A ART

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Special Issue

Faiz  
Art  
Prize  
Oct 2011  
Galerie  
Sadequain  
Karachi



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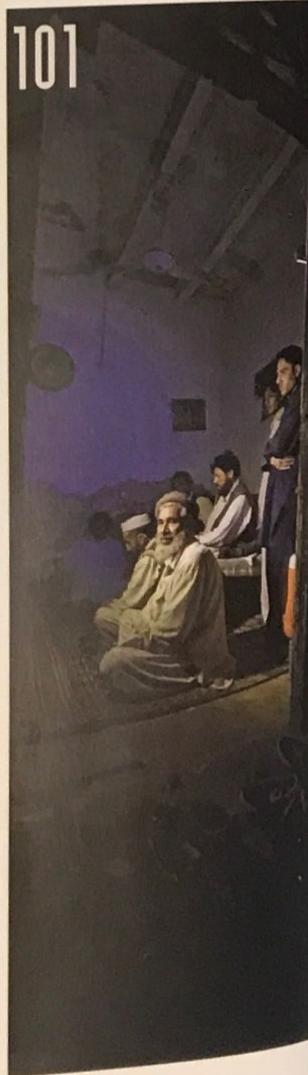
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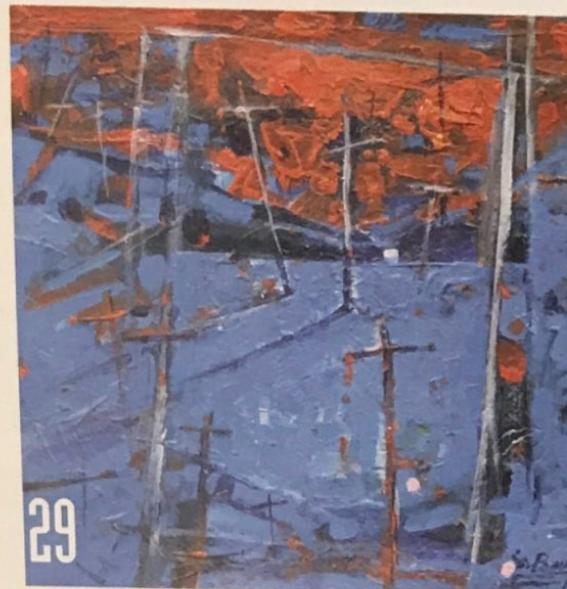
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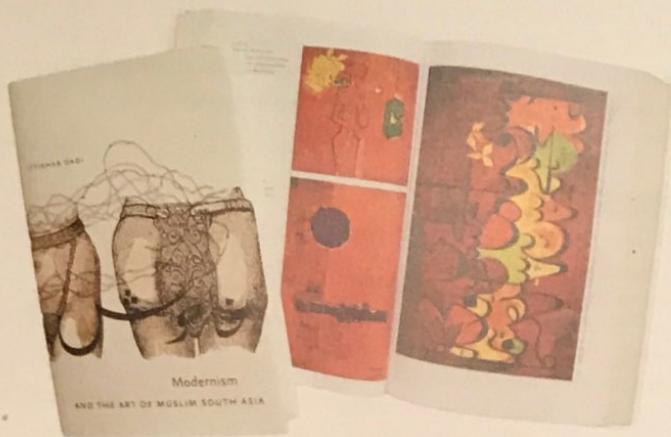
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## Aasim Akhtar

Aasim Akhtar lives and works in Islamabad. He is an artist, art critic and curator. He was a curator in residence at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in Japan in 2002. His curatorial practice includes *An Idea of Perfection: National Exhibition of Photography* (2004), *The Figurative Impulse* (2007), *The Nocturnal Song: Interpretations on the Theme of Night* (2008), *The Line Unleashed* (2010), *Pachydermal* (2010), *Silent Decibels* (2010), and *Amnesia: The Loss of Cultural Memory* (2011). Akhtar's writing is published in magazines, catalogues, books and journals, both nationally and internationally, and his artwork has been widely exhibited, more recently at Whitechapel Gallery, London, as part of a commemorative show entitled, *Where Three Dreams Cross: 150 Years of Photography in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (2010). He is the author of two published books: *Regards Croises: Peshawar, and The Distant Steppe: Indus Kohistan*. He has just finished writing his third, *Dialogues with Threads: Traditions of Embroidery in Hazara*. He teaches Art Appreciation at Fatima Jinnah Women University in Rawalpindi.

## Arif Mahmood

Arif Mahmood lives and works in Karachi. He has worked as a photographer for over two decades and holds shows of his work and curates exhibitions regularly. Mahmood is Chief Operating Officer Whitestar, Pakistan's largest photo agency for the media.

According to Mahmood, he is a street photographer, and it is mostly people who inspire him. "In a way, my work is also a documentation of the times we live in. There is this restlessness in my work, as if I am collecting things for a certain task or cause," he says.

In December 2009, NuktaArt, in collaboration with Visiting Arts UK, held the 'One Mile Square - Mai Kolachi' project in Karachi to encourage both the art community and the broader public to engage on issues of environmental awareness and intervention. At the exhibition of the project, Arif Mahmood displayed twenty-eight black and white photographs as his 'photo-essay on survival'.

## Arooj Zahid

Arooj Zahid holds a Masters in Fine Arts from the College of Art & Design, Punjab University. She did field work in Art History at major museums in United Kingdom and France. She is an artist, art writer and presently engaged in teaching at the Punjab University. She has a keen interest in art as well as its history and undertakes assignments related to these fields.

## Asma Husain

Asma Husain is an architect and artist working in Shanghai, China. She studied Sculpture at Colby College in Maine, USA, and later graduated with a Masters in Architecture from Rice University, Texas, USA. She was a Watson Fellow in Brazil and India, where her research involved low-cost and squatter housing typologies in planned and organic cities. Her architectural as well as research work focuses on the political and social potential of the built environment, often in unconventional ways. Currently, she is working with a Shanghai-based firm invested in environmentally sustainable architecture.

## Gemma Sharpe

Gemma Sharpe has a background in Art History and Literature, and studied an MFA at Goldsmiths University. She has contributed to numerous magazines and publications internationally and in 2010 she co-curated the events program for the Whitstable Biennale. She lives between London and Karachi.

## Ikona Yusuf

Ikona Yusuf is a designer, poet and printmaker. Largely self taught, she has read widely on art and literature and learned the technical skills of printmaking through workshops and open studio sessions. She began her artistic career by running a crafts club and taking commissions for hand painted fabrics and painted glass panels. Over the past few years she has focused on designing lighting and conversation piece furniture. Her poems have been published in book form (*Picture This*, Alhama Publishing, 2001) and in literary journals in Pakistan and abroad. She freelances for several magazines, writing on art and literature, and is currently co-editing a special issue of Pakistani poetry in

English for a Canadian poetry journal. She has recently begun to integrate word and image, combining her etchings and collagraphs with poetry to create artist's books. Her work can be viewed at [ilona.yusuf@blogspot.com](mailto:ilona.yusuf@blogspot.com)

## Karen Darricades

Karen Darricades is an artist, freelance writer and community activist living in Toronto. Her writing has been published in *Broken Pencil*, *HERizons* and *THIS Magazine*, where she was editorial/publishing intern in 2005. From 2001-2005 she was the co-founder and co-editor of *thing 'zine*, an independent publication exploring intersecting themes of art and activism. She is a graduate of the University of Toronto, where she studied visual arts and linguistics.

## Rabyya Naseer

Rabyya Naseer has recently returned to Lahore after completing her MA in Art History as a Fulbright scholar in Theory & Criticism from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Currently she is visiting faculty at the NCA, BNU and LGS and writing about contemporary Pakistani Art. Naseer is an interdisciplinary artist, whose work combines areas of sculpture, painting, photography and performance. Her work has been shown in Pakistan and at Today Art Museum (Beijing), Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale (Japan), Jamjar (Dubai), USA and Ikon Gallery (UK). Exploring her interest in Performance Art, she is currently working on her writing, titled *Promises to Keep*; contextualizing performative art practice in contemporary Pakistani Art.

## Shahana Rajani

Shahana Rajani has graduated from Cambridge University with a BA in History of Art. The past year, she has worked in Karachi as the curator of the Karachi School of Art Gallery. She is currently pursuing an MA in Critical and Curatorial Studies at the University of British Columbia in Canada.

## Shireen Ikramullah

Shireen Ikramullah graduated from the National College of Art, Lahore, in 2006, majoring in painting, and with two minors, photography and printmaking. She went to the UK in 2008 for an MA in Art Gallery and Museum Studies. She is a painter, and a freelance writer for *Dawn Gallery*, *Blue Chip Magazine* and *NuktaArt*.

## Simone Wille

Simone Wille is an art historian. She has written a PhD thesis on contemporary art in Pakistan with the University of Vienna, Austria. She writes for various newspapers, art magazines, and exhibition catalogues. She is currently based in Vienna.

## Sulaf Zakharia

Sulaf Zakharia is a Canadian freelance writer whose primary focus is contemporary Arab art. Her writing has been published in *Brownbook*, *Clientele*, *Gulf Weekly* online on *Universes-in-Universe* and *ChinarTree.com* and in a number of exhibition catalogues. She also writes a monthly art feature for *L'agenda Golfe*. She is currently based in Bahrain.

## Xhingyu Chen

Xhingyu Chen is a contemporary art specialist and writer based in Shanghai, China, where she has been involved in the art world for over eight years. She was raised in New York City and attended Middlebury College in Vermont, where she studied Fine Arts and Chinese. She is a regular contributor to *Art Asia Pacific*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *Art Info* and *NuktaArt*. In addition to her journalistic work, she organizes personalized tours in Shanghai and Beijing focusing on contemporary art and culture. She is the author of *Chinese Artists: New Media 1990 - 2010*, a work which explores the other side of Chinese contemporary art through the works of 19 artists working in new media.

## Zahra Malkani

Zahra Malkani is an artist based in Karachi. She studied Fine Art at Bard College in New York. Her work can be seen on her website: [www.zahramalkani.com](http://www.zahramalkani.com)

In the last ten months Faiz Art Prize has been a catalyst in creating a link between a literary philosophy and visual arts, and **NUKTAART** is privileged to be a partner in such an initiative. A large section within this special issue brings to its readers a catalogue of the works competing for the awards. Also included are statements from Shahid Sajjad and Habib Fida Ali, two eminent Pakistani personalities from the fields of art and architecture whose creative input in the project has made it even more special.

In a parallel theme, **NUKTAART** investigates the dynamics of emerging local and global art markets and its impact in China, United Arab Emirates and Pakistan where diverse factors have brought art and investment together as never before.

In China, which is the second biggest art market in the world today, a sharp rise in personal wealth has been the driving force behind its increasing number of billionaire collectors. While contemporary art is attracting some buyers, the primary art investment remains in traditional arts. This trend also needs to be seen in the context of the government policy to restrict investment in real estate at home and abroad, which has made the wealthy look for other avenues for investment.

The phenomenal upsurge in art activities in the last decade in United Arab Emirates has given it visibility with a unique art infrastructure investment which has very little to do with local cultural expression. Except for Sharjah that has made attempts to integrate art as a part of its education, Dubai and Abu Dhabi are pouring money into galleries, art fairs and museums primarily as an economic strategy to enhance cultural tourism.

In two articles, one from a global perspective and the other that takes an insider's perspective of the art market and related concerns in Pakistan, bring into focus the dichotomous realities influenced by national economics and international politics.

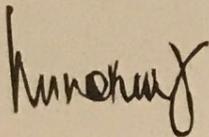
This year, at the Venice Biennale, the Indian National Pavilion was dominated by artists living outside its geographical boundaries which has prompted a discussion on the changing perception of national representation. The Venice Biennale, for almost a decade, has looked at possible internal reforms to make it more relevant to the times. Focusing on the progress in this area becomes the subject of the second article on the Venice Biennale.

Burke and Norfolk, two photographers, a century apart, who documented wars in Afghanistan were on display in a curated show at Tate Modern, UK. This summer, **NUKTAART** invited two independent writers, one each from Pakistan and UK, to examine it through the historical and critical subjectivity of war documentation.

In recognition of the contribution of two important Karachi based gallerists, Zohra Hussain of Chawkandi Art and Riffat Alvi of VM Gallery, **NUKTAART** has a conversation with them in Nukta-e- Nazar, on the outreach and strategies that each has evolved simultaneously with the art market in Pakistan, and the implications of this growth is addressed.

Arif Mahmood has curated the Photo Essay for this issue under the rubric, *Families*, a selection from a larger portfolio previously exhibited at VM gallery. The Youth Lens is delighted to showcase the work of talented young photographers from Karachi and Faisalabad.

Faiz Art Prize is the first public event on a national scale that **NUKTAART** has been involved within its six years of existence. This participation was motivated by the publication's mandate to engage in debates and projects to narrow the gap between the overly commodified art practice and the de-linked community. In previous years **NUKTAART** has hosted The Anxious Century, a regional seminar with art critics from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Iran and Germany and One Mile Square- Mai Kolachi, the country's first full-fledged ecological awareness workshop and exhibition for artists. Creating an opportunity for artists and art students to re-discover one of Pakistan's greatest poets and understand the relevance of his message to our times has been both a challenge and a memorable experience for **NUKTAART**. We thank our partners and sponsors for their support.



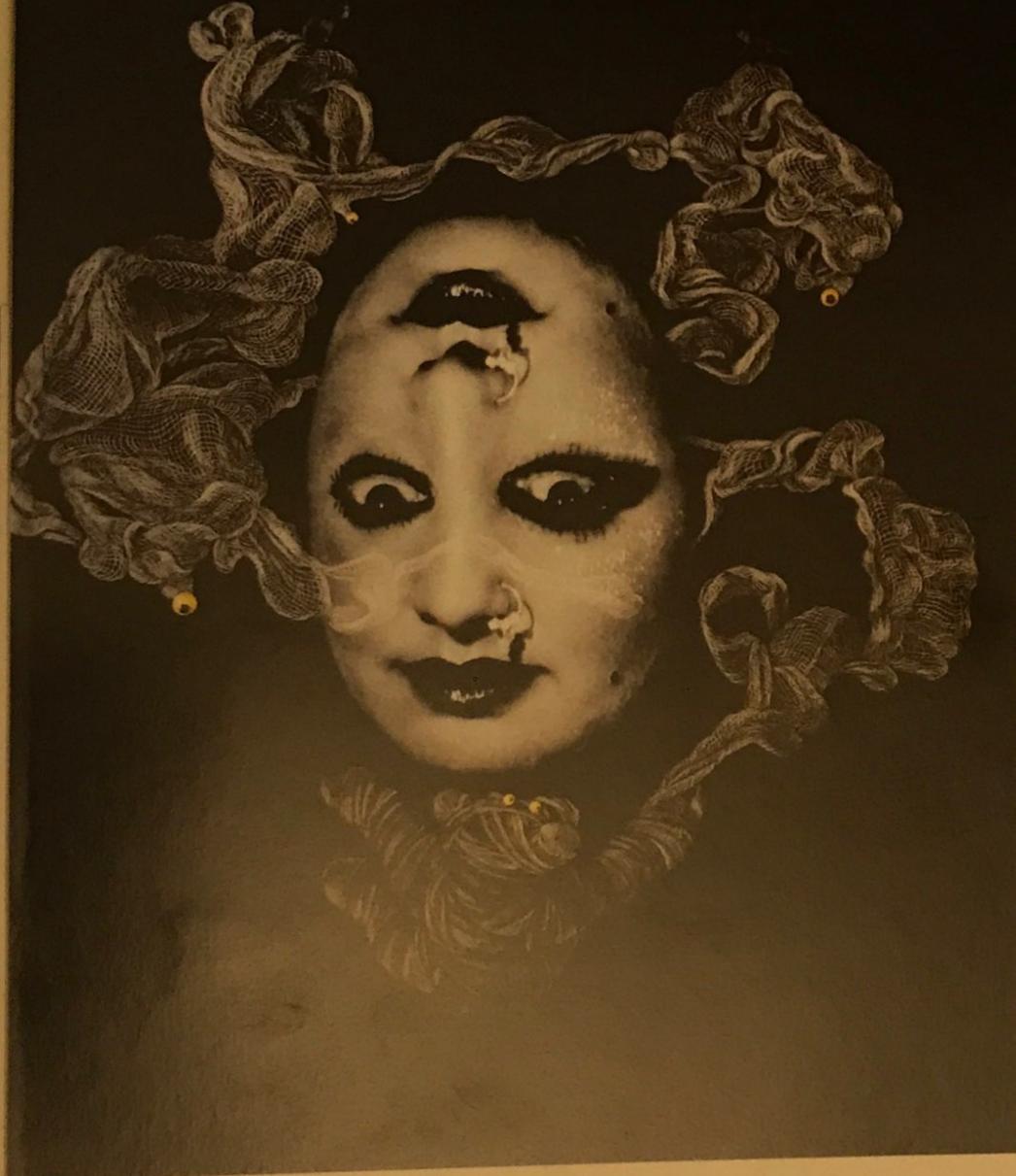
Nilofur Farrukh  
Editor

Rumana Husain  
Senior Editor

Amra Ali  
Senior Editor

October 2011

Adeel uz Zafar,  
*Star*, mixed media on  
 photographic paper,  
 50.8 x 61 cm, 2011



Rabyya Naseer

## In loving memory:

# RANI

*The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.*  
 (Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle - Thesis 37*).

Cinema is one of the most glaring manifestations of a 'spectacle'; to the extent that cinema is synonymous with spectacle. It conjures images of extravagant display and performance, much of whose appeal derives from its visual power and ability to hold the gaze of the viewer. This spectacularity of the filmic medium, organized around the production and consumption of images, is highly dependent on the skills of its actors. Through this consumption, in the sense of belief or to give credence to, the actor elicits emotional responses from the audience, becoming exemplary heroes of the spectator's life. Such an exemplary hero is the subject of the exhibition, titled 'Icon', organized jointly by the Lahore

Arts Council and the Rohtas 2 Gallery, to pay tribute to the Pakistani actress Rani, on her 18th death anniversary. The driving force behind the exhibition is Rabia Anwar, her daughter, a painter, whose work has always been inspired by the woman, Rani.

Rani, whose acting career spanned over almost three decades, needs little introduction especially among her generation. My father remembers her as an electrifying performer, while my mother still bears in mind her dialogues with that trademark wit and rhyme. Admired for her picture-perfect beauty, her versatile acting and dance performances, and some of the songs picturized on her, are classics in the history of Pakistani cinema. Rani stood as an icon for a particular cultural era.

Twenty-one notable and emerging artists were asked to make work for this tribute show, including Asim Akhtar, Abdul Jabbar Gull, Adeel Ahmed, Adeel uz Zafar, Ahsan Jamal, Ali Azmat,

Amber Hammad, Asad Hayee, Atif Khan, Hassan Mujtaba, Madhia Sikander, Mohammad Ahmed, Muhammad Ashraf, Risham Syed, Sadaf Naeem, Saeed Akhtar, Saira Dar, Sheraz Faisal, Zeeshan Memon and Rabia herself.

Since its Rani's face, whose form directly reflects the thing it signifies, most of the works in the show presented a physical likeness, picking key images that define her iconic status within her acting career, yet sticking to the face. Such an approach, on the one hand links the development of celebrity culture within the technological development of modern day image making, while on the other, to be interested in a portrait as a record of what the subject looked like is not the same as being aesthetically interested in the portrait as representation. Some of the portraits ended up being mere surrogates for their subject, lacking an aesthetic interest; as Scruton writes that "an aesthetic interest in representation is not only for the sake of its subject, but in representation for its own sake", (*Arguing about art: contemporary philosophical debates*, Alex Neill, Aaron Ridley, pg 193, Routledge, NY, 2002). This makes one wonder about the works' reason to

Zeeshan Memon, *Untitled*, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 121.9 cm, 2011



be, of recreating a replica of her image, when it already exists as an image, and if changing the medium alone helps. However, there are a few works in which this confrontation with Rani's image is accompanied by other visual codes/clues, that help to read the work beyond its face value. Adeel uz Zafar's mixed media on photographic paper, titled 'star', uses humor, irony and exaggeration, combining romance and horror in an attempt to thrill and terrify, in order to present an idealized portrait of a difficult life. Amber Hammad's perception of Rani was bi-fold: an object of desire and perhaps a role model. Her digital print on canvas is a reproduction of Rani's image from a dance performance, manipulated to replace Rani's face with Hammad's. Such impersonations are a recurring feature in Hammad's work. Zeeshan Memon's 3ft x 4ft oil painting, speaks of the Pakistani Cinema in

general and the cultural/gendered stereotypes it instills. The image presents two (male and female) headless bodies, possibly the hero and the heroine, holding hands, the hero wearing a *kurta* is holding a *klashinakov* in his hand. The heroine's fat thighs, flabby arms and a pot-belly are revealed through fitted flowery tights and a short bright *kurta*. The visual clues provided here speak of romance, violence, pleasure, irony of the armed act of romancing, gender codes and a very different notion of beauty that Punjabi or Pushto cinema promotes. Memon's painting also makes subtle references to the, now obsolete, tradition of cinema hoarding painting, but the scale defers that reference.

The act of looking at these works is no less voyeuristic than the cinema itself, at once hallucinatory and distanced, suggesting the space of an imaginary world, with which the viewer engages privately, but disconnectedly. It reproduces traditionalist / symbolist reading of the female, as either muse or femme fatale. Just as the narrative of film's effect locates the power of the gaze within male spectatorship, the works intentionally fetishizes the female into a sexual object and spectacle. Asad Hayee's necktie, titled

'theater of indifference' is a good example. Rani's two images, as a cabaret dancer and a *tawaif* (courtesan), repeated on a digitally printed canvas speaks of pleasure and consumption, presenting the female as an 'image', while the male as the bearer of the look, referring to the automatic assumption of a male spectator. Similarly, Ahsan Jamal and Madiha Sikander's 'Untitled' collaborative piece, unfortunately enclosed in an acrylic box, appears to be an interactive book (perhaps). The cover of the book is an old Nikon film camera, with a peeping hole in place of the lens, through which a 'dream girl' kind of an image of Rani is visible. Hayee has also used the same cabaret dancer image on the necktie. Jamal and Sikander are also making references to the way the camera reflects, reveals, and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference, the camera's phallic presence and the attributes associated, such as shooting, aiming. The voyeuristic feature is so prominent that it would be hard to give an example of a work where it is absent.

Thematic shows are a very ambivalent thing. It is often a pretext to the show and a framework for the works, but not an aim in itself, yet it has the potential to turn into an aim and that is when it becomes mere illustration. It is important for the theme to sit nicely in the space, not be imposing and remain a pretext. Despite the fact that this bridging of high art and popular culture is a unique idea for us and more so, the show intends to raise funds for a noble cause of facilitating a free ambulance service for the patients of Rani Rafiqun Memorial Hospital and not to mention that despite all setbacks it liberated an art exhibition from the boredom and confines of the *burqa*, guns, the flag, the missiles, and the minarets, acknowledging fantasy, play and spontaneity, the works demand a little less space and a lot more light than the Alhambra can offer. ●

Ilona Yusuf

# Breaking Barriers, Initiating Dialogue: the 'Opening Lines' Project



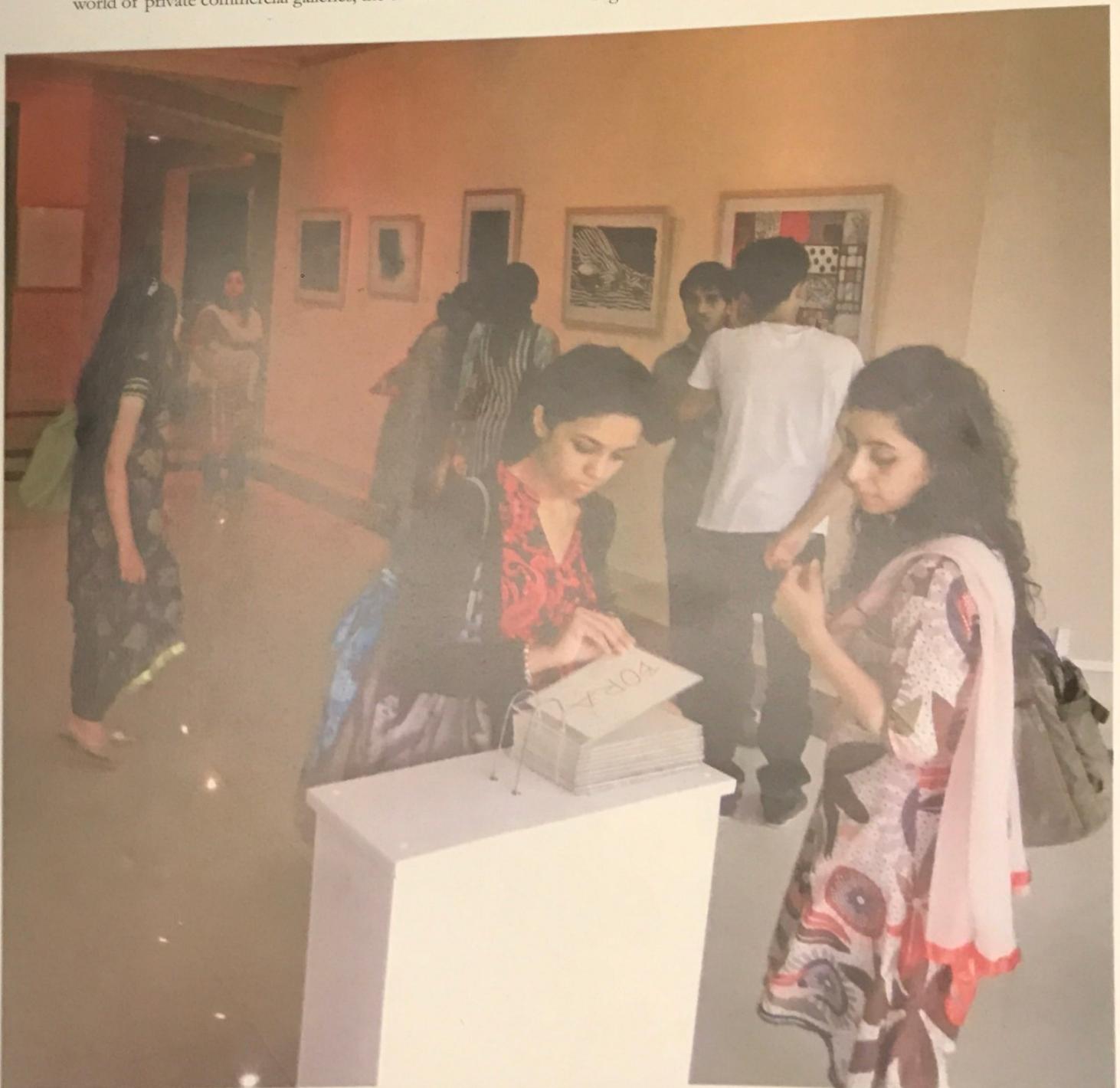
Opening Lines exhibition at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST)

With his unconventional approach Islamabad businessperson turned curator, Naeem Qadir, attempts to inculcate art appreciation to new audiences. The curator has stated his aim as twofold: to initiate dialogue and to 'build an understanding for the vocabulary of art, which can only come about by viewing art.' For this, he uses improvised spaces outside the gallery to exhibit a collection of fifty artworks on paper.

Taking as a cue, his coming of age during the Zia era, which permitted artists' public recognition only if they conformed to the state's idea of acceptable art forms to cement its religious agenda; and his subsequent experiences of an increasingly insular world of private commercial galleries, the curator concluded that

in the absence of art displayed in public spaces, the answer lay in reclaiming that space by bringing it to the people. Through exhibitions organised in office spaces where outsider traffic was most likely to occur, as well as displays in educational institutions, Qadir anticipates creating a public consciousness of art.

Qadir's interpretation of public art is a departure from the standard. In the West, art displayed in public spaces such as parks and squares often consists of sculpture or installation art. Corporate art, on view in banks and offices, is largely calculated not to provoke or offend. This collection comprises a vast spectrum of art processes and themes. *Opening Lines*, a largely self-funded project because of the individualistic approach of its curator, began with the idea that a non-complacent member of society

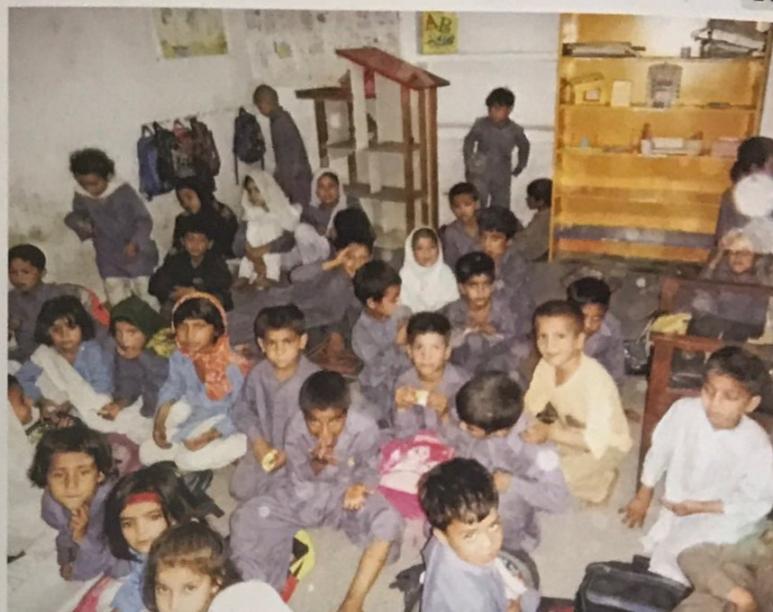


*Opening Lines* at NUST, students viewing postcards

can achieve goals through perseverance.

The artworks for this non-commercial exhibition were donated by senior and established artists approached by the curator personally, beginning in 2008. The artworks themselves range from the figurative genres of portraiture, urban and rural landscapes, and still life to abstract works with their more complicated vocabulary of line, pattern, and color; most challenge conventional representation of familiar objects or scenes.

This is evident in Rahi's and Kohari's renderings of bulls, the first a charcoal drawing in the cubist style, the second a more abstract portrayal in oil, in which the animal appears almost a part of the richly textured, undulating background; both conveying



Mural being painted by Syed Akber Shah, visiting artist from Karachi at Mashaal School



a sense of weight and power. Other figurative contributions include Sajana Joshi's whimsical painting of an overloaded truck; the staggered, staccato carbon transfer drawing of an imaginary meeting between Jinnah and Gandhi by Raju G C; Naveed Sabir's urban landscape, an aerial bird's eye-view leading downwards from the open sky to the narrow, hemmed in city street; and the softly blurred lines of Zubeda Javed's urban rainscape. Salima Hashmi's view through a window is more complex, but draws the viewer in to read visual clues. Abstract blind embossing by Arfan Javed Augustine, Fatima Saeed and Hassnain Awais explore the nature of line and curve. This is only a small sampler of the collection. What emerges from its varied palette of mediums is a vibrancy that is likely to tickle the viewer's curiosity, and stimulate the long subsumed inclination to ask questions. Responses gathered by the curator during showings, from executives, students, schoolchildren, chance visitors, and even janitorial staff, vindicate his intuition that the impulse to respond to art is intrinsic to

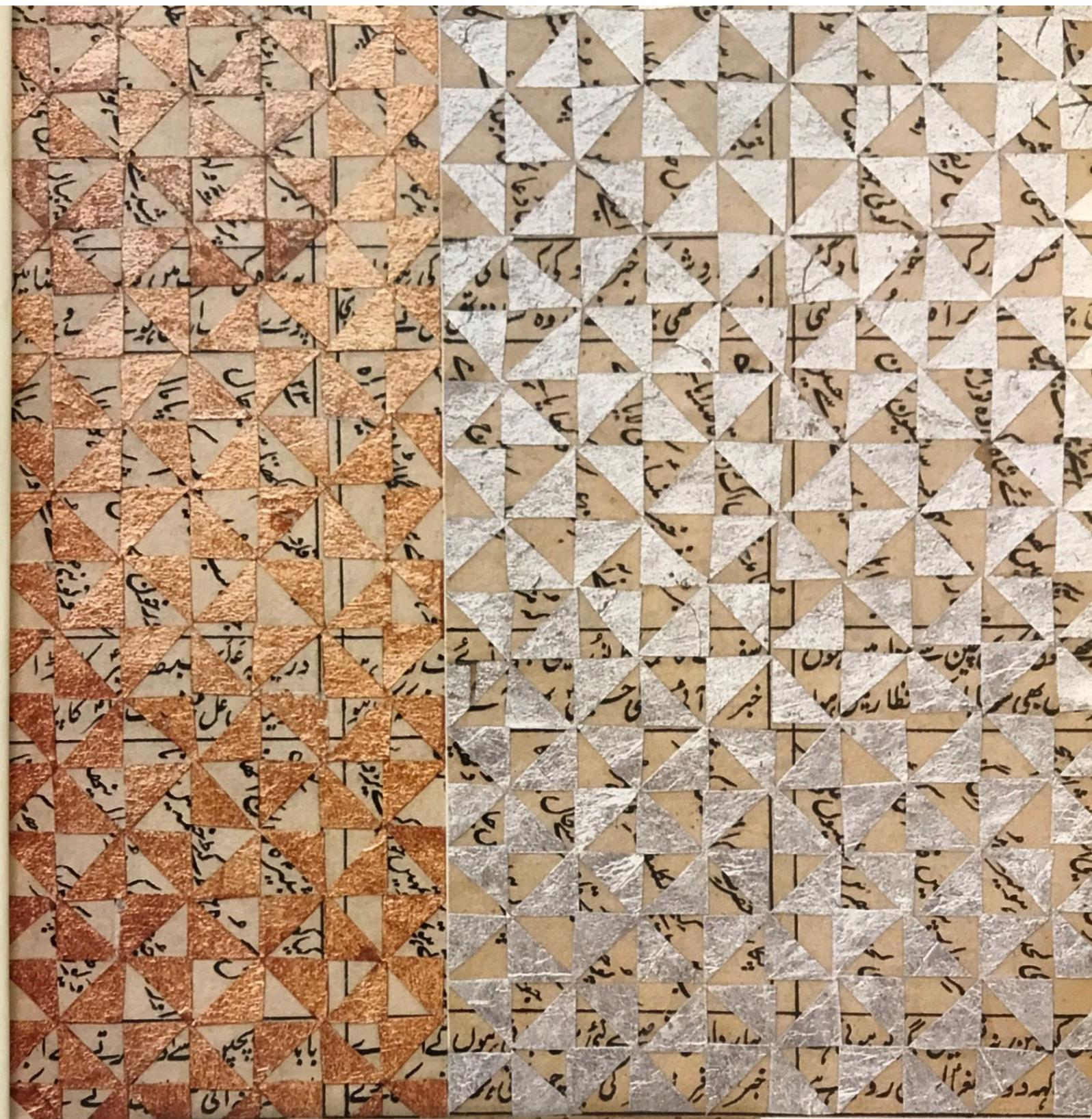
human nature. The decision to arrange the works beginning with paintings that were 'easy on the eye,' such as calligraphy, still life or portraiture, ensured that the viewer was not immediately burdened by images that might be difficult to comprehend. The postcards, sandwiched between sheets of Perspex, were displayed in the form of a bound tablet whose 'pages' could be turned, or hung so that they could be turned and viewed from both sides.

To date, the exhibition has been shown at five of the nine intended Islamabad venues: the National Library, the Islamabad Stock Exchange, the School of Art, Design and Architecture at NUST; and two local schools, the Federal Government School for Boys in Chak Shahzad and the private Mashaal School

for street children in Nurpur Shahan, where due to space constraints only a part of the collection was shown. Karachi artist Syed Akber Ali Shah, who visited the exhibition at the Stock Exchange, volunteered to conduct an interactive discussion with the children and painted a mural on the school wall.

*Opening Lines* is a first step in a process that will require additional exhibitions to continue in developing a sensibility for art. This particular venture, in which the artists were given complete freedom, demonstrates their commitment to produce spontaneous works that have so far received an appreciative audience. Moreover, while its architect recognizes that art will always be associated with money, it is possible to present it in a non-commercial venue with the hope that besides the educative aspect, it will prove to revive the spirit of tolerance. With minimal sponsorship in the form of funding for the catalogue from the British Council and archiving and storage assistance from the Alliance Francaise, it affirms the ability of the individual to contribute to a movement. ■





CATALOGUE

# Faiz Art Prize



# Postcards to Faiz

**Faiz Art Prize** brings together two popular cultural expressions, visual art and literature, through the philosophy of the internationally renowned poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, to commemorate his Birth Centenary in 2011.

The central idea is to emphasize the relevance of Faizian philosophy to our times and connect artists to the poet's message of social justice and human rights as key components of societal harmony and grassroots development.

The Faiz Art Prize is a collaborative initiative of Progressive Writers Association, NuktaArt and Aman ki Asha. It consists of two tiers with three prizes in each category. The first category is for professional artists and the second for art students. Two entries in each category will be selected by a distinguished jury and the Popular Prize will be selected by visitors to the exhibition.

All artists and art students have been sent specially printed A-4 size postcards to create a visual message to Faiz. These have been sent out to the art community in Pakistan and India and the Diaspora, wherever Faiz is extensively read and appreciated. NuktaArt was responsible for the distribution of postcards in Pakistan and the Times of India under the umbrella of Aman ki Asha facilitated the same in India.

A special award with a history connected to Faiz Ahmed Faiz has been created by the country's leading sculptor **Shahid Sajjad**. This will be awarded to artists.

Cash prizes would be awarded to art students with outstanding entries to help them establish their art practice.

Many galleries and art institutions came on board and extended their support to this initiative. In Karachi, Chawkandi Art and V M Gallery, Zahoour Akhlaq Gallery and Rohtas2 in Lahore, and the National Art Gallery, and Nomad and Khaas Gallery in Islamabad became the main centers for distribution and collection for the entries.

To engage a larger group of younger artists who found it difficult to engage with the poetry of Faiz, workshops were held in Karachi and Islamabad. Well known literary figures Harris Khalique at Kuch Khaas and Salim Jafri at Alliance Francaise in Karachi discussed Faiz with the participants and answered their queries. Regular articles in Jang and News have created a general awareness of the Faiz Art Prize during the last few months. A short documentary on the potters of Yarak was made by Geo.

The Faiz Art Prize was received with enthusiasm and entries have been received from artists and art students from Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Multan, Peshawar, Jamshoro in Pakistan and cities in India, Canada, Australia, UK, USA.

All the entries to the Faiz Art Prize will be installed in a specially designed space by one of Pakistan's leading architect, **Habib Fida Ali**, at Gallerie Sadequain in Frere Hall, Karachi. The exhibition will be open to the public from Tuesday 4 to Friday 7 October 2011.

The exhibition has an extensive outreach program designed to engage school students with various dimensions of this project. A series of gallery talks have been organized for art students and visitors. A day-long seminar on Literature and Visual Art will also be held.

Visitors to the exhibition will select one Popular Prize in each category via a secret ballot which will be opened on the last day by the jurors.

On October 8 and 9, 2011, the following jurors will select the prize winning awards:

**Mussarrat Nahid Imam**, Director National Art Gallery, Islamabad

**Naazish Ataullah**, artist, curator and former Principal of the National College of Arts, Lahore

**Akram Dost Baloch**, artist and former Chairman Fine Arts Dept, University of Balochistan, Quetta

**Saqib Hanif**, art critic and former Editor of Herald, Karachi

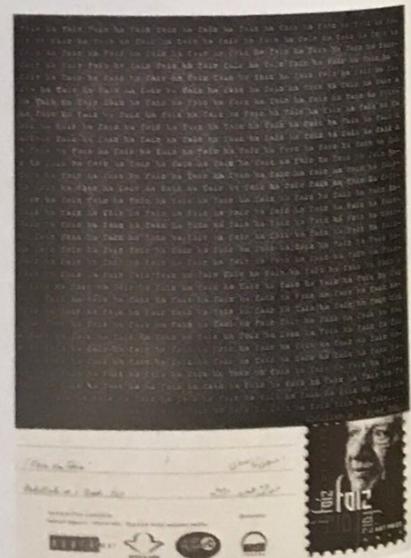
**Tariq Rangoonwala**, collector, Karachi

On the evening of October 9, 2011 in a ceremony the Faiz Art Prize will be awarded by **Salima Hashmi** and **Muneza Hashmi**, the daughters of Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

The last part of the event will be the auction and sale of Faiz Art Prize entries to raise funds for the re-building of homes and workshops at the potters' cluster of **Yarak** near **Dera Ismail Khan**, which was destroyed during the 2010 floods in Pakistan.



Abbas Ali



Abdullah M.I. Syed





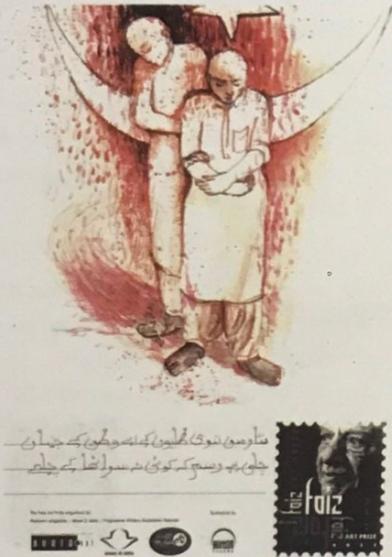
Amin Rehman



Amina Cheema



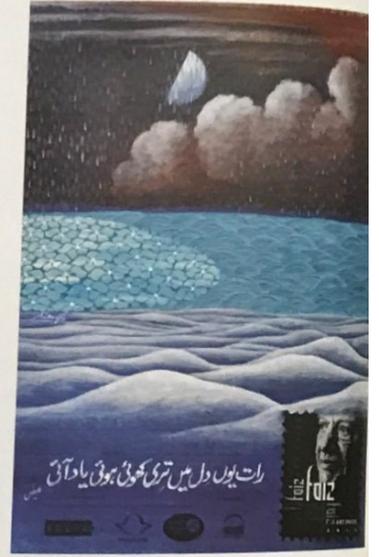
Anila Zulfiqar



A. Q. Arif



Aqsa Malik



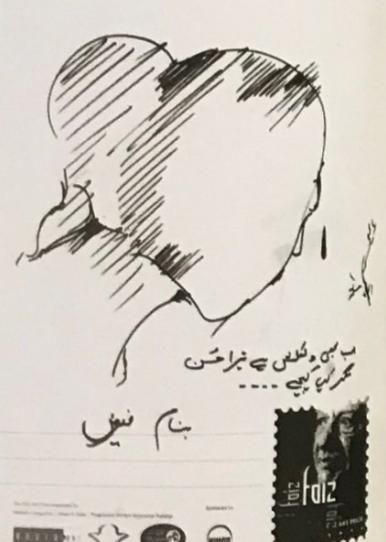
Aqeel Solangi



Asad Hayee



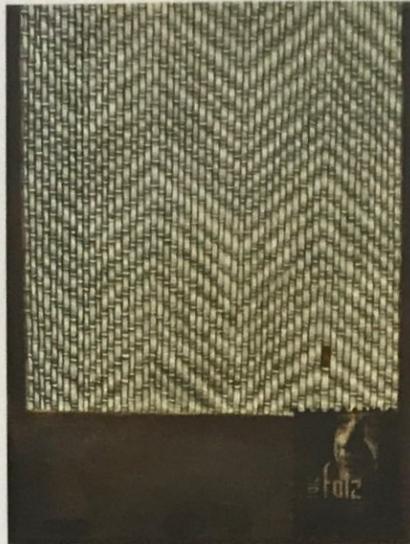
Asma Arshad Mahmood



Assaad Sallahuddin



Fahad Hameed



Fahim Rao



Fauzia Minallah

## MESSAGE

As we celebrate the centenary of one of the greatest poets of the subcontinent - Faiz Ahmed Faiz - it is most appropriate that NuktaArt, the Progressive Writers Association and Aman ki Asha should collaborate not just to pay him tribute, but also to create a lasting monument in his name by re-building, and dedicating to him, a village devastated by the recent floods.

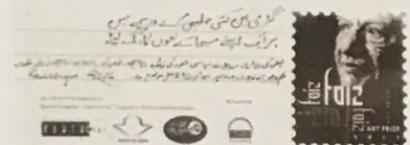
Aman ki Asha, a joint initiative by the two largest media groups of Pakistan and India - the Jang group and the Times of India - seeks to promote peace between the two countries. Since the poetry of Faiz campaigned so forcefully against repressive forces and spoke so eloquently for peace, brotherhood and love, I can think of no more fitting tribute to the great poet than for the artists of India and Pakistan to create art dedicated to his poetry and for that art to raise funds with which an entire village can be re-created. As I understand it, the village is home to some great artisans and they will rebuild it as a model artisans' village using their own craft and indigenous resources of the area.

Aman ki Asha and the Jang group feel privileged to partner with NuktaArt and the Progressive Writers Association in this wonderful endeavor. The willingness, indeed joy, with which the three organizations as well as artists from India and Pakistan have participated in this event bears testimony to the admiration, respect and love that Faiz enjoys amongst all sectors of the society.

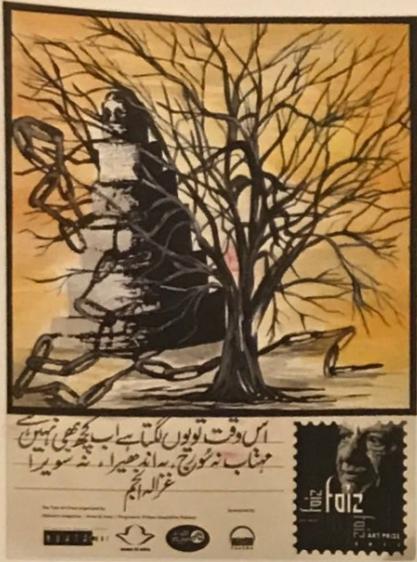
On behalf of the Jang Group and the Aman ki Asha team I would like to thank NuktaArt and the Progressive Writers Association for this wonderful initiative - clearly a labor of love. I hope that we can do justice to the great ideals that Faiz and his poetry stood for.

### Shahrukh Hasan

Group Managing Director  
Jang Group



Ghalib Baqar



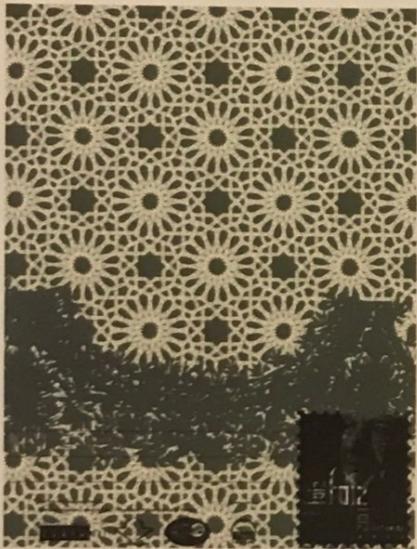
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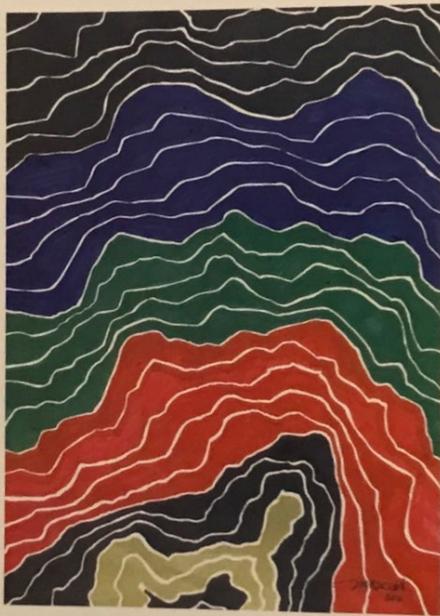
Gulnoori Ghani



Haider Ali Jan



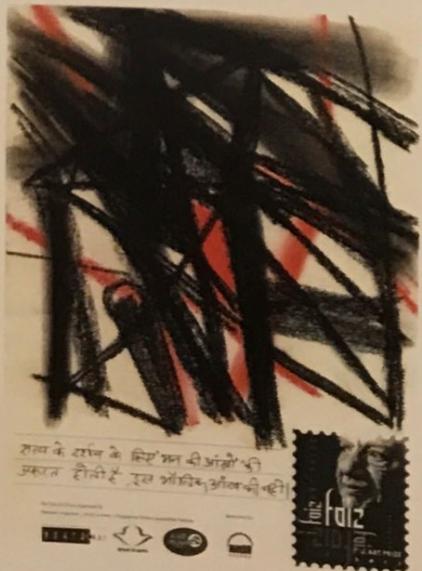
Hamra Abbas



Hasnat Mehmood, diptych



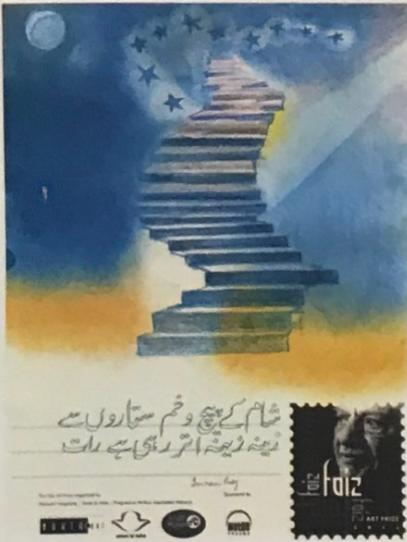
Hawra Harianawala



Hukum Lal Verma



Ilona Yusuf



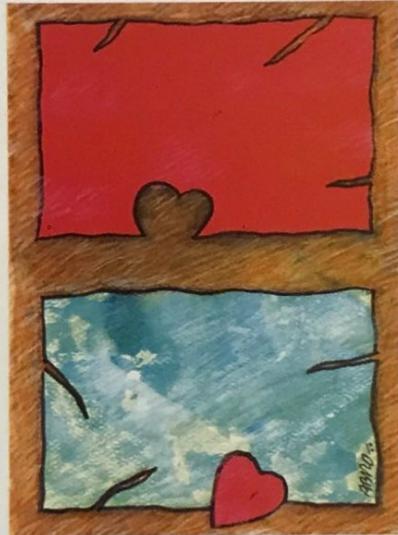
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Jibran Hussain



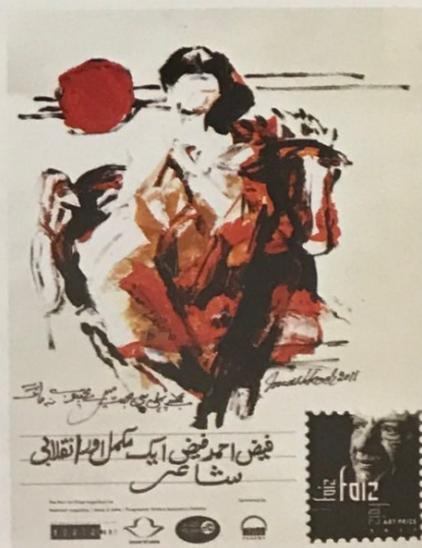
Kahkashan Jafri



Khuda Bux Abro



Maliha Azami Aga



Mashkoor Raza

## MESSAGE

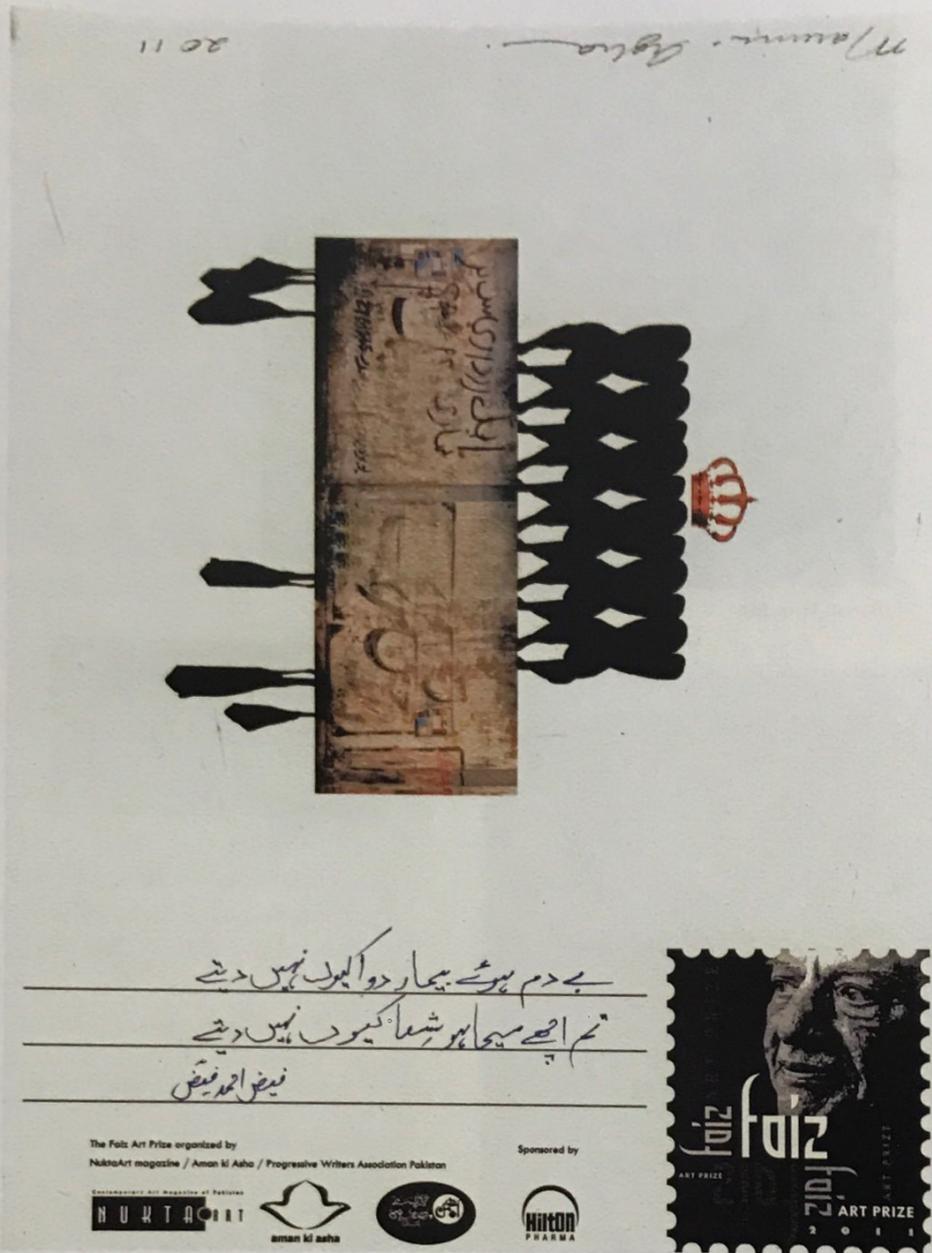
Art in Pakistan is either frowned upon or considered the fashionable preserve of the nouveau riche. The NuktaArt team, therefore, merit our deepest appreciation for not only publishing NuktaArt, but for also courageously persevering in this labor of love.

Creativity that is inherent to man's nature can be seen in the fascinating art and culture of ancient civilizations, that reveal his need to be creative and appreciate beauty in all its manifestations. This creative dimension, that distinguishes him as 'Ashraf-ul-Makhlooqat' (superior being), is also reflected in the poetry and person of Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

To pay tribute to this iconic poet on his Birth Centenary, celebrations were spearheaded worldwide by Progressive Writers Association in 2011. In this connection when I suggested to NuktaArt, sometime last year to invite artists to interpret Faiz's poetry, they responded with the Faiz Art Prize. I am hopeful that the efforts of the participating artists will be widely valued.

**Rahat Saeed**

Secretary, Progressive Writers Association



Marium Agha



Meher Afroz



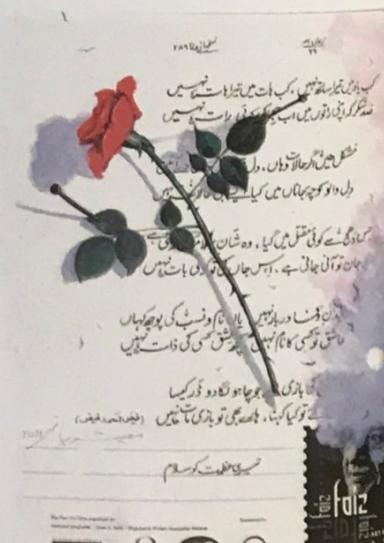
Moeen Faruqi



Mohammad Arif Khan



Mohammad Yusuf



Mugheez Riaz



Munawar Ali Syed



Nadir Ali

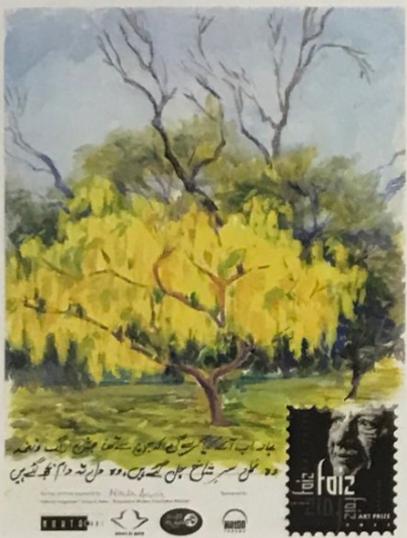
# MESSAGE

I love beautiful names. Faiz Ahmed Faiz is one. It has a lilt to it. A musical quality just like his poetry.

This show "Faiz Art Prize" for which I had the pleasure to do the exhibition design, is based on works of artists from all over Pakistan. This body of work addresses Faiz Sahib's literary contributions that focus on a philosophy of love for humanity and beauty.

Faiz Sahib said that poetry is not only about seeing but it is also a struggle. One's participation according to one's ability is not only a demand of life it is also a demand of art.

**Habib Fida Ali**



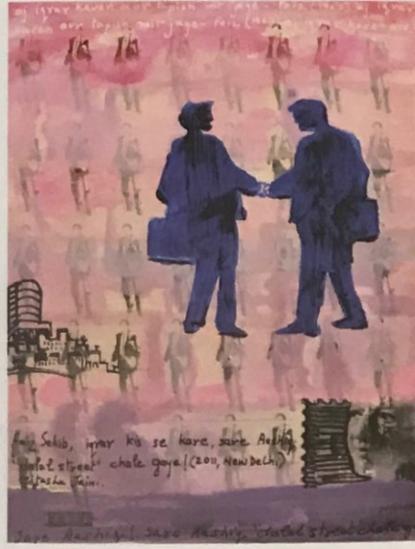
Naila Aamir



Naz Ikramullah



Naima Dadabhyo



Nitasha Jaini



Priyanka Kuchhal



Rabia Tahmina Shoaib



Rafique Ahmad Feica



Raza ur Rehman



Dr. Rahat Naveed Masud



Riffat Alvi



Roohi S. Ahmed



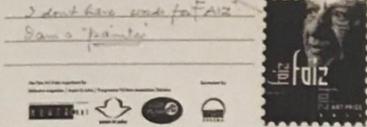
Ruby Chishti



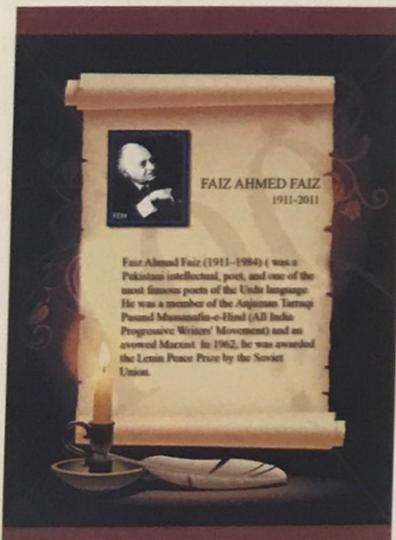
Sabah Hussain



Sadia Jamal



Saeed Akhtar



Sabeen Naeem



Sahyra Qamar Sultan

MESSAGE



Shahid Sajjad ( in a floral print shirt) with Faiz Ahmed Faiz ( in a suit) at the inauguration of the sculptor's exhibition.

Even though I had come across him several times but the first time I closely interacted with Dr Salimuzzaman Siddiqui was at my one-person show at Atelier BM, in 1978. At the exhibition I remember being busy with a PTV producer, who was filming the show when Dr Salimuzzaman, who, perhaps on seeing so many sculptures together, and that too in bronze, could not help but comment loudly. The producer promptly invited him to speak about the work for his program. My great regret is that it was never telecast.

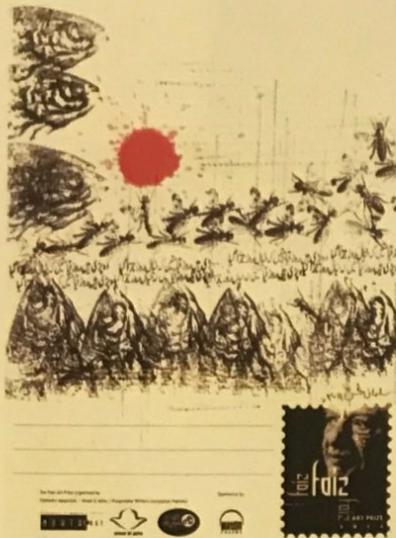
It was only later when I had the opportunity to visit this distinguished man of science, at his residence at the Karachi University that I found a small bronze sculpture in his living room. To my surprise, I learnt that it was done by him, and then I discovered the hidden sculptor in Dr Salimuzzaman and the reason why he could understand my work, the way he did.

When I requested him to let me make an edition of his sculpture for myself, he agreed right away. The eminent scientist was a man of very different order. I always felt in him a human being open to discovering life despite the fact that he was such an authority in his own field.

For the Faiz Art Prize Award I have chosen to do an interpretation of Salimuzzaman's sculpture to pay tribute to two national figures, the great poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz and the eminent scientist Dr Salimuzzaman Siddiqui, who were also very close friends with each other. Someone Faiz admired so much that he chose to name his first born, Salima (Hashmi), after him.

The Faiz Art Prize Award in this way presents another dimension of Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

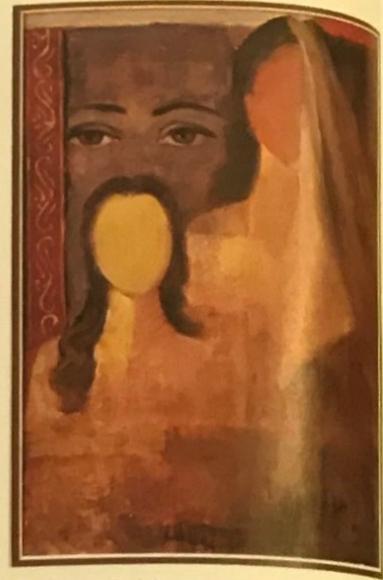
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Salman Hassan



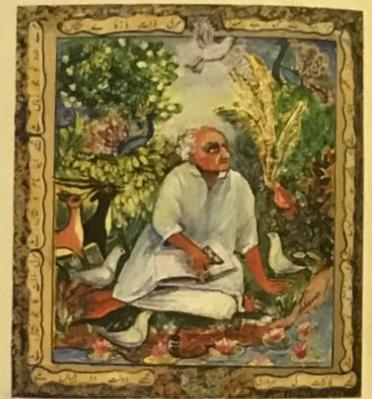
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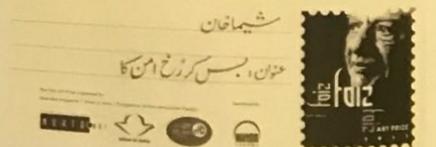
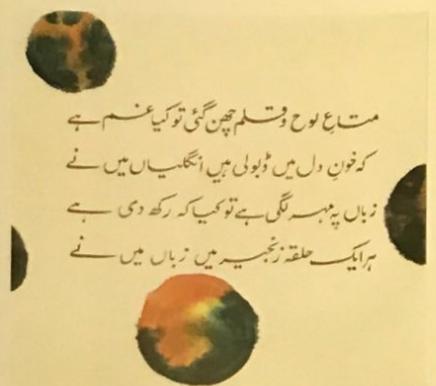
Shakeel Siddiqui



Sheema Khan, diptych



Shamsa Hassan





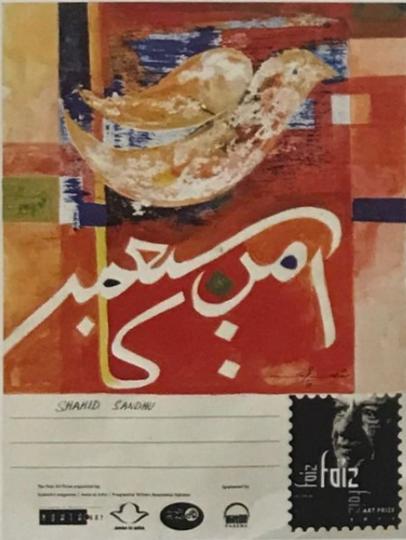
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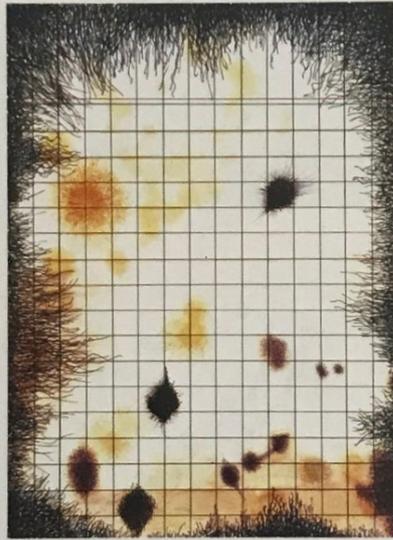
Shehzad Ali



Shehzad Rashdi



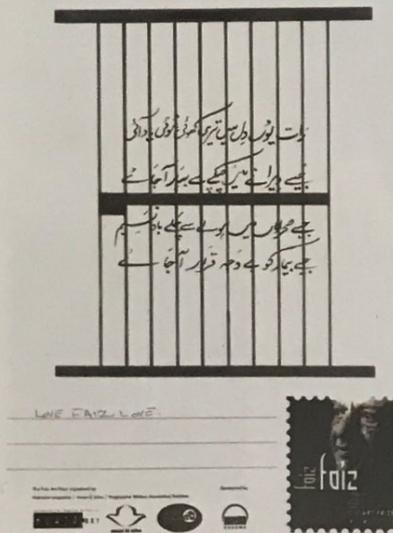
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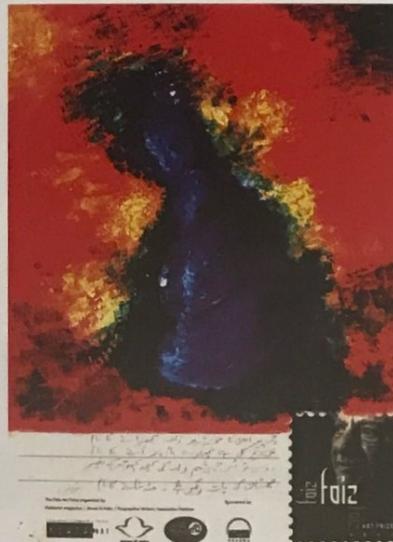
Shiblee Munir



Shireen Ikramullah



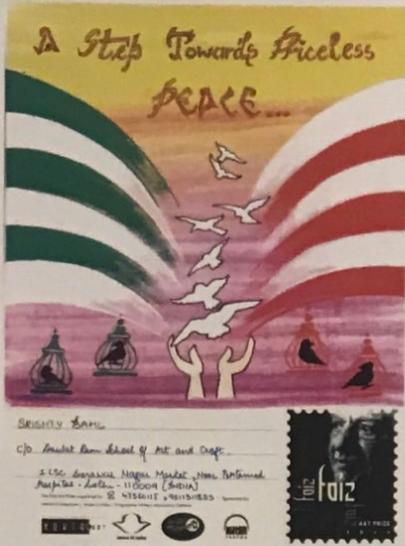
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Sikandar Ali Jogi



S.M. Raza



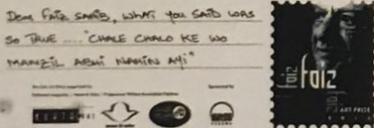
Srishly Bahl



Sumera Jawad



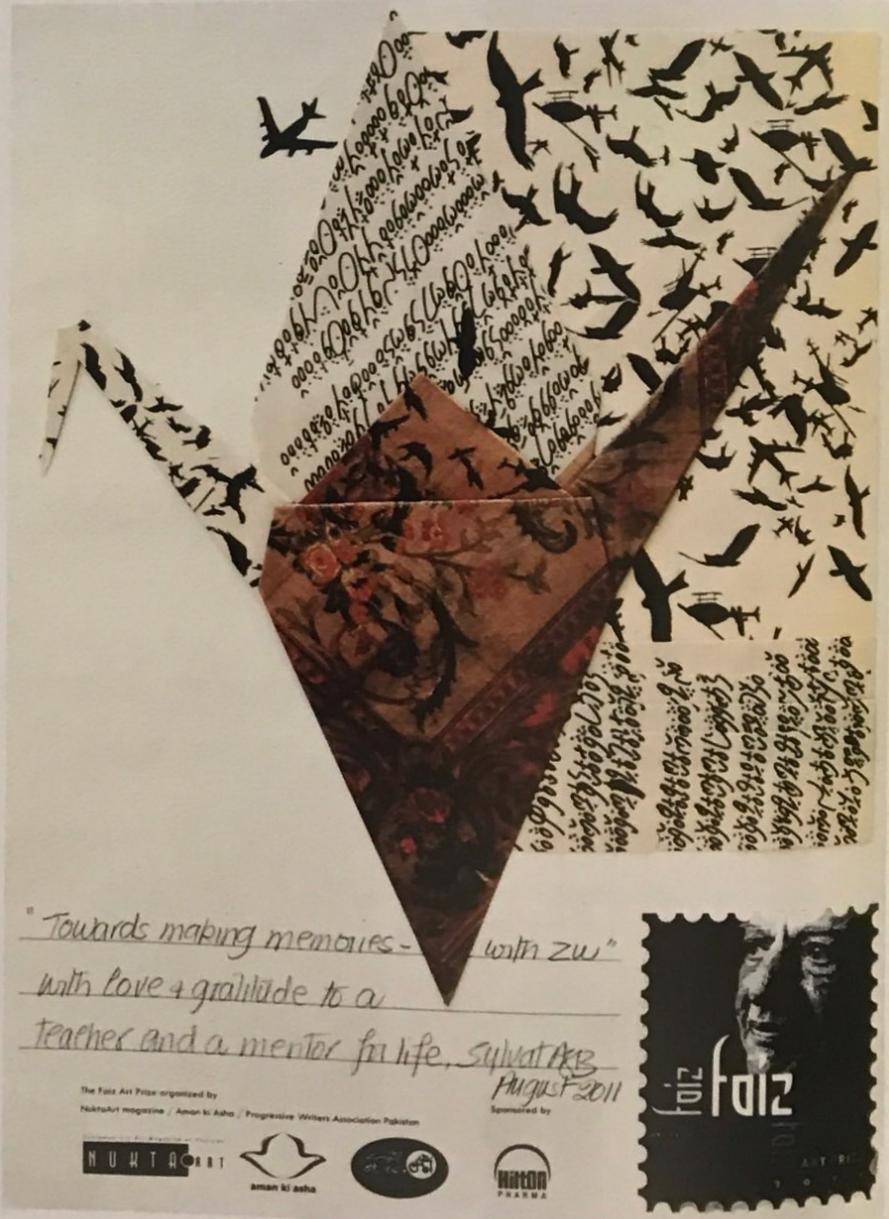
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Tehmina Rashid



Uzma Sultan



Sylvat Aziz



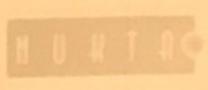




زبان بہ مہر کاں تو کیا کہہ لے  
دل میں لوں سن اظہار میں لے

ان محمد صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم کی آواز

I N S T I T U T I O N S



faiz ART PRIZE

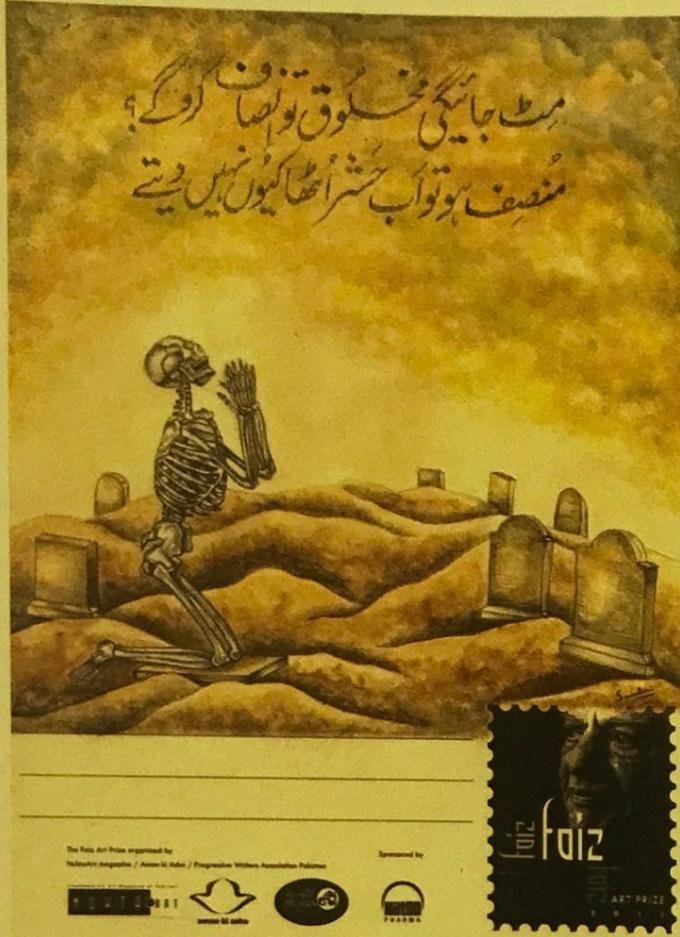


faiz ART PRIZE

2011

# Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University

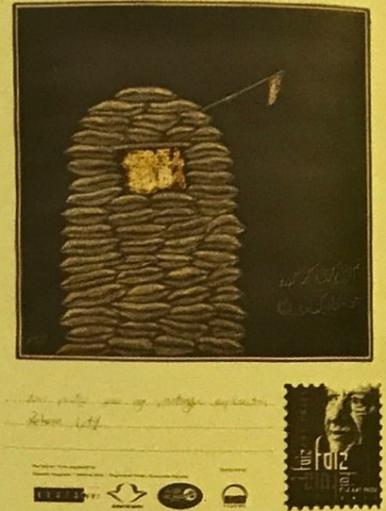
QUETTA



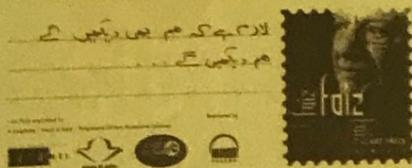
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Rabia Anwer



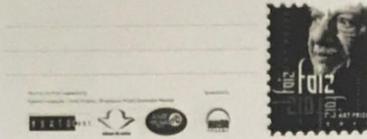
Rehana Latif



Sofia Shahid

# Beaconhouse National University LAHORE

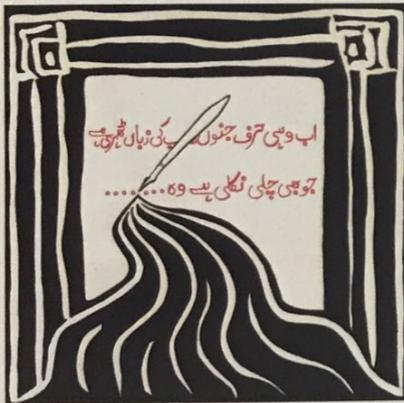
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Women  
University  
RAWALPINDI



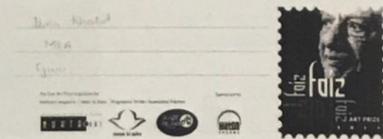
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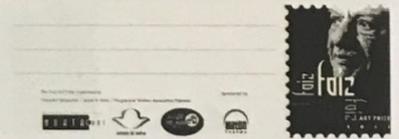
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Amna Irshad



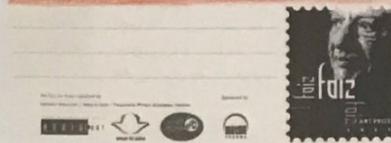
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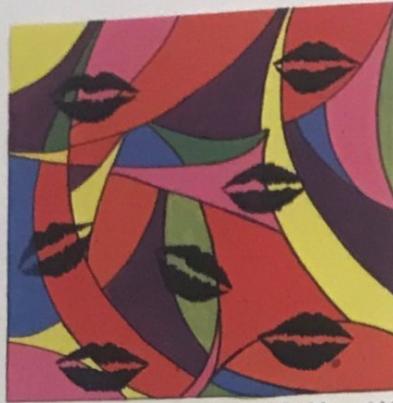
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Meerab Savio



Sadia Sikandar



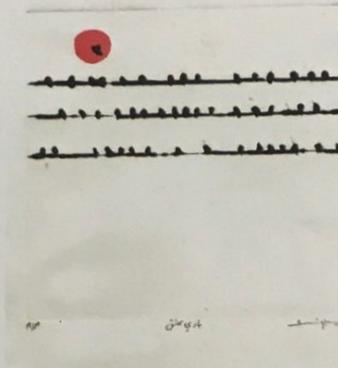
Sana Nasir



Nemat Bibi



Summaiya Latif Awan



Summaiya Khan



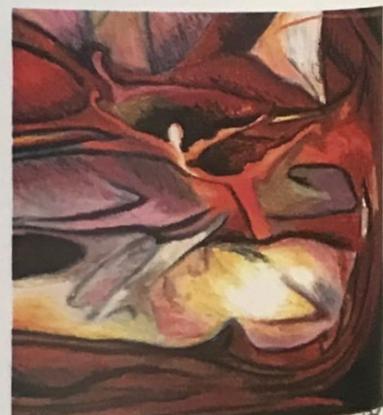
Sumaiya Noor

Punjab University  
LAHORE



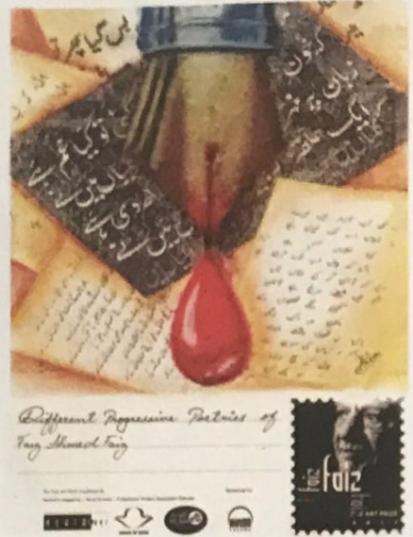
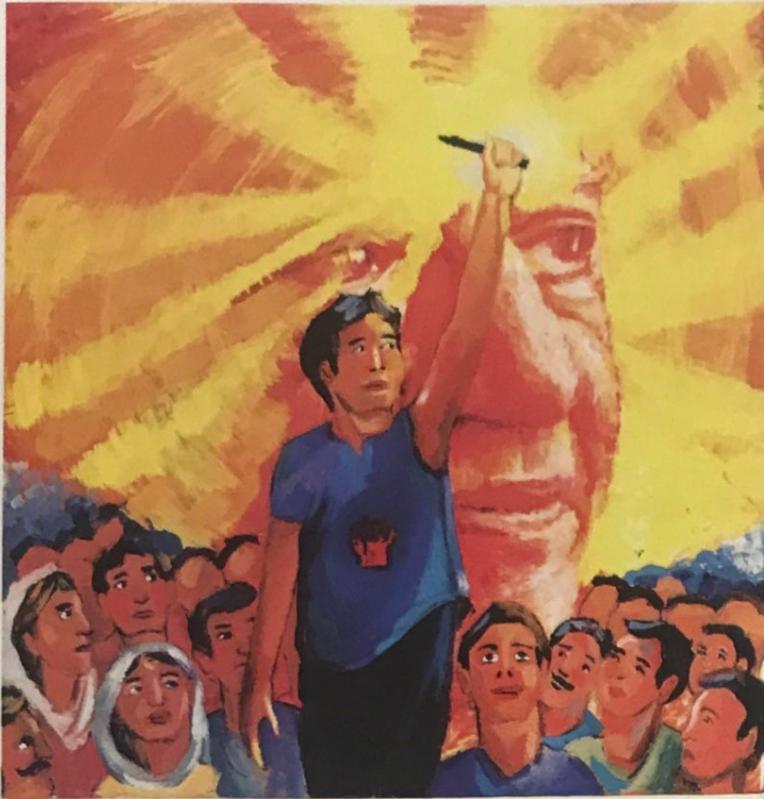
Night weighs so down, it still weighs  
no dream. Friends, come away from  
the false light. Come, we must search for  
the promised dawn.

Aatika Sahar Gondal

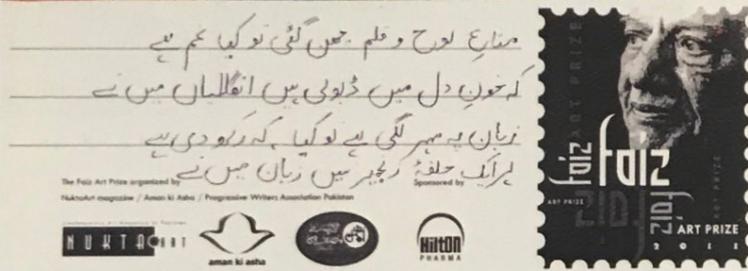


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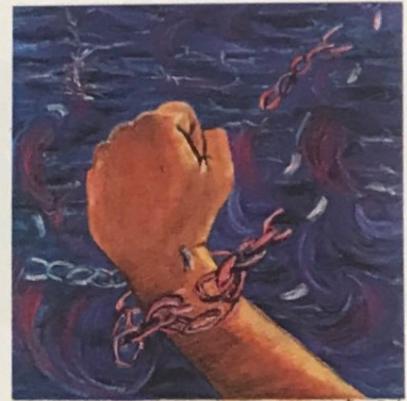
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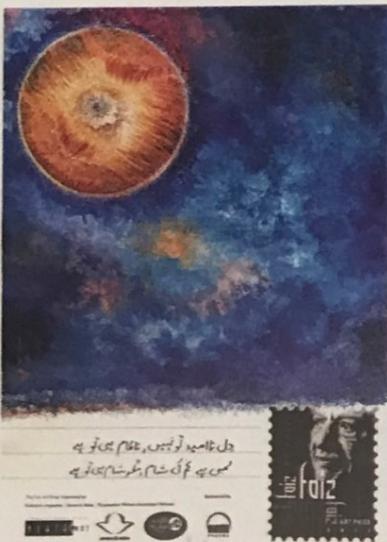
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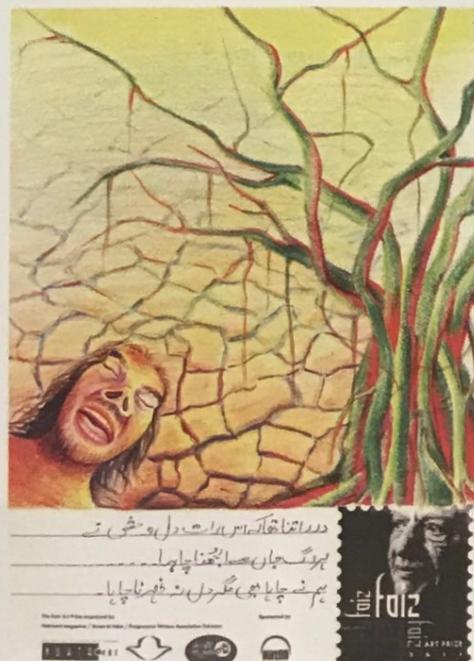
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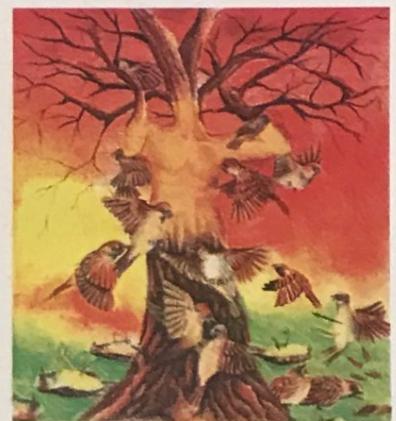
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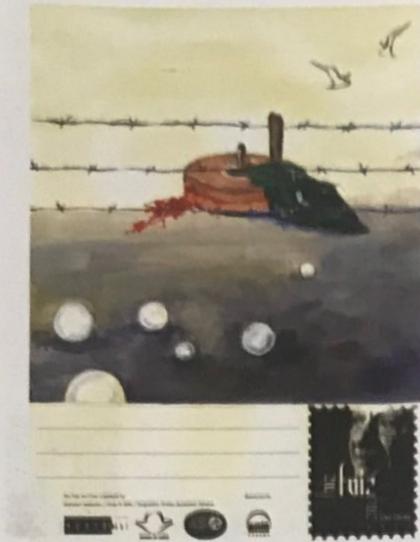
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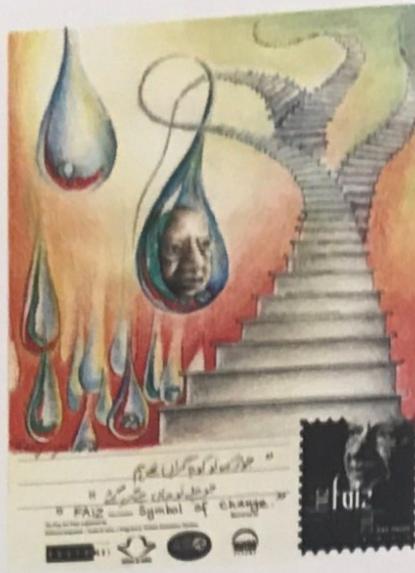
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Palwasha Qayyum



Rabia Shahnawaz



Rakia Raza

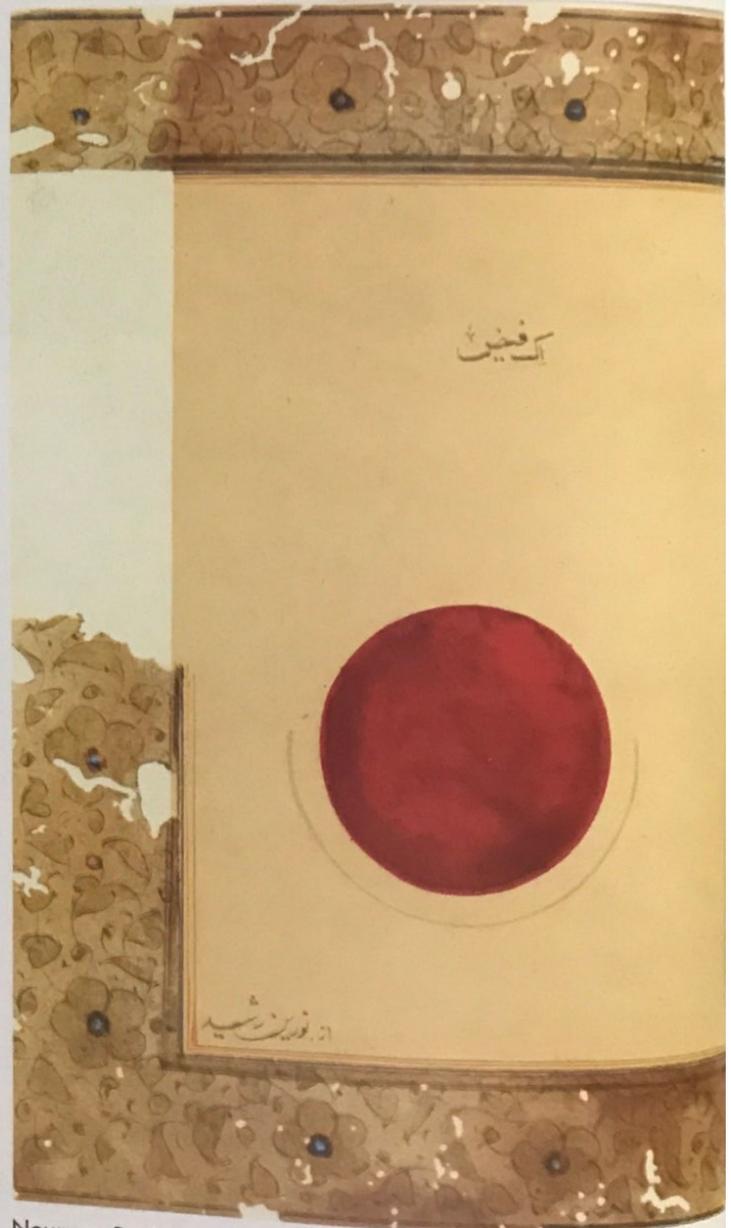


Zohra Tanveer

# National College of Art LAHORE

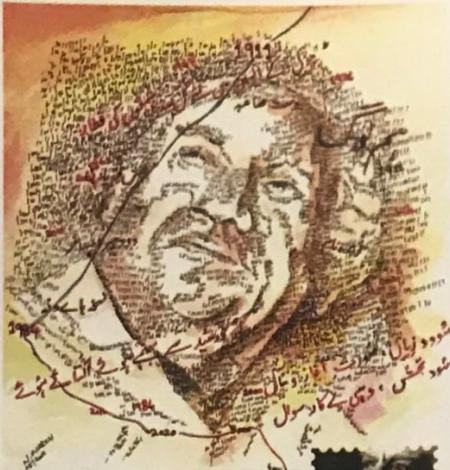


Uzair Amjad

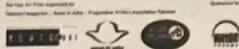


Noureen Rashid

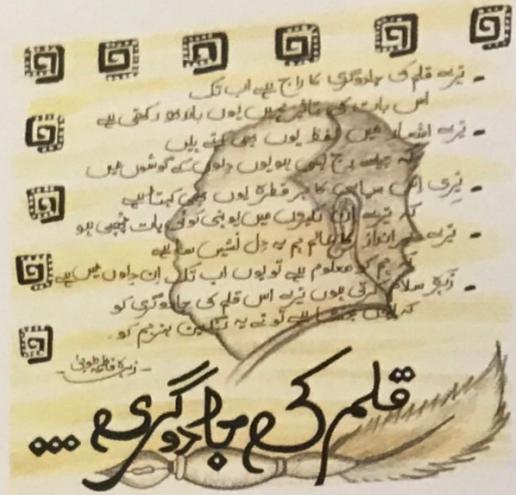




FAIZ AHMED FAIZ is a muse like a Great Thought than a poet.



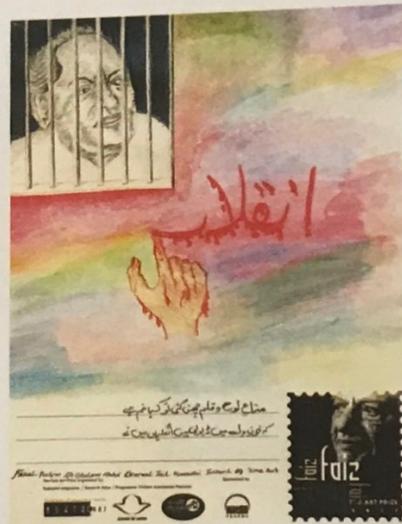
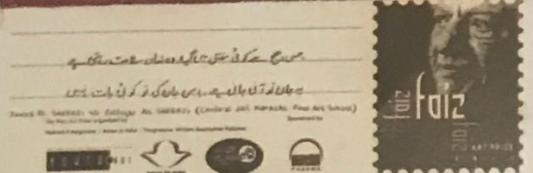
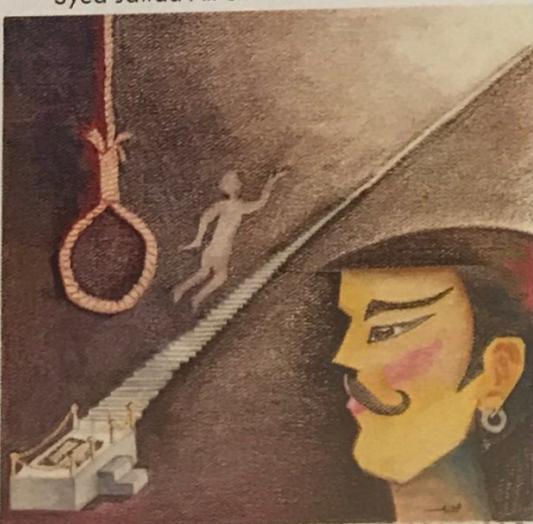
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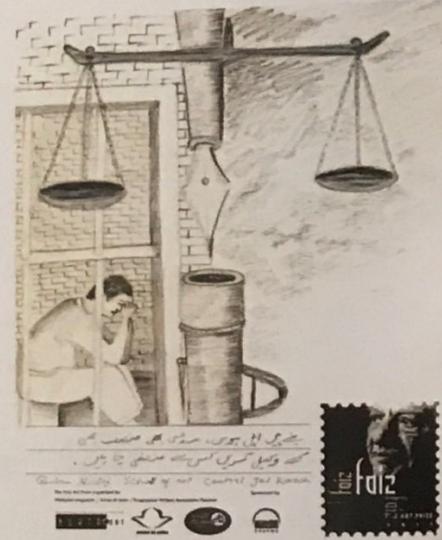
Zehra Fatima Tooba

# School of Fine Art Central Jail KARACHI

Syed Jawad Ali Sherazi



Fazal Rahim



Ghulam Mustafa



Moosa Bacha



Sayyad Kazim Naqvi

# University Of Sindh JAMSHORO



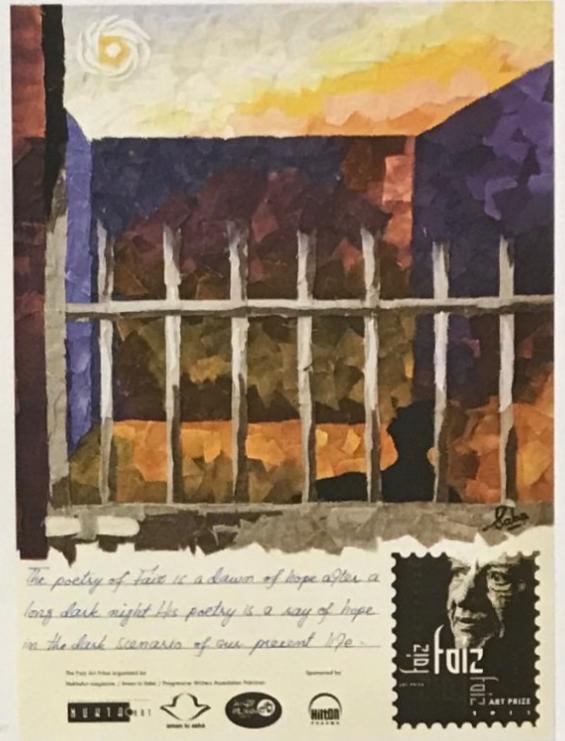
Humaira Baloch



Hinna Naz



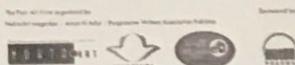
Mehwish Gul



Saba Qayoom Leghari

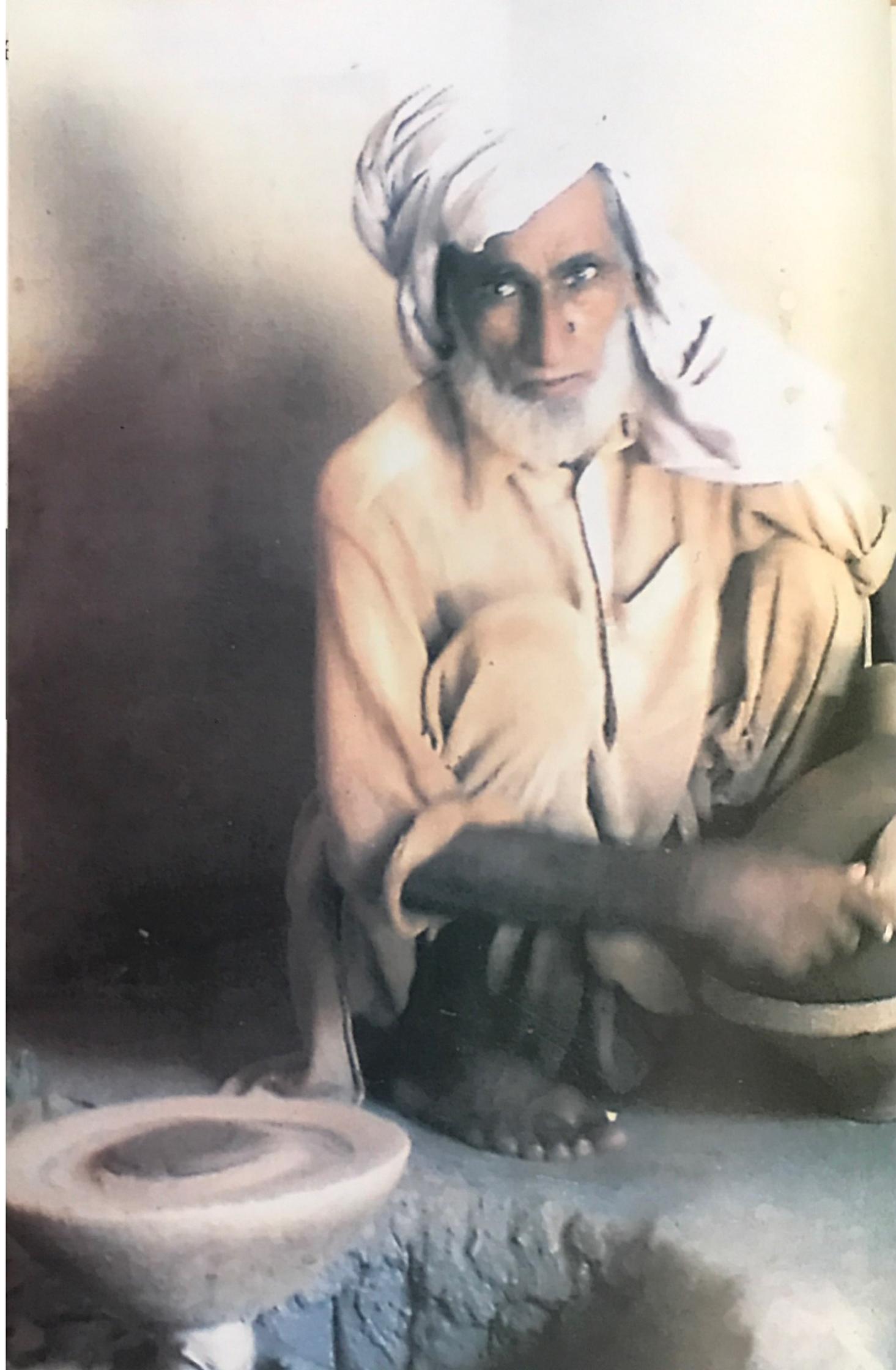


Your words, a human hearts dilemma.  
"There are sorrows in this world, comforts other than love"



Neha Grewal

# Jamia Millia Islamia University NEW DELHI - INDIA





Faiz Art Prize  
Artists to

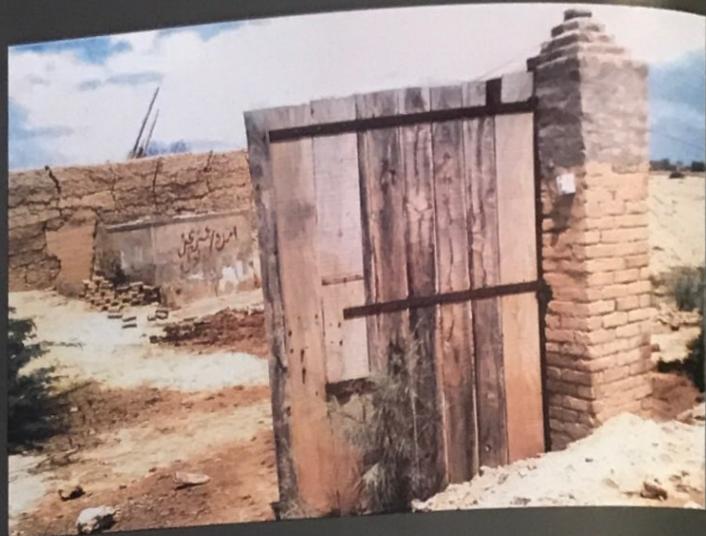
Rebuild  
Ancient  
Yarak

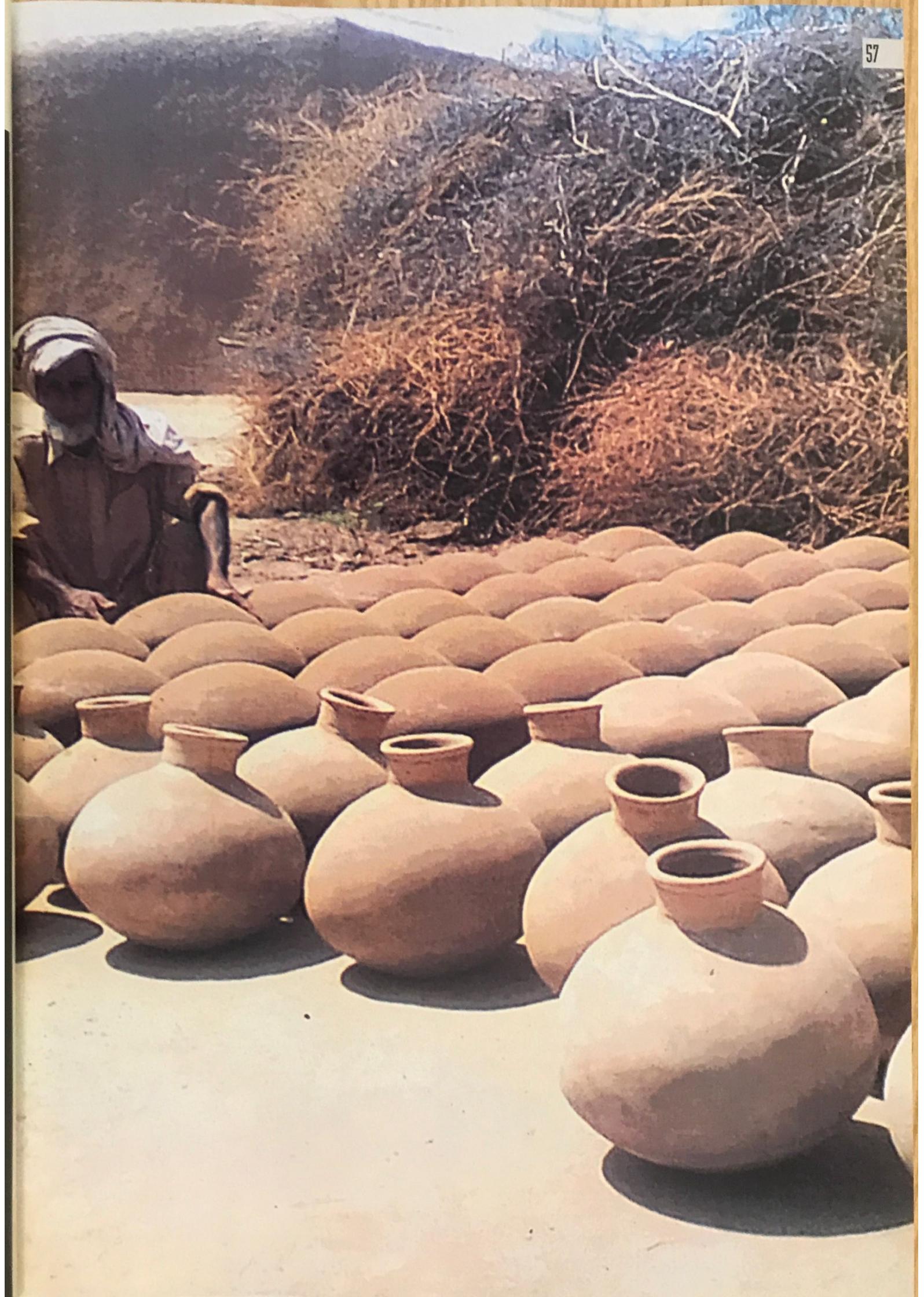
At the foot of the Sulaiman Mountain Range is located the ancient settlement of Yarak where a small community of potters have lived for over seven generations.

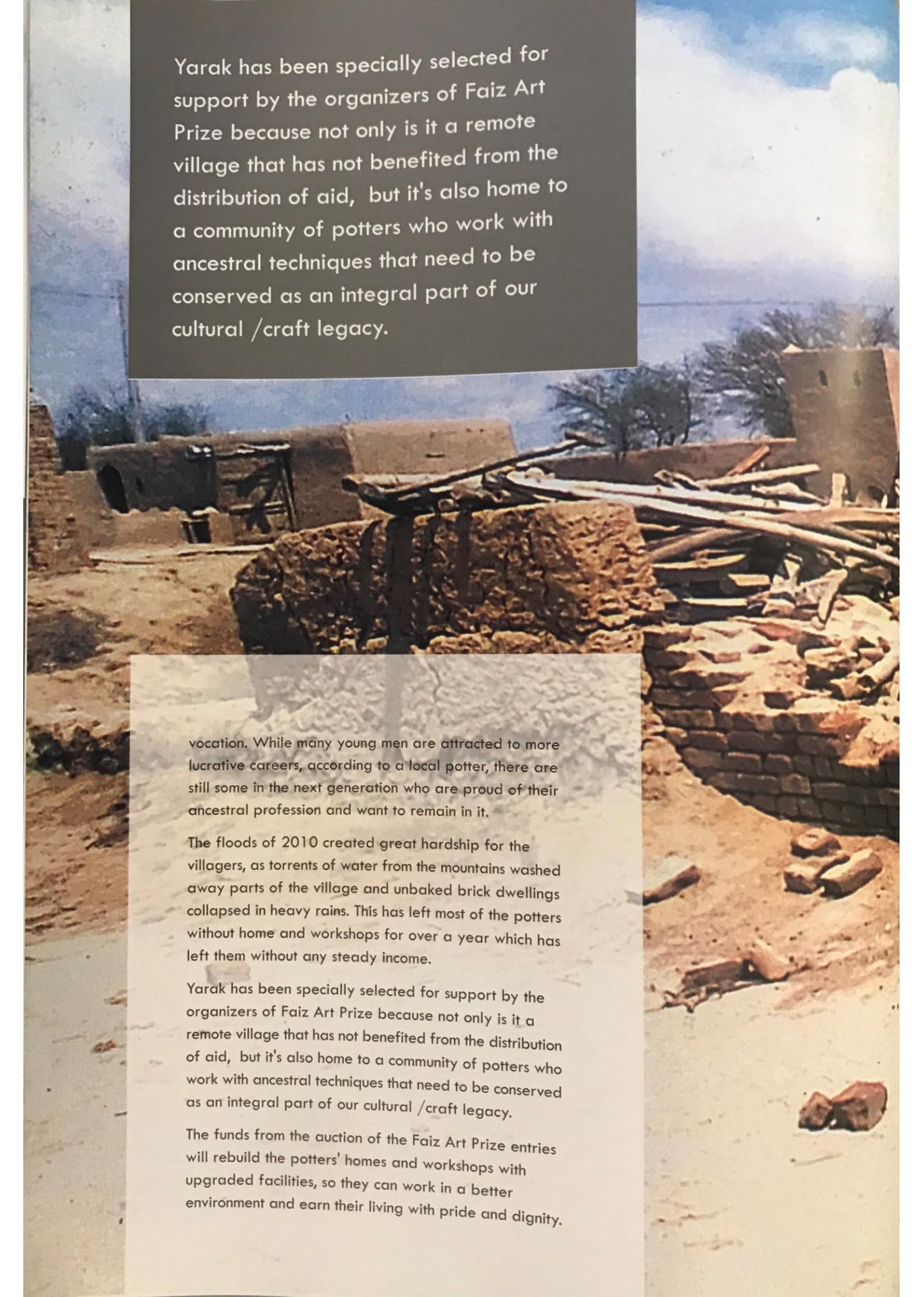
Yarak has 10,000 residents, out of which 44 households belong to potters whose livelihood depends on making and selling utilitarian pottery. Due to poverty and limited interaction with the outside world, the potters of this isolated village continue to use the age-old techniques of their ancestors to make rugged water pitchers that are in great demand in the mountain valleys.

In this arid area where water has always been a rare commodity, it's only recently that progress has come to the village in the form of a pipeline. The potters' work is seasonal here, as monsoon and severe winters limits the productive months. Productivity is also low because an average potter in Yarak can only afford one cartload of clay and kindling to fire the wares made from it, in one given year. For the rest of the year, Yarak potters eke out a livelihood by making unfired clay bricks and repairing the clay houses in the village. They collect and sell firewood when no other job is available.

The women folk of the potters' family work alongside the men and help with unskilled tasks like putting out batches of pots to dry in the sun. Children from the potters' families have begun to attend school, which has opened a world beyond their ancestral







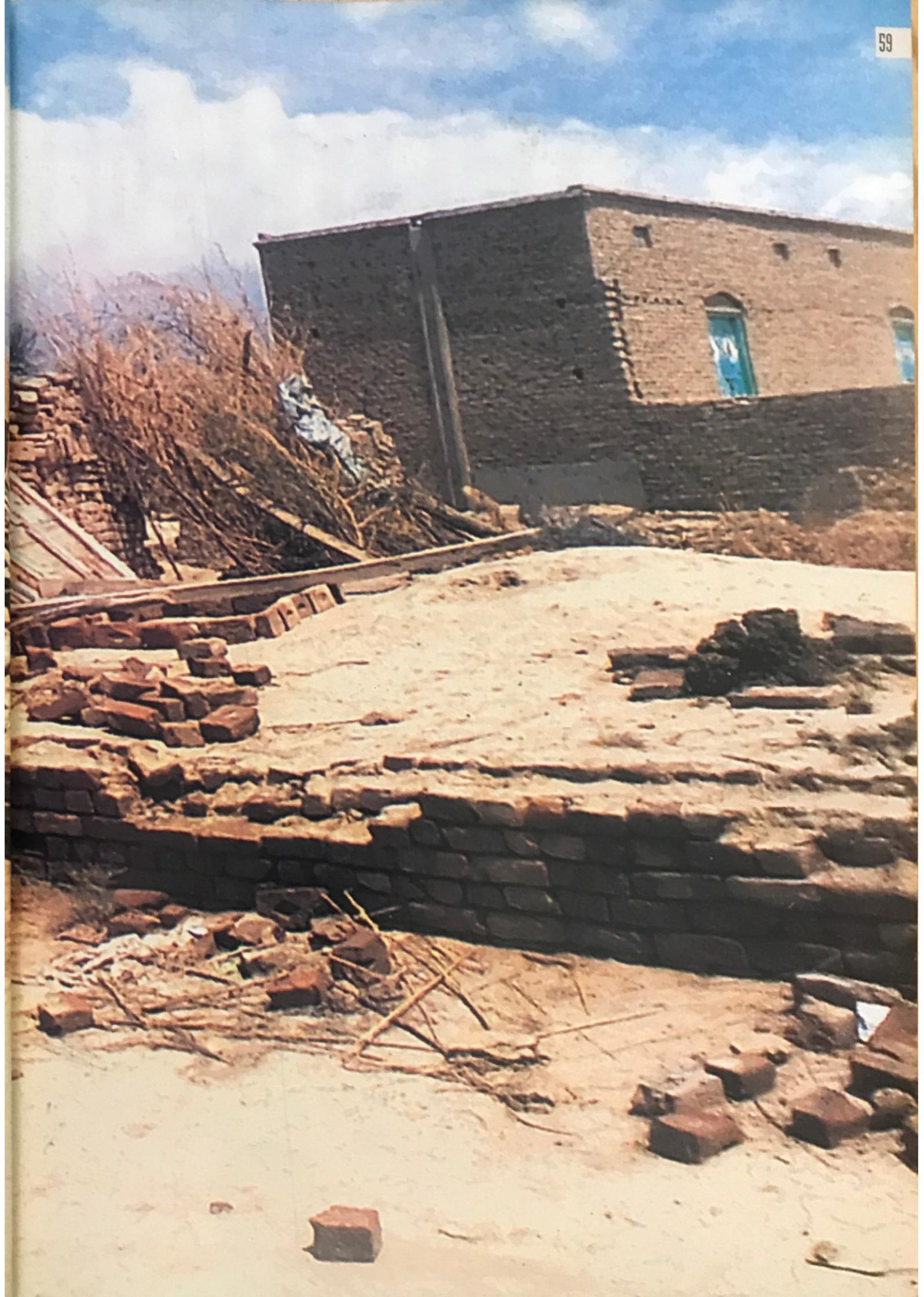
Yarak has been specially selected for support by the organizers of Faiz Art Prize because not only is it a remote village that has not benefited from the distribution of aid, but it's also home to a community of potters who work with ancestral techniques that need to be conserved as an integral part of our cultural /craft legacy.

vocation. While many young men are attracted to more lucrative careers, according to a local potter, there are still some in the next generation who are proud of their ancestral profession and want to remain in it.

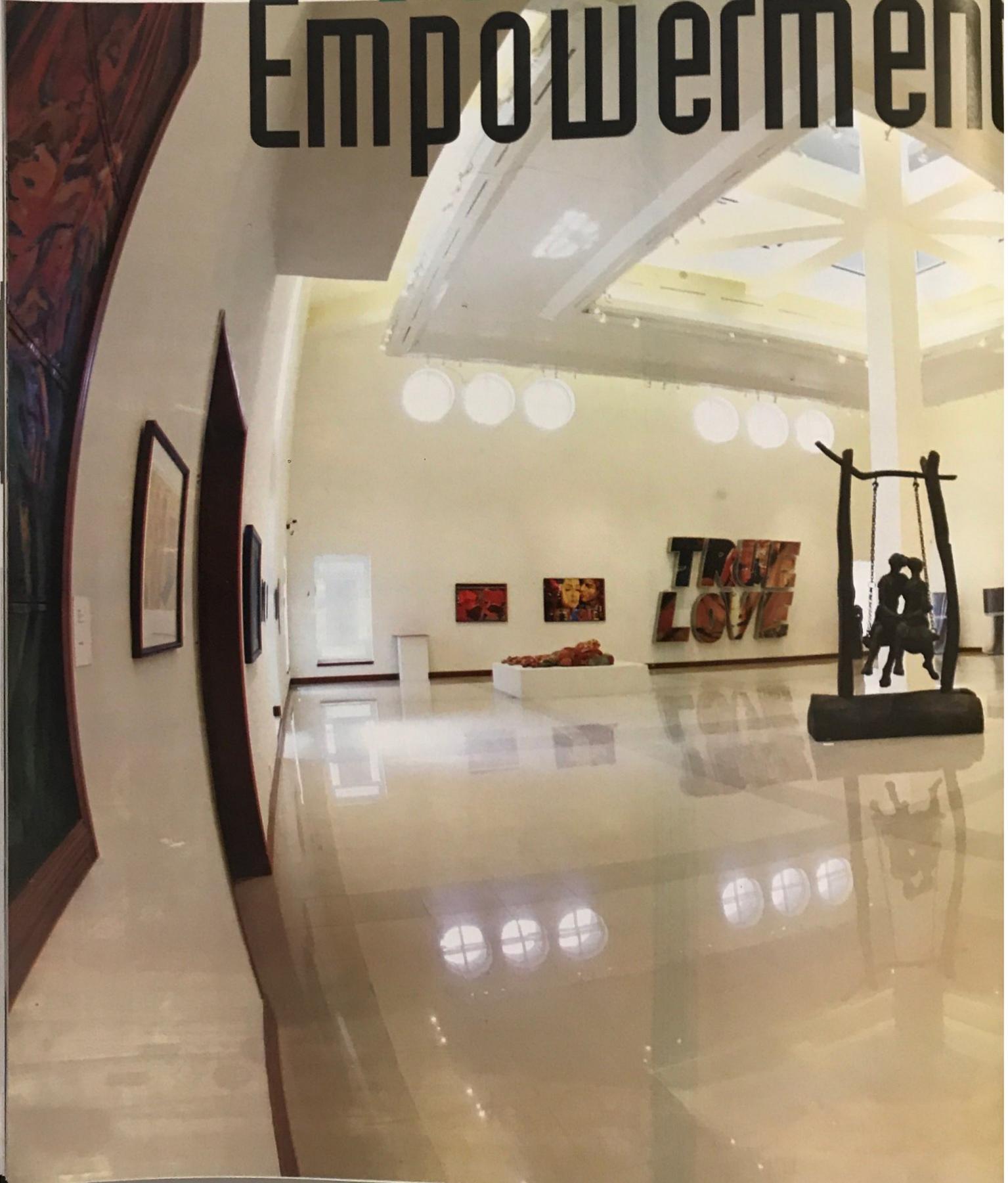
The floods of 2010 created great hardship for the villagers, as torrents of water from the mountains washed away parts of the village and unbaked brick dwellings collapsed in heavy rains. This has left most of the potters without home and workshops for over a year which has left them without any steady income.

Yarak has been specially selected for support by the organizers of Faiz Art Prize because not only is it a remote village that has not benefited from the distribution of aid, but it's also home to a community of potters who work with ancestral techniques that need to be conserved as an integral part of our cultural /craft legacy.

The funds from the auction of the Faiz Art Prize entries will rebuild the potters' homes and workshops with upgraded facilities, so they can work in a better environment and earn their living with pride and dignity.



# Terms of Empowerment



National Art Gallery, Islamabad

## Zahra Malkani

The past decade saw much hype around the increased presence of Pakistani art in the international art market. It seemed the world had suddenly woken up to Pakistan's vibrant art scene. Pakistani art was making the rounds in international art exhibits, museum shows and auctions; prices were rising meteorically and there emerged a new class of Pakistani 'global native' artists, traveling around the world, signing on to international galleries, frequenting biennale and art fairs and selling their work at rates unheard of in the local art scene. The romance of cosmopolitanism and internationalism has always been essential to art and Pakistan's sudden explosion on to the international art scene seemed to fit right into the discourses of a globalizing art market. The global contemporary art arena seemed to be a space where Pakistani voices were being heard, Pakistani narratives were being privileged, where Pakistanis were claiming space. Since the recession, however, the euphoria has dwindled and it is worthwhile now, to take stock. To look back at Pakistan's foray into the international art market and to put it in perspective of the dynamics that dictate the terms on which countries like ours enter and exit and inhabit this 'global' art market.

In the prologue to his book, *The Culture Game*, artist and art historian Olu Oguibe reflects on how 'the Western gatekeepers of the contemporary art world' maintain and perpetuate their dominance whilst also maintaining a façade of liberalism and inclusiveness:



"The culture game operates on a number of related levels. There is the systemic, structural level where it is methodologically implemented and perpetuated by contemporary art institutions through acquisitions, programming, criticism, and general discourse. On this level the game may take the form of minimal exhibition allocations for art that comes from a particular province or constituency. Such slots, it appears, are rationed over ten-year periods, and because the opportunity to display is so rare, it becomes the tendency to seek to remedy the situation by consigning all such work to humongous, inchoate, and badly conceived group or period exhibitions, after which heroic gestures institutions return to their regular, clinical programming, satisfied that they have paid their dues. In other words, every ten years over a designated period, there are huge African, Asian or Latin American exhibitions after which the pained rhetoric of institutions becomes, *Well, but we just had an African or Asian or Latin American show!* Having staged the routine decade shows, museums and galleries feel no further obligation to touch any art or artist from these provenances, especially since all the major artists would have had a corner in the continental group fair." (Oguibe 2004, pp. XII.)

The fact that in the past decade Pakistani artists were among the chosen ones tokenized to satisfy diversity requirements as well as the western obsession with the exotic is hardly surprising considering the post-9/11 political climate. The sudden onslaught of interest in the cultural production of Pakistan fully manifested itself in the art market. Sameera Raja, owner of Karachi's Canvas Art gallery, says the escalation in demand for Pakistani art was because 'we were in the news.' 'It was not because of the work,' she says, 'the work was secondary.' Sameera is skeptical of the hype, 'the world woke up to contemporary Pakistani art, gave exposure to 1% of the artists and may have ruined the careers of many more.' Meanwhile, there are also the cases of artists whose careers were ruined upon entering the international market. Sameera talks of how a lot of artists were overpriced in the midst of the hype, 'It is easier to go up,' she says, 'but it is very difficult

to come down'.

It is true that the number of artists who 'made it' in the international market remains insignificant, and the number of artists who managed to maintain momentum, even more so. Even in 'South Asian' auctions, for example, Pakistani works are far outnumbered by Indian art. Oguibe gives some insight into how the issue of numbers plays out in the contemporary art institution:

"Ultimately, things degenerate to a game of numbers: *We had five Africans in the Biennale, seven Chinese, two Southeast Asians, and even two Australian Aborigines. We do our best to ensure that this year's exhibition was representative. What is masked in such a seemingly liberal gesture is that Western artists are seldom subjected to the same game of numbers, unless of course, they too belong outside the mainstream: folk artists, Northwest artists, Native Americans, self-taught artists, prison artists*" (Oguibe 2004, pp. XIII.).

According to Sameera, Pakistani artists were similarly 'slotted into a box.' She points out Rashid Rana as perhaps the only artist who managed to transcend the 'Pakistani Artist' label. But the issue of numbers is not all that is at stake for non-western artists engaging with the international market. Curator and art critic Gerardo Mosquera argues that increasing numbers could only suggest a 'quantitative internationalization' of the art market. The real issue for artists is that of agency, 'the challenge of mutating a hegemonic and restrictive situation toward active and enriching plurality.' (Mosquera 2003, p. 146)

Oguibe speaks similarly of 'the peculiar predicament of artists who come to the global contemporary art arena from backgrounds outside the West only to discover that the most valued attribute required of them is their difference.' (Oguibe 2004, pp. XII.) Pakistani artists exhibiting and selling internationally have clearly not been exempt to this predicament. Despite much discourse on challenging assumptions and breaking stereotypes, the work shown abroad too often seemed to fit right into western frameworks of a violent, bloody Pakistan. Indeed, violence was a running theme, with imagery such as burqas, Kalashnikovs and hand grenades proliferating. The coverage of the work in western media was no different with headlines such as *A Breath of Violence* in the Economist in 2007, or *Pakistani Art: Under the Gun* in Times Magazine in 2010. The role of the neo-miniature movement, in all its exotic glory, in cultivating western interest in the Pakistani art scene is also worth mentioning here.

Indeed, the relationship of the native artist to the international market is a fraught one. The struggle to claim agency and frame oneself on one's own terms feels like a losing battle. The pressure

to show work that exhibits, as Jinoos Taghizadeh put it in his article *Finding the Third Way* for Bidoun Magazine, 'grand narratives of liberation or some sort of exotic political commentary' is fierce and anything one produces is inevitably deeply politicized. Yet with limited opportunities at home it is hardly surprising that Pakistani artists seek to engage with the international market. There is little infrastructure in place to support artists and no patronage. Sameera Raja says the lack of government support is not surprising given the political and economic state of Pakistan but she finds the lack of corporate support to be more problematic, especially in the case of contemporary art. Though corporations will often commission the more traditional painters to fill up their buildings with color coordinated paintings, contemporary art does not receive the same attention. Syed Shehzad, owner of ArtScene gallery says that local collectors mostly seek out aesthetically pleasing works that display skill and only consider conceptual work that has the name of an already established artist attached to it. In such circumstances it is inevitable that contemporary artists would look to the international market for support. In an essay in the catalog for the exhibition *Hanging Fire* at the Asia Society in New York, Quddus Mirza described these artists as 'exiles at home... slowly drifting away from the local art scene'. In an open discussion on the Asia Society website the artist Huma Mulji responded to the quote, saying:

"There is an expectation and a 'market' for what is overtly 'Pakistani' in the work coming out of Pakistan. And by market I mean a critical/curatorial market as well. The unfortunate limitation of this is that Pakistani artists have more opportunity internationally if the work addresses the socio-political /religious turmoil in Pakistan directly. Often, this can be at the cost of a more subtle or poetic gesture.

Most artists will agree that living in Pakistan/South Asia today affords more opportunities to show internationally, and it is much more meaningful to produce work within the context of Pakistan, for most of us. A large number of contemporary artists from Pakistan, showing internationally today, live and show in the country and the work is regularly shown in local galleries as well, although its true more and more, that this is often right before the work is to travel elsewhere."

It has definitely been the case that the increased demand for



Canvas Gallery, Karachi



VM Art Gallery, Karachi



Chawkandi, Karachi

Pakistani art internationally has meant a decrease in access to Pakistani art locally. It is the reproduction of a dynamic we have experienced since colonial times where our resources are co-opted, disappearing from local markets only to be offered back to us at higher prices. Upon analysis the ways in which the old center-periphery model reproduces itself in this new, globalized art world only becomes clearer. To what extent are non-western artists the victims in this case and to what extent are they implicit? In an interview with online magazine *European Alternatives* Rasheed Araeen says:

"cultural globalization' is part of the demand of global capital for continually unending innovation and production of new things, the successful entry of the products of other cultures, with their own different identities, into this scenario has been promoted and legitimized by the postcolonial surrogate class and its intellectuals. It is this collaboration between the center and periphery that has produced the multiculturalism of 'cultural globalization', in which Chinese and Indian artists are now allowed and are celebrated. As both the Chinese and Indian industrial products are integrated into the global capital and its exploitation of globally available cheap labor, the gap between the exploiting center and the exploited periphery has now collapsed into this common goal. And culture is used to cover this up, producing global spectacles of art biennales and art fairs in which the colonial desire and fascination for the Other is put on display and is consumed like any other exotic commodity."

It would be impossible to discuss the globalization of the art market without mentioning the Biennale. The proliferation of Biennales began in the 1990s in the name of transnational engagement and integrating the global art world. 'Biennale art' became a new category, giving rise to concerns of homogenization in the arts:

"the requisite mixing of 'local' and 'global' artists, recurrent themes generalizing the contemporary condition... and a singular, age old display strategy diminish the distinctions between geographically distant events. The paradox, of course, is that the neoliberal model of globalization against which many of these biennales position themselves thrives on and itself produces just such homogenization" (Filipovic 2005, pp. 68)

Pakistani presence at International art fairs and biennales has, thus far, been limited. The Dubai-based art fair Art Dubai had seven galleries showing Pakistani artists' works but only two of those galleries were actually based in Pakistan. Syed Shehzad of Art Scene Gallery says he visits Art Dubai

every year to see the work but could not possibly afford to rent a stall for his gallery. Sameera agrees that the costs are overwhelming for Pakistani gallerists. In an interview with Dawn, Zohra Hussain, Director of Chawkandi Art Gallery, weighs in: "Before Art Dubai the art of this region was not only marginalized but totally ignored in art fairs held in the western capitals". She goes on to say "On the downside, due to high costs involved the galleries tend to showcase works which are commercially viable rather than stimulating works by newcomers. Such participations will undoubtedly raise the price for Pakistani art and bring it closer to international level but with the falling price of the rupee it will soon be out of reach of the local buyer". Thus it seems the local art market, gallerists and buyers, find themselves at a disadvantage in the system, while artists continue to be stuck in a cycle where they are dependant on international art galleries to have their work shown.

Though contemporary art took a hit after the recession, Sameera thinks the reality check that came from the financial crisis was a 'blessing' for the Pakistani art scene. She feels that overall Pakistan's foray into the international art scene was detrimental to Pakistani art. Regarding the question of how to move forward from here she says, "There is no savior but ourselves. Developing the local market is more important than focusing on the global market". Zohra Hussain similarly emphasizes focusing on the local market. Citing the example of India she says, "India has a strong market at home, they are not even bothered to sell their work abroad". For artists as well she advises against being too hasty to enter the international market and emphasizes establishing oneself in the local market first, giving the examples of Ayesha Khalid and Imran Qureshi as two artists who successfully followed that path. Tapping into other emerging markets outside the West such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Dubai is also an option. Zohra says it would be helpful to have more Pakistani curators, gallerists and dealers working abroad and giving more exposure to the art produced locally, as has been the case with India. The question remains though, would this enable us to defy the forces of tokenization and co-option that

are so deeply embedded in the global art arena? Olu Oguibe describes the Western art market as 'ironically...one of the last bastions of backwardness in the West today... an uneven playground, a formidable terrain of difficulty for artists whose backgrounds locate them at the receiving end of intolerance.' (Oguibe 2004, pp. XII.) These are the dynamics that determine what space we are allowed to occupy in the contemporary art world, and how much, and for how long. The global art arena embodies and perpetuates age-old power relations. The best option this leaves us with is to empower ourselves. ■

ArtScene Gallery, Karachi





Simone Wille

# A Global TURN?



Gandhara-art's booth at ArtHK10, Hong Kong International Art Fair, May 2011-Aisha Khalid and Imran Qureshi

Exhibitions, auctions, and markets: How have art galleries and art organizations worked towards opening up new ways of looking at contemporary art from Pakistan? Have curatorial projects informed by artistic practice in Pakistan helped inform global art audiences about artistic diversity? Moreover, since the art world today seems to be less divided between the "international" and the "regional," how pertinent are programs dedicated to the regional or the national cause?

This essay is a first step in following the growing presence of art from Pakistan as it spreads beyond its own borders into North America and Europe and through organizations and galleries that promote Pakistani contemporary art in such a way that it has arguably left behind a lasting impression. This considerable lasting impression must, thus, be scrutinized for its significance in transgressing individual and national expressions, in leading towards a universal or transnational art history.

Geographically oriented towards the East is Gandhara Art, which exhibits a number of Pakistani modernist artists in both Karachi and Hong Kong. Gandhara Art also produces publications and features an online gallery



Talha Rathore, *Traversing Territories-1*, gouache on vasli, 30.5X47cm  
Gandhara Art, Hong Kong, 2008

### Methods of Working

If we look at how an international curator comes to make a choice about who to include in an exhibition, we clearly see that choices are made according to a machinery of validation. A number of platforms are at work: Galleries and museums, opinion-makers in art journals, and numerous awards and residencies, each playing a part in evaluating an artist and his/her work.

In Pakistan, there is a lack of public art institutions and public support for art in general. In the absence of museums, who traditionally take it upon themselves to discover, research, and rationalize and categorize the arts, commercial galleries and not-for-profit arts organizations seem to fill the void. Nevertheless, while commercially run spaces do play an important part in the global art world, their intentions are far from being unbiased. They also have no public service remit, implying that the designation of cultural value at large is at risk of succumbing to

the value of the market rather than cultural or aesthetic values. Having said this, it is not this writer's intention to imply that the designation of cultural values should be in the hands of a public museum alone; especially when there are not any museums. In general, it has to be acknowledged that the entire art crowd, including artists, gallerists, collectors, curators, and scholars, play important roles in making choices about where the future of contemporary art is heading.

Before scrutinizing their programs, let us first assess the difference between an art gallery and an art institution or organization. The former is run as a commercial enterprise and the latter, by definition, is formed to develop and promote an artist's work without the intention of making money. Having said this, one needs to be aware of the fact that the traditional boundary between these two entities has shifted. Funding from sponsors and other bodies are often insufficient to unfold curatorial projects and publish well-designed and edited books. The result is that organizations must also depend on sales, thus incorporating the

commercial side of a gallery. While art institutions and organizations are usually run with a not-for-profit intention, art galleries, on the other hand, are run for profit, with the intention of supporting an artist and his/her career in the production and sale of his/her artworks.

Just as a good museum cannot be "universal," a good gallery or art organization cannot cover an entire country or region even if its declared goal is to present the arts of that country or region. However, an organization such as *SHISHA*, the international agency for contemporary South Asian crafts and visual arts based in Manchester, acts as an influential cultural organization that builds awareness of art from the Subcontinent in Great Britain. With this year's 2nd edition of the Asia Triennial in Manchester, *SHISHA* is clearly transgressing territories, thereby opening up new opportunities for their institutional work as well as situating South Asia and its diaspora in England within the larger Pan-Asian context.

Operating out of Toronto, Canada, *SAVAC* (the South Asian Visual Arts Center) is a not-for-profit and artist-run organization that acts in a similar way to *SHISHA* - networking, developing, and producing exhibitions that build awareness for the arts of the Subcontinent. *SHISHA* and *SAVAC* are both valuable platforms for artists who do not have a gallery representing their work. Nevertheless, what artists today truly need in order to

establish themselves internationally is a gallery representing them. The galleries with a stated goal of representing artists from Pakistan on an international level are Green Cardamom, London; Gandhara-Art, Karachi and Hong Kong; and Grey Noise, Lahore. Green Cardamom operates as both an organization and gallery, and has been successful in advancing the careers of artists from Pakistan and neighboring countries. The gallery has formed strong ties with museums in both Great Britain and the US and has produced well-developed curatorial projects and publications that have a tendency to radiate beyond its gallery artists into a variety of cultures. Having only recently taken on two important modernist artists from Pakistan - Anwar Jalal Shemza and Zahoor ul Akhlaq - and having developed a historical art discourse on both these artists by commissioning texts relating to new research, Green Cardamom is among those organizations and galleries actively partaking in shaping Pakistan's artistic past, present, and future.

Geographically oriented towards the East is Gandhara-Art, which exhibits a number of Pakistani modernist artists in both Karachi and Hong Kong. Gandhara-Art also produces publications and features an online gallery. Located in Lahore is one of Pakistan's youngest galleries, Grey Noise. While it's inherent character for now is to represent young and - for the Pakistani art market - rather experimental art and artists from Pakistan, it has managed to connect with an international art community through some ambitious projects in both Germany and the US.

### Directional Lines and Mechanisms of Division

Apart from institutions and galleries, artists, while at work developing a unique way of looking with local particularities in both form and content, have achieved to produce work that should simply deserve to be called contemporary art!

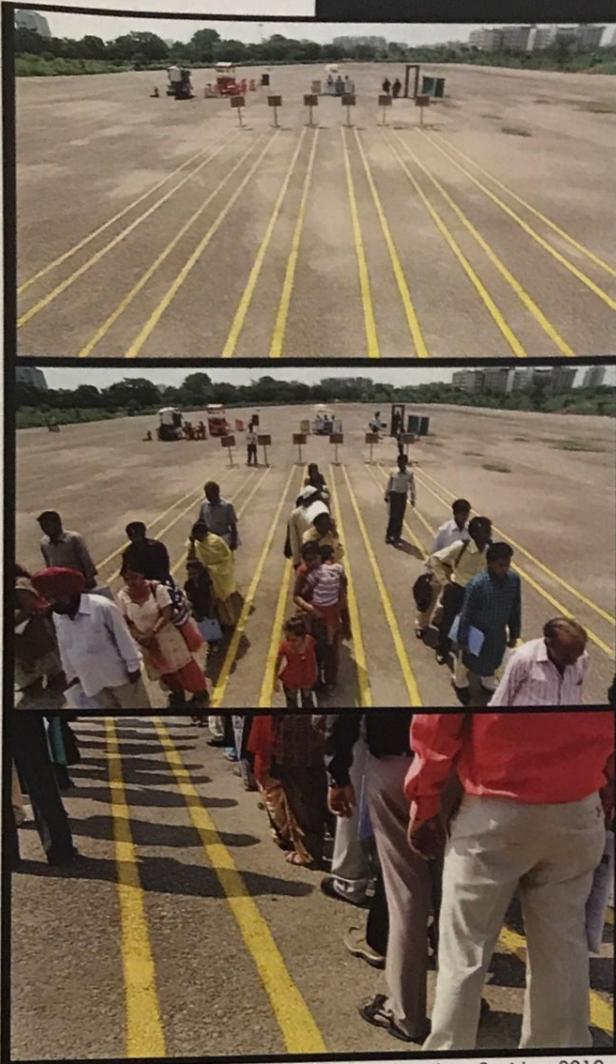
As an example of an artist clearly transgressing borders, we shall examine some of Bani Abidi's work.

Early works such as the video trilogy, *Mangoes* (1999), *Anthems* (2000), and *The News* (2001) explore the personal and national identities between the two contested neighbors, Pakistan and India. When she recapitulates that the two are not very different from one another, she does it with a dose of humor that has become a fixed



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Khalil Chishti, *Blame II*, white and black trash bags, 155X158cm, Green Cardamom Gallery, London 2008



Bani Abidi, *The distance from here 2*, video, 2010

attention towards the individuals' expressions as they wait with their documents and records of citizenship, while simultaneously the camera observes the clerk setting up the table with a typewriter and stationery. This juxtaposition ultimately highlights the power held over the people. In a film that is all about preparation, examination, and waiting, the yellow directional lines drawn into the huge asphalt terrain and subjecting people to the arbitrariness of power seem absurd in comparison. The work reflects the artist's own experience in a similar situation, but, at the same time, it channels our attention to the power of national divisions to which all kinds of

In a film that is all about preparation, examination, and waiting, the yellow directional lines drawn into the huge asphalt terrain and subjecting people to the arbitrariness of power seem absurd in comparison

component of her work. Her latest video and photographic work, *Section Yellow* (2010), addresses transformation in both art and the geo-politics, where power and authority are imposed on people who want to travel for reasons of study, work, or simply to visit family. Throughout the film, Abidi draws our

human passages and exchanges are opposed.

Staged and fictional, Bani Abidi's documentary style, which is based on contemporary and historical records, is exemplary of how an artist's work addresses local problematic experiences that achieve global meaning and thus re-stage national issues.

### A Need for Multi-Directional Interaction

Apart from the galleries named above and a few exhibitions from Indian galleries, there are very few individual artists from Pakistan who have managed to gain representation from international galleries alongside other international artists. Since this is not the norm, however, most artists from Pakistan are hoping to be promoted and represented by a gallery with the explicit intention of exhibiting art from Pakistan or the surrounding region. Therefore, and this is the case for other countries as well, there is a need for art galleries and organizations to represent artists from a specific country or region. However, in order to overcome the solely profitable and popular undertakings that are often situated in the historical fairway of Western-dominated perspectives, these import-export scenarios, as they occur in a variety of regions and art circles around the globe, have to work towards equality in order to make a difference. This difference can be achieved as easily through critical artistic positions as it can through curatorial sensitivity, and will result in presenting artists' works in such a way that it will open doors to a "critical transregionality," (Nancy Adajania, Ranjit Hoskote, 2010) thus leading towards a transnational and perhaps a universal art history where any work of art can be enjoyed for the artist's unique form of looking! ■

Sadia Salim's work, *Between Kismat and Karma: South Asian Women Artists Respond to Conflict*, 2010  
Exhibition Leeds Art Gallery organized by SHISHA.



Amra Ali



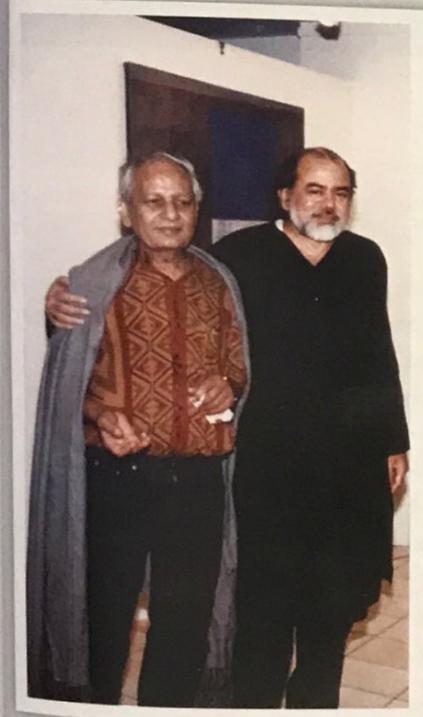
Gulgee and visitor

# The role of two pioneer galleries

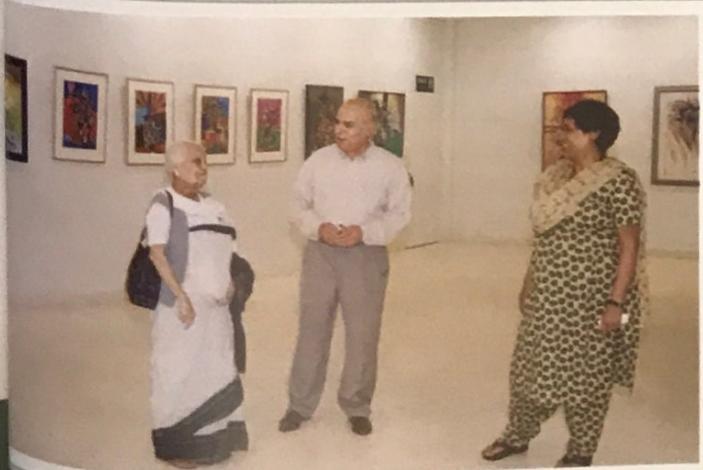
## and the relationship of art commerce to the art discourse in Pakistan

**NUKTAART** discusses the values and directions of art commerce in Pakistan, with two of the more established gallerists, Zohra Hussain, Director at Chawkandi Art and Riffat Alvi, Director at the VM Gallery, of the Rangoonwala Trust. Both based in Karachi, the economic hub of the country, they have played a pivotal role in introducing and providing visibility to local artists, giving them validity in the art circles in Pakistan, and a stepping stone for international participation.

Locating the changing role of these pioneer galleries, we invite them to address the escalation in prices of Pakistani art in the international market and its impact on the local. Keeping in mind that newer centers are now present throughout Pakistan, and provide a lot more space for discourse, we need to address the nature of this discourse. The opening of Chawkandi Art, in 1985, brought art outside the intellectual/art circles and propelled a direction in which art opened its door to a much wider audience, with a bang. It was in 1987, that the VM Gallery opened with a mandate to give visibility to emerging talent, many of whom have now gained international prominence, or have established their practice within Pakistan.



L to R Bashir Mirza and Zahoorul Akhlaque



Fatima Suraiyya Bajia, Wahab Jaffar and Riffat Alvi



L to R Nahid Ali, Rehana Hakim, Imran Mir, Rabia Zuberi, Riffat Alvi and Amin Gulgee

Amra Ali with Zohra Hussain

## Zohra Hussain, Director, Chawkandi Art, Karachi



**Amra Ali:** the opening of Chawkandi Art was seen to have commercialized art, by bringing it to the 'bazaar'. This was in sharp contrast to the intellectual discourse that Ali Imam held at the Indus Gallery. That was a place an artist showed if he/she was thought to have 'arrived', if the art met the strict scrutiny of Imam. At that time, the conceptual and intellectual challenge provided by the work superseded its commercial standing.

**Zohra Hussain:** Imam Sahib's Indus Gallery operated in an atmosphere conducive to art dialogue. It is true that I was openly accused of 'commercializing' art. I saw the gallery first as a business, as it is everywhere else in the world. I did break the mold that you have to be an artist to run an art gallery, and brought art from a small private circle into the public space. This was something that was waiting to happen; art galleries mushroomed in Karachi and in other cities within three years of Chawkandi Art (initially known as Chawkandi Gallery). Many of these did not survive because there was no sustained vision to cultivate excellence in Art.

**AA:** An artist given an exhibition at your gallery makes a huge impact on his/her future inclusion in the art market. That is a vital role in shaping an artist's career and controlling or dictating what acceptable / unacceptable art practice is. What has given Chawkandi Art an edge over the years and how have you sustained as a leading gallery in Pakistan?

**ZH:** It is a question of balance and of ethics. Running a gallery carries with it the responsibility of shaping public taste, where one's own credibility is at stake, and constantly under scrutiny.

Chawkandi Art opened with established artists like Anna Molka, Colin David, Jamil Naqsh, Shahid Sajjad, Bashir Mirza, and Meher Afroz. It was with the opening of Chawkandi that art started selling in Pakistan, and investment buying took root in a big way. Zahoor Akhlaque, who did not sell much before then, started selling. In those days, only the Indus and Chawkandi galleries had any clout. The Indus Gallery had established itself as a role model sixteen years before Chawkandi emerged, bringing the market into the art discourse. It was another sixteen years after us, that other galleries started to benefit from the opportunities Chawkandi had initially created.

The question of ethics was integral to our practice. There was no question of chasing the other gallery's artist. For example, Tassaduq Sohail was understood to be Ali Imam's artist. I respected that, and it was much later that Tassaduq moved away from Indus. Souza asked me for an exhibition, but I turned him down politely because I knew that Ali Imam had initially invited him. However, with newer and successful galleries, the competition is cutthroat, that atmosphere is changed.

**AA:** Many galleries are providing artists the bridge to make it big on the international stage, which also enhances credibility in local markets as well, especially in investment buying circles. What do you think is the impact of this on

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L to R Shahid Sajjad and Tasneem Jatoi



quality, value and production of art in Pakistan due to the changing market factors?

**ZH:** Many successful artists like Imran Qureshi, Aisha Khalid, Mohammad Zeeshan, Khadim Ali and Nusra Latif are fetching quite high prices through international galleries. Khadim Ali is showing at the next Documenta. Some of them now have commitments with international galleries representing them, because of which they cannot sell at a different price in Pakistan than the Dollar/ Pound rate established abroad. We have often tried to bring their prices down in Pakistan, but that is going to get more and more difficult. I hope that their future contracts will allow them to continue to show here. I must add that, unlike many newcomers, Imran and Aisha first established themselves in Pakistan, with very moderate prices that saw a gradual hike. Local buyers are at a disadvantage, because even the work of newcomers who manage to show abroad is becoming simply unaffordable within Pakistan. The sufferers are also the emerging local artists, because investment buyers are only going for the big names.

The role of Pakistani representation in international auction houses and gallery/museum circuit is minimal. There have to be inroads into it for an engaging and authentic inclusion outside Pakistan.

**RR:** This brings us to the relationship of art practice to market

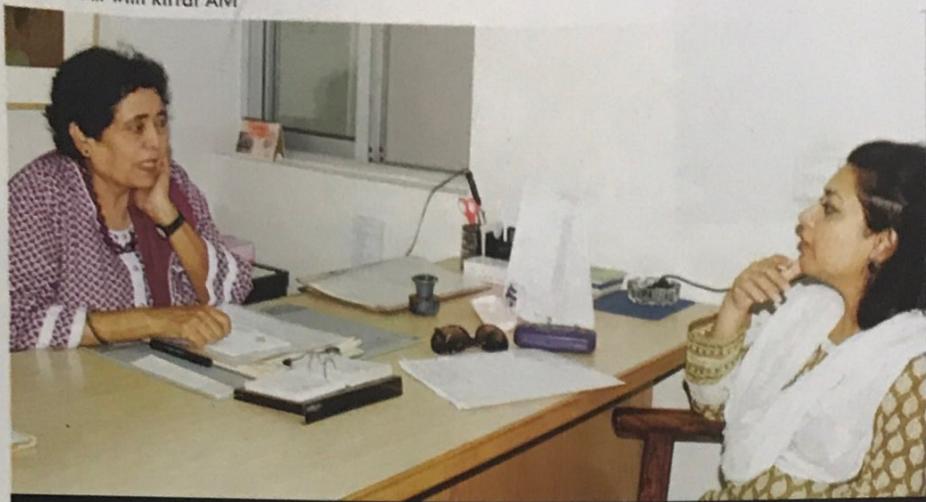
practice.

The thriving local market of fake art has certainly triggered a crisis, where the criterion is copying, thus promoting mediocrity. Success in the global markets is also subject to appropriation. Product oriented, be it in the concept or material, much of the art caters to the dictates of the (western) global markets. Pakistan is seen in the light of post 9/11 politics, and many artists are cashing in and remain constrained within the jargon that stems from this discourse. There are, of course, deeper issues of gaze and self-censorship here. Do you agree or disagree with me?

**ZH:** Fortunately, with recession in the last two years, there has been a decline in the production of such practice, as it has somewhat prevented copyists from churning out such work. Artists are copying known artists openly, and still selling, because the intellectual dialogue is missing. Many such artists are not given exhibitions at Chawkandi. Mediocrity should be discouraged and for that, art critics have to play a more proactive role. They have to stop churning out reviews of every artist showing. Distinctions have to be made with more responsibility.

Yes, artists are generally catering to the dictates of the foreign markets, just as it is happening globally. One can take the example of big names such as of Salman Rushdie, or in art, of Shirin Nishat. There are more recent success stories of young Pakistani artists who are allowing their success to be measured by the expectations of the foreign markets. ■

Amra Ali with Riffat Alvi



## Riffat Alvi, Director, VM Gallery, Karachi

**Amra Ali:** The VM Gallery has provided much discourse in terms of nurturing young artists, helping those fresh out of art school, a forum to launch their careers, and to nurture their creativity in the initial years where such support is essential.

**Riffat Alvi:** The mandate of the Rangoonwala Trust, under whose umbrella we operate, has been to provide a platform for younger artists. Our biggest success has been the sustained effort to bring the thesis work from art colleges from across Pakistan, in our yearly *Emerging Talent*. It was formally launched in 2004. It was Karachi-based for the first two years, after which we expanded to incorporate participation from art colleges in Jamshoro, Multan, Bahawalpur, Quetta and Lahore. The yearly show is of select works by the graduating students. This is a much-anticipated show, and has seen many successful artists. For example, Ali Kazim showed in *Emerging Talent 2004*. We gave him a solo show in 2009.

Two generations of Karachi School of Art graduates were brought together in the show *Roll-call*, which was envisioned as a tribute to Rabia Zuberi. Along with early artists like Lubna Agha and Sumbul Nazir, newer artists like Roohi Ahmad and Asad Hussain made their debuts. Asad made his first sculpture in this show, and has developed a mature socially relevant vocabulary since. In many ways, we are trying to sustain and nurture the local dialogue, in order to address the changing local context, and not let it be forced to the periphery.

**AA:** The VM also supports other initiatives thus providing resources which are essential, especially in the absence of museum support to artists. Which are some of these commitments and how do you gauge their relevance?

**AA:** The Rangoonwala Trust has been supporting the VASL network since 2003. This involves residency and studio space as well as gallery/exhibition space. At times, we have provided financial support also. There is an effort to provide a platform for diversity. We also encourage experimentation, when we see

that there is a commitment and our partners can deliver. We support the Green Cardamom UK, through the Rangoonwala Foundation based in the UK, because their mandate is to provide support to Pakistani ventures in the UK. In Pakistan, we only support through providing exhibition space at the VM. The Rangoonwala Foundation also supports the Charles Wallace Foundation, which selects one artist of Pakistani origin, yearly, for residency in London. A lot of local young artists have benefitted from it, but in order to scoop out the most engaging artists, the selection procedure is very tough. This exposure has provided artists the possibility to interact with artists from other countries, an exchange which is necessary for growth and new partnerships.

**AA:** Tell us about the landmark changes in the mandate of the VM over the last 25 years.

**AA:** Apart from giving space to young artists, the Rangoonwala Trust has given scholarships to deserving art students for their thesis work. These 'Thesis scholarships', initiated in 1988, have only applied to Karachi, but more recently, we have supported artists from Sindh who are studying at the NCA, in Lahore.

An important part of our work is to provide exchanges to artists regardless of their standing in terms of experience, based on the credibility of the work. For example, in 1999, we have had an extensive exhibition of glass sculptures *Marching On* by the Turkish artist, Lale Andik from Izmir. We have had *Seasons of Kunj Wingen*, a group show of posters from Australia; aboriginal art in 1997, *Other Stories*, a group show from Australia, 1998. Among local artists who have made it big internationally, we have had Rashid Rana's solo show *Identical Views*, in 2004, and Bani Abidi in 2006. Henry Moore prints came to us in 2007, and more recently, in 2009, we had a solo of Sigma Polke, in collaboration with the Goethe Institut. There is always an element of surprise because of new artists or art that I have come across. Most of the times I have visited artists across the world, and invited them to show here in Pakistan.

Another tier is our commitment to showcase the work of major Pakistani art, such as *Return to the Sphinx*, a solo show of A.R.



Among local artists who have made it big internationally, we have had Rashid Rana's solo show *Identical Views*, in 2004, and Bani Abidi in 2006

Nagori, followed by a lecture, in 2004; the retrospective we had of Ahmad Parvez in 2004, for which the work was lent by the artist and collector, Wahab Jaffar. This collection was purchased by the Rangoonwala Trust for the VM Gallery.

**RA:** Will the Rangoonwala Collection be housed at the VM, and when do you foresee its opening? How extensive is it, and how far back does it go? Are there any research-based publications that are in the making?

**RA:** The addition of a new gallery is going to be attached to the present one. The W.J. Collection would be displayed by next year, hopefully. Presently, it is in the storage, amounting to about thousand works or more along with thousand books on art. The catalogues are being developed and are in process of documentation. The purpose of acquiring them was to create several shows out of this collection, so that the future generations would be able to benefit and enjoy seeing the works. Some foreign artists are also included in this collection.

ZVMG is one of the few non-commercial art forums of Pakistan, and the VM gallery looks after it under the guidanceship of Mr. Tariq Rangoonwala, who is the Chairman of the Visual Arts Committee of VM Gallery. The expansion is already in the process and need-based areas will be added on.

**RA:** The VM has supported community-based dialogue, and is one of the few non-commercial forums for art in Pakistan. What are the structures that help you sustain it, and how do you foresee its expansion in another ten years?

**RA:** I think this is the only non-commercial platform for art in Pakistan. The Trust is there to see our needs and sustainability. We have board members and committees, and the expansion plan is already in the process for the WJ Collection. New ideas and new projects would be scrutinized before implementing them in future.

VM has always supported a community-based dialogue and supported galleries like Green Cardamom and Vasl Projects...any

other project brought forward which would enhance knowledge and stimulate energy for young artists...we are for it.

Our past record and future project list is extensive. As an example, we held sessions of films of *ART21*, utilizing the auditorium of the Rangoonwala Community Centre, which I think is one of the best in Karachi. For future, we plan to collaborate with a Turkish group for an exhibition of photography. The Turkish Orchestra will perform at the auditorium and works will be installed at ArtChowk the Gallery, Karachi our co-partner for this.

We shall also be announcing the Local Residency Program for young artists at the V.M. , modalities for which are being worked out.

The expansion in the next ten years depends on the creative activities and proposals from different quarters which will be brought forward, including the Art Community. I am desperately working towards starting short programs for art management, curatorial exercise, documentation and other art-related programs, such as art packaging, restoration of artworks, special handling and transportation of artworks.

**RA:** How do you think that the shift towards international markets has affected the local discourse?

**RA:** When you talk about the shift towards the international market which has affected the local discourse, I quite agree with you, this has happened because of the political unrest and instability in the country. With this situation, new ideas and programs cannot be materialized, whereas sales are affected. Both cities, Karachi and Lahore are not at rest. If and when conditions improve, activity would be generated and exchanges of exhibitions and programs would take place. The number of exhibitions booked for the coming months from abroad has been cancelled due to the precarious situation of the city. I think presently great art activities are happening beyond our borders, but we continue to generate interest and engage with the local, through our ongoing programmers of discussion and dialogue, especially with younger artists. ☐