



RETROSPECTIVE

FIBRE AND TEXTILE EXPRESSIONS

PROJECT INITIATED BY PROF. KIRAN KHAN AND FASEEH SALEEM

Photo credits: Rehman Younas

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PREFACE

With over 18 years in the core faculty at The Mariam Dawood School of Visual Arts and Design’s Textile, Fashion, and Accessories department, I am honored to give my perspective on this department’s history in the extraordinary exhibition.

The path of artistic expression through textiles is an insightful journey that spans time, discipline, and evolving perspectives. The term ‘textiles’ intertwines tradition, craftsmanship, and boundless innovation, making it a cherished medium of artistic expression passed down through generations. The discourse surrounding whether these art forms were intended as artistic endeavors, agents for breaking disciplinary boundaries, or simply aesthetic pieces has been a topic of extensive global discussion.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Fiber Art began to emerge as a recognized form of artistic expression on the global stage. Lenore Tawney’s groundbreaking solo exhibition at the Staten Island Museum in 1961 marked a significant mile stone, introducing fiber art within a fine-art context. Tawney’s innovative open-warp weave technique challenged traditional conventions of craft and fine art, sparking controversy and resistance from both realms. Despite initial skepticism, subsequent exhibitions like MoMA’s “Wall Hangings,” curated by Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen, played a pivotal role in solidifying the recognition of fiber art internationally. These exhibitions showcased large-scale, abstract woven and off-loom works, challenging established notions of art and craft. However, fiber art faced ongoing struggles for legitimacy within the art world, as exemplified by divergent reviews and institutional categorizations. Despite these challenges, Constantine and Larsen’s curatorial efforts, along with the contributions of artists like Lenore Tawney, Sheila Hicks, and Claire Zeisler, paved the way for the establishment of fibre art as a significant genre in the contemporary art landscape.

One can attribute the pioneering of this movement to Anni Albers, who challenged the traditional notions of the loom and her position as a woman within the Bauhaus. Along with Anni Albers, other artists who pioneered the fibre art movement include Lenore Tawney, Jack Lenor Larsen, and Magdalena Abakanowicz. These artists made significant contributions to challenging traditional notions of weaving and textile-based art, ultimately shaping the trajectory of fiber art as a recognized genre in the art world.

Exploring the history of textile-based artistic practices in Lahore has been a fundamental aspect of my own research. I’ve delved into departments and programs teaching textiles, navigating the shifting dynamics between vernacular craft, commercial design, and artistic expression. The factors influenc-

ing the changing paradigms for various art and design schools that teach textiles are ideas I have been reconnoitering both in my pedagogical, artistic, and research-based practice. The textile artifacts in Pakistan range from the necessities of shelter to luxury haute couture apparel, and various domestic pieces studded with religious and cultural emblems. A significant amount of this textile production has historically been relegated to women, who have evolved their interests in textile-making from domestic goods to manufacturing for income generation. A gradual transition started taking place in the textile production and consumption with the establishment of design schools in the region.

The tacit relationship between consumers and makers transitioned to a formal relationship of teachers and students involved in textile knowledge dissemination with the introduction of design schools in the region. The trend of shifting paradigms of teaching textiles/fibers in art and design institutes with a focus on either craft, commercial design, or fiber art was seen worldwide. In this backdrop, it is important to highlight the premier art and design institute in the region, National College of Arts (NCA), formerly Mayo School of Arts (MSA), an alma mater to myself and many other colleagues and professors who went on to lay the foundations of a new school in the region, School of Visual Arts and Design (SVAD) housed in a forward-looking Liberal Arts University, Beaconhouse National University (BNU).

The economic and industrial history of Pakistan post-1947 played a pivotal role in the transition from MSA to NCA. The nuanced journey of the link between this historical backdrop and the reshaping of educational focus from craft to design is important to understand the art and design establishment in the region. The transformation from MSA to NCA wasn’t merely a shift in instructional content but a broader adjustment to the national imagination of post-independence Pakistan. The NCA, once one among many art schools, became insufficient for the demands of a newly independent nation, necessitating a more comprehensive curriculum.

The global surge in exploring textiles as an artistic medium during the 1960s marked a pivotal moment. In Lahore, Pakistan, this evolution took a distinctive trajectory at the National College of Art (NCA). Under the visionary leadership of Mark Sponenburgh, the NCA’s transformation, particularly the establishment of the textile department played a crucial role. This marked the beginning of a paradigm shift and a reorientation from craft to industrial design. The evolution of the NCA into the “premier art college of Pakistan” and its potential influence on the complex interplay between art, craft, industrial development, and the evolving educational landscape in post-independence Pakistan were responses to economic, industrial, and political changes, reflecting a broader transformation in the nation’s cultural and artistic identity.

In 1998, Kiran Khan graduated from the textile department after a remarkable thesis that was the beginning of a new era in textiles. She was mentored by Shabnam Khan who had at that time recently

returned from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design and brought with her abundant ideas to look at textiles in a new way.

Fast forward to 2003, the birth of BNU marked another significant chapter. The School of Visual Arts and Design was established. The School's mission laid out by Dean, Prof. Salima Hashmi, Prof. Rashid Rana and the founding faculty was to embrace individualized learning, free from historical constraints, fostering innovation, and breaking barriers imposed by national and cultural boundaries. Kiran Khan, tasked with setting up the textile department, undertook the challenge with exemplary determination. Her vision for an eco-friendly screen printing lab and a comprehensive curriculum produced thinkers and designers.

Faseeh Saleem, a pioneer from the first batch, exemplifies this dedication, showcasing his textile expertise on a global stage. Saleem explores alternative fashion design methodologies, challenging conventional perceptions of the human body, offering fresh perspectives that enrich artistic approaches. His explorations yield insights into iterative design processes and redefine the human form within fashion design education programs.

The exhibited works transcend mere expressions; they are reflections of individual journeys, drawing from personal experiences, cultural heritage, and a profound understanding of the language of textiles. The exhibition outputs vary from cultural, personal, and regional maps to associations of home expressed as immersive installation as well as sculptural reliefs. Some works explore materiality of pain and loss, to other works produced with indigenous techniques and materials. While some narratives are regional others explore entanglements and deception of the contemporary media world. The wide variety of materiality and conceptual outputs reflect the breadth and depth of curriculum which converting these individual stories into potent works of art.

This catalogue is more than a showcase; it is a window into perspectives converging to create a larger narrative, transcending aesthetics and inviting contemplation. As you immerse yourself in the pages, explore the stories woven into each creation. This event is a celebration of artists, their journeys, and the ever-evolving landscape of artistic expression.

ROHMA MOID KHAN
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, IEDA, MDSVAD
BNU

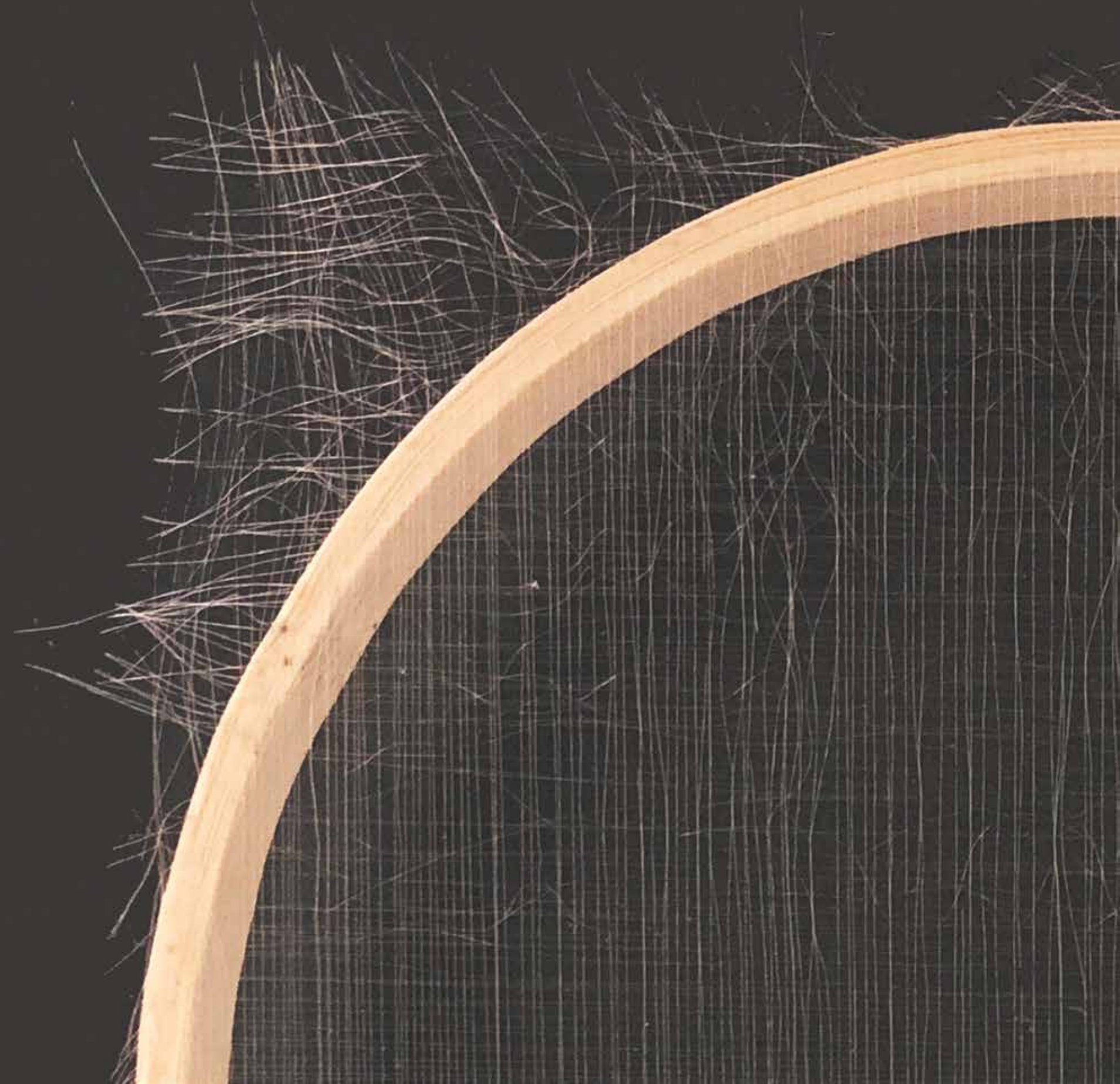
CURATORIAL NOTE

The term ‘textile’ is central in both social and cultural history and has always had a richness in terms of meaning. Design institutes mostly take solution-based design as the foundation of their textile and fashion design curricula. This makes the designer focus on theory-based concepts and methods for engaging with the problem itself: the problem comes first! As such, artistic-based design – which primarily focuses on the idea of individual or artistic imagination, and allows the creator to come first within the design process – is rare.

In relation to the pedagogical challenges experienced through practice and teaching, this project reflects on artistic-based design research and its role in the design curriculum. This exhibition brings together artistic outputs by participants who specialise and work with textiles and fibres. The presented outputs are material-based critical inquiries, investigations, and interpretations that augment our understanding of the field of contemporary fibre art and thoroughly investigate materiality and form. They generate critical dialogue through process-led fibre and textile artistic expressions.

PROF. KIRAN KHAN
HOD TFA MDSVAD
BNU

FASEEH SALEEM, Ph.D.
DESIGN RESEARCHER, MULTIDICIPLINARY ARTIST





P 1

AIMAN GILLANI

Aiman Gillani's work is based on the concept of communication, evolution of language and how it defines humans. Aiman highlights how language defines identity. She takes inspiration from the letters and excerpts from her grandfather's essay collections and artifacts. The visuals of the phrases and words from the excerpts create a spellbinding narrative, which is translated through textile techniques and expressions in the form of hanging panels. She layers different techniques such as foil printing, hand embroidery and fabric manipulation techniques that depict the overlaps within Urdu language. This is further highlighted by the combinations of textures that captivate the viewer.

aiman.gillani@bnu.edu.pk
2013-2017

This image shows a close-up of a severely damaged manuscript page. The surface is characterized by a dense, wavy pattern of brown and tan fibers, possibly silk or cotton, which has been heavily deteriorated. Large, irregular patches of white, fibrous material are visible, suggesting significant loss of the original surface layer. The background is a mottled brown color, and faint, illegible traces of text are visible through the damage.



P 2

ANAM KHURRAM

The concept for Anam's interactive sound installation, Ghalti Atkan, is based on the abusive experiences at a madrassa and the deaths of two of her siblings that she had witnessed in her early childhood. Anam implements a research oriented approach and incorporates different textures that she had observed on the skin and wounds of her brother. These are depicted within the installation using unconventional fabric manipulation techniques such as burning, disintegrating and appliqueing the fabric. Materials such as gauze net and twisting of felt fibres are inspired by the tactile memories of the sense of touch. The sound piece connects these elements and captures the essence of the reality experienced by Anam.

anam.khurram@bnu.edu.pk
2014-2018





Eisha Liaquat explores the idea of mortality by capturing the stages of relative disorder. It shows that when objects decay, they start from a state of relative order going through stages of increasing disorder. The lives of objects evolve through decay and eventually attain a complementing level of perfection and imperfection which significantly reflects beauty. Through contextual analysis, Eisha closely captures her ancestral home, with detailed documentation and investigation of the artifacts in their original context. She layers found objects, textures and paint that speak a unique language and transport the viewer back into her reality. The piece serves as a timeless image that not only communicates narratives but generates an array of feelings.

eisha.liaquat@bnu.edu.pk
2013-2017





P 4
FARHAN UMAR

Farhan Umar's work is an ode to the textile weaving technique, Kimkhwab, which translates to Golden Dream. The word is a combination of Chinese and Persian and it is a fabric that Farhan's mother adorned at her wedding. The regal fabric is entirely handcrafted and truly captures an essence of timelessness. The work aims to bring back traditional weaving and dyeing crafts in their purest form, in order to empower the artisans' community. In an attempt to revive the traditional form of weaving, Farhan engaged with artisans in a community based weaving project to pay homage to the craft behind Kimkhwab.

farhanumar116@gmail.com
2019 - 2023





P 5

FASEEH SALEEM

Faseeh Saleem's work explores the artistic possibilities of fashion design processes by reimagining the body, observing and exploring material interactions physically and digitally through the use of editing tools. The exploratory experiment augmented knowledge of standard methods used in fashion design processes, suggesting alternative ways of approaching these processes. The outcome addresses the ways in which new silhouettes are created using physical and digital interfaces, constituting knowledge of recursive design methods and facilitating enhancement of artistic approaches to fashion design practices.

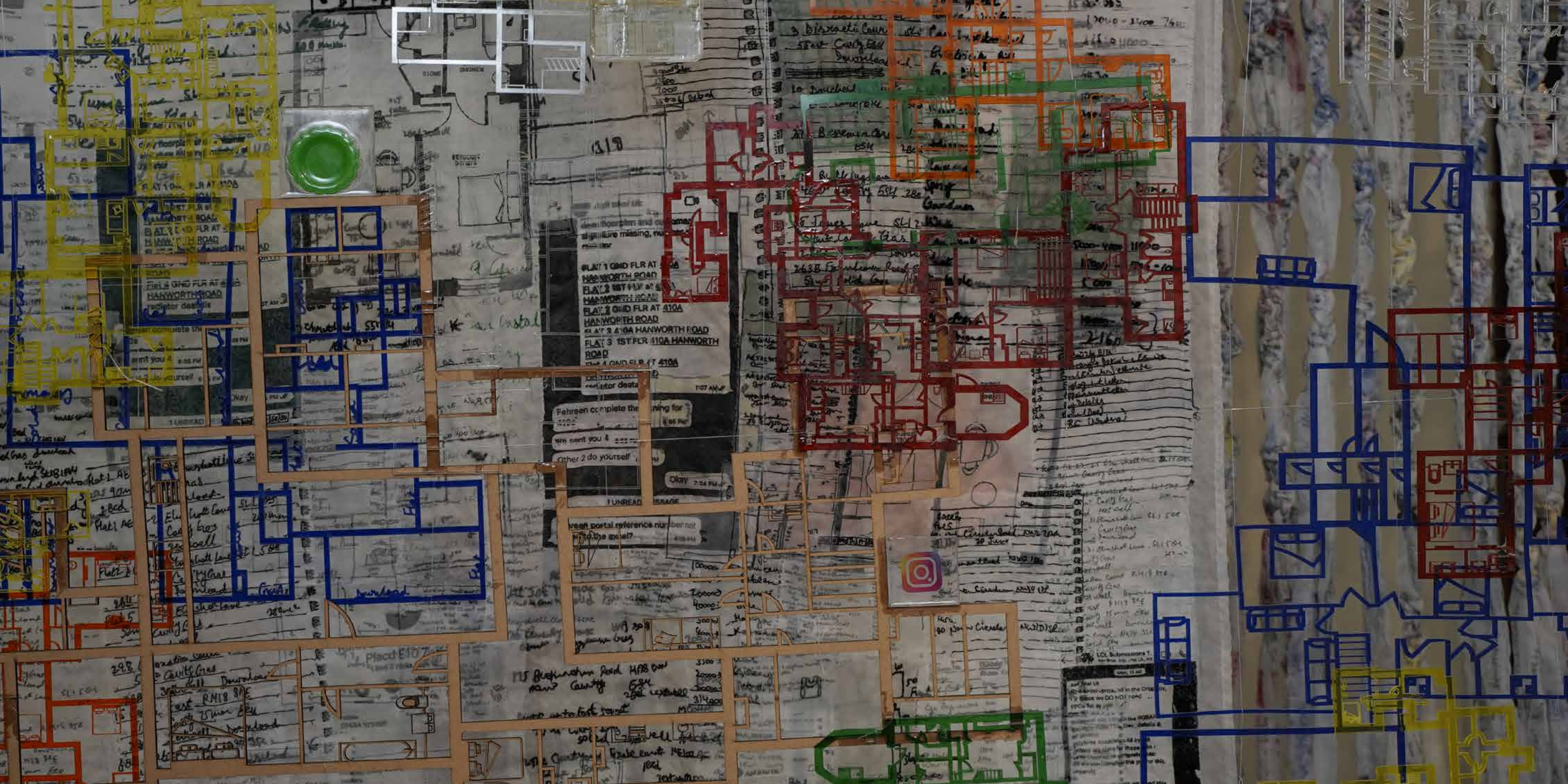


Scan QR code to watch video
faseehsaleem@hotmail.com
2003 - 2007





fehreenmujahid123@gmail.com
2019 - 2023





P 7

HAJIRA REHMAN

Hajra Rehman creates a series of charpaees in Mukaish work that are handcrafted, titled in keywords that are associated with the positive changes in her life after the many tortures she endured during her marriage, to the time leading up to her divorce. She employs Mukaish work, which is a craft, traditionally practiced in and originated from the artist's native town Bahawalpur. The idea has been inspired by her mother and the tireless will to educate her daughter which enabled Hajra to break the stigma attached to being divorced at an early age. Her work brings motifs and text together in the form of Mukaish work which lends her a unique design language.

hajirarehman12@gmail.com
2017 - 2021

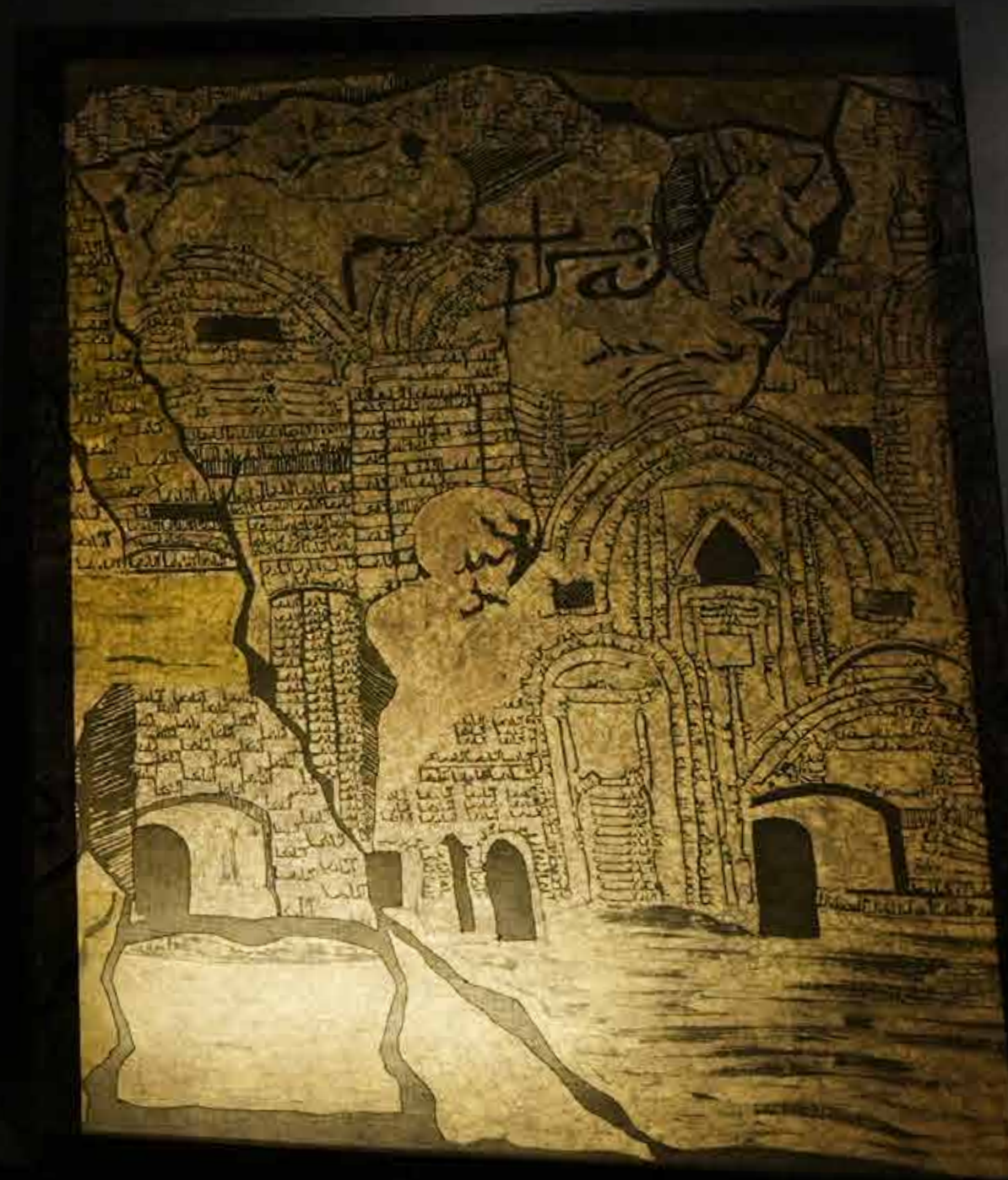




P 8
I J M A L H A I D E R

As someone of Pashtun heritage, he deeply appreciates the rich tradition of Pashto poetry and believes it serves as a wellspring of enlightenment. Hence, by creating visually captivating representations of a famous poet; Rehman Baba's excerpts, Ijmal aspires to facilitate a broader understanding of his ideas and effectively spread the message behind the poetry. To bridge the language barrier, Ijmal believes in harnessing the power of visual media. He creates a series of surfaces for his work that depict the poetic scenes in the craft: Batik. These works are presented against light so that the contrasting images become apparent on the surface leaving a lasting impact on the viewer.

ijmalhaider.789@gmail.com
2019-2023





P 9

KAINAT WALI KHAN

The installation is an amalgamation of Art and Craft visually represented as the map of Kainat's hometown; Damas. The work sums up the history and heritage, in the form of unique tilla embroidery in the form of layered motifs and traces running along the landscape of the mountainous region. The ornamentation of the craft is sprung from natural ancestry, floral details, food and animals. These elements are depicted with an organza base, layered beside flock printing and organic dyed gauze structures that leave the viewer spellbound. The fabric manipulation applied to different areas of the surface, make the installation seem as realistic as the aerial view of Damas itself.

kainatwk@gmail.com
2013-2017



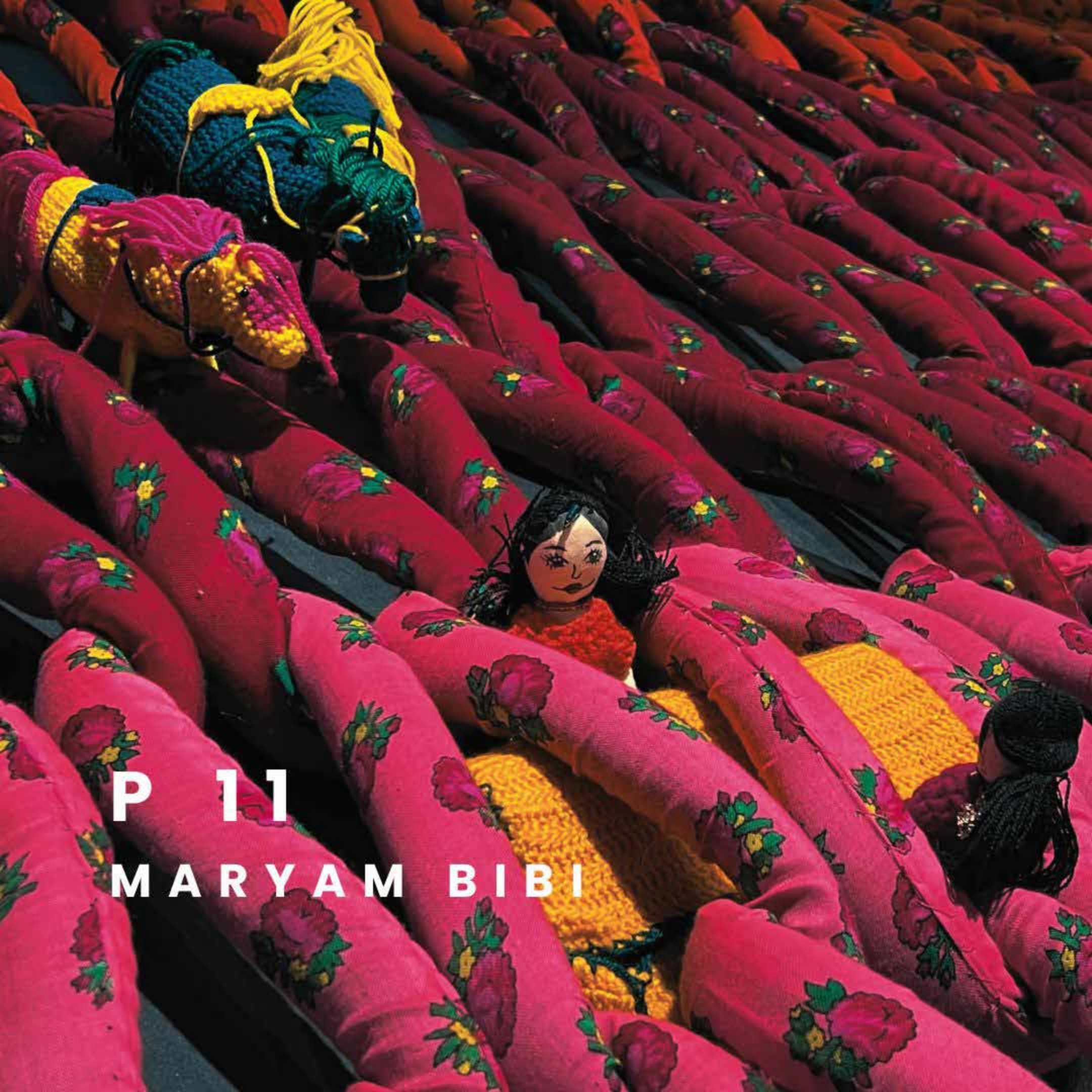


P T O MAHRUKH SHAHID

Mahrukh pushes the boundaries of innovation in textiles by inviting viewers to immerse themselves in the meticulous craftsmanship of her unique installation. She implements the use of metallic fibres and thus reimagines the regular functionality of metal. She focuses on the incorporation of scrap brass shavings, discarded metal that she collected from factories in contrast with the softness of laterite fabric. She juxtaposes the two opposing materials into structures that play with light and shadow in different settings. The work has significant implications for the field of design as it explores the interplay of metallic elements that are upcycled or repurposed into art pieces.

Mahrukhshahid612@gmail.com
2019-2023





Maryam Bibi's work questions the political notions attached to the 1947 partition between India and Pakistan. The work revolves around revisiting friendship bonds and memories between Maryam's Muslim grandmother and her Hindu friend. Both had shared their childhood together but got separated by the aftermath of partition. The two friends had grown up together as each other's support system. These stories inspired Maryam to narrate the devotion behind her grandmother's friendship. The creative investigation led Maryam to revisit her grandmother's memories through crafts that are associated with her grandmother such as knitting. Her interactive installation aims to comment on the bond shared between two friends.

maryamahsan999@gmail.com
2019-2023





P 12

MOHAMMAD MAINUL

As handicrafts have been a source of livelihood for a large number of artisans in the Subcontinent, Mainul's project serves as an attempt to provide a platform to the artisans who employ organic materials and practice. The project blends two indigenous craft practices; jamdani and dhurrie from Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively. While further engaging the artisanal community to create contemporary designs with natural dyes, the vision of this project also aligns with the values of sustainability. Mainul seeks to revive the craft weaving rugs in flat-weave using the traditional hand-loom. Furthermore, Mainul aims to protect and preserve the knowledge to ensure sustainable livelihood for these artisans.

mainul_011@yahoo.com
2013-2017





P 13

MUHAMMAD ATIQUE

Muhammad Atique adds a fresh perspective to the field of design. Through his work, he actively addresses the issues concerning media censorship. Through his project, he aims to expose fabricated information and create visually captivating representations that unveil the true nature of mass media. His work shows that society is polluted by false news, misinformation and manipulated truths that are biased and exist to push forward certain ideologies, organizations or groups that might be powerful. His creative investigation is a product of the dichotomies between different media groups. The visuals show opposing views to entertain as well as subtly highlight the true nature of media. He uses movement through 3D printed pieces and sensors to echo the ever changing perspectives of media manipulation.



Scan QR code to watch video
atiquerehmani278@gmail.com
2019-2023





P 14
RAFIA SHAFIQ

Rafia's work revolves around reviving Phulkari - a traditional embroidery technique practiced in Pakistan and India. Rafia's area of focus was the link between terrorism and dying of phulkari as a craft practice. Her work narrates the tragic Peshawar attack on the children of Army Public School. This was an event that shook the lives of the families of the victims as well as all of Pakistan. Rafia engaged the artisans of Haripur to revive phulkari by creating panels with motifs that represent the students who lost their lives in the attack. Her work reflects the emotions and agony of the children who were once set to become shining stars of the nation.

rafiashafiq7@gmail.com
2011-2015



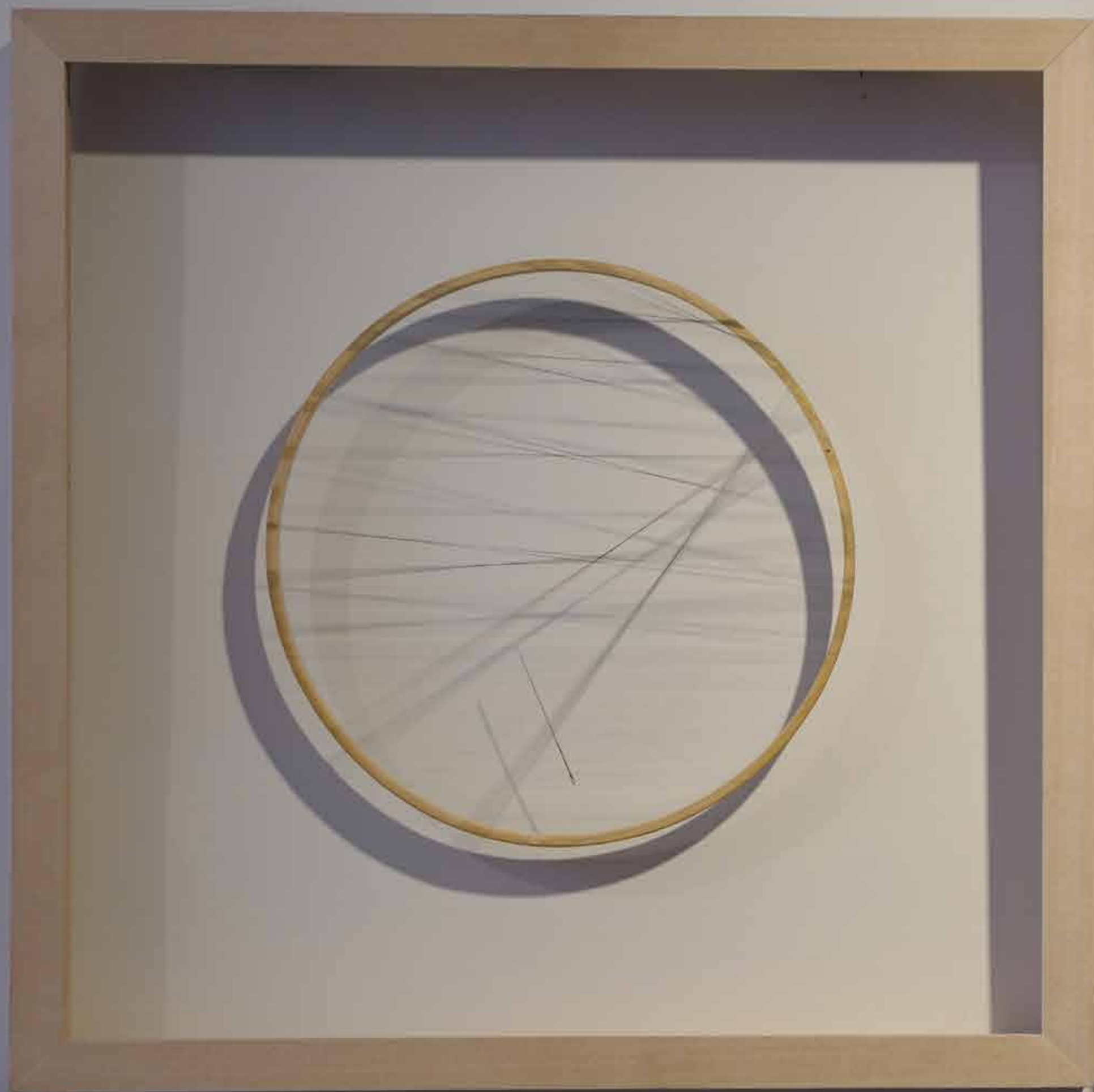


P 15

REHMAN YOUNAS

Rehman Younas has been experimenting with the fiber; a material that is fragile and struggles at a micro footprint in an effort to highlight its presence. Through the warp and weft of a fabric, threads from both points are woven, intertwined, overlapped, while arranging them into new conceptually layered installations. His artwork reflects interest in grids, patterns and gives the audience the feeling as if his artworks are floating above the surface. One can see the hints of a mesh which is there at micro eye-sight level, lines that show evidence of the effects of the passing of time. His aim through this project is to master the art of creating optical illusions using the association with materiality.

rehman.85@live.com
2009-2013





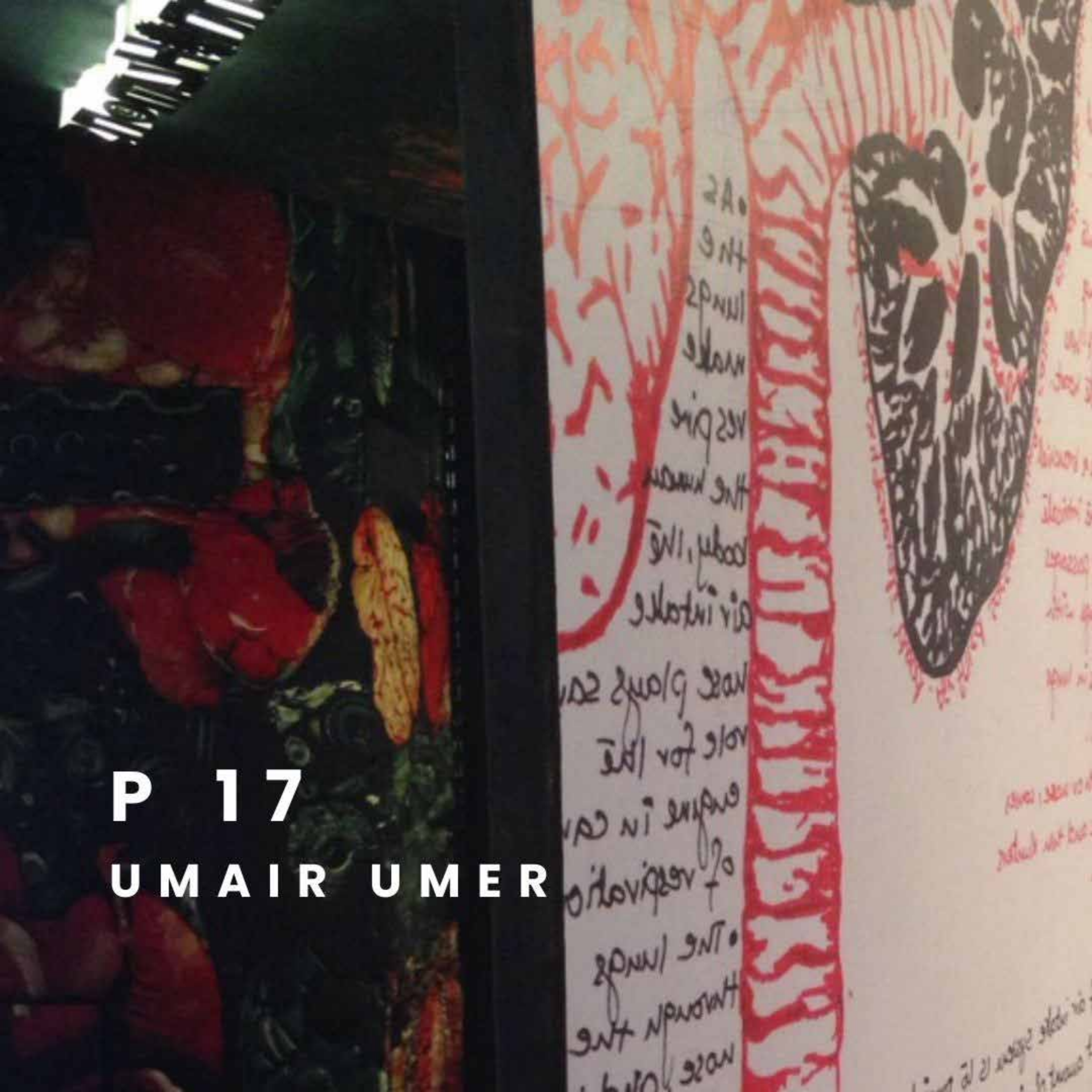
P 16

T A Y Y A B A S A B I R

Tayyaba explores the deeper meanings associated with the objects that come from surroundings such as home, school and culture. The alternative perspectives behind the objects in her video fascinate her and through her work she explores these distinct interpretations. She also aims to change the perception of these objects by showing them differently. She focuses on the interplay of tactile materials practiced by female hands during household practices. She stands convinced by the philosophical conceptions of western Gestalt psychology and Muslim Sufi thought. She further explores the interconnected themes of memory and experience residing in the relationship between traditional materials, symbols, and mixed media.

tayyabasabir77@gmail.com
2007-2011





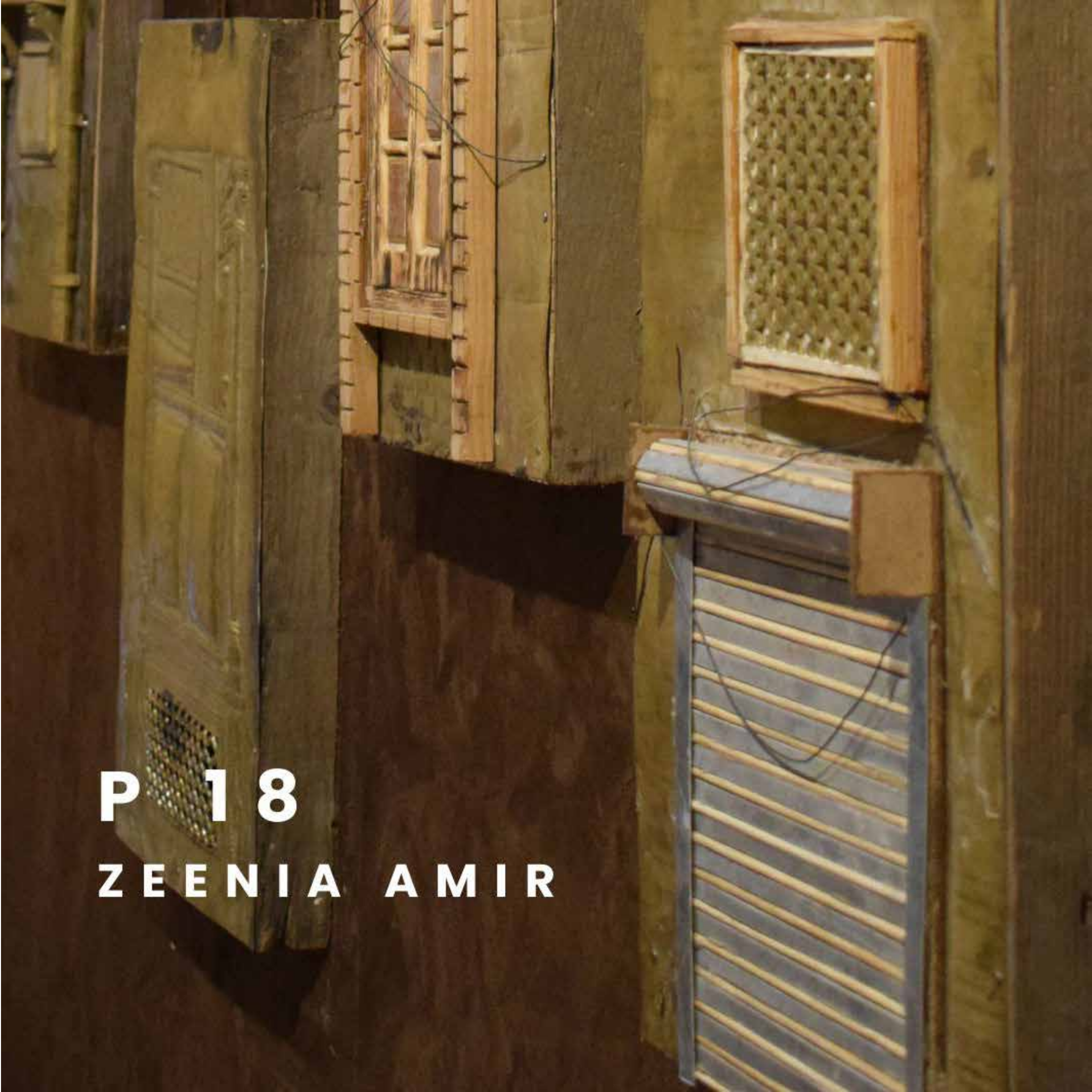
P 17

U MAIR U MER

Umair Umer created a portable structure from textile materials titled: Mechnohumans. It is a space saving fabricated outlet which is inspired by the theme: Engines in relation to the human organs. Within the dimensions of 6 by 6.5 feet, the printed panels are quilted and decorated with hand embroidery techniques such as Kantha (running) and Marorri (twisted) stitch. Embellishments were done with textile materials and car engine parts. The lights turn on automatically with the opening of panels and it accomplishes the basic needs of an outlet like table, chairs, storage, display shelves and try room.

umairumer27@gmail.com
2011-2015





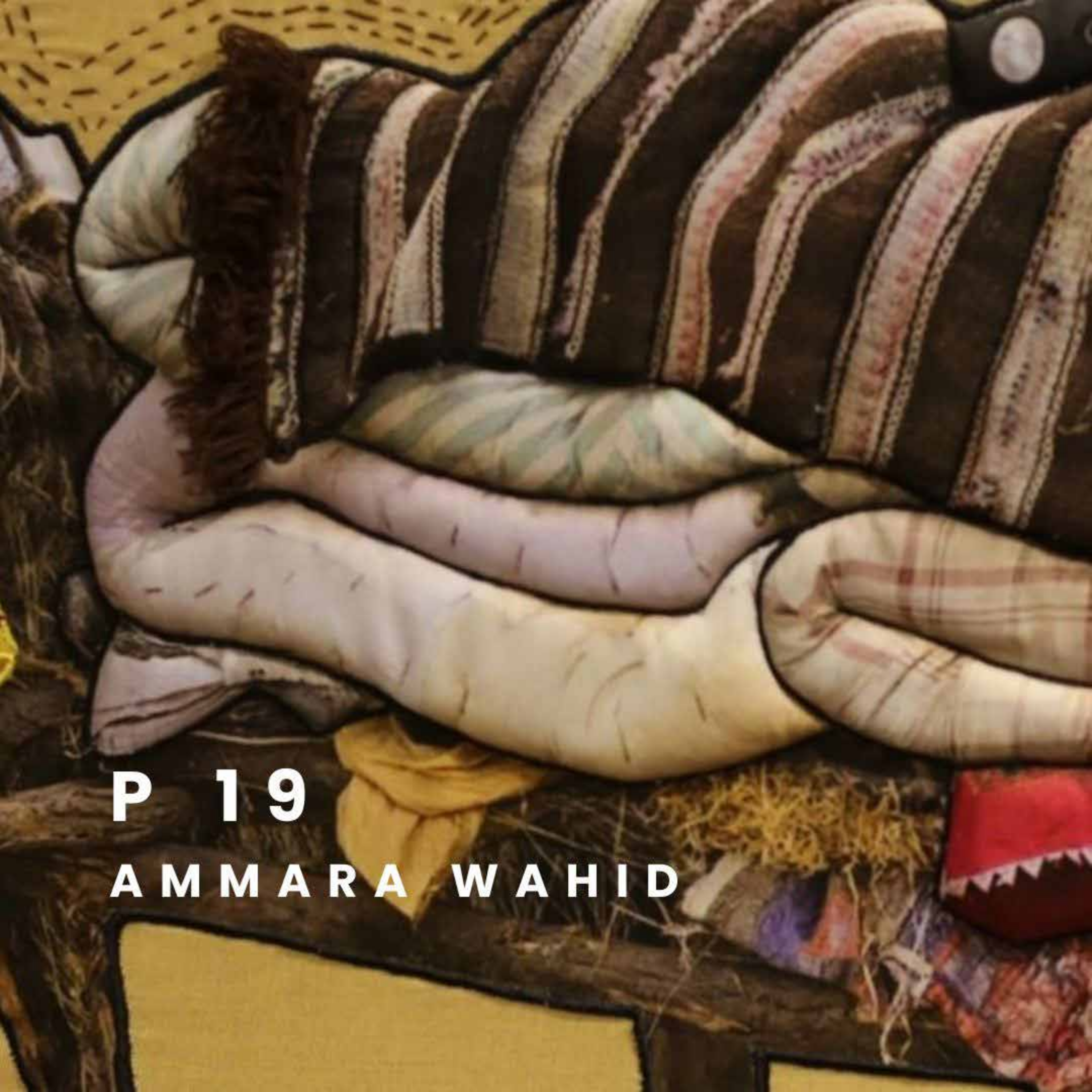
P 18

ZEENIA AMIR

The central idea for Zeenia's work is exhaustion, which she explores through the prism of abandoned spaces in Lahore. By working with materials that are not traditionally known as textile materials, she makes a statement about the ethereal phenomenon of exhaustion of the human mind and souls. This phenomenon cannot be seen but rather be measured through the exhaustion of different materials and then understood by the changes within the environment, infrastructure, and context. Zeenia examines exhaustion from a number of perspectives; Visual; in terms of space and material, Physical; which affects the functioning systems, followed by Spiritual; which refers to the breakdown of human psychological and emotional processes.

zeenia5303amir@gmail.com
2018-2022





P 19
AMMARA WAHID

With the presence of a family from a nomadic tribe living nearby, Ammara became deeply curious about their distinctive culture and identity. Her work consists of portable bricks that were created from textile materials. These bricks narrate her concept and serve a decorative purpose in the way that these bricks could be turned into multiple structures or one large scale wall. The embroidery and patchwork captures the essence of the culture of Cholistan desert. The striking white patterns (Lippan Kaam) in Ammara's work serve as a symbol of power and originality. Her work reflects a deep appreciation for the traditions of textile art, while incorporating contemporary elements.

ammarawahid671@gmail.com
2019-2023





Through her work, Dania shows the condition and recuperation of her mother after she suffered from a brain stroke and was diagnosed with Agnosia. She does this using hand embroidery techniques. Her work represents the mechanism of her mother's consciousness after having gone through the stroke, as her memory and vision lost coordination with the brain ever since. The white colored panel that dominates the vision portrays the partial optical incapacitation; or the inability to perceive colors. She implements a series of stitches with different techniques; each portraying the symptoms that her mother still faces. The work serves as an example of understanding the quandaries, and needs of their loved ones after a stroke. Dania uses textile stitches to portray what doctors advised her mother; which was to work on hand and eye coordination, hence embroidery became a therapeutic activity and a symbol of healing for her mother.

roshikhan7100@gmail.com
2017-2021





P 21

FAHAD HUSSAYN

Fahad's work features a pair of costume designed armor created out of textile materials. The work is intricately detailed and makes the audience understand materiality when one observes the piece. The structure of the couture piece is woven with extreme attention to detail, which is handcrafted with embroidery and beadwork. The surface is further detailed with embellishments such as stones and three dimensional decorative elements. The piece combines functionality while highlighting the timelessness of various textile techniques from Pakistan. The piece shows a unique visual representation of silk thread embroideries like Tilla and Dabka.

fahadhussayncouture@gmail.com
2003-2007



CONVERSATION WITH ZEB BILAL

It was a sultry August evening as I headed to the opening of a first-of-kind exhibition titled ***‘Retrospective: Fibre and Textile Expressions’***. The setting was idyllic; tucked away behind the industrial hustle of Baghpanpura, a mid-twentieth-century colonial-style mansion had been converted into an off-beat gallery, called ***‘Articulate Studios’***. I walked through the sprawling lawns and the shaded veranda to enter the tiled corridor that led to the spacious rooms converted into gallery space. A delicately embroidered phulkari on gossamer gold tissue hung from the ceiling and in proximity, a small-scale windowscape constructed through textile materials was juxtaposed next to the coloured window panes of the room. I was intrigued and as I surveyed the works in interconnecting rooms, I began to appreciate the relevance of the space to the body of work on display.

Retrospective: Fibre and Textile Expressions, was a showcasing of the textile/fibre artworks produced by a select group of 20 graduate practitioners from the TFA department at Beaconhouse National University. Curated by two leading textile design pedagogues, Professor Kiran Khan, and Dr. Faseeh Saleem, the exhibition highlights the intrinsic materiality and exploratory qualities of fibre and textiles to express universal ideas of body, self, memory, history, and place.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, I sat down with the curators to understand their motivations for putting this exhibition together. The conversation touched upon their curatorial concerns, their pedagogical ideas and how their teaching practice has nurtured fibre art practice, and how they contextualize fibre and textile art practice and see it evolving in the future.

How was the exhibition conceived, and what specifically were you aiming to share with your audience? Why do you think it was important to have this retrospective now?

Kiran Khan (KK): Well firstly, 2023 was a milestone year for us collectively as a Textile department and as a University. We were celebrating 20 years of BNU, and we took this as an opportunity to reflect on our achievements and contributions to the field of textiles. On a personal level, this year carried sentimental value, as it marked 20 years of my teaching at BNU from its very nascent stages to where it is today. Two decades later, 16 batches have graduated from 2003 to the present, and the department has expanded from a textile department to include fashion design studies and accessories.

Conceptualizing the exhibition, Faseeh approached me initially, and we started discussing why and how important it was to showcase the achievements of the Textile Department over the past two decades through the lens of fibre art. The first textile/fibre art-design thesis in 2007 set the foundation for an ideology that would grow and flourish in the following years. Faseeh, (who was from the first batch and then later joined the department as a faculty member), encouraged me to reflect on the

pedagogical challenges faced in teaching fibre art and how the department had provided a platform for students to express their notions through textiles and fibre. This exhibition thus materialized at an opportune time, marking the 20th anniversary of Beaconhouse National University but more importantly, it aimed to archive a tradition; of what was achieved from the pedagogical platform of the TFA department (Textile Fashion and Accessories) at Mariam Dawood School of Visual Arts And Design (MDSVAD). We wanted to bring together all the exceptional work produced into one collective viewing, charting our journey and reflecting the TFA department’s ideology. We had already started talking about the blurring of disciplinary boundaries and over the years we showcased a strong body of work that centred around this creative approach.

Thus, this was the first comprehensive show dedicated to textile practitioners that exhibited works of diverse experimentation and which the art/design fraternity viewed with great interest. It was a pivotal moment for us as mentors/teachers, and academicians, to be able to share the results of a pedagogical initiative that we formally introduced at the undergraduate level, where we encouraged fibre art as a platform for creative expression.

Kiran, you laid the foundation for the Textile department at BNU and have seen it evolve from its nascent stage. In what ways did your own textile/fibre practice help you in setting its initial vision? And can you trace how the department has developed over the past two decades?

KK: My journey and practice in fibre art began three decades ago when I was working on my thesis at the National College of Arts in 1996. With the help of my mentors, Dr. Shabnam Khan and Dr. Iram Zia, I created a 65-foot long and 8-foot-wide fabric installation, suspended from the architecture building opposite the textile department.

This installation generated dialogue with the space and context as it interacted with the wind and movement, softening the flat surface of the red brick facade of the architecture block. The absence of windows on the facade always bothered me, but it played a big part in the suspension of my piece, as it allowed the fabric to sway and move freely. The fabric hanging, swaying with the wind, its gentle movement, brought a new kind of life to that wall.

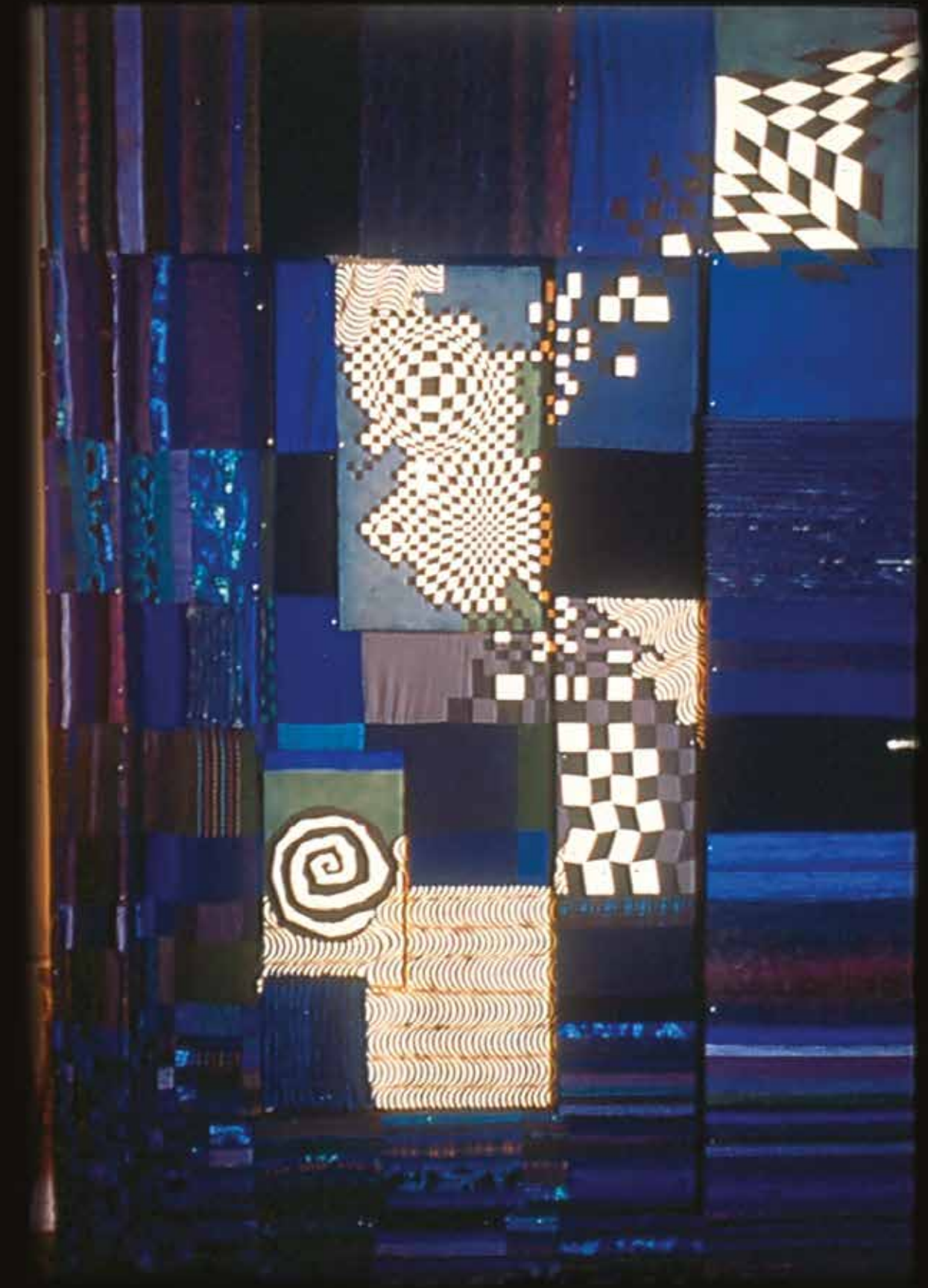
This installation marked the birth of the fibre artist within me. I received many intriguing questions, some of which were not so positive, as the concept of fibre art or a textile person creating something that was art-based and didn’t have the traditional utilitarian product-oriented approach was unusual for many people at the time. While this type of textile art was already happening internationally, my installation was something novel in the context of NCA. The project opened up possibilities for textile/fibre practitioners who came after me but more importantly, as a fraternity it made us think about experimental textile practice and the phenomenon of the fibre artist.

With my textile art practice as a background premise, in 2003, I joined BNU where I was given the task of establishing the textile department. As a founder member, my team and I brainstormed new ideas and worked collectively to develop the ideology of MDSVAD. With no traditions/precedents to follow and no boundaries, it was the time of discovery. Our first batch joined us post-foundation, in our second-year textile program in 2004 and graduated in 2007. During this time, we set the stage for an ideology that aimed to nurture and mature in the years to come. Initially, we were unsure if fibre art as an independent practice would be accepted. Therefore, we gave our first batch the option to work as industrial/commercially viable textile designers or fibre artists. Our first batch was of six students, with Faseeh Saleem and Fahad Hussayn being the two great thinkers who were part of this class. Their projects were experimental, and ambitious yet offered translatability in the real world. We received positive feedback and became more confident in our approach. Over the years, we continued to offer our fourth-year students two distinct tracks to pursue; textile-fibre art practice and applied/industrial textile design. The third-year major studio played a pivotal role in developing this awareness and dual-track ideology. My colleague, Rohma Khan, who was taking the third year at that time, injected this ideology by designing projects that gave students exposure to a range of design possibilities. Interestingly, as courses were refined, the two distinct paths merged, overlapped, and blurred. The department evolved to provide students the creative space and freedom to become thinker-designer-artists.

Why did you think having Fibre/Textile art as a sub-discipline within a Design programme was important? At what point were Fibre/textile arts modules incorporated into the 4-year curriculum?

KK: Textiles have a world that extends beyond boundaries. Its smallest unit, the tangible fibre, can be moulded, bent, and stretched as required. For instance, a 'Kanaaat' or 'Shamiyana', apart from its historical context, can be perceived as a fibre or textile art installation. It creates a space within it, so by that measure, it is a functional textile installation. We practice a preconceived notion that fibre artists cannot create functional works. However this is where boundaries are set to blur. A fibre artist's work can have a functional purpose. It can be a space or an interactive form. Aesthetic purpose is itself a valid purpose, so when design purists are dismissive of fibre/textile art, I'm a little wary of that confining approach.

Fibre behaves almost like a living organism. It breathes and adapts to the environment it inhabits. So, when somebody like Christo drapes a building, the fabric wraps the form, in turn reshaping itself. Therefore, fibre/textiles are contextually resilient. Its intrinsic nature, called 'Fitrat' in Urdu, makes it a versatile medium. It is not limited to making cloth, garments, upholstery, or carpets, it can tell stories and can be considered a communicative medium. Its resilience and innate capacity for movement are unmatched by any other medium. Thus, the creative potential of fibre cannot be ignored. As design pedagogues, we realized that exploring textiles in abstract and functional terms was important





for our students. We provided them a platform to explore all sorts of techniques in the major studio projects, ranging from traditional indigenous crafts, and printing to technology-based work. We also allowed the outcome of the major studio to be open-ended. We noticed that students became more inclined towards fibre art as a form of expression for their conceptual/material-led projects. This set a trend for forthcoming years/batches. Therefore, ‘why’ fibre arts was not a point of debate as we could not ignore it as a form of making and expression. It became more a case of ‘when’ we should formally acknowledge fibre art as a sub-discipline in our degree programme.

We formally introduced Fibre arts into the curriculum around six years ago. For the first ten years, we practiced it informally through a studio curriculum that nurtured this fluid fibre-textile-art-design sensibility. But then a few years ago we introduced a course titled, ‘Fibre Revisited’ into the curriculum, and that played a significant role in polishing and maturing students’ fibre art ideology. Besides this, several modifications preceded its formal introduction. For instance, when it came to offering elective courses within the department, their premise was that they would be taught through a thematic lens.

What was the curatorial focus or framework that guided you in selecting the works for the show? What aspects were taken into consideration?

KK: We had several criteria in mind when selecting works for the show. Firstly, we decided to choose at least one project from each year, starting from 2007 until 2023 (the first batch of students enrolled in 2003, constituting 20 years). Secondly, we wanted to showcase the various trajectories that fibre artists had taken in the field over these 20 years. This included the revival of traditional fibre crafts, social commentary, archiving history, and the use of fibre and technology. Lastly, we focused on how the fibre artist’s journey transcends from one medium to another and how they bring forth an ideology where boundaries between disciplines are blurred through their work. Interdisciplinarity thus became an important factor in this group show, as we looked at which fibre artists created a dialogue through their work with the viewer, with the context, and with the work itself.

It was important that the works we selected broadly came under the category of fibre art and were not purely or majorly product-oriented. Although we did include some functional textile/fibre projects (like Mainul’s “durries”), we looked at them as works that addressed a larger audience and transcended their purely functional purpose. This ultimately became the focus of our selection.

Faseeh, your role as curator for this exhibition is particularly interesting as you are both an alumnus of BNU’s textile design department and then also taught there. Could you comment on your student learning experience at BNU and tell us about how more recently Artistic Design Research (ADR) has impacted your design teaching and textile practice?



FS: The journey has been self-exploratory, and a process-oriented progression. The four years at BNU allowed me to nurture my artistic skills. The stimulating environment for me with a science background in high school exposed me to interdisciplinary ways of translating my thoughts into creative expressions. The textile program at BNU enriched my understanding of design being an indivisible discipline. As a pedagogue, I have been interested in incorporating a diverse range of teaching methods that can cater to alternative learning styles and foster creativity and innovation in students.

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In your exhibition project statement, you make a case for the agency of the maker/practitioner and his artistic imagination as being fundamental to artistic-based design practice. Can functional textile design be considered artistic and meaningful?

KK: The perception that visual artists have higher-order thinking abilities or that their work is hierarchically more meaningful than designers is common. So the premise here was that frankly design practitioners have never been given the rightful platform that they deserve. Whether it is a visual communication design graduate, a textile, a fashion, or a jewellery and accessory graduate, this has been the accepted notion. Hence, one of the goals of this exhibition was to challenge the prevailing norm and bias that has been prevalent over the past two decades. The creative process of a design graduate or a craftsperson should not determine the hierarchy or value of their work. Every person has a unique creative process, and the outcome or product should not be judged as being higher or lower based on this process. Whether the work is functional or otherwise, one should not take precedence over the other.

Artistic-based design practice gives design students the flexibility to blur these hierarchies and respond in creative, functional/utilitarian, and meaningful ways. So to answer your question, can functional textile design be considered artistic and meaningful? Yes, definitely. Hung textiles have an aesthetic and meaningful purpose similar to that of paintings. Textiles have their unique dialogue and contextuality that other mediums lack. The medium of textiles/fibre intrinsically adds depth and meaning to the art. So for me, textile is a narrative, it is a story, it is an archival piece, or a historical mapping. It is representative of its time, its aesthetics of making, place, and context collectively lend worth to it. The entire creative story is woven into that textile piece or portrayed in that textile which

in turn makes it meaningful. Coming back to the example of Mainul’s work, he worked with the Durrie makers, his craft intervention/revival project entailed working with Durrie makers but with sustainable natural dyes.. He created these masterpieces which can be considered as visual tapestries that could be used on the floor or as decorative wall pieces. Hence, they are works that create a larger discourse through the process of meaningful design.

In terms of thematic content, a majority of the works touched upon ideas of History, memory (temporality), narratives of self, and the metaphorical object. Why do you think practitioners are preoccupied with these culturally rooted and meaningful representations? Is this our collective post-colonial response to reaffirming our cultural identity?

KK: Fibre/textile art serves as a powerful tool for reclaiming and asserting cultural heritage, challenging dominant narratives, and exploring the nuances of lived experiences. Exploring themes rooted in history and memory allows practitioners to engage with questions of continuity and change, as well as how individuals and communities make sense of their past and present. These themes address broader universal concerns about the nature of existence, time, and personal and collective narratives. The exploration of themes such as history, memory, narratives of self, and metaphorical objects in artistic works reflects a deep engagement with cultural identity and the complexities of human experience. These themes resonate with both creators and audiences because they touch upon fundamental aspects of what it means to be human and situated within a particular cultural context. In the aftermath of colonialism, many societies deal with questions of identity, agency, and representation.

Surveying the work exhibited, one finds that most of the projects employ techniques that are rooted in craft traditions, such as types of hand embroidery, weaving, dyeing, etc. How important is craft for contemporary fibre/textile art? Is the inclination toward ‘crafting’ unique to creative practitioners from a South Asian context (given our rich legacy of textile crafts and its formal incorporation in design institutes), or is it something more universal to the field of textile and fibre arts?

KK: I believe it is somewhat universal that craft plays a fundamental role in the work of a fibre artist. And yes, I do agree that in the South Asian context, we tend to gravitate towards textile crafts due to our rich heritage in this field.

A focus on Craft is one of the core values of the department and that is why most of the works in the retrospective by these graduate practitioners anchor around it. We do a lot of craft intervention projects and introduced two courses; ‘Fibre Revisited’ and an elective of ‘Craft Practices’. Both these modules allow students to work with craftspersons, and craft communities to understand the rigour of the crafting process.

It is important to understand the context that we are in, and how we encounter textiles in the every-day. We inherit textile pieces from our ancestors intergenerationally or from our immediate grandparents. From our maternal grandmothers' dupatta to their paan-daan we grew up listening and appreciating the stories and narratives about these objects. For instance, many of us have heard our grandmothers reminiscing about a dupatta made with pure silver thread or embellished with pure silver (Chaandi) tinsel /gota work....and then you realize that pure silver tinsel/gota is not available anymore.

The intergenerational transfer of artifacts and skills is a cultural concept. Piaget (1967) says that knowledge resides in objects and children retrieve information by manipulating them. So in our South Asian context children grow up with stories of craft objects, of heirlooms passed on intergenerationally. The social fabric of any society also dictates or echoes its practices. Hence, crafting and the idea of craft is central to our social fabric. We commonly see our grandmothers knitting or doing their cross stitch, or their trunks covered with handcrafted cloth; all these textiles that we see in our social context, in our social fabric, within the family unit, inculcate a sense of ownership and value for traditional artefacts and heirlooms.

As our four-year program places a strong emphasis on craft, it often leads students to rediscover the techniques they were exposed to while growing up. This creates a connection between their personal history and their work, resulting in a diverse range of craft techniques being utilized by our graduates. Whether it's through inheritance or personal experience, our students have a deep respect for the craft of textiles, and it's evident in the quality of their work.

The exhibition has two video works (by Faseeh Saleem and Tayyaba Sabir). I find these works post-disciplinary in terms of how they approach their idea- related to body experience and form possibilities. Can you share your curatorial intention for including these works? (Besides the fact that the makers have a textile background)

FS: The main aim of selecting these works was to reflect on the use of digital technologies in fibre/textile art practices. The digital technology incorporated expedites the process and representation of artistic explorations, however, the artistic relationship of both has the potential to further explore the possibilities. Digital editing tools mediate human experiences and practices. These video works explore the artistic possibilities, observing material interaction, and its manipulation both physical and digital through editing tools. The exhibited video, "Banana series", reflected on the close connection with the experimentation that is embedded into artifacts during the practice-based design research. The video is an artifact that materializes the thinking process and expresses the abstraction of the concept. It further explores the conceptions of the research artifact in the field of fashion and textiles. This added another dimension in contrast to the other selected works in the exhibition augmenting the understanding of term fibre/textile art practices.

Taking fibre/textile art practice to be a creative knowledge production endeavour how has it been received in our local context? (Particularly by the art fraternity and design industry) Were there any challenges?

KK: Certainly, in Pakistan at least, there were many challenges. However, they have diminished over time. I do not want to take credit for this, but I believe that my team and I were among the first to establish the concept of "Fibre Art as a practice." Initially, about twenty years ago, this idea was perceived as threatening and as if we were encroaching upon someone else's domain. We were questioned about entering a mode of creative practice reserved for visual artists. However, we received a lot of support from our textile fraternity. Breaking the hierarchy and attitudes took time. I believe boundaries have been broken or reconfigured, and there has been appreciation and positive feedback

from all practitioners across the art-design spectrum. In this age of interdisciplinarity, there are no rigid lines. Whether it is a designer, an artist, or a craftsperson, all embark on a creative journey, and their processes result in creative output. While the outcome may differ slightly, one cannot be considered superior to the other. Thus, for me, the craftsperson is just as important as any other practising artist, visual artist, textile artist, or whatever one may call them. So, though it was quite challenging, we have come a long way and are now showcasing a textile/fibre retrospective.

When the field of fibre arts emerged in the 70s (almost 50 years ago), it had puritanical roots with artists working with materiality and the processes of making; do you think that basic ethos still holds today or has it been taken over by the tendency to be conceptually meaningful, abstract and/or representational?

KK: I believe no discipline or area can remain entirely puritanical, and its boundaries must blur eventually with the kind of interdisciplinarity and ethos that surrounds us, along with the dialogue that has been happening over the past 50 years. This leads to changes in processes of making and conceptual challenges as well. To answer the question, yes, the field was puritanical initially, but it now chooses not to be puritanical to privilege any one way of approaching fibre art. It can be for some people and not for others. The field evolved with artists and craft practitioners initially working with textiles and fibres as a medium. Christo undertook ambitious wrapping of buildings with textiles in the 1960s and 70s. Yet, these textile installations were still labelled as the work of artists, not specifically as those of fibre artists.

Post-1980s, exemplary fibre artists like Sheila Hicks, Nick Cave, and El Enatsui made a huge mark with their work, distinguishing fibre art as a genre on the international scene and paving the way for the recognition of future fibre art practitioners. At BNU, some students, like Mainul, who have a rich heritage of Bangladesh as a backdrop and have been exposed to natural dyeing in fibres, work puritanically in material and technique. The boundaries of all disciplines have blurred because of the time

we are living in, so the discipline cannot exist in isolation vis-a-vis materials. Students now work with fibre but also incorporate things like metal, technology, and projection mapping. Fibre artists have a vast platform, from plastic to metal, natural fibre to optical fibres, encompassing everything, including paint. They have an entire process where they have interacted with the material, seen how it behaves, and explored its possibilities. While there is a tendency to be conceptually meaningful and representational, there is also a cross-pollination of ideas that favours a conceptual piece being utilitarian as well. One can say that the blurring of boundaries has created grounds for accepting textile/fibre art in the mainstream discourse of art and art-making. In Pakistan’s context, visual artists such as Ruby Chisti and Risham Syed have embraced the use of fibre and textiles, pointing to a trend toward interdisciplinarity.

What are the present-day challenges of the fibre/textile art practitioner? (Particularly being located in South Asia/Pakistan)

FS: To begin, I feel there is a need to expand the understanding of the term “fibre/textile art”. That would only be possible if we encourage the archiving of existing as well as the making of new works by the practitioners. The collaborative mindset of exploring textile skill sets with transdisciplinary methods needs to be implemented. South Asian artists tend to grapple with the tension between traditional craft techniques and contemporary artistic practices. Balancing the preservation of cultural heritage with innovation and experimentation can be a complex endeavor.

In my opinion, shedding the burden of cultural biases is not only necessary but also essential for the progression of art and society as a whole. Art, at its core, is about expression and reflection of the human experience. Restricting artistic expression based on cultural biases limits creativity. By shedding the burden of cultural biases, we open up opportunities for artists from all backgrounds to contribute diversity in artistic expression.

There is still a dearth of formal education and institutional support for fibre art. Few art schools or programmes offer specialization training in fibre arts, leaving aspiring artists with limited opportunities for formal education or mentorship. Another concern is the lack of reception for fiber artists in traditional galleries which reflects a broader issue within the art world locally. Often fiber artists don’t receive the recognition that they deserve in mainstream galleries. To address this issue, both galleries and the broader art community need to actively educate themselves about fiber art and actively seek out opportunities to showcase it. This could involve organizing dedicated exhibitions, providing resources and support for fiber artists, and challenging existing biases within the art world.

With technology being so integral to all forms of creative practice, what form and direction do you see textile/fibre art practice taking in the future?

FS: With the advancements in technology, the future of “fibre/textile art” practice holds immense innovation potential. My practice has evolved during the last couple of years, especially during my collaborative projects with fashion design technology specialists. The integration of interactive technologies i.e., motion neuron sensors, actuators, and microcontroller make fibre expressions more interactive. This involves and encourages the incorporation of human-computer interaction, blurring the boundaries between art, technology, and audience participation. The advancements in digital fabrication technologies offer new possibilities for textile/fibre art creators. They can incorporate hybrid materials, pushing the boundaries of traditional craftsmanship and exploring the interaction of digital and analog techniques.

KIRAN KHAN AND FASEEH SALEEM IN CONVERSATION WITH ZEB BILAL

Image credits: Kiran Khan, 1996. “The world beyond the senses”, image 1 & 2.
Image credits: Roham Moid Khan, 2014, Room 2008, Textile studio.

REFLECTIONS

“METAPHORICAL LAYBRINTHS OF STITCHES AND STROKES”

Experts say weaving is one of the oldest crafts that is still done today. The activity dates back to the Neolithic period, whereas fibre twisting—the predecessor to further growth in weaving—began around 20,000-30,000 years ago. Similarly, ancient humans were adept sewers who attached pieces of cloth with animal sinew thread and bone and horn needles. Iron needles date back to the 14th century, and eyed needles were invented in the 15th century and are even used today. Accentuating textiles, dress, and accessory design, historian Richard Rutt gained widespread recognition due to his beloved book ‘A History of Hand Knitting’—which conservatively proposes that knitting developed in Egypt between 500 and 1200 A.D. Since the turn of the century, an excellent study has been conducted on textiles and fashion as channels of self-expression, increasingly freeing them from the label of being only crafts. Fibre art emphasises the medium’s expressive and communicative capabilities, paving the way for an experimental evolution establishing its aggressive and adventurous dimension in form and content. Academics have adopted an experimental approach to shaping this critical discourse in Europe and other parts of the world—since the ’70s, breaking down the barriers between high art and craft and exposing some of the ideas of pluralist material and exhibition practices from the 1960s.

Published in 1979, Rosalind Krauss’s influential essay ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’ introduced the concept of the ‘long-drawn-out field,’ arguing that contemporary sculpture has expanded beyond the traditional classifications of landscape and architecture to encompass a broader range of artistic expression. Textile art has also undergone a similar transition offering fresh perspectives and hotly debated areas that delve into the complexities of politics and power in contemporary textiles, challenging boundaries and hierarchies. A new wave of exhibitions of artistic outputs has played a transformative role, serving as a platform for showcasing the depth of creative research in textiles, celebrating student work, fostering critical dialogue, and bridging theory with practice. These exhibitions highlight how materials and forms can convey complex theoretical concepts, encouraging a deeper engagement with textile/fibre art and design. ‘Retrospective—Fibre and Textile Expressions’ was one such exploratory show, exhibiting complex, multiformat works by selecting creative practitioners with backgrounds in textile, fashion, and accessory design, which used several mediums, methods, and materials to produce works that addressed contemporaneity. This show, conceived and executed by Professor Kiran Khan, Head of the Textile, Fashion and Accessory Design Department at Mariam Dawood School of Visual Arts and Design, Beaconhouse National University in Pakistan and Faseeh Saleem, a PhD scholar at the University of Borås, Sweden and a fibre artist living and working in Canada. Khurram aimed to showcase technically adept designers capable of thoughtful, innovative work

by promoting a curriculum that values artistic inquiry alongside technical skill—to address our era’s multifaceted social, cultural, and environmental challenges in the broader context. The project coordinators were Esha Liaqat and Anum Khurram, who teach at BNU and practice textile/fibre and fine arts.

As repositories of the past, archives and collections hold objects and stories ready to be reactivated and given new interpretations. Over the last century, archives have gained a status of value addition and have become one of the most important academic disciplines, especially for practitioners within art, design, and architecture, who have explored all the unprecedented possibilities in the recent past. Museums are also pruned to this offshoot of anthropology, and personal to collective archives are becoming widespread across continents. Aiman Gillani is an academic and independent curator who has a particular affection for the archives. Her concerns over the lesser and wrong use of Urdu are valid, as various observations, data, and statistics demonstrate that Urdu’s popularity and use in Pakistan have decreased over the past few decades. Aiman, being a sceptic at heart, explores affinity to language, fostered by her grandfather—a writer and a publisher, who taught her to investigate its structure and social meaning beyond speech. Through poetry, however, we can empathise with others and learn about their lives, experiences, and feelings. As the concerns around language proceeded, Ijmal Haider endeavoured to dismantle the linguistic barriers that often obscured the beauty of Pashto poetry admired amidst the breathtaking landscapes of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, immersed in the rich literary heritage of Pashto, particularly the timeless verses of Rehman Baba, Hamza and Pir-e-Roshaan. Haider’s profound connection to his Pashtun roots drove his exploration. With a commitment to making the wisdom of these revered poets more accessible, Haider harnessed the power of fibre/visual/multi-media art.

On a separate tangent of appreciating and protecting one’s territory, Eisha Liaqat’s inquiry gave the widespread degradation phenomenon a melancholy undertone that made people reflect on how mortality left its mark on everything. Over time, items transition from a relative order to an increasing disorder, denoting distinct developmental phases. Through degradation, they evolve with a different blend of perfection and imperfection, expressing a worn-out beauty in their altered shape. Their unique ness is expressed via form, texture, and the priceless memories they hold, interwoven with life. Eisha gave her ancestral home a contemplative atmosphere by meticulously capturing two decades of seclusion there. She preserved the artefacts in their original location, using careful documentation and contextual research to make every door, window, and wall evoke memories. Boundaries and hierarchies between textile and visual arts were challenged as time stood still in these remnants of the past, keeping splendour and exquisiteness preserved in nostalgic amber.

Mistakes happen to everyone, so they are an impediment yet a chance to straighten a learning curve, especially when we get exposed to the world around us in childhood and adolescence. Through her fibre art, Anam Khurram Javed raised an exciting viewpoint about the challenges of learning religious

scripture—her own story. In many religious contexts, the teachings are considered sacred and immutable, which can limit questioning and critical analysis. This is often due to the respect and reverence for the tradition and its scriptures, which are believed to convey truths beyond ordinary human questioning or reinterpretation. This mostly happens in the Madrassas—an alternative populous education system throughout Southeast Asia, especially in Pakistan. Anum became acquainted with contextual understanding, comparative analysis, and critical thinking of various knowledge pools, as they all prospered later in modern pedagogies. Seeking visual poetry, Anum investigated and recorded the spasms of textures with the critical lens in her hand. Through the whispered tales her people shared, translated into asymmetrical shredded papers, every piece shows a bit of her vast familiarities. She weaved together felt, gauze, and cotton threads to create the textures of an eternal existence in which every line defines Ghalti and Atkan’s writing intertwined. Her recollections aligned through fibrous structures over a tactile map with an original layout echo of a universal thralldom are what the auditory strands of learning spaces are alike. The essence of her time in madrassa was preserved this way and narrated to the onlookers, speaking straight to their souls.

The current era is one of digital change, with technology being recognised as pivotal in today’s society. A growing number of us are utilising digital innovations that we can access from our homes or places of employment, and technology is permeating all decision-making, whether personal or collective. We have to better allocate resources, choose wisely, resolve conflicts, and handle things appropriately. In his single-channel video, fibre artist and PhD scholar Faseeh Saleem discussed the relationship between technology and humans. Using a banana as his canvas and object of experiential, Faseeh started an unusual experiment. He peeled the banana and found that its skin could be changed and manipulated in various ways, piquing his curiosity about how everyday objects and edibles affect how we see the world and ourselves. By controlling the mashed banana pulp, Faseeh further explored themes of identity, agency, and the fuzziness of the lines between human and non-human creatures.

Similarly, Muhammad Atique combined a do-it-yourself approach with cutting-edge technologies to pioneer a unique experiment in fibre artwork. Equipped with digital manufacturing techniques and AI algorithms, he created elaborate designs that combined innovation and heritage. However, Atique’s dedication to democratising art through do-it-yourself culture was his invention. The cloth came to life in Atique’s works, swaying and pulsing to a captivating beat. He included dynamic components in his fabrics using state-of-the-art technology, enabling them to move and change in reaction to sound and movement. His creations became dynamic, breathing manifestations of his genius, enthralling audiences and igniting imaginations thanks to this marriage of art and technology. Correspondingly, in the gritty urban landscape of a city pulsing with life, Umair Umer, an artist with a soul as bold as the city itself, embarked on a daring endeavour inspired by the timeless theme of “engines to the human organs. Umair’s creation unfolded the meticulously crafted details of his portable outlet, which was made up of printed panels adorned with intricate Kantha stitches and embroidery techniques, evoking the raw energy of the streets. At the same time, embellishments made from textile materials and

car engine parts added a touch of mechanical mystique. Just like the iconic car chase scenes in car racing films, where every twist and turn held the promise of excitement, Umair’s outlet became a thrilling adventure for all who entered.

The art of Fehreen Mujahid explores women’s difficulties in achieving financial independence and juggling several facets of their lives. Her study examined the issues of gender equality, work, education, and home obligations by drawing on human experiences. Mujahid advocates for women’s empowerment via education, professional growth, financial literacy, and an active role in home economics. Her artwork used a multi-layered approach that includes patchwork, laser cutting, resin blocks, and macramé to graphically express the stress of juggling many societal duties. In Cholistan’s history, an incredible narrative of grit and ingenuity is often told during an extreme drought hundreds of years ago. Ladies of the tribe banded together in a massive endeavour, guided by a wise elder knowledgeable in Lippan Kaam. They painted elaborate designs on their modest mud homes with deft hands and steadfast resolve, each stroke symbolising their power and solidarity. Travellers were in awe of their artistry, and knowledge of them travelled far, attracting support and appreciation. Arriving with presents of supplies and water, merchants were la-di-da by the spirit that Lippan Kaam represented, as well as the place’s beauty. The women’s artistic abilities inspired future generations by transforming their houses into sources of hope. Ammara Wahid’s research serves as a rallying cry for action to protect and revitalise cultural practices and artefacts in danger of extinction. Analogously, a narrative of resiliency and reinvention takes place in the enchanted land of Bahawalpur, where legends of Nawabs and extravagant living reverberate over the ages. Her mother’s steadfast energy inspires Hajra Inam, and she sets off on a self-exploration trip with the help of historical echoes. Hajra’s forebear’s woven stories of luxury and custom amid the splendour of Nawab reign; their heritage shadowed her own. However, Hajra finds her voice and tale entwined with the themes of Mukaish work beneath the weight of tradition, symbolising her resistance and ancestry.

The armour of renowned Pakistani fashion designer Fahad Hussayn exposed a crucial element of the couture garment, coordinating well with architecture, art, and design. Expertly fashioned, it was a protective symbol honouring the wearer’s bravery, courage, and illustrious heritage. Every minor detail told a story of battles fought, and victories won, reflecting the ancestry of individuals dressed in similar clothes throughout history. Likewise, disaster struck the city of Peshawar following the end of the conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Army Public School assault permanently changed the neighbourhood’s appearance and left an enduring impression on its streets. Rafia Shafiq’s project, which aims to revitalise cultural heritage in the face of darkness, has emerged as a ray of light. Her efforts resulted in the scattering of Urdu alphabets among the elaborate Phulkari designs, a moving memorial to the schoolchildren’s grief. Maps of the city began to appear among the grief, like imprints in the fabric, depicting the people’s resiliency and will to rebuild and heal.

Rehman Younas, as a textile artist, delved into the intricate world of fibre experimentation. This pro

cess delved deeply into the fundamental origins of fabric, where he sought to elevate and honour this often underestimated medium. Employing meticulous methodology and traditional textile techniques, he meticulously crafted line-based patterns that purposefully intersected or diverged, evoking emotions rather than merely replicating scenes. For Farhan Umar, a humble custodian of tradition, transferred to him from his mother, Kamkhwab embodies beauty and the sanctity of heritage. Inspired by its enduring presence, he revives age-old weaving techniques, breathing new life into ancient threads. In his hands, Kamkhwab becomes a vessel for storytelling, a tangible link to the wisdom of ages past.

Zeenia Amir's art explores the profound idea of fatigue in the colourful tapestry of Lahore, where the hustle of contemporary blends with the echo of ages past. She studied the neglected areas of Bilal Ganj, Misri Shah, Railway Road, Brandreth Road, the city of shrines, and the busy commercial districts after leaving the city's busy streets and famous attractions behind. Zeenia's views serve as a call to action, imploring us to consider the measures required to revitalise and conserve Lahore's rich cultural heritage, including its thriving commercial districts and hallowed shrines, and to breathe new life into its run-down urban landscape.

Relatedly, Mahrukh Shahid delved into the fascinating world of material manipulation for her project. She tried to create visually arresting and distinctively unique textured surfaces by combining brass sheets and shaving scraps with the soft feel of laterite fabric. Her goal was to open up new possibilities for tactile aesthetics and sensory experiences by extending the boundaries of traditional textile uses. Her work shed new light on textile design's relationship to materiality, sustainability, and sensory engagement. Tayyaba Sabir's art reflects the ideals she learned in her home-based education. Drawing inspiration from many concepts and tactile experiences, she employs her position as a bridge between the past and present to convey the ageless wisdom ingrained in each stitch and stroke.

Within the brilliant tapestry of its arts and crafts, the emperor's court was a tribute to the region's rich cultural legacy, echoing throughout the subcontinent. Under the emperor's watchful eye, artists thrived in this haven of patronage and inventiveness. The court's worldwide effect may be seen in how its talents, refined over centuries of custom, were influenced by the exotic goods found along the Silk Route. The work being done by Mohammad Mainul Islam is essential to keeping these customs alive. Promoting organic materials and weaving processes aims to uplift craftspeople by highlighting handicraft customs from Bangladesh and Pakistan, like dhurrie and jamdani—as these handloom weavers still retain the flat-weave skill with their modern patterns and natural colours. Through her artistic creations, Kainat Wali Khan explored the complex relationship between memory and identity. She aimed to tell stories of imagined encounters blended with reality, expressing her affinity for the region and its crafts, especially Zardozi, in the face of environmental difficulties experienced by the residents of Damas, Gilgit Baltistan, which is tucked away in the Karakoram Range. Her craft's embellishment, which included wolf paw prints, flowers, leaves, bread loaves, and mountain goat horns, is inspired by

nature. Through the use of methods like organza bases, flock printing, constructions made of organically dyed gauze, thread work, and Tilla stitching, Khan skilfully illustrated these themes, creating a story that speaks to her ancestry.

A mother plays a vital role in one's life, frequently acting as a primary caretaker, mentor, and emotional support. Her impact is significant, influencing our values, beliefs, and perceptions of love and caring. A mother's link with her child may be one of the impactful partnerships, offering support and advice through life's many phases. In Dania Khan's fibre art, a narrative unfolds, a tale of her mother, whose journey she beheld.

After a stroke, her world turned skewed, and Agnosia's shadow was a challenge to construe. many phases. In Dania Khan's fibre art, a narrative unfolds, a tale of her mother, whose journey she beheld. After a stroke, her world turned skewed, and Agnosia's shadow was a challenge to construe. Through sundry and strange formations of the encephalon, Dania decided to depict the brain and its structures as neurons and cells in textiles were sewn, a testament to the battles her mother had known. Visual agnosia was a puzzle to untangle, as her mother saw all colours as one. Dania's work highlighted the strokes' aftermath, trying to understand empathy's gentle path. Maryam Bibi explored the sad bond between her Muslim grandmother and Hindu companion, Aanchal, shattered by the 1947 partition in the rich tapestry of her artwork—multicoloured tangles and twists. Maryam discovered the treasured memories of their childhood friendship—a closeness characterised by constant support and shared laughter—through her grandmother's memories.

I would like to finish this essay with a poem—prose expression. Under the banner of Retrospective—Fibre and Textile Expressions 2023, a few creatives and curators gathered having threads in their hands and visions tethered to no rule, willingly exploring life's fabric in themes with loom and needle; they often redefined the tools, techniques and topologies. Then, they aligned various fibrous dimensions into a colourful display. There are no old names or labels to define materials, new fabrics against silk and synthetic, and threads from gold beads to multiformat lingos. The arts span the breadth of an existence, where handmade fine arts merge with appliqués, even the toughest barricades down to the domains out there. This gallery of motion, texture, and hue—every stitch tells a tale in a new language to us, every colour, a new code.

AARISH SARDAR
HOD, VCD
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, MDSVAD
BNU

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BIOGRAPHIES

PROF. KIRAN KHAN

Kiran Khan is a Professor and founding member, Head of Textile, Fashion, and Accessories department at Beaconhouse National University. Holding a bachelor’s degree in textile design from National College of Arts and an MSC in linguistics from BNU, she believes in the power of language in communication, shaping her focus on the language of textiles. Recognized with the prestigious Percy Brown award for Art History, Kiran has taught at the Pakistan School of Fashion and Design and received further trainings at La Chambre Syndicale De la Couture, France, and Bunka College of Fashion, Tokyo. She was an Artist in Residence at Art Address, Canada, in July 2018. She has collaborated with various artisans on craft intervention projects. She led a UNESCO craft capacity building project in 2021 and runs her brand, Tanka: a brand dedicated to celebrating artisans. In 2021, she collaborated with fiber artist Liz Williamson on the Weaving Eucalyptus Project. She served as the Executive Director of Design Summit 01: a collaborative event between Beaconhouse National University, Rhode Island School of Design, Punjab Walled City Authority and various other partners that took place in Lahore in March 2024.

FASEEH SALEEM, Ph.D.

Faseeh is an enthusiastic design thinker; exploring the rigor in artistic design research to develop skills for contributing insightful and alternative conceptions of body in the field of art and design. He has recently completed his doctoral studies from the Swedish School of Textiles, University of Borås, Sweden. He graduated with a BA in Textile Design from Beaconhouse National University (BNU), Lahore, Pakistan in 2007. This further encouraged him to explore his creative potential in both fields of textile and fashion. He later completed his MFA in fashion and textile design with a specialization in textile design at the Swedish School of Textiles, University of Borås, Sweden. His work so far has been more about figuring out individual artistic skills, making constant decisions, and exploring new mediums, techniques, and traditional practices by translating his thoughts into creative expressions. His works have been exhibited both nationally and internationally, in reputed Art Galleries and Museums. His current research explores the aesthetics of the body and its notions in fashion and textile development. The results of the explorations are alternative methods for understanding the body as a central variable in fashion and textile design practices.

EISHA LIAQAT

Eisha Liaqat is a multidisciplinary artist and educator at the School of Visual Arts and Design, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, Pakistan. She Co-Founded Articulate studios, a creative space established to foster a sense of community among artists. The studio serves as a platform for artists to exchange ideas, find inspiration, and showcase their work. Expanding upon this ethos, she introduces Articulate Residency Program and hosted its first edition with the theme “Power of Art”. Eisha’s expertise extends to her role as a trainer for capacity-building workshops, notably under a UNESCO initiative in collaboration with the Pakistan Tourism Department, Pakistan Small Industries, and Pakistan Arts Council. Beyond her contributions to the studio’s creative community, Eisha is committed to broader community engagement.

ANAM KHURRAM JAVED

Anam Khurram Javed is a Textile/Fibre Studies graduate and MA Art Education scholar, with distinction in both her theses. Visiting Faculty at the textile department of SVAD since 2018. Her design practice revolves around hand embroidery, fabric manipulation, felting, recycling and product development. Her MA research is based on Mind-blocks/Atkans that exist in the textile studios. The research maps energetic sources that create tangible obstacles within the studio environment. It brings awareness to the importance of hidden curriculum, body language and the spiritual aspects of the self.

PROF. QUDDUS MIRZA

Prof. Quddus Mirza is a painter, art critic and independent curator. He is a Professor at the School of Visual Art and Design, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. He is the former Head of Fine Arts Department at the National College of Arts Lahore, where he studied BFA, before acquiring MA (Painting) from the Royal College of Art, London in 1991. Quddus Mirza was the first Pakistani who was accepted into the Painting School of the prestigious Royal College of Art, London. On his return to Pakistan, he joined his alma mater and contributed in the field of art education, he has trained several generations of artists in Pakistan. As a practicing painter, he has shown extensively, in more than 45 important group exhibitions held around the world, and had 16 one-person exhibitions in Pakistan and the UK. He represented Pakistan at the Asian Art Biennale Dhaka. He is known for his distinct painting style, innovative themes, and expressive imagery. His works are part of various important collections including the British Museum, Royal College of Art Collection, the National Art Gallery Islamabad and many private collections in Pakistan, India, UK, USA, Germany, Sweden, Nicaragua, Italy and Spain. Mirza is also recognized as an art curator and has curated a number of exhibitions; including Celebrating Art and Love at National Art Gallery, Islamabad; Exotic Bodies, based on the miniature paintings from the collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, that was displayed at the

Preston Museum in the UK, 2002; and Beyond Borders: Art from Pakistan at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Mumbai, India 2005, the largest exhibition of Pakistani art held anywhere outside of Pakistan. He has been invited to various conferences, seminars, talk shows and literary festivals, in Pakistan, the UK, India, the UAE, Kazakhstan, Turkey and the USA, to read papers, give talk, and participate in discussions on art, culture, particularly on the Pakistani art.

ARISH SARDAR

Aarish Sardar is a design educator, writer and independent curator. He holds a BFA in Fine Arts (2000) and an MA in Multimedia Arts (2003) from the National College of Arts, Lahore. Aarish went to the UK to do his MA in Communication Design from Kingston University London (2006) after a few years' experience as an Associate Producer at GEO TV Lahore. He heads the Department of Visual Communication Design at the Mariam Dawood School of Visual Arts & Design, Beaconhouse National University (BNU), Lahore. Aarish, being a curator, takes an interest in the role of communication design to bring change in society. He has curated multiple public pop-up shows, i.e., the "Tolerance Poster Show" at the Packages Mall, Lahore, "Everyday Pakistan: Celebrating Local Design" at Royal Kitchens, Lahore Fort, "Datum 2.3" at Expo Centre Lahore with the Institute of Architects, Islamabad (Lahore Chapter) and "Simultaneity as Design: Pakistan and Beyond" as part of the Design Summit, Lahore at Lahore Fort. Aarish has also worked as a communication designer & a multimedia consultant with clientele internationally from the USA, UK to Pakistan and beyond, like Sophia Learning, Autograph ABP, Hulton Archives (Getty Images), DFID UK, Linge Roset, Eugene Dodd Typographics (EDT), Woolpack Inn, Hamptons of London, Aconflag Group Europe and Salt'n'Pepper Restaurants (PAK/UK) to name a few. Aarish has exhibited his interdisciplinary works in various group shows at Kunj Art Gallery (Karachi), Rohtas Gallery (Islamabad), Corydon Clock Tower Gallery (London), Bermondsey Gallery (London), School of Tomorrow exhibition held at the Royal Palm Club (Lahore) and Alhmara Art Gallery (Lahore) as part of the group show Crossovers.

ZEB BILAL

Zeb Bilal is a design educator and researcher with over two decades of teaching experience. Her core interests are interdisciplinary research that explores Design History, South Asian textiles, Coloniality and the relationship between craft and design studio practices. As an independent researcher, she has been studying the textile collections at the Lahore Museum to discover the multi-dimensional narratives they embody. She uses these collections as a pedagogical and visual art/design resource to investigate, respond and showcase the rich cultural heritage of South Asian textiles.

ROHMA MOID KHAN

Rohma Moid Khan, a versatile artist and educator, serves as the Associate Professor and Programme Head of IEDA at Beaconhouse National University. Her interdisciplinary work spans deep-historical to abstract futuristic concepts, exhibited globally at esteemed institutions. As a co-founder of Provocations, she fosters dialogue among academicians, researchers, and practitioners in art and design.

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