

KB17

KARACHI BIENNALE

CATALOGUE

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KB17 Karachi Biennale Catalogue

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FOREWORD

*Sitaron say agay jehan aur bhi hain
Abhi Ishaq kay imtehan aur bhi hain*

**Many new worlds lie beyond the stars
And many more challenges for the passionate and the spirited**

Allama Iqbal

Artists with insight and passion have always re-imagined the world to inspire fresh beginnings with hope. Sadequain communicated through public murals, Bashir Mirza furthered the discourse with the first art magazine, and Rabia Zuberi founded the longest running art school. They, and other stalwarts of Modernism, like Zubeida Agha, Ismail Gulgee, Ali Imam, Anna Molka Ahmed, Shakir Ali, and Zainul Abedin, offered a cultural vision to the people of a young country learning to be a nation.

Among Pakistan's art movements, the Neo-Miniature Movement is perhaps the most internationally recognised, but other unsung, locally-born art movements have been equally influential in the local context. The Watercolour Movement from the Karachi School of Art, under the mentorship of Mansur Rahi, and Resistance Art that, even without a manifesto, came to express solidarity against a repressive regime in the 1980s, and post-2000, have continued to complicate narratives of social and religious extremism. Pakistan's Feminist Art, with its manifesto signed by 15 women artists in Lahore, has persisted on a trajectory of resilience. Popular Art that emerged in the 1990s, offering its lens to daily pursuits in the city's bazaars and streets, has marked a new inclusivity. Subsequent decades have thus seen widening art engagement and collapsing distinctions between art that was once subsumed within 'high culture' and that which, it might be argued, was injudiciously dismissed as 'popular' or 'mainstream.'

Powerful works seldom get a chance to reach the people since public art spaces, which are controlled

by the state, have begun to shrink and many turning points in Pakistan's art remain uncelebrated as they are absent from the national cultural discourse. Karachi boasts of one of the biggest commercial gallery scenes in South Asia, after Delhi and Mumbai. Over the years, however, these galleries have become the only space available to professional artists. This imbalance has exacerbated the commodification of art and diminished its role in the cultural consciousness of a people.

A commitment to connect art, the city, and its people led to the founding of the Karachi Biennale Trust (KBT) in 2016. The Biennale was premised on addressing local concerns and global aspirations, taking its cue from the renowned curator, Enwesor Okwui's empowering words, 'you can make the Biennale whatever you want it to be.' KBT responded with an ambitious vision to intervene with art, in order to engender optimistic discourse about rehabilitating the cultural identity of a city eclipsed by three decades of tumultuous violence and offer the world an alternative lens to this ostensibly beleaguered city. In October 2017, KB17 successfully showcased over 180 artists from Pakistan and 5 continents across the globe in the largest international assembly of art in Pakistan.

This first Biennale in Karachi engaged with the city at multiple levels, recognising, in its early stages, the need to step in and connect with audiences from a spectrum of neighbourhoods and communities. In the year preceding the Biennale, the 'Reel on Hai' project installed dozens of public art works, crafted from recycled cable reels in hospitals,

parks, places of worship, schools, and universities to initiate a dialogue about public art within the environs of the reel sites and in the media. Since Pakistan's population is largely in its teens, including young voices in the conversation took priority. Our emerging artists initiative and educational programmes helped young artists and students explore the transformative power of art, with its potential to spark creative solutions in classrooms and help young people, who have grown up in a fractured city, narrow ruptures and rally for change.

By creating new memories of invigorating and provocative art, KBI7 successfully took some steps toward reclaiming the history of the city's historical core on MA Jinnah Road, particularly at two important institutions: NJV School, which was built in 1852 and housed the first National Assembly of Pakistan, and the century old, Jamshed Memorial Hall of the Theosophical Society, with its unsurpassed contributions to interfaith dialogue in a land where the followers of over six religions live in close proximity.

As an art critic and an art historian, it has been important for me to introduce a forum for robust discourse and documentation in the field of cultural knowledge as an institution undergirding the Biennale. The Critical Knowledge Lab (CKL), which I hope will develop into an interdisciplinary incubator for ideas, where an open exchange on contemporary concerns will persist and evolve, and where voices from disparate backgrounds and ages will converge, sometimes even coalesce, is a realisation of that interest.

For the Biennale's first instalment, the CKL focused on five interdisciplinary roundtables that explored the experimental space around ideas common to artists, social activists, writers, musicians, and urban interventionists, leading up to the main event. Comprehensive records of these discussions, available in this catalogue and on our website, can serve as a vital resource for students and researchers of art and art history.

Another component of the Discursive Programme was The South-South Critical Dialogue, which was

inspired by Gerardo Mosquera's claim that the 'zones of silence' that exist between countries of, what is politically termed, 'the global South' continue to prevent a free flow of ideas. To counter this separation, it was decided that KBT will, in each iteration of the Biennale, exhibit art and explore thinkers from a different region, which negotiates comparable histories of colonial or neo-colonial intervention. Latin America became the focus of KBI7, where the works of 9 artists from the region were exhibited, and a study circle, which read, discussed, and critically examined texts on the works of cultural visionaries from Latin America, met fortnightly. Taking it further, art critics from Cuba, Paraguay, and Puerto Rico were invited to present on contemporary practices in the region that address the thematic WITNESS, examine legacies of colonialism, and scrutinise autocratic regimes. They collectively highlighted the valence of witnessing as a means of responding to shared experiences of epistemological control.

Contemporary Artists all over the world are seen negotiating experience and memory in an era full of disorder, anxiety, and contradiction; the thinker, Ziauddin Sardar, calls these 'postnormal times.' KBI7 invited audiences and artists to share a platform to imagine a world beyond 'postnormal times.' Its exhibitions acted as a temporary museum of testimonies across the city, where the visitor could hold reflective conversations, find stimulation in a diversity of perspectives, and feel provoked to ask pressing questions.

The interface created by KBI7 kindled the beginning of a new relationship between art and the public audience, as a quantum of paintings, installations, video art, and performative works entered their cultural imagination.

I began by quoting the national poet, Allama Iqbal, who alludes to a new world awaiting discovery. I maintain that this first journey will indeed hinge on inward reflections, guided by the maps that poets, writers, and artists create for society.

Nilofur Farrukh
CEO KBI7, Managing Trustee KBT

INTRODUCTION - WITNESS

When confronted by the theme for the Karachi Biennale 2017 (KB17) – Witness – the much-quoted Chinese curse, “May you live in interesting times” comes to mind. These are indisputably interesting times not only for my city but also for the world around us. We are often told as artists that our duty is to question the times we live in. If so, even this seemingly familiar “Chinese” proverb demands scrutiny. Fred R. Shapiro, editor of the *Yale Book of Quotations*, noted, “No authentic Chinese saying to this effect has ever been found.” The British politician Sir Austen Chamberlain first conjured up this expression in a speech in 1936, as reported by the *Yorkshire Evening Post*.

We all bear witness to our times and ourselves, both in the present and the past. Karachi, where I was born and raised, bore witness to the bloodshed of the partition of the subcontinent into the modern nation states of India and Pakistan in 1947. Despite continuing episodes of turmoil, the city of migrants resiliently grows and thrives. This is especially true in the arts. In 1971, Ali Imam opened Indus Gallery and it became a focal point for many of our Modernists. Today the gallery scene flourishes and contemporary artists from all over the country display their work here. Commercial galleries, however, are not enough. Art museums are needed in Karachi. (At the moment, there are no public collections of modern and contemporary art in the city.) For Karachi’s first art biennial, I considered it imperative to install a large-scale exhibition that encompassed not only neighbourhoods where galleries are now present, but those where displays of art are rare. The hope was to create pop-up art spaces, to raise awareness that art belongs to all people and not just the elite.

I feel honoured to have been chosen to be the inaugural Karachi Biennale’s Chief Curator. My team consisted of three dynamic assistant curators, who, like me, not only call this maddening, inspiring city home, but have their own art practices: Zeerak Ahmed, Humayun Memon, and Sara Paganwala, all

of whom brought a young perspective and energy to our endeavour. Curator-at-Large, Zameene Shah, operated in an invaluable advisory capacity. 20-year-old Adam Fahy-Majeed, who grew up in Australia, brought another view to our curatorial process. My entire team, including myself, worked on a voluntary basis.

Coming from the perspective of an artist-curator, I am wary of the tremendous power and responsibility that the title “curator” bestows. For KB17, I approached artists whom we commissioned with a single word: Witness. My team and I then worked with each artist over a period of a year to clarify their respective visions. The idea was to get a kaleidoscopic view of what this thematic meant to all the artists involved. I also chose to initiate a project called “The Incidental Object,” in which Karachi-based artists were asked to include one work of their choice and install it wherever they liked in the public spaces of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. For this exercise, our role as curators was intentionally diminished so that the artists could negotiate among themselves how they wanted to be represented and where they would like their work to be placed.

I cut my teeth as a curator in Karachi. My experience began in the 1990s when I was invited to install yearly exhibitions in the lobby of the former Karachi Sheraton. I called these shows “Urban Voices” and curated four iterations. In these exhibitions, I juxtaposed works from artists who had just graduated from art school with those of established artists. In the year 2000, I launched Amin Gulgee Gallery, a non-commercial space, where I also live and work. About once a year, the gallery organises large-scale, thematic exhibitions. Sometimes I curate these shows alone, but I most often invite guest curators to work with me. I feel the need to maintain an artist-led space that is open to new ideas and other points of view. Over the years, I have also engaged with performance, both as an artist and as a curator. For KB17, my

team and I initiated a nationwide open call for performance art, which is an emerging field in Pakistan.

Given our severe lack of funds, the scope of KB17 was ambitious. We had 12 venues organised into four clusters scattered throughout the city in which to install the work of 182 artists. Due to the immense scale of Karachi, and the daunting prospect of traversing it, each venue was treated as a microcosm of the whole: self-contained and yet connected. Although moods and connections varied from venue to venue according to the works that were placed there, the thematic arc of KB17 remained consistent. Challenging works were presented in all 12 venues, including those located in areas unaccustomed to displays of art. My curatorial team and I also decided to develop a website dedicated specifically to Curatorial, which went live on the opening, to guide the viewer through the sites. For us, this was an expression of our belief that KB17 should be accessible to all and free of cost.

Our main venue was the Narayan Jagannath Vaidya High School (NJV), a functioning school for middle to low income families. The NJV is in Saddar, a congested downtown neighbourhood far from upscale Clifton, where most galleries are located. Since school was in session at the time of KB17, the student body of nearly a 1,000 pupils automatically became an organic audience, as did their families and friends. A short walk from the NJV, which served as the epicentre of what came to be known as Cluster B for the purposes of KB17, was another venue: the (former) Theosophical Society (established in 1896) which now houses a Montessori school. Not far from this were Pioneer Book House, one of the oldest bookstores in the city, and Capri Cinema, an iconic movie house that mainly screens Pakistani films. Also in the vicinity was 63 Commissariat Lines, a colonial building from the early 1900s. No entrance fee was charged to enter any of the 12 venues. The hope was to lure people off the street into a space that had been temporarily hijacked by art.

The majority of artists included in KB17 were

Pakistani. Most of them live and work in the country, although a handful is now based overseas. Contemporary Pakistani art is rich and complex and required such strong representation simply to encompass the vast array of concerns that it addresses. We also felt it important to present such a comprehensive overview of contemporary Pakistani art for another reason: Although those in the city who frequent commercial galleries are aware of trends in contemporary Pakistani art, most are shy about the prospect of entering a white cube.

Also on display were the works of over 60 international artists. These included practitioners from Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe, South America, and North America. We naturally wanted to include a global perspective on the act of witnessing, but we also wished to address a pragmatic concern for our local audience: it has become increasingly difficult for Pakistanis to obtain visas, especially to Western countries, and, hence, it has become harder for them to go to galleries and museums abroad to see art there for themselves. Wishing to include as broad an international view as I could, I invited guest curators to contribute to KB17: Carlos Acero Ruiz, who curated the work of nine artists from Latin America; Paolo de Grandis, who curated the work of six artists mostly from Europe; and the two-woman team of Dominique Malaquais and Kidiyatou Diallo who make up Space for Pan-African Creation and Knowledge (SPARCK), and curated five artists working from Africa.

It was an experiential venture for me to approach artists from both Pakistan and abroad to bear witness to this perplexing era. It was an opportunity to learn and absorb very diverse artists' idiosyncratic vocabularies from various continents. Visual artists were not the only ones invited into this discourse: architects, filmmakers, and professionals engaged with fashion and theatre were also included. This cross-disciplinary approach reflects the ethos of Karachi in which there is a great deal of interaction and collaboration among creative communities.

The works commissioned and selected for KB17 bore witness in many ways. For some of the artists,

the act was personal. They witnessed their own journeys, their memories of family and childhood, experiences of loss, their connections to the sacred, to tradition, and to their bodies and selves. For others, Karachi itself became a point of departure that led them to witness the trauma of violence, as well as the challenges presented by urban decay, the beleaguered intellectual space, barriers, migration, change, and territory. There were also artists who witnessed issues of gender and sexuality, capitalism and global commerce, legacies of colonialism and class divides.

The topics addressed by artists, whether they were based here or abroad, all had a resonance for Karachi. Some were commentaries on the times and issues relevant to the artist, while others explored the artist's own internal dialogues with themselves and the city. They were acts of defiance and celebration that took viewers to unexpected places.

When I began this journey, my aim as curator was to ponder not only our times but also the narratives surrounding them. I did not have answers, only questions. The idea was to let the artists speak for themselves.

"There must be something sacred about salt. It is in our tears and in our sea," stated Khalil Gibran. Now, I feel, is the time for us to come together as artists, and more importantly as human beings, to bear witness to our shared salt.

Amin Gulgee
Chief Curator KB17





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The Streets That We Live In

Aquila Ismail

Yes Art, living on the same street as life but in a different room, offers relief from life without relieving one of living. It embraces the meaning of all things, the resolution of all mysteries. Indeed Karachi, which lies on the coastline of Sindh province in southern Pakistan, along a natural harbour on the Arabian Sea with scattered rocky outcroppings, hills, and coastal marshlands, where mangrove forests grow in the brackish waters, embodies both life and art. Its streets embrace the rich, the poor, the dispossessed, the disabled, the outcasts, the indigents, the denizens of the dark, and the worshippers of the sun, the throngs in the temples, the churches, the mosques, the fire temples, the gurdwaras, the *imambaras*, the *jamatkhanas*, the five star hotels, and the *dhabas*, opening its arms to each one of them.

Cities are usually analysed on economic rather than aesthetic grounds. Their character is judged by the efficiency with which they facilitate the creation and distribution of wealth. The city is the product of vast, unregulated, unplanned, and sometimes hidden forces; it is not an individual creation. Any beauty it might possess would be incidental to its real nature, its visible structures imposed by historical rather than artistic intent.

The Discursive Sessions of KBI7 that linked Artists with feminists, poets, writers, musicians, development practitioners, environmentalists, and architects, however, laid out that the city that is Karachi does not constitute a monolithic ensemble or static backdrop to the dramatic action of their works. Rather, it presents a dynamic, polymorphous entity in a constant state of change. This makes it possible for each of the groups mentioned above to exploit the city's diversity, utilise its fantastic potential, lose themselves in the labyrinth of its *mohallas* (neighbourhoods), or even attain a life of anonymity if one so desires.

So, it is a small wonder that, through their works,

artists depict a city of contrasts and mysteries, a kaleidoscope, a character, a marvellous, monstrous, hydra-like creature that enjoys a symbiotic relationship with its inhabitants. By examining the interaction between characters and their environment, novelists, painters, sculptors, mixed media practitioners, writers, and musicians weave a poetic discourse into the realist fabric of their medium to create a representation of space that is filled with immense joys and griefs, beauty and ugliness, hope and its negation; one that pulsates with life and death indeed.

At its very core, all art is a communication between the practitioner and the audience. The interrelationship, though complex for creation, is essentially a solitary act that lends itself to mutual inspiring. The relationship between poetry and music, for instance, is obvious, as is the link between theatre and literature; so it is, with movements and art. All resistance movements have led to treasure troves of artistic works. Since each art form seeks to depict the milieu it exists in, the nostalgia for the past, the griefs and joys of the present, the anxiety for the future, there is a commonality of purpose, which the Biennale's discursive sessions sought to understand. They sought, indeed, to create a bridge between seemingly disparate elements through interaction, to create a common voice for the much misunderstood nature of Karachi.

The disillusionment that many feel after every massacre, every target killing, every ethnic clash, after sectarian riots, blasts on the Ashura processions, massacres of Hazara communities, burning alive of Christian families, burying alive of girls in the name of honour, murders of young couples who elope to find security in this city, leads many artists to create reflective works. Many explore the malaise and social inequality plaguing the city's disenfranchised and depressed, shed light on the horrific conditions of workers and women, and foreground the evils of bonded labour. Their politically and socially

motivated works satirise the pretences of the elite and their hypocrisies and affectations; some even ridicule popular theories such as the optimism of the socially responsible modern corporate practice, which clashes with their ultimate goal to make profit at all costs.

Art may reflect the influence of war, famine, and the tremendous impact of the religious right, but there is nothing real in life that is not more real for being beautifully described. It is often pointed out that such and such painting or sculpture, with all its impossible moulding, carving, and encrusting, or a poem, for all its generous rhythms, is saying nothing more profound than perhaps that moon beams light up the earth. But, it is not so easy to say this, since the night and the moon are transient. Their memory, however, is endless. So, the artist, writer, musician, et al fill the skies of the empty, transient internal world to make it immortal.

The multiple cultures of the city have a profound influence on the arts, from abstract and psychedelic art to graffiti and performance, wherein theatre provides the medium. One of art's greatest strength is its ability to go inside the subjective experience of history. For example, the feminist movement, the shifting development paradigms which create densification, or the urban renewal canard of gentrification, which creates chaos in the dispossession that ensues. Art takes all this in, through the complex act of seeing and thus witnessing, directly or indirectly, the lives of others. Art, along with literature, therefore, often serves as a record of the social and personal impressions that follow from historical movements. In that respect, art and literature can be understood as records of what particular historical events actually felt like, rather than simple descriptions of what occurred during particular historical events.

So, while literature is a way of ignoring life, music lulls us, the visual arts enliven us, and the performing arts, such as dance and drama, entertain us. Art gives us the illusion of liberation from the sordid business of being.

* * * * *

Aquila Ismail has written extensively on development, women, and literature in newspapers and magazines. Her novel, *Of Martyrs and Marigolds*, was published in 2012 and is based on the emergence of Bangladesh from the ashes of East Pakistan. Ismail has translated Urdu fiction into English. Her published works include *Harvest of Anger and Other Stories*, *Godavari*, *Zindabahr Lane*, and *The Three Worlds*.

Her non-fiction work consists of the documentation of the work of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), a Karachi based development NGO. She is, at present, documenting her sister, Perveen Rahman's work as the Director of OPP; Rehman was gunned down by armed assailants on 13 March, 2013 in Karachi's Orangi Town.

The “Interesting Times” of the Karachi Biennale

Adriana Almada

It was enriching to attend the first edition of the Karachi Biennale (2017), not only because I met artists that are not normally in the international circuit of grand capitals but also because of the connections I found with artistic experiences from Latin America, especially those that appeal to popular traditions and the work of memory.

The thematic “Witness,” around which the first edition of the Biennale was developed, came as a timely revelation for its potential to tackle the social conflicts of the present, both from direct observation or experience and from processes of memory taking a stand against the past and opening questions about the future. Artists, as witnesses, accounted for their time, a convulsive time, as could be appreciated in most of their works, whose topics treated the global and the local from the lens of different languages and disciplines. There was, in nearly all of them, a strong political and social component, but also an important measure of personal poetics. The artists addressed current issues that challenge democracies and efforts to understand history from a non-colonial perspective.

While the Biennale gathered artists from many countries, among them greats like Yoko Ono, Orlan, and Michelangelo Pistoletto, what I found especially interesting was the work of the Pakistani artists, those from Karachi in particular. In their works, the political power of memory became evident against a colonial past of disputes and resistance, in addition to the resilience of societies taken down by violence, from political murder to terrorism and gender discrimination. The Biennale was also an exploratory space that invited revisions of identity and otherness, questioning Eurocentric standards in a context of cultural diversity.

Within the framework of this Biennale, I was invited to participate in the panel, ‘South-South Critical

Dialogue with Latin American Critics and Curators,’ which took place at the Rangoonwala Centre. It was an important opportunity to present, with my colleagues Dannys Montes de Oca (Cuba) and Carlos Acero Ruiz (Dominican Republic), artistic practices from Latin America and compare them with the works exhibited in Karachi. Months before, the South-South Study Group had already been constituted, formed by Pakistani art critics who collectively studied and discussed important Latin American thinkers – Walter Mignolo, Gerardo Mosquera, and Nelly Richard, among others – with the intention of highlighting issues common to both regions.

These two regions, bearing very different histories and cultures, have common distinctive traits: colonialism, segregation, and dictatorships. The similarities generate a shared interest for matters of frontier; identity, forced displacements, discrimination, cultural diversity, and a focus on memory as a mechanism of reflection about the past and political violence.

Themes such as identity and the subaltern condition were addressed in the last decades by Latin American biennales, along with social and political issues, exile, migrations, dictatorships, drug trafficking, armed conflicts, cultural and sexual diversity, and gender issues. These concerns have been a constant in biennales like San Pablo (Brazil), Mercosur (Porto Alegre, Brazil) Bienal Paiz (Guatemala), Cuenca (Ecuador), La Habana (Cuba), Curitiba (Brazil), Montevideo (Uruguay), and SIART (Bolivia). They have all addressed the tension between the marginal, the alternative, and the dominant, as well as the concept of “cannibalism” in allusion to the mechanism of cultural appropriation. The Triennial of Chile, in 2009, addressed, among other themes, the condition of the Mapuche people, who were strongly repressed in their fight

to recover their ancestral territories.

The road was initiated in the 80's by the Havana Biennale that, emerging as a showcase for the symbolic production of what was then called the 'Third World,' was able to position itself as a space for artistic expressions that normally did not have access to the international art circuit, dominated by western capitals, especially New York and London. The Havana Biennale thus gave way to art conceived as a form of communication, resistance, and activism, and already, in its beginnings, to the exhibition of works that dealt with multiculturalism and with artists working on indigenous aspects of identity, with their foundations in historical and anthropological thought.

Latin American artists have dealt with these complex problems in their works at biennales and outside of them. Here are some examples:

Milton Becerra (Venezuela) has worked on indigenous sacred spaces, rites, and ceremonies, with an eye on the deaths a particular community suffered due to an epidemic.

Ayrson Heráclito (Brasil), an artist and "Candomble" priest, recently presented work, which acts like an exorcism that retroactively serves to free, from their tragic load, humans who were trafficked from Africa to America during the period of European colonisation. He thus performed rites in the island of Gore (Senegal) and in Bahia (Brazil), two places that marked the exit and entry of the ships loaded with slaves in the times of the Portuguese empire.

Milagros de la Torre (Peru), in her work *Bajo un sol negro* (*Under a black sun*), re-edits a manual photographic procedure that lightened the skin of the subjects that were photographed.

Adriana Bustos (Argentina) reflects on the colonial route of the "mules" in the times of the Spanish empire. The mule is a hybrid animal, the result of the union between a horse and a donkey, very resistant to climate and the geography in the way from Córdoba (Argentina) to Cuzco (Peru). This modality of traffic persists and drugs, specifically

cocaine, are the products transported. Women who are dedicated to this activity are, therefore, called "mules." This work takes the colonial past of the region, conquered by the Spanish Crown, as an antecedent, and simultaneously highlights the condition of so many Latin American women, who are forced to commit crimes to support their homes and fulfil their innocent dreams.

In South America, in the 70's and 80's, dictatorial regimes orchestrated a supranational plan of repression, resulting in thousands of jailed, tortured, dead, and disappeared people. After the fall of the dictatorships, the issue of memory has, therefore, appeared repeatedly, each time with more emphasis, as a way to elaborate a scar, the mark of a pain not talked about enough. This work of memory reconstructs the past from the exhumation of archives or diverse narratives, introducing new components in the scene. The so called "post-memorial" productions deal with events from the past not from narrations by the survivors of traumatic situations but from their descendants, who learnt of them by references. The stigma of the disappeared sweeps Latin America from Mexico to Chile and Argentina, to this day.

Doris Salcedo (Colombia) addresses the consequences of the civil war in her country, the conflict between the military, the paramilitary, and the guerrillas, and drug trafficking in her practice. In her installations and performances, she looks to process the violent death of thousands of people. She carries out collective actions to refer to situations silenced by political interests and fear. She establishes proximity with the victims of bloody events to elaborate mourning and absence. In one of her works Salcedo uses hair, which acts as an element of union or an articulation between objects. Hair, in its fragility, appears like the only human element that survives after the tragedy. Also in Colombia, **Oscar Muñoz** has done plenty of work on the relationship between image and memory, between what appears and disappears – visions that blur, that lose identity and return like mirages. And, **Juan Manuel Echavarría** has photographed the guerrilla camps that have bombarded his country, working visually with the remains, the daily

elements that have survived the attack.

Rosángela Rennó (Brasil) also works with discarded objects: photographic remains rescued from flea markets, newspapers, albums, and archives. The rescued images are manipulated in a way that their significance is renewed and recreated. She tackles disappearance and death, between what is shown and what is hidden.

Fredi Casco (Paraguay) also alters images in archived photographs and addresses the dramatisation of power during the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner, which lasted 35 years, in Paraguay.

Paz Encina (Paraguay) also resorts to archives for her video-installations in which she tackles human rights violations during the same dictatorship.

Hugo Aveta (Argentina) has done work spotlighting detention and torture centres in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, in addition to work about the great social manifestations of 2001 in Argentina, at a time of social and economic collapse that led to the fall of the government in power.

In Guatemala **Regina José Galindo** worked time and again on works exploring the political violence and armed conflict in her country, and **Manuel Chavajay** explored the way that this civil war impacted his indigenous community.

Teresa Margolles (México) has addressed, in several works, the murder and disappearance of women in Ciudad Juárez, in the frontier with the United States, as well as deaths that resulted from drug trafficking. With regard to economically-motivated migrations, the Guatemalan collective, *Sitio y seña*, formed by Enrique Lee, Iris Castillo, and Andrea Monroy Palacios, created codes that Central American migrants could use during their rough and dangerous journey to reach the United States illegally.

Joaquín Sánchez (Bolivia) works on the subject of identities, appealing to the elements of popular and indigenous cultures in Bolivia and Paraguay.

Coming back to the Karachi Biennale, it is important to note that a concern with the colonial past visibly stood out in many works, among them **Akram Dost Baloch's** (Pakistan), who sculpted cases of ammunition as if they were great seals. The cases had been abandoned in a warehouse when the British left the country in 1947, ending the British empire's official presence in the region.

David Alesworth (England-Pakistan) reflects on the garden as colonial legacy. He rendered, through an embroidery on an antique rug of Kashan (a region in Iranian territory, ancient Persia), a map of the Lawrence Gardens, today *Bagh-e-Jinnah*, a central park in Lahore that was once a part of the circle of imperial British gardens. Alesworth's work thus marks an overlapping of cultures, as Persian carpets are considered the representation of sacred gardens.

Ruby Chishti (Pakistan-USA), in one of the most powerful works exhibited at the Biennale, works through the concept of architecture as a witness to atrocities. This exhibition piece was created from her experience in a faraway village, the inhabitants of which had run away leaving their belongings. Using the clothes she found – receptacles of diverse memories – she elaborated a dense and solid installation: a narrative of flight, of loss, of abandonment, of permanent menace, of the need to be displaced for reasons of immediate survival in the case of those who have suffered from the emotional and physical costs of armed conflict.

It is worth remembering the work of **Ali Kazim** (Pakistan), who was awarded the Biennale's jury prize, for its musings on the precariousness of human life. It was completely made of human hair and stood out because of its subtleness and simultaneous strength. The artist paradoxically appeals to an element that always remains in order to refer to the inside of the body that deteriorates and expires. He constructs, from it, a nearly immaterial structure that defies death, in a region of the world marked by violence, wars, and fear; in addition to the emotional and physical trauma produced by armed conflict.

I only mention these four Pakistani artists to show possible relations between works arising in very

different regions but that, as I said at the beginning, share the fact of having had a colonial past and of having been the stage of multiple and repeated forms of violence. In this sense, I think that the South-South link is a favourable mechanism of analysing structures that still persist and affect the reality of hundreds of thousands of people in these parts of the world.

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Adriana Almada
Director TEKOHA, Editorial and Curatorial Projects

Adriana Almada is an art critic, writer, poet, editor, and independent curator based in Asuncion, Paraguay. She has been a member of curatorial teams for several biennials in Latin America and curated Paraguayan art exhibitions in Europe and South America. She contributes to several art magazines and currently runs TEKOHA projects, a cultural platform to develop publishing and curatorial projects. Almada is also the incumbent Vice President of the International Association of Art Critics (2014-2017) and chairs its Awards Commission. She visited Karachi, for the first time, during KB17.

The City as Witness: Ways of Speaking, Seeing, and Being Seen

By Zarmeene Shah

In his 2003 speech at the Capitol Rotunda in Washington D.C., Holocaust survivor, Nobel laureate, and Founding Chair of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, Elie Wiesel evoked the poet, Paul Celan when he asked the question: *who will bear witness for the witness?*

More than a decade prior, in the 1991 book, *In an Era of Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, literary critic Shoshana Felman and psychoanalyst Dori Laub had referred to the last decades of the 20th century (and onwards) as “an age of testimony, an age in which witnessing itself has undergone a major trauma.”¹ Some years later, in 1998, historian Annette Wieviorka would classify the current time as ‘the era of the witness.’² This ‘era’ of which they both speak refers to the numerous representations, through prolific texts, videos, photos, art, and records, that have emerged since the 1980s that take the analytical framework of the ‘witness’ and thereby of the idea of ‘testimony’ as a central concern.

Felman does this in the context of Claude Lanzmann’s documentary film *Shoah*, through which she calls into question the relationship between ideas of testimony, atrocity, and ethics as demands placed on the eyewitness (as duty), in the context of the inhumanities that they evidenced, experienced, remembered, and survived through the Holocaust. She quotes Elie Wiesel, when he says, “If someone else could have written my stories, I would not have written them. I have written them in order to testify. My role is the role of the witness.” According to Felman, to bear witness is thus:

“[T]o take responsibility for truth: to speak, implicitly, from within the legal pledge and the juridical imperative of the witness’s oath. To testify – before a court of Law or before the court of history and of the future; to testify, likewise, before an audience

of readers or spectators – is more than simply to report a fact or an event or to relate what has been lived, recorded and remembered. To testify is [...] to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative, to others: to take responsibility – in speech – for history or for the truth of an occurrence, for something which, by definition, goes beyond the personal, in having general (nonpersonal) validity and consequences.”³

Giorgio Agamben speaks of the idea of testimony in a similar way, when he cites Primo Levi as the ‘perfect example of a witness.’ “(But) Levi does not consider himself a writer; he becomes a writer so that he can bear witness.”⁴ Writings such as those by Felman, Wieviorka, Agamben, and Arendt would help to launch the fields of memory and trauma studies, and of witnessing, testimony, and truth (particularly with a view towards human rights). Ideas of truth telling and the legitimacy of the all hold as central the figure of the witness, from within whom emerge considerations of the personal, the political, the historical, and the social. Over the years, these notions have been viewed as (alarmingly) pertinent to the current global socio-political condition, where trauma, memory, truth, and testimony stand as critically relevant concerns in an increasingly unstable world.

Viewed through such a lens, it is then poignant that the city of Karachi should find the witness as the central framework of its inaugural biennale of art. Where the thematic of ‘Witness’ bears manifold implications, with the ability of opening and unfolding into heterogeneous directions and interpretations, particularly in the hands, minds, and imaginaries of artists, it is also an idea that resonates powerfully and undeviatingly with the city of Karachi.

Amin Gulgee (Chief Curator of Karachi Biennale 2017) refers to Karachi as a ‘bruised city’⁵ – a fitting

analogy, since Karachi's post-partition history can best be understood as one of pluralism and multiplicities that have often manifested in conditions of strife and contestation within the city. After its first large influx of immigrants in 1947, over the decades, Karachi has continued to draw a multitudinous population from across the country seeking economic opportunities in this cosmopolis of over 22 million inhabitants, the financial hub of the country and its major seaport, a city whose map changes each year as it continues to expand and spread like an entity in and of itself: alive, throbbing, growing.

The city has also been home (in the past) to two of the country's most powerful political parties, a fact that has often resulted in violent clashes, and the infamous 'shutter down' situation, where the giant machinery that is at constant play in the workings of this megalopolis can be brought to a grinding halt (through threat of violence) in a few minutes flat. At the intersection of diverse and differentiated populations, politics, and economics, Karachi thus becomes a site of exchange unlike any other in the country; often as turbulent as the ocean it sits next to. The conceptual framework of witnessing becomes a critical and inescapable link to the city, a way of seeing and being seen, of bearing witness – looking from, to, and at.⁶

The opening ceremony of KB17 took place on the evening of 21st November 2017 at the sprawling premises of the 152-year-old Narayan Jagannath Vaidya (NJV) High School – the central site of the Biennale and an operational high school with over 1,000 students. The Biennale opened to the public the following day at 12 locations across the city, with works manifesting in the form of painting, sculpture, and mixed media works and large-scale installations, films/videos, photography, and performance works by over 180 local and international artists responding to the curatorial premise: 'Witness.' In the spatial configuration of the city, the sites could be divided into four clusters, with the one forming in and around Saddar, the old city centre and business district of Karachi, representing what could be viewed as the central node.⁷

Within this central cluster were the NJV school; the

Karachi Theosophical Society, founded in 1896 as an emblem for the inclusive and pluralist society that Karachi always stood for; Capri Cinema, with its modernist 1960s architecture housing the most well maintained single screen projection cinema in the country; Pioneer Book House, established in 1945 and known to be the oldest functional bookstore in the city; and 63 Commissariat Lines, a private turn-of-the-century structure, whose changing functions over time lent it a character that made it one of the most unique and distinctive spaces to host the Biennale.

Sites in other nodes included the iconic Frere Hall, built in 1863 as the city's town hall, the expansive gardens and building of which remain open to the public to date; the 154-year old Claremont House, owned by National Foods and restored just prior to KB17; the FOMMA DHA Art Centre, located in a refurbished 19th century army barrack situated in a park; the gallery of the Karachi School of Art (KSA), the city's first art school, set up in 1964; the IVS Gallery, housed within the prestigious Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture (IVS); the Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui Gallery at the Alliance Française; and the VM Gallery, supported by the Rangoonwala Trust, whose community centre launched in 1971 and the gallery in 1987.

The diversity of the sites, the historical significance of many of these to the city, and their spread across Karachi becomes a critical point of departure in many considerations of Karachi Biennale 2017. For those wanting to see all 12 sites, these two weeks would come to signify a kind of expedition around the city that would likely not be routinely attempted, particularly considering the chaotic frenzy of traffic across the main arteries of the city that would need to be traversed to reach a majority of locations. Significantly, however, this also meant that it was possible to see only some of the sites closer in proximity, if one wished. Curatorially, this presented an interesting challenge – how to imagine the connection between each site, how to think of their separation and interrelation.

Eventually, the curatorial framework came to rest on viewing each site as a nucleus, a kind of pivot,

in and of itself, each one functioning as a totality, a singular (but smaller) whole that was able to encompass the concerns embedded within the premise of 'witness,' while maintaining its connection to the larger complex of the Biennale. Set against each other, both these complexes (the site and the Biennale, and thus the site and the city) form the microcosmic and macrocosmic lenses for perceiving the ideas disseminated through the works. In so doing, the sites became integral to the narrative of the exhibits that they housed; each space, unique in its character, architecture, and history (and yet unmitigatedly distinctive also of the city of Karachi), becoming definitive of the ways in which medium, content, and message could be perceived and received. This is apt, since, at its heart, KB is a deeply localised project, rooted in the city it takes place in, the city of Karachi.

Critique of the Biennale finds issues of hierarchy, power, and privilege and, relationally, of representation at its core. The question of whether a city like Karachi needs a biennale has been asked. When viewed through the lens of Karachi's exhibitionary art history and positioning, being home to several Pakistani Modernists and Ali Imam's Indus Gallery, however, one can argue for this as an organic, even likely, evolution. Perhaps a more appropriate question would address what a biennale means for a city like Karachi (other than the generic list of universally cited merits). Viewed in this way, its critique is perhaps one of its most significant consequences, symptomatic of interactions, reactions, and exchange. While questions of institutions and power relations, of publics and positions of privilege – whether manifested through the voice of institutions, critics, or patrons – are inherent to the very being and circumstance of the Biennale, it is in the meanings these conversations take here, in the particular historical, socio-economic, and political framework of a city like Karachi, within a country like Pakistan, where relations of power lie embedded within a history ripe with the burden of witnessing and being witnessed, that the meaning fundamentally lies.

Questions then of who represents whom and how critically they connect, not only to the above

but also, to notions of identity and ownership. In the context of biennales, many have and continue to attempt exactly such representations. In 1995, the Johannesburg Biennale (South Africa's first), titled 'Africus,' was criticised for not being 'African' enough;⁸ in 2006, the 9th Istanbul Biennial sought to define/redefine the city under the unambiguous thematic of 'Istanbul'; and the Kochi-Muziris Biennale's book, *Against All Odds*, speaks of the need to invent 'a new language of cosmopolitanism' through art.⁹

Karachi's first biennale makes no such claims, admitting at the outset that there is no one voice, whether individual or institutional, that can claim to define the multiplicities, ruptures, and divergences within the city of Karachi. Rather than seeking a singular perspective, it operates in difference, and in the ways that this manifests in the multifarious imaginings, investigations, and readings of artists who engage with the Karachi Biennale and the context of 'Witness' in 'acts of defiance and celebration.'¹⁰ The claim, if there is one that the Biennale makes, is then perhaps not so much that 'this is Karachi' but more pertinently that 'this is *also* Karachi,' recognising that it is only in Karachi's differences that its convergences can also be found.

* * * * *

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From witness to actor

Hamna Zubair

"There is no simple formula for the relationship of art to justice," wrote poet Adrienne Rich in 1997. "But I do know that art means nothing if it simply decorates the dinner table of power that holds it hostage."

Pakistan's young history is littered with examples of artists for whom an engagement with the arts was inextricably linked to a desire for justice and humanity. The tug of war between artists and power structures that favour control over expression played out, and continues to play out, on every level in our social setup: between artist and state, as was the case with writers such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Saadat Hasan Manto, or Fahmida Riaz; between artist and local community, as evinced by Iqbal Hussain; and even between the artist and the art world, as artists strive to reimagine traditional forms and techniques, leapfrog over entrenched gallerists and gatekeepers, and upend the means by which their work reaches the wider world.

It is with an eye to this tension that I enthusiastically consumed KB17, Pakistan's largest international contemporary art event that takes place every two years in Karachi. I use the word 'consumed' quite deliberately here because KB17, which featured the works of over 100 artists from Pakistan and around the world displayed across the sprawling metropolis that is Karachi, could not simply be 'attended' or 'viewed.' These verbs are far too polite and self-contained to describe the act of experiencing such an ambitious project. Like Karachi and the inhabitants that shape it, one had to be hungry, dedicated, stubborn, and pushy in order to take in all KB17 had to offer; for the artwork was spread out across multiple venues at considerable distances from each other. This observation is the opposite of criticism, for art should always demand something from its audience. Consuming KB17 demanded perseverance, and I was glad to be among those who persevered because I can soundly say that KB17 was an important step towards reinvigorating

a discussion on art and power that has dwindled in Pakistan of late.

Set to the theme 'Witness,' the works featured at KB17 intended to be both "a commentary on the times and...explore the artists' own inner dialogues. They are acts of defiance and celebration that will take viewers to places unexpected and unexplainable. The aim is to ponder not only our times but also the narratives surrounding them. I do not have answers, only questions." Written by KB17 curator, Amin Gulgee, this explanation of the theme describes an impulse to press pause and take stock of where we are and what we have become.

At this point, it would be an oversight for me not to spare a moment for the venues and exhibition spaces selected by KB17. We have to admit that Karachi lacks large-scale exhibition spaces that are open to the public and freely accessible. The challenge for the KB17 team, then, was to locate venues housing memory and character; sites that held some place in the Karachi residents' imagination and could yet accommodate a variety of art work ranging from video installations to sculpture to performance art.

Exhibition spaces were not 'located' as much as they were 'created.' A secondary school was briefly repurposed to serve as KB17's main venue. For the duration of the show a bookstore became an art gallery. A building's facade became a canvas, covered in repeating patterns of tiny bugs. This effort – to reimagine spaces – deserves a mention.

I believe the most effective and powerful works at KB17 were those that spoke to this theme while maintaining fidelity to the artist's vision and the unique space they inhabited. Some installations, like Ayaz Jikhio's puppet children at the NJV school, produced claustrophobia and unease: what have we done to our children? Some, like Sanki King's spirited

'Mind Palace' at Jamshed Memorial Hall, produced cheer and encouraged play: how unexpectedly lovely it was to stumble upon a neat, brightly graffitied rooftop amid the sad, neglected historic buildings in Saddar. Some, like Shazia Sikander's 'Disruption as Rapture' or Ali Kazim's installation at the IVS Gallery, invited simple awe at the artist's craft. And some, like Huma Mulji's streetlight at Pioneer Book House, sparked the kind of protest and conversation that spoke directly to power and interrogated the premise of KB17 itself.

This conversation, which stemmed from accusations that Huma Mulji's work damaged Pioneer Book House, opened up discourse on how classism, appropriation, income inequality, and more are navigated (or not) by the art world. In an earlier essay on the subject I myself questioned whether KB17's 'interventions' in public or semi-public spaces like Pioneer Book House were not in fact acts of extreme privilege that benefited the elite art community more than the everyday patrons of these venues.

Another critique of KB17 declared that the Biennale, in placing much of its works in heavily curated, gated venues, had created too much distance from the lived reality of Karachi to really be considered representative of anything: "The politics of establishing distance from the material realities of Saddar, and thus de-limit, rather than disrupt, our spatial imagination of it, manifested itself in many ways at KB17...simply placing artwork in a public space does not make it public art, especially if distance is at work."

The above makes it very clear that, with regard to justice, KB17 definitely succeeded in one area – it opened up space to critique power dynamics at play within Karachi's art world. The more 'controversial' work at KB17 encouraged viewers, curators, and artists to engage in frank dialogue on social media and in the press. As a result, the inner workings of the art community and its major players – often remote and inaccessible to the casual consumer of art – became visible.

On the flipside, the fact that many of KB17's

venues were in fact private spaces that viewers "retreated" to, much like elite consumers of art flocking to popular galleries, meant that broader questions of power and powerlessness relating to ethnicity, gender, and class were not as accessible to the public as they should have been.

Still, I found three aspects of KB17 very encouraging: first, that the exhibition was the cause of so much critique and introspection, which is a clear indication that people care. Second, that KB17's makers were gracious in their acceptance of this critique and engaged in open discussions with critics on social media. And third, that in planning KB19, the Biennale's founders have appeared to incorporate feedback from last year into their process.

When I had a conversation with the Managing Trustee, Niilofur Farrukh, she spoke of KB19's desire to make the exhibition more "dynamic."

"In our country we don't give artists the freedom to work in the public space," she told me. "There's a great deal of tokenism. We lead such insulated lives with all these barriers, mental and physical, between spaces. We have an idea about the public space... and we think we have crossed that barrier; but we have not. What we want to do now is move our venues. We want to go to the people, not make them come to us."

I believe this is the precise action KB19 had to take in order to grow the value of the exhibit. While KB17 was a solid start, its very theme – 'Witness' – implied a passivity that we should place well in the past.

To bear witness, to watch, to listen, to endure – these are practices the art world and wider society has become very good at.

What we lack, perhaps, is the singular focus and will required to make the transition from witnesses to actors.

From bystanders to active participants. From stoic observers to passionate protestors. From those who chronicle an event to those who become its catalyst.

The steps KB19 is taking now – appointing curator Muhammad Zeeshan, desiring greater engagement between art and public space, continuing its educational program for aspiring artists, seeking out critics to add diversity to the exhibitions aims – make me hopeful that dynamism is on its way.

And with it, we will perhaps see a greater reckoning with institutions of power, both those within the art world and without. This, of course, depends as much on the individual artists featured at KB19 as it does on KB19's curatorial team. I do not, however, believe the artist is insulated from the rapid changes rocking Pakistan and Karachi from all sides.

As a burgeoning smartphone society, our newly born impulse to tell our stories butts heads with an uptick in media censorship. A global trend to emancipate women from the pressure to stay silent in the face of harassment rubs up against a resurgence of conservative, patriarchal values. And, our desire for social change – for a taste of the new, for all things '*naya*' – is hampered by the knowledge that true transformation will require every single one of us to alter our ways, causing temporary discomfort and disruption in every aspect of our lives before we arrive at a better place.

To know that all this and more will be reflected in the art at KB19 is an exciting prospect.

But even more exciting is the hope that KB19 will become more proficient at communicating to the public how artistic expression can be a vehicle for change at all levels: personal, social, institutional.

Stripped off imaginative power by poverty, systemic injustice, and ideological rigidity in school systems, the average resident of Karachi is often despondent and fatalistic, unable or unwilling to see the steps that can be taken to question authority or even simply to experience wonder.

But, we deserve better. We deserve to have the art come to us. We deserve to apprehend strange new colours, shapes, and spectacles in our neighbourhoods, on our daily commutes, at our workplaces. In time, perhaps this will serve as the

necessary spark to create anew the very thing that inspired us: art.

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Hamna Zubair is a writer and editor deeply invested in creating and promoting diverse narratives that better explain us to ourselves and to each other, regardless of the medium – be it books, print journalism, or digital media.

She's been committed to this goal in her engagement with both the media and with the publishing industry. As a writer, she has contributed opinion and reportage to respected US-based publications and websites like Slate, Salon.com, Vogue, and more. As a literary agent-in-training in New York City, she worked with respected writers and journalists to create wonderful books that sell. Now, as the editor of Dawn's culture website in Pakistan, she aims to bring progressive voices to the fore in mainstream Pakistani media.



Mapping KB17 in Clusters – Art Knocks on the City's Doors

KB17 meandered through Karachi's neighbourhoods and communities – educational institutions, parks, and heritage sites – welcoming all into the many vibrant, reflective, urgent, and optimistic conversations that our collective of artists, thinkers, and cultural activists spurred about their times, from within and without the city. The geography of Karachi's first Biennale subsumed four large localities into clusters that offered two weeks of exhibitions, live performances, film screenings, workshops, tours, keynote speeches, panels, and dialogue.

KB17 CURATORIAL TEAM

Amin Gulgee Chief Curator for KB17

Zarmeene Shah Curator at Large

Zeerak Ahmed Assistant Curator

Humayun Memon Assistant Curator

Sara Pagganwala Assistant Curator

Adam Fahy-Majeed Curatorial Team Member

INTERNATIONAL GUEST CURATORS

Carlos Acero Ruiz Santo Domingo

Paolo De Grandis Venice

SPARCK Dominique Malaquais, Paris; Kadiatou Diallo, Cape Town



CLUSTER A

Karachi School of Art
VM Art Gallery, ZVMG Rangoonwala Trust



CLUSTER B

63 Commissariat Lines
Capri Cinema
NJV Government Higher Secondary School
Jamshed Memorial Hall
Pioneer Book House



CLUSTER C

Sadequain Gallery, Frere Hall
Claremont House
Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui Art Gallery, Alliance Française



CLUSTER D

FOMMA DHA Art Center
IVS Gallery, Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture

KARACHI SCHOOL OF ART (KSA)



*2B Sir Shah Muhammad Suleman Road, Karachi, Pakistan
24.89777, 67.07899*

The Karachi School of Art (KSA) was founded in 1964 by sisters, Rabia Zuberi and Hajra Mansoor. KSA was the first art institution to be introduced in the Northern part of Karachi. It is the city's oldest running art school and caters to a large and diverse student body. During the 1970s, Zuberi acquired a piece of land to construct a purpose-built campus. It took seven gruelling years for the first story to be completed, with Zuberi overseeing the construction and financing the project independently through sales of her artwork. Founding Principal, Mansoor Rahi's artistic practice was heavily influenced by his teacher, the legendary watercolour painter, Zainul Abedin. It is, therefore, not surprising that several students including Abdul Hayee, Athar Jamal, Ghalib Baqar, and Pirzada Najmul Hasan established themselves as esteemed watercolourists upon graduating, giving birth to a local watercolour movement.

BROERSEN AND LUKÁCS

Live and work between Berlin (Germany) and Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

Margit Lukács (born in 1973, Amsterdam, The Netherlands) and Persijn Broersen (born in 1974, Delft, The Netherlands) have produced a body of introspective works that explore artifices that have penetrated social cultures globally. Their videos incorporate film footage, digital animation, and images from research across media.

In *Establishing Eden*, the artists focus on the establishment shot: the moment a landscape is introduced and set as a protagonist in a film. Celebrated cinematic spectacles, including *Avatar* and *The Lord of the Rings*, have employed the establishment shot seamlessly in narrative. Both blockbusters set their establishment shots in New Zealand's transfixing natural landscape. A new Eden; ever-green and unspoiled! Yet, there's risk in art, since fiction threatens substituting reality. Mountains and forests lose their identities to cinematic alter-egos. The artists travelled through New Zealand's wilderness to capture its untainted landscape and mimic, what they consider, the cinematic appropriation of nature. Creating an architecture of fragments, connected by the camera-movement of a perpetual establishment shot, they show this Eden as a series of many possible realities. The illusion comes together just as easily as it falls apart.

Another video, *Stranded Present*, was on view at FOMMA. In this work, the vertigo effect of time in today's culture makes the present appear as if it were woven out of many pasts. While searching for the strength and sustainability of certain patterns, Broersen & Lukács stumbled upon the 19th century illustrations of the ruins

of Palmyra in the Parisian Bibliothèque Forney, a library of decorative arts. They reconstructed this once flattened motif of a temple, depicting its endless dimensions – plastic, malleable, and untouchable – as a liquid body, transforming over time.



Establishing Eden, 2016
Video installation, 10 min (loop)
Sound by Berend Dubbe and Gwendolyn Thomas
Courtesy the artists



Stranded Present, 2015
Video installation, 18 min (loop)
Courtesy the artists



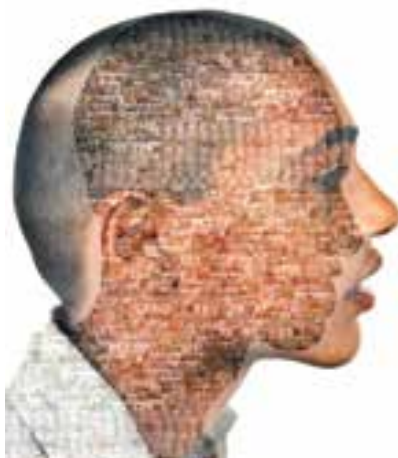
The Great Wall, 2017
Installation
Dimensions variable

IMRAN CHANNA

Born in 1981 in Shikarpur (Pakistan) | Lives and works between Lahore (Pakistan) and Maastricht (The Netherlands)

Imran Channa is concerned with the role of historical documentation as something that is itself information but also a source of wider information. The duality of documentation simultaneously makes it a vulnerable vehicle of erasure and a foundation on which forgotten narratives can be pieced together. The artist uses a multi-media approach, including moving image, drawing, installation, and digital technology to revisit historical records, identify their role and influence, and then invite audiences to contemplate the various contradictions and inconsistencies in the ways we choose to record and understand our past.

Channa's installation for KB17, *The Great Wall*, explores the concept of boundaries, not as forces that merely define physical space but as tools of epistemic and ideological control. The wall is thus an embodiment of the dialectical tension between concealing and revealing. His project plays with the implications of creating walls that are used to demarcate physical and ideological space based on religion, culture, and socio-political or socioeconomic histories. The physical installation is disrupted in its form. Treated as a metaphor for the way the political and sociological frameworks of our environment influence creative thought and productivity, Channa's installation explores questions that contextual constraints impose on the artistic process. His wall exists, like all walls, in a very specific, finite plane of time and, as the artist himself says, "it explores and records the discursive traces of time."



Standing Boy, 2017
Digital photograph on semi matt paper
76 × 102 cm

IZDEYAR SETNA

Born in 1977 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Toronto (Canada)

Izdeyar Setna captures narratives of the everyday, the interiors of developing consciousnesses, and people's emotive responses to their spatial and incorporeal realities in his images. His body of work reflects a shifting approach in response to our progressing times; he shifts from the realms of optimism, with proud and happy subjects, to capturing the insecurity, disillusionment, and confusion for which our conflicted times set us up. Two of Setna's images will be included in the upcoming book *Identities Now* – a collection of the best contemporary portrait photography, selected from across the globe.

While Setna's photographic subjects are often actors and responders, moved by their lived realities, his series of three photographs at KBI7 complicates that notion of the photographer and the subject. He subtly collapses stark distinctions between photographer and subject, to epitomise his and his characters' collective roles as witnesses to their lives and their times. He states:

"When you look closely at the images you will see a collage of numerous semi out-of-focus images. These numerous images create a face within a face that represents a human being who has seen, experienced, and witnessed time. A witness is an observer, onlooker, or even a spectator. The people in my photographs have been digitally manipulated with multiple images taken by me to create an illusion of what I have witnessed in the course of my life. These images are not meant to be clear. They're meant to create an illusion of what goes on in one's mind."

JESPER NORDAHL

Born in 1969 in Stockholm (Sweden) | Lives and works in Stockholm (Sweden)

Through his practice, Jesper Nordahl examines issues related to politics, society, and gender, with close consideration of the interplay between these facets of the human condition. His works, which are mostly collaborative and context-driven, reposition the artist as an agent and researcher, who invents forms that constantly renegotiate art as a critical project. He fuses video and sound with a variety of media – photography, painting, text, and public interventions – to explore concepts of art, image, representation, and knowledge production.

Nordahl lived in Sri Lanka for two years as a teenager from 1982-1984, where his father worked at Skanska. The company was contracted to build the Kotmale Dam, a controversial project both in Sweden and Sri Lanka, with funds from the Swedish foreign aid agency (SIDA). Nordahl's video, *Katunayake Free Trade Zone*, on view at KBI 7, is the most recent in a series of projects that Nordahl has been working on in Sri Lanka since 2004. These works are based on collaborations with The Women's Centre, which consists of the Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees Union, in addition to women workers, lawyers, academics, and activists. They explore the politics of Free Trade Zones and the Kotmale dam, which together with a series of other dams, were central parts of developmental restructuring policies initiated in Sri Lanka by the IMF and World Bank in the late 1970s.



Katunayake Free Trade Zone, 2015
Black and white HD-video as projection, no
sound, 15 min
Courtesy the artist



IT'S ALL DEVO, 2016
Digital animation, 3:30 min
Courtesy the artist

MAX PAPESCHI

Born in 1970 in Milan (Italy) | Lives and works in Milan (Italy)

Curated by Paolo De Grandis

After working as a writer and director for theatre, television, and cinema, Max Papeschi turned his attention to digital-art. Since then, no political or cultural figure has been spared his scathing wit, be it Kermit the Frog, Josef Stalin, Mickey Mouse, Adolf Hitler, or Hello Kitty. Papeschi has had numerous exhibitions all over the world.

Commenting on Papeschi's work for KBI 7, his Production Manager, Flavia Vago, writes:

"In 2016 Max Papeschi realised his work *IT'S ALL DEVO* in digital animation technique for his friend and collector, Gerald Casale. Casale is a member of DEVO, a revolutionary American band that is a symbol of New Wave...Casale asked Papeschi to make a music video, which he did, in collaboration with Maurizio Temporin...[in it] a dystopian reality is presented; a mass of horrific characters who represent the most disturbing aspects of our contemporary age."



History Class, 2016-17
Acrylics and ink on canvas and shredded paper
467 x 243 cm
Courtesy the artist

MUZZUMIL RUHEEL

Born in 1985 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

History Class serves as Muzzumil Ruheel's deconstruction of the concept of historical memory, specifically its vulnerability to manipulation, control, and alteration. The artist grounds his comment in the context of the classroom, the physical and the metaphysical space in which human attitudes and behaviours are shaped around deliberate presentations and perspectives on reality, both past and present.

Ruheel makes a pointed remark on the paradox of history, which is often projected as objective, accurate, and truthful, in schools, textbooks, and mainstream narratives at large. By "fictionally" placing himself within historical documents and narratives, becoming an agent and direct witness to the events that have been related by way of these historical literatures, and interacting with characters from different chapters of the past, irrespective of a linear timeline, the artist attempts to expose fallacies that are perpetuated under the veneer of historical truth.

Describing his own work, Ruheel writes:

"Every account presented by history has a multitude of perspectives and what one sees or remembers is that which has been given importance and documentation while a lot of the small details are overlooked. My narrative is about that undocumented time, the stories and images before and after those documented narratives. One session in a history classroom has so much more to tell; there are so many stories and so many perspectives missing. If one were to try to justify this theory, there wouldn't be enough time and space; the incessant flow of information would blacken pages, text over text over text, resembling a blackboard. The ambiguity in meaning is complemented by the darkness of ink and the text that hides in plain view and shines unexpectedly."

R.M. NAEEM

Born in 1968 in Mirpurkhas (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

While many artists respond to political and social chaos by producing works that contain imagery from the conflict and disorder that they find around them, R.M. Naeem is a strong proponent of an antithetical approach. He believes that the artist cannot adequately document these problems; rather than helping resolve these issues, they sometimes add to the chaos and sense of disillusionment by projecting it in their art. Naeem thus responds to the grimness of his times through subjects and motifs exuding peace, love, and hope. With his work, he hopes to showcase and possibly engender “a world of harmony, one lost to us that we must learn to resuscitate.”

Naeem's children are the subject of his painting, titled *Connection*, for KB17. He writes:

“The work is about the bonding between siblings, where this relationship challenges the norms associated with age. The older one might think that he/she is a grown-up and has a certain authority and maturity, but it is challenged by the younger one constantly... Most of the time, the younger one refuses to accept the established norms and demands equality in all matters. While, at the same time, the love and bonding prevail!”



Connection (Diptych), 2017
Acrylic on canvas
189 x 229 cm
Courtesy the artist

TALAL FAISAL

Born in 1992 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

As a Pakistani who grew up in the 1990s, Talal Faisal belongs to the post-memory generation of South Asians. They never really experienced but still bear tremendous temporal proximity to the influence of British colonial rule, which saw its twilight with a schismatic independence movement leading to colonial India's partition and the creation of Pakistan. With the rising forces of globalisation, economic imperialism, neo-liberal control, and the persistence of certain colonial ideals and institutions, however, Pakistan's short existence as a state has arguably never really seen the sort of 'independence' that its founders imagined. These realities take significant shape in the post-memory generation's sense of their identity, abilities, and limits as members and residents of a relatively nascent nation-state, as reflected in Faisal's artistic practice.

For his work at KBI7, the artist has constructed toys from wheat, speaking to the recent proliferation of Chinese-manufactured soft toys in the markets and roadside stalls of Pakistan. In this installation, the artist wishes to address the successive legacies of British, American, and Chinese influence on his country. He writes:

"Chinese toys displayed in wheat are a satirical take on the dominance of a superpower on a Third World agrarian economy already battling with food insecurity. Wheat is an important signifier in this case."

Faisal's second piece, a ladder made of bangles, *Your Honour Is My Honour*, was exhibited at 63 Commissariat Lines.



One Belt, One Road, 2017
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

The VM Art Gallery of the ZVMG Rangoonwala Trust



*ZVMG Rangoonwala Community Centre, Plot # 4 & 5, KDA Scheme-7,
Block-4, Dhoraji, Karachi, Pakistan 24.8853, 67.07493*

VM Art Gallery is Karachi's longest running non-profit art gallery, located in the ZVMG Rangoonwala Community Centre. The Rangoonwala Trust, which imparted vocational skills to women in 1971, recognised the significant contributions that artists make to society and thus established a gallery in June 1987. Founding Director, Riffat Alvi is a distinguished artist and curator, whose methodologies and insight shaped the crux of the gallery's values and operations. The city's largest gallery, this space is recognised for facilitating opportunities for emerging artists, providing them the kind of exposure that is akin to established seniors. Besides that, the gallery has exhibited the works of some of the most celebrated international and Pakistani artists, including Rashid Rana.



HIROSHIMA I, 2010
Digital photograph
130 x 52 cm
Courtesy the artist

EDUARDO GÓMEZ BALLESTEROS

Born in 1964 in Madrid (Spain) | Lives and works in Madrid (Spain)

Trained as an artist and a psychologist, Eduardo Gómez Ballesteros's lengthy career is marked by the use of several techniques, including photography, drawing, etching, video-installation, and public art. One of his major projects, the *GENOCIDE PROJECT*, comprises harrowing artworks based on archival images of political violence and genocide. The research-based venture focuses on artistic practice, history, philosophy, and pedagogy. Fed by contemporary photographs of places of torture, confinement, and execution, as well as images of the victims of violent political processes, the haunting work is dedicated to the preservation of memory.

For KB17, Eduardo Gómez Ballesteros submitted work from his series *HIROSHIMA*, *S-21* and *BAS LA SOCIÉTÉ SPECTACULAIRE-MARCHANDE*. Of *HIROSHIMA*, the artist writes:

"The intentional killing of more than two hundred and fifty thousand people, in the eyes of the whole world, should be unanimously recognised as a mass murder. From images from the archive of The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, I converted some of these portraits of victims into photographic masks for a performance. This consisted of asking the participants, dressed all in black, to move and pose on a dark stage with the image as a mask. Thus, the photos take off from the intimate, to become a collective, moving device. I intend to anticipate the poetics of the ephemeral and the volatile."

ELVIN JOSÉ DÍAZ TOLENTINO

Born in 1979 in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) | Lives and works in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic)

Curated by Carlos Acero Ruiz

Elvin José Díaz Tolentino explores themes of the border, in addition to interconnection and exchange between Haitian and Dominican cultures. He sees art as a means to channel and exalt the different manifestations and concerns of the human being. The uni/bi/tri-dimensionality of life, Tolentino believes, reflects and exemplifies each of our activities and gives answers to the vision of the environment that surrounds us. At first, music, graphics, and architecture were his supports. Over time, however, his content transcended medium to occupy body and movement, thus manifesting itself in the art of installations, video art, and performances. Most of the issues he has worked on thus far, revolve around existentialism or the perplexing multidimensionality and playfulness of life, without being pigeonholed into a specific geographical condition or framework. With every process being essential, Tolentino immerses himself in the investigation of materials and experimentation. Each place in which he develops the body of his work gives him visual elements that he integrates into speech, which he interprets with his inherited memories and perspective of the Caribbean.

Of *Placenta*, his work on view at KB17, the artist states:

“This is a video performance that spawns from an action that takes place at the national border

between Haiti and the Dominican Republic in a place called ‘No Man’s Land,’ where a Haitian and a Dominican man blow up a balloon so big they both can get inside until the pressure and movement make it burst. While trying to remain in the balloon, they begin to interact, to converge until the object takes their shape. This video performance provides different views of the same event: the horizontal and frontal views allow us to see in detail how these two men struggle to remain in the same space, and an overhead one permits us to witness the dilemma of two bodies trying to coexist in a limited and fragile space.



Placenta, 2016
Digital video, 9:10 min
Courtesy the artist

FARAH MAHBUB

Born in 1965 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Farah Mahbub's eclectic visual journey has navigated various photographic genres, ranging from fine art to commercial, architectural, and landscape photography. Mahbub's widely exhibited work has also been published in books, most notably *Journeys of the Spirit: Pakistani Art in the New Millennium*. She joined the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in 1997 as a faculty member. Enraptured by the tangible pleasure of manipulating, toning, and layering photographs within the darkroom, the artist imparts the same knowledge to her students, enabling them to produce photographic artworks that stand apart for their unique detailing.

Mahbub writes the following of her triptych for KBI7:

"As the city grows and expands with time, its magnitude and character experience alterations. These shifts happen at an unpredictable pace. The city is continuously including or excluding old structures. Hazrat Abdullah Shah Ghazi RA shrine was, and still is, a significant Karachi landmark. This Sufi saint has for centuries been a witness to beautiful, restless Karachi. Hazrat Abdullah Shah Ghazi Baba R.A. was martyred in the year 773 and was buried on top of a hill in Karachi. He was a Syed (lineage of the Holy Prophet of Islam). And his burial site for the longest time was a hut on this high ground, which much later, around the 1960s, was built upon to create a *mazaar* (shrine), with several other modifications assembled over the years. All my life I have felt blessed to be conscious of the saint by the seashore. I can't imagine the city without his presence."



Shahenshah-e-Karachi, 2017

Inkjet paper

Triptych, 50.8 cm x 76.2 cm each

Courtesy the artist



Out of Home, 1994-2014

Digital print

50 x 50 cm

Courtesy the artist

GILDA PÉREZ

Born in 1954 in Havana (Cuba) | Lives and works in Miami (USA)

Curated by Carlos Acero Ruiz

Born during the tumultuous Cuban Revolution, Gilda Pérez is amongst the first few Cuban women to embrace photography as a career. The artist is also one of the first photographers (the only woman amidst a group of six) to exhibit in the United States during the Cold War in the 80's.

Gilda Pérez exhibited work from her series *Out of Home* for KBI7. The artist writes:

"As a photographer I have always been looking for spaces of quotidian life that do not get enough attention from us. I am not talking about the myth of photographers who see what common people do not see. I am talking about things that do not seem important: an abandoned doll in a yard, a lonely man contemplating a landscape, a rundown gas station, an old-fashioned car parked in front of an iconic theatre in Havana, my own house. I am also interested in the lives of ordinary people: farmers, workers, passengers. Those are my *punctums* (to put it in the words of Barthes). My *punctums* are the small realities inside reality. In that sense, my work is influenced by photographers such as Walker Evans, David 'Chim' Seymour, Dorothea Lange, and Imogen Cunningham."



Fault Line, 2012
Video, 2:24 min
Resolution: 4:3
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

JASON MENA

Born in 1974 in New York (USA) | Lives and works between Puerto Rico
and Mexico City (Mexico)

Curated by Carlos Acero Ruiz

Exploring the complex philosophical and physical relationships between architectural structures, interdisciplinary artist, Jason Mena interprets lines, boundaries, and frameworks, both visible and unseen. The artist also examines the contradictions and patterns of dishonesty and manipulation within social formations, focusing on the informal sector; its broad economic structure, and its prevalence and diversity in all classes.

Jason Mena submitted a video, titled *Fault Line*, as well as a series of photographs, *Failed States*, for KB17. *Fault Line* is a drawing in motion; a mark that delineates geographies, that conforms and forms, but also one that represents occupation and rupture. In a symbolic gesture, a continuous line is drawn with chalk marking the perimeter of *Unidad Habitacional Nonoalco-Tlatelolco*. Here, chalk, a porous material frequently employed for didactic purposes, represents and traces a jagged historic route that paradoxically disrupts the linear conception of history. *Failed States*, a commentary on the G-7 group of industrialised nations, is the photographic documentation of an action, where the body is employed as a geopolitical metaphor ultimately subdued to its immediate context.

JESÚS HDEZ-GÜERO

Born in 1983 in Havana (Cuba) | Lives and works between Havana (Cuba) and Caracas (Venezuela)

Curated by Carlos Acero Ruiz

Intrigued by the construction and curation of narratives within contemporary representation, Jesús Hdez-Güero questions and contests the tales, accounts, and histories we consume. Of his practice, the artist writes:

"I am interested in the capacity of art to utilize and reorganise existing social forms and cultural models that can be updated infinitely. I intend that my work has a double impact and validity: merit in the plane of art as well as in the social dominion. It must become a platform of communication and expansion of specific phenomena and of the principal contradictions and socio-cultural forces of those areas that are not made evident, lack transparency, or are hidden, and in the end the work must remain as an archive of these 'social invisibilities.'"

The video, *Minutos de odio contra sí mismo* (Minutes of hate against oneself), shows a close up of the Venezuelan flag receiving eight bullets, which, one by one, replace the stars that normally adorn it. In his work, the artist reflects on the attacks, mutations, and re-significances of media, social, and political discourse that have caused the flag and the nation to suffer to such an extent that violence has become an integral part of the Venezuelan identity.



Minutos de odio contra sí mismo, 2014-2015

Video, 1:11 min

NTSC, Ed. 5 + P/A

Brillembourg Capriles Collection, US (Ed. 2/5)

Kadist (Sur) Collection, US (Ed. 3/5)



Arqueología de la ausencia, 1999-2001
Analog photography digitally reproduced
224 x 30 cm
Courtesy the artist

LUCILA QUIETO

Born in 1977 in Buenos Aires (Argentina) | Lives and works in Buenos Aires (Argentina)

Curated by Carlos Acero Ruiz

Growing up in the absence of her father, Lucila Quieto investigates the pervasive nature of loss, absence, and post-memory through photographic content. Five months before the artist's birth, her father, Carlos Alberto Quieto was kidnapped by the military during Argentina's Dirty War. Utilising the photograph as a space of memory, Quieto creates dialogues between the past and the present, imagination and resignation, and delves into wishful narratives of relationships and familial bonds.

In *Arqueología de la ausencia*, on view at KBI 7, Quieto combines fiction, biography, performance, and photography, to explore the disappearance of her father. Rather than solely focusing on her own narratives, she also invited other children of disappeared parents to participate in the work. Quieto remembers:

"I asked every son or daughter to look for a photograph of their parents. I then reproduced the images as slides. I projected them on the wall and asked the children to insert themselves between the camera and the image."

The project resulted in 35 black-and-white photographs showcasing playful, fictional scenes presenting alternative narratives. The images thus address a disturbing question: what might have happened had the disappeared survived? Quieto's montages speak of a time she refers to as "a third time," an invented dreamscape where everything is plausible.

MADEEHA IQBAL

Born in 1989 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Despite the traditional artistic training she received, multidisciplinary artist Madeeha Iqbal works with a peculiar assortment of mediums. The artist manipulates the form and function of medical equipment, shifting its prior interpretations. Iqbal harbours an intense curiosity in the continuous, natural dialogue in which we engage with our surroundings. Pleasure and pain remain in continuous negotiation through her humorous, satirical artworks. The eccentric employment of material creates a multi-layered visual discourse, endowing the work with a sense of spontaneity and creative dynamism.

For KBI7, Iqbal demonstrated her innovative approach to medium in her sculptural installation, which consisted of coral and teal coloured articles of clothing and fashion constructed with hypodermic needles. Within her work, she synthesises two disparate interpretations of the commonplace. One, in the sense of feminine accoutrement; the other, in medical equipment. By inserting the needles into the very fabric of the handbag, body-shaper, and shoes, she amalgamates and transforms both sets of everyday objects, creating a strangely uncomfortable, anomalous whole. Iqbal's novel use of ordinary objects also raises questions of the societal pressures that women are forced to face on a daily basis. The work encourages the viewer to place themselves inside the work, evoking a subtle yet penetrative empathy.



Untitled, 2017
Hypodermic needles, shoes, handbag, body-shaper
30 x 36 x 20 cm
Courtesy the artist



Downtown Ciudad Juárez, 2010-2015

Digital photograph

90 x 60 cm

Courtesy the artist

MAYRA MARTELL

Born in 1979 in Ciudad Juárez (Mexico) | Lives and works in Mexico City (Mexico)

Curated by Carlos Acero Ruiz

Artist and photographer, Mayra Martell examines traces of forced disappearance, violence, and femicides through her lens. Absence generated by brutality is never absolute. Loss lingers and festers within emptiness, concealed but ever present. Within her series *Ensayo sobre la Identidad* (Identity Essay), Martell documents the bedrooms of missing women in Ciudad Juárez, investigating the distressing preservation of memory within absence. By rendering the invisible visible, the artist condemns this inflicted devastation, breaking through the pervasive silence.

For KB17, Mayra Martell presented work from her series on Ciudad Juárez and the Western Sahara. Of her Ciudad Juárez series, she writes:

"It's been five years since the downtown started to disappear, becoming a battleground for drug cartels, the scene of murdered women, and the vanishing place for countless people. Ciudad Juárez is the paramount example of a society that is consuming itself without being able to stop. I believe that there is something there in those spaces that make people forget that other places exist as if one had no past, like the city itself. Perhaps I like it because it has no memory, or at least not one as obvious as other places where I've been. It's as if it had collapsed and something broke inside; it's like the life-essence of someone in disgrace, so overwhelmed by her loss that she has become stuck, stranded in the same place; a place of sadness. Juárez is like an old and abandoned kitchen; as the sun rises, buses can be seen roaming about like iron cockroaches crawling on a dirty, retched floor; a floor in ruins; a lonely floor."

NAYAN KULKARNI

Born in 1969 in Norwich (UK) | Lives and works in London (UK)

Nayan Kulkarni's current research develops new ways to understand the complex formations of experience and meaning generated by artificial light in the city. Investigating the perceptual, intellectual, ethical, and technological dimensions of light as medium and idea, the artist is interested in the effects of cinematic imagining on human experience, personal identity, and the built environment. This inquisitiveness is expressed in light, sound, video, and performance-based works in galleries as well as the public realm.

Combining elements of location and studio-based recordings Nayan made a new work for KBI7. Exploring the nocturnal urban *mise-en-scene* as a site of reverie and surveillance, the work explores the city as ill-mannered, its atmospheres contingent upon themes that overlay each other in voices that collide. These constructed atmospheres are an emergent phenomenon experienced in momentary equilibriums within a dynamic whole. There is no fixed arrangement that could be inferred to be a composition. Illuminating space is to rend darkness, to tear it apart, shred and fragment it, distribute it, differentiate, and articulate it. Every lamp produces a radiant micro-politics of space, an organisation and articulation of its local value. Where there is no light, there is no use, no value. Lamps, together, project an image of politics onto space and in turn produce spaces for preferred activities. Furthermore, it makes them visible; it brings them into the tattered black. Where there was no use, the rend can produce. In the cut, space is rendered, made into an image of activity that is also a space for activity: a twin channel work for a twin site production.



Ricochet, 2017
Twin channel video for two flat screens
Courtesy the artist

NIDA RAMZAN

Born in 1988 in Faisalabad (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Faisalabad (Pakistan)

Nida Ramzan focuses on the female body and its multifaceted relationship with everyday objects in various spaces and environments. Her practice manifests itself both in video and on canvas. Ramzan explains the basis of her work:

“On a daily basis, I find myself overwhelmingly confronted with images and societal prescriptions of what it means, as a woman, to be ‘beautiful.’ I have decided to address the illusions and realities that exist for women faced with this aspect of contemporary culture.”

In her video installation, displayed at KBI7, Ramzan experiments with the division of the filmed material, so that the elements, once whole, undergo a transformation, merging the natural form of the body with the other compositional objects and elements to create a shifting, two-dimensional sculpture. The work explores the pervasive contemporary issue of the premium placed on the appearance of women, visually symbolising the resultant obsession with expending energy into self-presentation and re-creation. Playing on Ramzan’s own experience with textiles, the male figure measuring and re-measuring the female form offers an artistic critique of the psychological, corporeal, and cultural implications fostered by the contemporary human condition.



Measurements, 2013
Video, 2:11 min
Courtesy the artist



Mounds, 2017
Fiberglass, industrial paint, rose petals
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

NOMAN SIDDIQI

Born in 1980 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Infatuated by the glamorous 1960's American Pop Movement, Noman Siddiqui traverses a wide spectrum of materials. The multidisciplinary artist probes the anxious relationship between the politics of representation and their consequences on the city's sociocultural landscape. Siddiqui states:

"My concerns are about the media-oriented manipulation of the audience and how they use any news in favour of a certain socio-political slant."

Noman Siddiqui created an installation comprised of flowers and fiberglass bullets for KB17. He writes:

"Keeping in mind this city and events, I have created an installation that consists of two mounds: one of flowers and the other of bullets. These objects are opposite in nature and yet linked when seen with the eyes of a witness. The flowers shall wilt and die like the flowers left on graves by loved ones, while the bullets shall remain untarnished, much like the permanent feeling of absence caused by death."



La Nuit, 1976

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Jacques Glénat, and M. Benoît Cousin

PHILIPPE DRUILLET

Born in 1944 in Toulouse (France) | Lives and works in Paris (France)

The illustrious French comic artist and author, Philippe Druillet, is renowned for his baroque Franco-Belgian artwork and outlandish sci-fi tales. With fellow cartoonist Jean Henri Gaston Giraud, also known as 'Moebius,' Druillet challenged the traditional barriers of the graphic novel, exploring methods beyond the conventional. The artist, who once worked as a *comédien* for the *Théâtre du Soleil*, has authored several beloved books. One of his most celebrated series features the adventures of Lone Sloane, an intergalactic adventurer who travels the universe trying to save it from chaos. His work has been translated into several languages including English, Italian, and Japanese. In 1998, the artist was presented with France's highest cultural honour: Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters.

Images from Philippe Druillet's iconic graphic novel *La Nuit* (The Night) were on view at KBI7. Druillet drew them between 1973 and 1976, in an agonising period during which his first wife suffered and eventually passed away from cancer. Rendered in lurid, gaudy tones of violet, moss, and lemon, amongst others, the work, decadent and expressive, is heavy with desolate nihilism.

ROXANA NAGYGELLÉR

Born in 1963 in Alajuela (Costa Rica) | Lives and works in San José (Costa Rica)

Roxana Nagygyellér utilises the medium of portraiture to perceive the politics of identity and sociocultural practices. Narratives beyond the physical frame are interrogated and implied. In her series, *Portraits of Lucia*, the artist photographs her seven-year-old daughter; innocuously occupied in gender-specific, childish games such as playing at pregnancy and cooking with dolls. The problematic portraits personify the hyperfeminised, domestic patterns that young girls mimic and perform, inadvertently imprisoning themselves within constructed, predetermined identities.

Nagygyellér submitted photographs from her series, *Letters to Nicolas*, for KBI7. This is a series of portraits of migrant men in Costa Rica. This is a continuation of earlier work in which she explored the migrant experience for women. That series, entitled *People in their Place*, was an easier task for the artist. She states:

“The work with women was fluid and fun for me. In *Letters to Nicolas* the approach to strangers was more complex. I felt more questioned, more watched. It was more difficult to break the ice with men. I converted the photographs into diptychs, generating a dialogue between texts, clouds, and portraits. The letters are like messages carried by the wind. Written by migrant children from slums in the capital, they attempted to answer the questions: Who am I? Where do I come from? These are questions we all ask ourselves at some point in our lives.”



Letters to Nicolas I, II and III, 2001
Digital photograph
61 x 46 cm
Courtesy the artist

SABAH HUSAIN

Born in 1959 in Peshawar (Pakistan) | Lives and works between Lahore (Pakistan) and Boston (USA)

Sabah Husain's practice takes shape within a diverse sphere of media, processes, and iconography. Japanese aesthetics have informed her South Asian cultural inclinations and artistic modes in an oeuvre spanning 25 years and in her present series. Husain's expression reveals itself in both realistic imagery and abstraction. Embracing an extensive array of mediums, materials, and techniques and trained in painting, printmaking, and paper making, the artist unreservedly traverses between geographical borders.

Husain's *Nur Jahan*, which was on view at KBI7, pays homage to the eponymous Mughal Empress, epitomising the artist's multi-media approach. Husain explains the importance of the aesthete who ruled India as follows:

"She was a remarkably powerful influence on the aesthetics of her age. Nur Jahan's narrative is unique because she did not conform to the established ideals of a woman of the time and stood outside the realm of the traditional Indian prototype. Her story is one of political dexterity, military competence, and numerous cultural achievements."

In the work, the artist references three architectural structures, which the Empress patronised and designed. Her father; Itamad ud Daulla's garden tomb in Agra; the Nur Afshan river-front garden on the River Jamuna in Agra; and her own tomb in Lahore on the banks of the River Ravi. Husain uses the plans of these gardens and tombs, maps of the cities, and architectural embellishments to create a visual narrative in coloured glass. Of her composition, Hussain writes:

"Sixteen panels reflect light and create an illusion of the Chaharbagh. The concept designates a cross axial symmetrical composition. The Chaharbagh garden served as a module, in the planning of the cities, as a paradise-evoking site for tombs and a political metaphor for a golden age. The grid provides a glimpse into continuum from the past to the present. And the mirrored surface and reflections also explore the concept of condensed time."

The work thus addresses the erasure from collective consciousness of the only Mughal Empress of India, whose accomplishments in the arena of arts equal, if they do not surpass, those of most men who ruled India.



Nur Jahan, 2017
Glass, handmade paper (kozo, mitumata, gampi fibres),
sumi, acrylic paint, and embroidery
243.84 x 121.92 cm, 121.92 x 91.44 cm
Courtesy the artist

SAMINA ISLAM

Born in 1966 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Having spent half her life in the Netherlands, exposure from two dizzyingly distinct cultures nurtured Samina Islam's intrigue of people, traditions, and her shifting surroundings. The quest for self, through her art, is an ongoing process. Islam comprehends the female being as an intrinsic form of strength, navigating the complications of existing in a harshly patriarchal society within her imagery. The multidisciplinary artist is recognised for incorporating needlework on top of her images, which are printed on cloth, creating expressive, intimate artworks.

For her work on view at KBI7, *From Within*, the figure of a young girl is seen floating in front of a tree. Islam states:

"She is in a moment of nirvana, a transcendent state in which there is no suffering, desire, nor sense of self, and she is released from the effects of karma and the cycle of death and rebirth. Her body is transparent as if she floated out of her earthly body and became part of another universe."

For this work, Islam photographed an old tree she saw in Karachi. The artist believes trees have a mysterious and spiritual aura, which she wished to emphasise through the colour green. From the flat, processed photograph, an image of the artist's daughter emerges. Her dress is formed by net textile, its folds stitched by the artist's own hand. Islam states, "In some way I am projecting myself through her."

Also on view at KBI7 was Islam's performance

entitled *Healing*, done in collaboration with international artist, Nadia Kaabi-Linke's at the IVS Gallery. The work involves stitching, text, jasmine flowers, and their perpetual upkeep.



From Within, 2017
Textile and thread on inkjet on canvas
129 x 183 x 3 cm
Collection of the artist

SARA ROITMAN

Born in 1953 in Santiago (Chile) | Lives and works in Quito (Ecuador)

Curated by Carlos Acero Ruiz

Throughout her trajectory as a photographer, Sara Roitman has incorporated video art, installation, objects, neon, embroidery, and sewing into her repertoire of artistic practices. Her work is about creating and rearranging spaces of reflection and speculation.

Of her work on view at KBI7, Roitman writes:

“Combining works of different series under a single title is not uncommon in my artistic practices. I have been working with the human body for many years from different aspects and perspectives. I picture the geographies of bodies; I picture the body as territory; I displace the body and make it fade. The photographic works: *S/T I* and *S/T II* portray the body after the soul abandons it. The portrait is an attempt to shape a body and its soul fading away and the emptiness that is perceived in its displacement. In the works *Territorios I* and *Territorios II*, I create fictional geographies of the same bodies that make us doubt if it is about more than one person in the same territory.”



S/T I, 2016
Photograph
70 × 105 cm
Courtesy the artist



Talk to Me, 2017
Live video stream, 180 min

SYED AMMAD TAHIR

Born in 1986 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Ammad Tahir's artistic practice includes painting, drawing, and performance. Intrigued by the city's sociocultural fabric, the artist explores contemporary narratives of urbanity, sexuality, and gender politics within a local context. Tahir's work is frequently informed by news about gender and sexual minorities printed in newspapers and magazines. His dreamlike paintings depict Karachi in a wistfully fantastical light, reminiscent of better days.

Of his work for KBI 7, Tahir wrote:

"Talk to Me is a performance work which will take place in real-time at one of the venues of the Karachi Biennale through live streaming of the performance via laptop and a projector/LCD screen. The artist will be streaming from an unknown location for three hours and will remain open to answering non-scripted questions by the audience during the entire stream of the performance. The performance relives the moments of cyber chat that I had with strangers during my teenage years and will allow the strangers/audience visiting the biennale to become part of my virtual fantasy."

TABITA REZAIRE

Born in 1953 in Santiago (Chile) | Lives and works in Quito (Ecuador)

Curated by SPARCK

A French artist of Guyanese and Danish descent, Tabita Rezaire utilises the politics of technology to confront and critique flawed representations of the black female body and oppressive colonial practices that persist today. Through activism, videos, and healing techniques, the artist explores the detrimental consequences of prejudice and colourism on identity, sexuality, health, and spirituality. Through screen interfaces, her digital healing activism offers substitute readings to dominant narratives, decentring occidental authority. Her work relentlessly forces viewers to question and tackle their own discomfort, as they comprehend the extent of erasure and miscommunication within visual media and the roles they themselves wittingly or unwittingly play.

Inner Fire is a series of life-size digital self-portrait collages exploring the politics of the artist's identities, aspirations, and contradictions. The images respectively embody an archetype of the black woman with respect to race, sex, technology, and capital. The artist portrays how those narratives affect her own as well as collective imaginaries and identities.



Inner Fire – Shadeliscious, 2017

Diasc print, 170 x 100 cm

Edition of 5

© Tabita Rezaire

Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg



Suppression, 2017
Video, 12 min
Courtesy the artist

WARDAH BUKHARI

Born in 1988 in Multan (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Stirred by the craft and creation of traditional ethnic jewellery in her hometown, Wardah Bukhari attempts to create alternative narratives, in which line, form, and aesthetic is restructured within a contemporary context. Meanings shift as the artist reassembles known imagery, incorporating visuals from history, myth, new media, religion, and politics. The work concentrates on the boundaries between inside and outside, content and form, feeling and shape, impression and expression.

In her video on view at KB17, Bukhari captures a simple domestic act: a woman's hands kneading bread. By focusing on the movement of a woman's hands working dough, Bukhari seeks to explore the idea of suppression. On the surface, this video is about an everyday chore. But, there are also undercurrents of a woman's search for pleasure, providing a link between what she calls "female task and female fantasy." As the artist states, "is is a celebration of a woman's freedom of body and her freedom from male dominance."

ZINNIA NAQVI

Born in 1991 in Pickering, ON (Canada) | Lives and works between Toronto and Montreal (Canada)

Zinnia Naqvi navigates a variety of historical and contemporary narratives through photography, video, archival footage, and installation. The artist investigates legitimacy and truth within the visible. Her past work has dealt with themes of post-colonialism, trans-culturalism, language, and gender politics. The use of archival objects allows viewers to step back and critically consider the issues that affect diasporic communities over time and place.

Naqvi's project, *Dear Nani*, which was on display at KB17, addresses issues of gender performance and colonial mimicry through the family archive. The photographs included in this project are of the artist's maternal grandmother; Rhubab Tapal. Nani is performing the act of cross-dressing by wearing several different outfits that belong to her husband. The photographs were taken on the newly-weds' honeymoon in Quetta and Karachi, Pakistan, in 1948. The artist's grandfather, Gulam Abbas Tapal, is the photographer and presumed director of the photo session. The work questions orientalism, societal practices, and constructed identities.



Nani with Moustache, 2017
Inkjet print
76 x 101 cm
Courtesy the artist

63 Commissariat



63 Commissariat Road, Karachi
24.86986, 67.02526

This 19th century grey and cobalt painted colonial bungalow, located in Gari Khata on Depot Lines behind MA Jinnah Road, was acquired by the Pagganwala family and served as their home for several decades. After the family moved out, it was used as a milk factory and later, a manufacturing plant for mineral water during the 1990's. Some machinery is still installed in the home today. Karachi's 19th century residences were commonly designed in British architectural fashions, which were prevalent in South Asia during that period. Peppered with signature, brightly coloured, geometric floor tiles, the largely symmetrical houses were elevated over one to two floors. Many of these homes have now been demolished to make way for urban development or have otherwise dilapidated or decayed. The nostalgic house on 63 Commissariat nonetheless survived the dire fate.

ABDULLAH M.I. SYED

Born in 1974 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works between Karachi (Pakistan), Sydney (Australia), and New York (USA)

In *Bucking* – a live performance – Abdullah M.I. Syed consumes and regurgitates a menu of fresh uncirculated banknotes. The performance is a critique of hyper-capitalist economies in their quest for global power, subverting familiar notions of contemporary economic development and their illusive standards of progress and success. Syed thus reminds viewers of the veiled perils of global capitalism, to which far fewer are immune than believed.

Bucking is an incisive deconstruction, quite literally, of the central role money plays in economies of consumption and exchange; it takes a confrontational look at how money regulates power structures and identity, both cultural and political. The US dollar bill serves as the performance's dominant instrument through which Syed addresses complex renderings of dysfunctionalities generated by global market economies, the dissemination of power, and concerns intrinsic to the neoliberal consciousness. Where the artist's body is in immediate play, occupied in repetitious and visceral movement, so is the larger body of the audience in that it witnesses and responds to this seemingly playful but audaciously violent act.

Since an inaugural 2011 performance in Karachi – pertinently Pakistan's financial capital – Syed has performed *Bucking* at multiple locations around the world, including a 2015 performance at the 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in Sydney. It was, therefore, only fitting for Syed to pay homage to the performance's city of origin by bringing a video archive back here for its first ever biennale.



Bucking: Sydney, 2015

Video documentation of live performance, 15:23 min
Courtesy the artist and 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney



Attaching Detaching, 2017
Photographic installation
Dimensions variable

ANTONIO PURI

Born in 1966 in Chandigarh (India) | Lives and works in Bogota (Colombia)

Antonio Puri's expression of the self has continuously evolved as an effort to challenge perceptions and deconstruct identities and labels that others exert upon the individual. Puri was raised in the Himalayas and attended the Academy of Art in San Francisco. Seeking relationships and charting intersections between his Eastern roots and his Western experiences has thus taken precedence for this artist, who not only embraces but actively aspires to the possibility of a world in which we can exist free of labels.

Attaching Detaching, Puri's work for KBI 7, comprises photographs documenting several distinct but analogous versions of an externally inflicted physical condition – the tied face. Arguably our most visually discernible identifiers, faces that are so violently distorted and limited symbolise afflictions that run deeper than simple binaries of freedom and restriction.

Puri reflects on the ideological ties that arise when culture, identity, and their schematic exchanges relegate us to an existence loaded with paradigms. Such paradigms mar organic human interactions and distort our communion with life and others. In Puri's work, the body becomes a territory invaded by perceptions. The act of tying signifies imprisonment to circumstances, while the act of untying manifests as a decisive act of liberation. The work alludes to the multiple and often violent ties of the mind and the flesh and our latent desires to escape them.



Rescue of an Elderly Civilian, 2016
Photographs

AYMAN OGHANNA

Born in 1985 in London (UK) | Lives in Athens (Greece)
and works throughout the Middle East

London born, half-Iraqi and half-British journalist and photographer, Ayman Oghanna has dedicated much of his professional career to documenting political strife, conflict, and societal change in the Middle-East. The son of an Iraqi immigrant father, whose memories of home are of a flourishing and open society at its peak, Oghanna evinces the quintessential struggles produced by inherited memories, especially when the world of nostalgia becomes irreconcilable with contemporary conditions.

Of his four photographs on view at KBI7, the artist writes:

"I am exhibiting work from Iraq, where I began my career exploring my father's country. My father left the country during *Asir-al-Tahabi*, the Golden Age, in the 1970s. The Iraq I discovered, however, looked very different from the one he left behind, having car-bombed, kidnapped, and executed itself into near oblivion. I've documented the country since the American occupation and Iraq has known little prosperity since, witnessing an endless cycle of violence recently manifesting itself with the rise and fall of the so-called Islamic State. Torn between opposing forces vying for influence in the Middle East, the country remains fragile, flawed, and complex. These images offer an insight, however brief, into the country, its pain, and its hope. Unfortunately, I do not think it will be truly at peace in my lifetime. I will, however, continue to carry on documenting its struggle for a better future and bear witness to its stories."

Experienced in and cognizant of the treacherous and alienating conditions that journalists documenting conflict must endure for their work, Oghanna became a proud founding member of the Frontline Freelance Register. The register is dedicated to protecting and uniting freelancers reporting in foreign countries and conflict zones.



Black Moves, 2016
Video installation, 9:30 min
Courtesy the artist

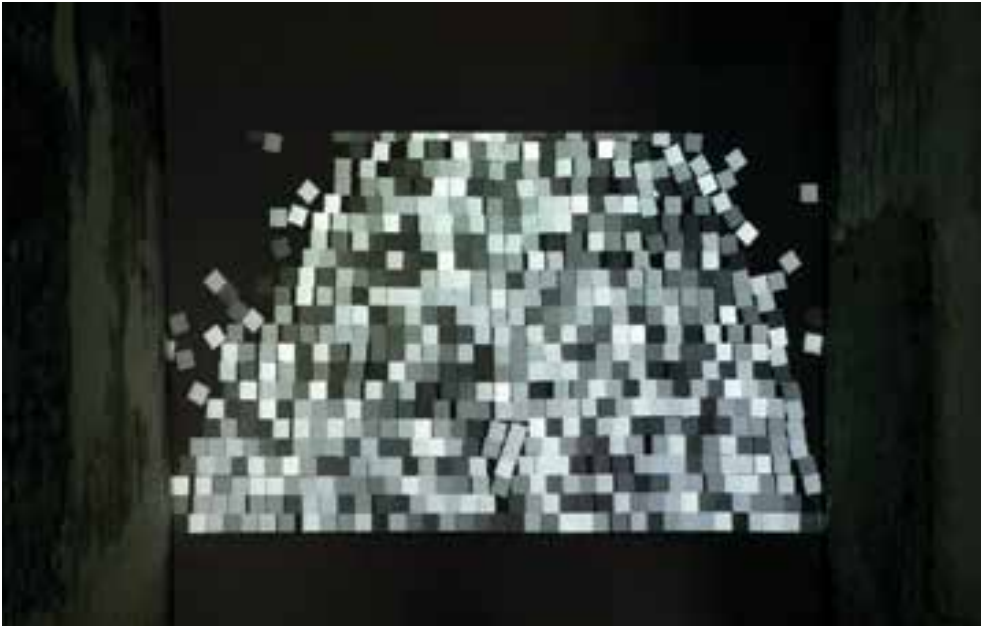
CARLA CHAN

Born in 1989 in Guangdong (China) | Lives and works between
Hong Kong and Berlin (Germany)

Much like the never-ending development of new technology, Carla Chan considers new media art a medium with infinite possibilities for artistic expression. Minimal in style and form, Chan toys with the blurred boundaries between reality and illusion, figure and abstraction. Her recent work focuses on ambiguity in nature. She fuses natural transformation with unpredictable computer algorithms and consolidates her visuals with a cohesive dynamic between form, means, and content.

Of *Black Moves*, on view at KBI7, Chan writes:

“[This] is a video that creates a spatial drama and a virtual landscape that simulates the forming and de-forming of an amorphous black mass, an evocative sensorial unfolding that traverses between the boundaries of the physical and the psychological as experienced inside a dark space. The multi-layered visuals in the video are created with a set of noise-generation algorithms simulating organic formations and patterns found in nature. These noise-like organic visual crystals are my attempts in naturalising digital imageries via the creation of a virtual landscape. *Black Moves* springs from my long obsession and fascination with natural transformations, particularly formless shapes and their movement. The transformative power of natural substances such as water, rock, air, and clouds produce infinite varying forms that seem both ordered and random at the same time. These magical transformations continuously disorient and fascinate the senses, creating a rich perceptual journey that is charted for a mysterious unknown cosmic. This unknown cosmic can be seen as a representation of an external world as well as a mirror of the psyche from within, where the immanent and the transcendent are fused as one via the ever-changing audiovisuality.”



Ziggurat of Neglect, 2017
Computer program/simulation
Infinite duration
Courtesy the artist

DANIAL HYATT

Born in 1991 in Rawalpindi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Multidisciplinary artist, Danial Hyatt experiments with music, sound, programming, and videogame production. Hyatt, who is an active promoter, collaborator, and organiser in Karachi's electronic music scene, has focused much of his practice on exploring and expanding the limits of technology as a medium for aural stimulation. Metaphysics and myth are recurring themes in his projects.

Hyatt describes *Ziggurat of Neglect*, his project for KBI7, in the following words:

"From the ancient dolmens to Lego, the deliberate act of stacking, connecting, and balancing material blocks is embedded in human nature. It can be observed plainly in Karachi, amplified by hues from the setting sun on raw concrete. This manifestation also lives in the garbage heaps that cast long shadows in the junkyard."

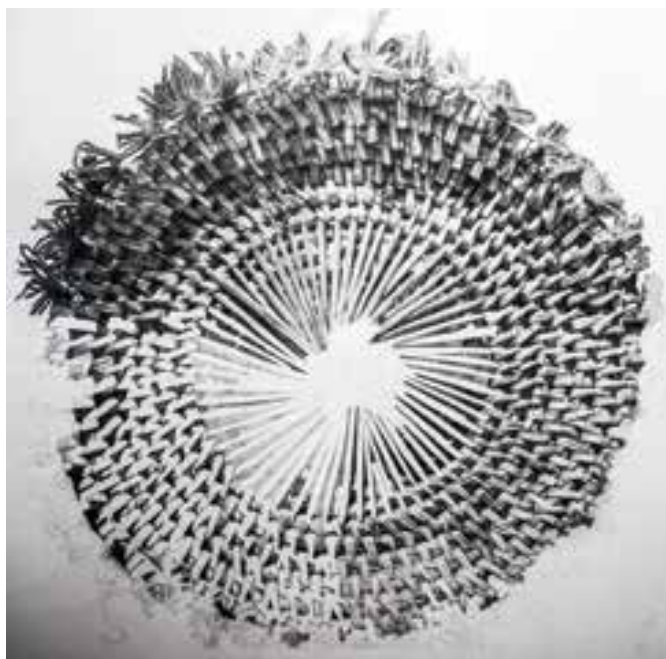
FAROOQUE ALI CHANDIO

Born in 1982 in Dadu (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Gwadar (Pakistan)

Sindh, its cultural legacies of art, music, and poetry, and the many existential challenges threatening traditions that bind its people have long been central concerns in Farooque Ali Chandio's practice. The artist, who is deeply cognizant of the ruptures plaguing his birth community often sites Indian contemporary artist, Subodh Gupta, a proponent of the transformative influence of art as a symbol and instrument of peace, as his inspiration.

Chandio describes the process and theme behind his drawing for KB17 as follows:

"I have used graphite to study the linear intricacy of the traditional straw *chaabi* used for keeping bread...These baskets convey the importance of nourishment, the primal quest in the circle of life. The tattered edges are symbolic of the natural decay that is an inseparable part of life. Grey areas hug the central disc. These represent shadows – shadows that embody the lingering effects of trauma, stored in memory long after the traumatic event has passed."



Dabakee, 2017
Graphite on paper
131 x 122 cm
Courtesy the artist

IMRANA TANVEER

Born in 1985 in Sialkot (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

The North-South axis of power transcends international politics and global economies, penetrating channels of social and cultural exchange in the global art world. This unequal balance of power, which inevitably foregrounds Western institutions and galleries as aspirational centres for artists, can relegate artists who do not enjoy the privilege of working within Western networks to the supposed 'peripheries.'

Imrana Tanveer's digital works incorporate weaving, textiles, and iconographic images from art and culture to problematise and subvert such cultural and intellectual hegemonies perpetuated by Western centres of power. Her multi-media practice synthesises imagination and reality and prompts a complex visual dialogue, which simultaneously deconstructs our collective realities and reconstructs an imagined reality, scrutinising and transmuting the world in which we live.

In *Construction/Deconstruction: The Work is Present*, on view at KB17, Tanveer digitally superimposed one of her 2012 textile pieces, *Post Betrayal*, onto visuals of several international galleries and museums, particularly in the United States. Tanveer's witty and sardonic comment on the artificial asymmetry and exaltation of Western power is strengthened by her underlying exploration of the definition of art in the digital age of interactivity and virtual reproduction. Such developments, in Tanveer's words, call for "a new conceptual understanding of different techniques, production, and display methodologies."



Construction/Deconstruction: The Work is Present, 2017
Video, 2 min (loop)
Courtesy the artist

J&K

Founded in 1999 | Live and work between Berlin (Germany)
and Copenhagen (Denmark)

Mammal Matrix (MaMa) offers a zoomed-out perspective on life as a continuous cycle in which beinghood shifts, where man-made categories and borders separating humans from animal species, plants, minerals, and inanimate objects are deconstructed. Displayed as a projection within a full-floor installation composed of soft materials, the work enables the audience to sit or lie down and experience the work as a guided meditation on the transient mysteries of life and death. The floor installation partly references the aesthetics of the video and blends it with local materials to create a communal patchwork.

The video installation, created specifically for KBI7, consists of a looped animation of still photography images showing a colourful and vividly textured composition of bedding materials, fabrics, and objects in constant transformation, as seen from a bird's eye view perspective. The painterly scenarios reference death and birth beds, and bear witness to possible rituals and stages of passage that are lived and performed in them. The image sequence is accompanied by spoken text, taking the audience on a cosmic journey through multiple states of birth and death, from the edge of the universe into a womb on planet Earth. The protagonists of this journey are a basilosaurus, a chicken, a sesame seed, and a meteorite: phenomena that loosely reference the ancient cultural and geological history of the geographic region that makes up contemporary Pakistan.

Since *MaMa* was created while the artists, Janne Schäfer (born in 1976, Darmstadt, Germany) and Kristine Agergaard (born in 1975 near Copenhagen, Denmark) were personally dealing with the processes of birth and death, they wish to thank Linards Kulless (Production Assistant) and Fritz Stollberg (Photographer and Editor) for their personal and artistic support. Jonathan Bonnici co-wrote and narrated the text. The work was realised with financial support from the Danish Arts Foundation.



Mammal Matrix (MaMa), 2017
Video installation, 12:28 min
Courtesy the artists

JAMES BECKETT

Born in 1977 in Harare (Zimbabwe) | Lives and works in Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

The investigative process of *Minor History*, which integrates physical and biographical research, steers James Beckett's practice. The artist and researcher, who is concerned with the rise and ravages of European industrial development, employs museological display mechanisms and craft-like assembly to create the sense of an uncomfortable amalgam between bourgeois decorative art and crude social realities. His recent works focus on architecture, dentistry, and the more metaphysical subculture of dowsing.

Charting the processes behind his installation at KB17 and its engagement with the theme, Beckett writes:

"As a starting point, I intend to look toward the Theatre of the Absurd in its famous dictum: *logical construction and argument gives way to irrational and illogical speech and to its ultimate conclusion, silence*. I see potential in such silence, specifically for the witness. Overwhelmed, dumb-struck, numb: a frozen spectator - yet a subject. For Karachi, it is not a theatre piece or a play I attempt, or even a documentary form for these players, but a research project looking to connect contemporary and historical moments, to find a form or a manifestation of 'witness' through the lens of the absurd. At this moment I am looking at the so-called 'dynamic back lights' of Audi A6/A7 sedans. The indicator of these lights is animated, so that LEDs move in sequence in the direction the driver intends driving. It is a kind of over-explained gesture, or sign - a point where technology becomes patronising by over-developing already well

functioning systems. I find this to be an appropriate metaphor for the times in which we live. In research I intend to expand on such a collection, to the formation of an installation to be titled *Simple Indicators*. My resulting work primarily hopes to engage and activate a public in Karachi, but purposefully looks for a more sublime and subliminal fashion. It is in this sense that I see this opportunity to show in the Biennial, as a chance for experiment and change."

Beckett's project for KB17 was made possible with support from the Mondriaan Fund.



Simple Indicators, 2017
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist



Jese Shahr-e-Madfoon Py Waqt Guzray!, 2017
Bricks, cement, mud, synthetic enamel, and emulsion
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

MAHBUB JOKHIO

Born in 1992 in Mehrabpur (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Mahbub Jokhio's work explicitly invokes and incorporates conflicting signs, symbols, and illusory indices to draw patterns of perception and intention, with all their ambiguity, into question. His materials and choices of medium are just as diverse as the themes he invokes.

Jese Shahr-e-Madfoon Py Waqt Guzray!, Jokhio's site-specific installation for KBI7, offers a biting comment on how Pakistan's contemporary political conflicts and systemic disorder have failed children. Not only are children endangered by the endemic patterns of violence surrounding them, but they must also continue to suffer for the privations stemming from a broken Pakistani education system.

There is a paradox to the idea of disillusioned or failed children, especially in cultures where they are considered paragons of an optimistic future. Jokhio plays with this paradox and recreates a children's graveyard, with tombs constructed from mud and brick, and plastered with cement. The vibrant colour scheme of the graves belies the sombre subject matter; epitomising Jokhio's aesthetic discourse between image and epistemology. The vibrancy of the graves is inseparable from the basis of their darker subject matter – the looming spectre of death, young death. The work is thus a visual manifestation of the inseparability of life and death, which although a part of the human experience, is particularly disturbing when it becomes a constant in the child's consciousness.



Factory, 2017
Post production video, 1:00 min
Courtesy the artist

MATILDE MARÍN

Born in 1948 in Buenos Aires (Argentina) | Lives and works in Buenos Aires (Argentina)

Matilde Marín's practice, which revolves around what she calls "the internal memory of man," is currently focused on the role of the artist as a witness. Photographs and video narratives about the planet we inhabit, about situations that relate to its pure landscape, and about those that have to do with the natural and artificial alterations it undergoes, are some thematic realities found in Marín's testimonies.

Paraguay-based critic and curator, Adriana Almada describes Marín and the process behind her work, on view at KBI7, as follows:

"To record images of fumes is to stop the course of history and make all bonfires one. In the same way that Bertolt Brecht extracted from newspapers, maps, and scenes of the Second World War; and mounted them in his *Arbeitsjournal* (Labour Diary), or as Aby Warburg long before did with his *Atlas Mnemosyne*, inviting a re-reading of European civilisation from a free association of images, Matilde Marín collected (2005-2011) hundreds of photographs of different 'fumes' – with their respective legends – appearing in the press. To read them is to get an overview of our convulsive times... smoke is usually the rubric of a catastrophe; the list is endless. The epigraphs change, but the smoke remains. Other and more recent fumes are shown on the move, confirming the end of an era, such as the spectacular implosion of Kodak Building 53 (July 18, 2015), which manufactured the acetate base of photographic film in Kodak Park, Rochester, USA."

MIR JABAL

Born in 1987 in Quetta (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Quetta (Pakistan)

Mir Jabal's paintings engage with themes of our reductive materialist conception of organic life. Exhilarated despair, loss of the self, moral masochism, sickness, and disease, however, are the most vivid and pertinent expressions of life in Jabal's view.

Lives Wasted Away, Jabal's creation for KBI7, visually evokes a sense of the microscopic cellular structures found in biology and human evolution, by replicating the organic texturing of dots. Describing the thematic underpinnings of his work, Jabal writes:

"I have attempted to give expression to the reality of the human condition in its Darwinian, evolutionary sense. To say that our hopes and desires, our loves and hates, are nothing other than the activity of flesh and bone, guided by the unhurried dictates of nature, puts the individual in a very disturbing situation. The soul, mind, and self become mere functions of the body and nothing else remains; where mystery is to be had, there is mechanism. Indeed, I want to reflect, in my paintings, human nature in its truthful scientific and biological manifestation. My symbolism is an allusion to the innumerable aspects of our corporeal selves that guide our base nature."



Lives Wasted Away, 2017
Oil on canvas
152 x 95 cm
Courtesy the artist



Correspondence, 2017
Installation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artists

NADIA BATOOL HUSSAIN FATIMA HUSSAIN

Live and work in Islamabad/Rawalpindi (Pakistan)

Visual artist and art educator, Nadia Batool Hussain (born in 1978, Karachi, Pakistan), explores her world and lived reality by focusing on bodily experience. The artist's collaborative practice raises issues of identity and femininity that most intimately represent her reality. Hussain's visual and textual motifs tend to sway from the purely clinical or anatomical to the emotional. She draws parallels between the two opposing notions of physicality and emotion by invoking one to identify the other.

Batool Hussain's collaborator for KB17, Fatima Hussain (born in 1983, Lahore, Pakistan), is an artist, curator, and theatre practitioner, whose work over the last few years has addressed issues of colonisation and postcolonial mindsets for their influence over art. Her concerns, which encompass the political, the historical, and the everyday, are driven by her personal quandary about how heavily her understanding of 'art' has been informed by internalised colonisation, by way of the structures, languages, and geographies she epistemically inhabits, whether by intention or escape.

The two describe their collaboration, entitled *Correspondence*, in the following words:

"In response to 'witness', the correspondence of the structure of Narayan Jagannath Vaidya High School works as the witness to the event, which in this case is the development of its surroundings. Our project takes the building as an entity that we imagine has corresponded across geographic terrains with other structures. We see this correspondence in today's time as a witness to many events and developments even such that it finds difficult to articulate. Translation and interpretation of this correspondence (although fictive) unearths a sequence of events that reference the larger socio-political narrative of the region. These documents are layered with footnotes and musings of a discoverer who navigates through the letters in order to make sense of how the structure has witnessed its surroundings over time."

RICCARDO MURATORI

Born in 1981 in Rimini (Italy) | Lives and works in Venice (Italy)

Trained in Philosophy, Riccardo Muratori focuses his research on relationships between “image” and reality, and on the virtualisation processes that operate under new media and technology in the present stages of advanced capitalism.

Musing on his painting at KBI7, Muratori writes:

“The female figure, depicted in this painting, could be interpreted as a muse (Aoede), who conceals herself or takes refuge through the instrument which should be the means of proper expression. Her generative force, momentarily suspended, is hidden by melding into her own shadow. The creation of a shield with a guitar is an expression of a phase of latency: does it represent a definitive withdrawal or rather a hiding place from which to launch a decisive attack?”



Girl with Guitar, 2015
Oil on canvas
152 x 110 cm
Courtesy the artist



Makaan/Ghar (House/Home), 2017

Mixed media installation

Dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist

SOHAIL ZUBERI

Born in 1970 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Graphic designer, photographer, and visual artist, Sohail Zuberi's recent work involves an intimate engagement with the physiological layers that Karachi and its coastlines preserve. The artist, who has for years enjoyed Sunday morning walks along Seaview beach, discovered their 'archaeological' potential by way of chance encounters, surveys, and excavations. The artist carefully recorded, documented, and archived objects he found on the beach. These close encounters with what is arguably one of the most celebrated features of his city, presents, for the artist, questions of man's relationship with nature and about the ways in which urbanisation subsumes, alters, and sometimes buries natural landscapes.

Of his installation at KBI7, Zuberi writes:

"Across decades, Karachi has undergone (and continually endures) a radical and mostly unplanned modification into a megalopolis. The desultory expansion leaves limited to no opportunities and amenities to accommodate its surging inhabitants, who in the face of which consequentially adapt to the domestic constraints and exploit the everyday dynamics to their advantage. By investigating the contextually extracted concept of 'adapters' and 'exploiters,' I amplify narratives on Karachi's ceaselessly revised physiognomy and extrapolate the parallels between the human and animal species that are settled in – and are manoeuvring – this urban sprawl."



Atomi Daamaki Wali Mohabbat (The Atomically Explosive Love), 2017
 Animation, 30 min
 Courtesy the artist

UMBER MAJEED

Born in 1989 in New York (USA) | Lives and works between
 New York and Lahore (Pakistan)

Umbra Majeed's interdisciplinary practice is characterised by her multi-cultural experiences and driven by concepts of physical and cultural displacement. Her work, a manifestation of cultural hybridity, thus engages with discourses surrounding migration, post-colonial confusion, and definitions of political contentiousness. Majeed's fragmentary perspective, which is conspicuous in her drawings, collages, and animations, depicts the complexity of cultural identity and the accompanying burden of misconception.

Atomi Daamaki Wali Mohabbat, Majeed's animation for KB17, chronicles the history of nuclear power in Pakistan. Compiled through national and familial archives, her disjointed and uncomfortable aesthetic perfectly dissects the history of nuclear testing. The Chaghi Monument Hill, placed as a visual motif within a digital space, serves as a poignant physical relic of a moment in history. Majeed employs flora to represent patterns of embedded violence and subverts mindsets of hostility using a hegemonic overlay of words narrated by a fictional populist Urdu poet.

UMME FARWA

Born in 1990 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Performance and video artist, Umme Farwa challenges the normative strictures of society to provoke and unsettle her viewers on sensitive social issues that make for taboo conversation. Farwa likes playing protagonist as she confronts viewers to disrupt their passivity, pressing them on ideas and issues that go unnoticed or are otherwise silenced.

Farwa performed her first piece, titled *Paitee*, at the KB17 opening ceremony at NJV School. Fully dressed as a young bride, the artist provoked audiences by entrapping herself in a small suitcase.

Of *Unwan*, performed at 63 Commissariat, Farwa writes:

"My performance takes place in front of a white wall. I 'prepare' the wall with the help of an aluminium folding ladder; recreating a perfect page from a school notebook. I draw all the margins and lines and decorate the page with a pretty border bringing it to a stage where it is ready to be written upon. Then I leave it be: an empty, perfect page. Without any content, the page, however perfect it may be, is rendered useless."



Paitee
Performance



Unwan
Performance



Scream Test, 2015
Experimental Short Film, HD 1920x1080,
16:9, colour, BE, 18:45 min
Courtesy the artist

VERA HERR

Born in 1988 in Freiburg im Breisgau (Germany) | Lives and works in Berlin (Germany)

German filmmaker and video artist, Vera Herr's practice draws intersections between experimental, documentary, and fictional films, presented by way of installations and single-screens.

Of her work on view at KBI7, Herr sates:

"The film director accompanies the person in front of the camera through the forgotten corridors of their personality. The *Scream Test* reveals a pre-historic instinct and innate experience through the performer's body. The scream is a personal release: it actualises the presence of aggression, touching upon the dimension of collective fear. Its high pitch abruptly interrupts the routine course of daily life. Provoking instant and total mental absorption, the scream paradoxically brings us back to reality, to the current time of now, as if a needle stung the collective body, exposing the limits of personal space and the shared sense of togetherness. What happens when the chroma key green-screen meets the psychotherapy session?"

Scream Test, a cleverly strident allusion to 'screen test,' is thus an unusual exercise in empirical research. The work stirs a dialogue about the interplay between sound, context, emotion, and interpretation. The result is a sort of mini-portrait series in which concepts of fragility, body posture, genius, and the occasional sense of a dry comedy all surface. Herr's film and test are strengthened by their inherent minimalism, creating a distinctly individualistic viewing experience for every beholder.

YASSER VAYANI | VEERA RUSTOMJI HIRA KHAN | AMMARA JABBAR

Live and work in Karachi (Pakistan)

Ammara Jabbar's (born in 1992, Karachi, Pakistan) interests meander within the aesthetics of dialect and language, specifically script and denominators of masculinity and femininity in the Urdu language. In her practice, Jabbar observes inanimate objects and distorts their functional value and compare such identifying parallels with texts after research into vernaculars.

Hira Khan (born in 1992, Karachi, Pakistan) primarily works with sculpture. Feminism, empowerment, vocabularies of socio-political discourse, and echoes of confessional art frame her practice. Khan enjoys experiments in materiality and form and is nimble with her choices: epoxy, synthetic leather, cloth, latex, polythene bags, and an occasional ephemeral substance.

Veera Rustomji (born in 1993, Karachi, Pakistan) cogitates on discourse around migration and heritage in a rapidly urbanising Karachi. Minority communities like hers (Parsis) often chart their histories from oral mythology or family archives. Rustomji captures moments, places, and people that stir her curiosity on camera, often including such personal records in her projects.

Yasser Vayani (born in 1992, Nairobi, Kenya) stretches the limits of art through objects and conversation. He engages with diverse communities, understands varied traditions, and reflects on his findings through found materials. Vayani believes that discarded and obscured objects frame contexts in which the human spirit extends into art.

The four emerging artists, who have collaborated for this site-specific installation, composed of

discarded and found objects, describe their project as follows:

"'Junk' is a relative term as it implies the terminal end of an object or a process which cannot be revitalised or has no secondary purpose. We are interested in the personification of these items of furniture using materials found from the site in order to readdress what the human mind categorises as junk. Art can be seen as an extension of people as all human identities are shaped by the space in which they live and socialise. Past identities are bound to the geographies of multiple places. Found material can be viewed as a common base for expressing and sharing thoughts and ideas about connecting to communities and understanding traditions... we aim to individually bring new purposes to the 'junkyard.'"



Untitled, 2017
Installation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artists

ZAHID MAYO

Born in 1987 in Alipur Chatha (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Within his dreamlike scenarios, rendered in drowsy colours, characters bathe in otherworldly, iridescent light, luminous against the languid weariness of the depicted worlds. Zahid Mayo's eclectic choice of subjects range from political icons and gods to the everyday, anonymous crowd. Mayo's works do not attempt to speak on behalf of their subjects, choosing instead to illuminate the essence of their narratives.

Mayo directly tackles KBI7's thematic, Witness, as he describes his work:

"I am a storyteller and I believe that stories need not always be structured from words. I want to narrate stories through visuals...I am a witness to those countless eyes who embarrass my own vision and to those faces that become an imprint on my subconscious. I am not able to face them directly so, with the help of my photography and sketch book, I let go of my subconscious. I cover my subject in the garb of traditional visual depiction to express my narrative onto the canvas.

I am a witness to my times and my work should be a testament to my social existence. My art practice, which includes my writings, helps me find meaning in what I experience daily and express it in a way that makes me and the viewer question the reality of our collective social existence. My practice helps me resolve inner conflicts and make sense of the world. It is a dialogue between my inner self and external realities expressed through conventional art forms and public places. For me, text is also a form of visual so I use text

in public spaces. Most of the time, I use my own writings, but sometimes I borrow other people's poetry and text."



Untitled, 2017
Water-based paint on trees

Capri Cinema



*MA Jinnah Road, Near Seven Day, Saddar, Karachi, 74200
24.86774, 67.02869*

Capri Cinema was established in 1968, during the heyday of Karachi's burgeoning cinema culture. Decorated with vibrantly coloured movie posters, the cheerfully nostalgic cinema sits on Karachi's bustling artery, MA Jinnah Road. The space, currently recognised as one of the best maintained single-screen cinemas in Pakistan, is a significant cultural icon that regularly showcases beloved Lollywood, Hollywood, and Bollywood blockbusters. In 2012, Capri's dedicated owners and patrons demonstrated their unflinching spirit when the cinema faced a grave existential challenge upon being set ablaze in an outburst of mob attacks. They restored the cinema to its original glory, opening its doors to enthusiastic audiences, within a mere matter of months.

ALTHEA THAUBERGER

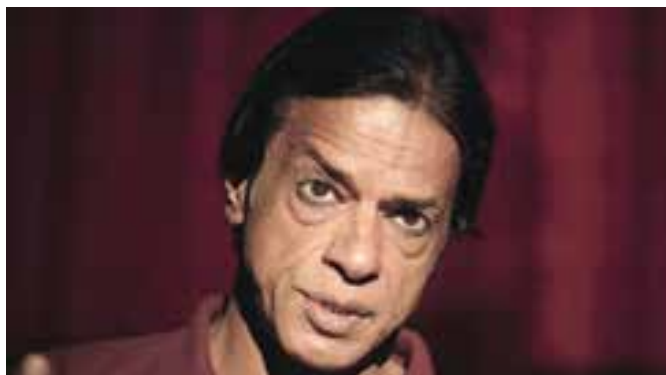
Born in 1970 in Saskatoon (Canada) | Lives and works in Vancouver (Canada)

The collaborative possibilities of the social documentary form are a central concern for Althea Thauberger, an artist who works with photography, film, video, and performance. Her recent film projects have involved research at and engagement with selected sites and their communities, ultimately transpiring in performance-based narratives. Her films reflect on social, political, and institutional power relations and present situations in which these dynamics are challenged, subverted, and sometimes upended.

Thauberger's dedicated, site-specific project for KBI7, a digital film titled *Pagal Pagal Pagal Pagal Filmy Duniya*, was paired with a painted movie billboard. The film features the built environment of Capri Cinema's modernist architecture and its security modifications, along with a cast of approximately 200 extras. Capri is one of only two remaining single-screen projection houses in Saddar; which was, in addition to being the city centre, once the heart of Karachi's cinematic activities. Even as several other movie theatres have succumbed to financial challenges, a decline of single screen cinemas upon the rise of multiplexes, a period of exponential decline for Pakistan's film industry, and a litany of attacks including a 2012 mob fire, Capri has persistently survived and resurged into a fully functioning cinema despite its many existential challenges. Due to her interest in capturing the authentic bustle of life within and beyond the cinema's tenacious walls, Thauberger has chosen to draw her film's cast from its longstanding patrons, including the ever-changing motley of residents in the cinema's direct environs. The scenes of the film were generated through a workshopping process

that enabled the artist and her collaborators to relate the history of this enduring site with utmost sensitivity to its remarkable legacy.

Her other work, a photograph titled *Who is that can tell me who I am?*, was on display at NJV School.



Pagal Pagal Pagal Pagal Filmy Duniya (Mad Mad Mad Mad Filmy World), 2017
Digital film, 29:00 min



Who is it that can tell me who I am?, 2017
Painted billboard
304 x 914 cm

NJV Government Higher Secondary School



MA Jinnah Road, Karachi
24.86223, 67.01853

Sindh's first government school, The Narayan Jagannath Vaidya High School (NJV) was founded by Sir Henry Bartle Frere in 1855. Named after Bombay-based administrator, Rao Jagannath Vaidya, who worked persistently for the advancement of education, the institution started off with only 68 male students. The current campus, established in 1876, was designed by British architect, James Astrachian. Historically significant, the sprawling, yellow sandstone building hosted several Sindh Assembly sessions after the Partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 and has been listed as a heritage site. The original furniture that was used during the sessions has been recycled for use in the library today. NJV remained a Sindhi-medium school for many years. It is celebrated, particularly, for enrolling students from diverse ethno-linguistic groups, religions, and communities across Karachi, including students from Karachi's fishing communities, and for arranging the daily transport of students as far as Ibrahim Hyderi. It has recently introduced boarding facilities for students from outside Karachi. The school's notable alumni include leading civil and political leaders. The Akhuwat Foundation adopted the school in 2015 with the aim of restoring it to its former glory.



Already Eaten, 2017
Taxidermal donkey, two television sets
183 x 152 x 123 cm

AAMIR HABIB

Born in 1978 in Kohat (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Aamir Habib seldom makes definitive statements but chooses to challenge establishments of power with critical questions instead. Through his art practice, he persistently problematises any political, cultural, and institutional inequities that uphold socioeconomic hierarchies and rupture society at the cost of impoverished civilians. His sculptures, installations, and digital works, whilst superficially light-hearted and playful, are therefore a satirical investigation and articulation of the ubiquitous paradoxes and contradictions plaguing society.

Already Eaten, Habib's taxidermy donkey saddled with two television screens, is reminiscent of Boxer, a hard-working horse and symbol of the Soviet proletariat, from George Orwell's iconic allegory, *Animal Farm*. With this installation, Habib pays homage to Pakistan's disenfranchised working classes who have, in his words, "stretched themselves on hollow praise and broken promises since the dawn of independence." The two television screens, playing the sounds of a theatrical applause, serve as a visual metaphor for cycles of false hope, hollow praise, and unkept promises that consistently thwart the labouring classes' aspirations of socioeconomic mobility and brighter futures.

ARIF MAHMOOD

Born in 1960 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Arif Mahmood is a photographer who specialises in photojournalism, portraiture, and fashion. His art practice is rooted in his professional interests, integrating elements from the three branches into many of his exhibited collections.

Fifteen black and white photos taken after the Ziarat Earthquake in early November 2008 comprise Mahmood's photographic collage, titled *Balochistan Earthquake 2008*, for KB17. Rather than capturing the topographic devastation and physical destruction of the 6.4 magnitude earthquake, Mahmood focuses on the human struggle that ensued in the aftermath of the natural disaster. Defying the viewer's expectations, his beautifully shot monochrome photographs refrain from narrowing in on human distress and pain. They, instead, capture the pure resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. The figures in these photographs serve as metonyms for the greater plight of those affected and displaced by the earthquake. Despite focusing on a tragic event, Mahmood, therefore, offers his viewers a distinct sense of optimism via the positivity and fortitude that radiates from various agents on his photographic stage.



Balochistan Earthquake 2008,
Photographs, black and white film, and handmade silver gelatin
prints



Doodh ka Doodh aur Paani ka Paani, 2017
Milk containers with embroidery and
silkscreen on denim and canvas
Dimensions variable

ARSHAD FARUQUI
NURAYAH SHEIKH NABI
SABA IQBAL

Live and work in Karachi (Pakistan)

Arshad Faruqui (born in 1964, Karachi, Pakistan), Nurayah Sheikh Nabi (born in 1971, Rawalpindi, Pakistan), and Saba Iqbal (born in 1970, Karachi, Pakistan) come together to produce this evocative installation that serves as both a wistful recollection of a declining tradition of fresh milk delivery in South Asian cities and a searing critique of global capitalism and its precarious consequences for the traditions and wellbeing of the worlds it successfully pervades. Using the visual of large milk containers, strapped tightly onto motorcycles, the artists simultaneously elicit the sense of a longstanding tradition at its twilight and the forces that are responsible for its displacement – capitalist consumerism, as evinced by all the packaged goods, including milk cartons, that have become a natural part of our urban consciousness. Speaking of the questions and dialogue that they hope to provoke through this piece, the artists write:

“Varying in size and depending on their capacities, these containers once encountered on a daily basis are now just sporadic witnesses to, and a comment on, the past. They bring forward questions on old versus new, organic versus inorganic, and pure versus adulterated.”

As the globalisation of capitalist goods, trends, and lifestyle choices persists, the artists worry that these goods’ marketed influence on well being has differed radically from their real-life consequences for health and safety. A pointed question thus ensues:

It is now a reality that packaged goods enjoy most of our attention, and the milk industry too has raced towards the promise of hygiene and convenience. However, the illusion of health deceives the mind and pleases the eye with brightly coloured boxes readily available at stores. Does this trend for consumerism have an expiry date?

AYAZ JOKHIO

Born in 1978 in Mehrabpur (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Ayaz Jokhio dissects the grammar of images with an idiosyncratically cerebral logic. His works employ an amalgamation of imagery from print media, the internet, and popular culture and melds them with his own experiential perspective of contemporary Pakistan. The artist questions the sincerity of the ways in which we regard and the authenticity of how we choose to represent our worlds. Jokhio's carefully crafted use of installation, drawing, painting, and text, through which he evocatively sparks conversations about self-reflection and self-presentation, are concurrently barbed critiques of the conventions of gallery display. Of his work for KB17 Ayaz Jokhio writes:

"I never enjoy talking about or explaining my work. It is like explaining a joke, which makes no one laugh. This is the first time that I am trying to create an art piece with puppets. Puppetry has always been there in my heart, but always like a secret crush on someone. My installation for KB is an imitation of a common classroom setting in our public schools: students sitting in rows at their desks – but replaced by marionettes/puppets. When someone opens the door and enters the classroom, all the puppets stand up like we all do during our student life in a classroom when a teacher or an elder enters. In my work, all the puppets are connected to the door through a mechanism of strings and pulleys. So basically, when someone opens the door; it pulls the strings connected to the puppets and they all stand up. And when the door closes, the puppets all sit back down again. I have not followed the advice of many of my friends to make the puppets life-size, like real children. To me, they should be smaller than life so that they can look like puppets and not like real

kids. Because the whole idea is to use puppets as a metaphor for what our educational system is trying to make out of our children."

On the one hand a critique of traditional schooling that champions conformity over individuality and, in so doing, propagates cultures of dogmatic hierarchy over equality, the classroom Jokhio bares for viewers, is ultimately a microcosm of the societies that such hackneyed educational systems produce. The relationship, however, cannot be reduced to a linear causality. After all, social tradition influences pedagogy just as well as education shapes society.



Untitled, 2017
Mixed media
Dimensions variable

AYESSHA QURAISHI

Born in 1970 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

A self-taught painter, Ayessha Quraishi turned to a photographic project for KB17. Through her works, the artist often reflects on the paradoxes and contradictions that are a persisting feature of most societies, subtly commenting on their requisite consequences and the confusion and desolation that they imbue in the human consciousness.

Quraishi's photographic installation for KB17 sees the artist widen her lens and let her viewers in on a refined exploration of the physical, psychological, and municipal implications that stem from the rise and eventual prohibition of a phenomenon that was of profound significance to Karachi's urbanity: the billboard hoarding. To describe her process and the empirical underpinnings of her project, Quraishi writes:

"I started photographing hoardings seven years ago. The scale of the metal grid and how it framed the sky fascinated me. I felt these empty frames mirrored the perspectives of individual lives that see a slice of the picture, not the entire panorama. Through the frames, I would often watch the grey Karachi sky change colour. Occasionally, I would spot kites glide through them, never knowing on which side of the structure the birds were until they became larger or smaller. Some disappeared. I felt that we too passed through life like birds traversing empty frames. Though the sky was often nondescript, I felt the empty frames offered me a space for reflection. Soon, the breathing space that allowed reverie was occupied and the sky in my eye shrunk. Due to the absence of a local government system, there was no regulator to oversee the mushrooming of billboards in the city. By 2015 Karachi had almost turned into a giant

advertisement with every street littered with huge hoardings, many on structures so flawed they led to repeated loss of lives. On May 5th, 2016, the Supreme Court of Pakistan maintained that there was no law that permits installing outdoor advertising on billboards, hoardings and signboards on public property and ordered the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, the Defence Housing Authority and all the cantonment boards to remove hoardings across the city by June 30th 2016. They were taken down but left by the roadsides and empty plots. A year later they still lie there."



Sky Frames, 2017
Photographic prints, mixed media

BANKLEER

Live and work in Berlin (Germany)

A duo of interdisciplinary artists, Karin Kasböck and Christoph Maria Leitner; bankleer develops installations and videos that address and expand documented performances and their settings. Using interventions and happenings as their point of departure, they produce documentary-fictional videos, objects, and spatial installations about distortions in society and about processes of transformation. A key component of bankleer's artistic practice is the interplay between documentary and fiction, social reality and artistic autonomy, and art and non-art.

Of their work for KB17, *The Thing*, bankleer wrote:

"In the city-centre around the Biennale, or nearby the exhibition building, we will place a meteorite – as it crosses the atmosphere, coming from the universe and reaching earth. Depending on the possibilities, the situation recreates an impact, with damage, a hole, or deformation. The meteorite is a sculpture that rests and becomes a performative element after some time. The sculpture is motionless and silent for quite a while, then slowly begins with sounds to speak to the audience, while body parts, such as arms or legs, become visible."

This installation, which was accompanied by a performance piece, included performers Erum Bashir and Shahjahan Narejo, and music and sound by Patric Catani. It could not have been realised without support from the Goethe-Institut.



The Thing, 2017
Mixed media
Courtesy the artists



A Minute More, 2017
Performance
25 min

BATOOL ZEHRA

Born in 1992 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Batool Zehra meditatively questions the notions of transience, impermanence, and the passage of time through the charred remnants of burnt objects. Ascribing value to creation through the process of destruction, the artist utilises powdery grey ash, and renders intricate, figurative works, exploring the realm of memory as a constructed space, where the past resurrects and disintegrates at will.

Zehra writes of her performance for KBI7:

"My practice revolves around the idea of impermanence and change. There is a process of deconstruction and reconstruction in my work; I burn down different materials and use their ash to set up something new. My performance, *A Minute More*, will be on a wooden bench made as a bed. Upon this 'bed' I will create a pattern of ash... I will wear black clothes and lay on that bed to sleep. With my movements, the ash patterns will gradually start deforming, relating to the idea of fragility and change."

ELÉONORE HELLIO

Born in 1966 in Paris (France) Lives and works in Kinshasa
(Democratic Republic of Congo)

Curated by SPARCK

Eléonore Hellio's interest in the electronic arts sparked during the 1990s, after becoming one of the main co-operating artists of the Electronic Café International. Today, this artist and teacher develops open creative systems and educational programmes in various contexts with numerous partners, most of whom are based in Africa. Network art, with or without technology, forms the crux of her practice. Hellio organises workshops, conceptualises films, installations, and performances, and publishes texts and photographic work, as a solo practitioner and in collaboration with numerous professionals. Her most notable collaborative endeavour is Kongo Astronauts, a collective that she founded with performance artist, Michel Ekeba. She is also involved in a wide range of art and research projects, bringing together international thinkers around questions relating to the impact of digital globalisation and challenges posed by the postcolonial era.

Hellio's video, *Upside Down World*, was on view at KBI7. The video was created in collaboration with 10 Lusanga-based artists, whom the artist led in a workshop. Eager to underscore that this is a collective work, Hellio explains that the video was filmed on the grounds of an ongoing project with which she has been closely associated. Initiated in 2014 by Dutch artist, Renzo Martens on a cacao plantation owned by Unilever in Lusanga, the project bears the name CATPC (Cercle d'art des travailleurs de plantation congolaise). The

work is a part response to an artwork on site by German artist, Carsten Höller: a set of goggles that project the world as upside down. Höller's goggles were discussed by the workshop participants as a metaphor for the "North's" misreading of Congolese lives and experiences.



Still from *Upside Down World*, 2017

Video, 24:28 min

© Eléonore Hellio

Courtesy of the artist and CATPC/LIRCAEI



Paraphernalia, 2017
Performance with suitcase, fabrics, threads,
needles, ropes, wires, and other textural
elements
240 min

FAYEZ AHMED AGARIAH

Born in 1976 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Fayez Ahmed Agariah works under the aegis of FYZ Art & Design, a small enterprise comprising multitalented artistic individuals from various disciplines, both within and outside the sphere of art. The enterprise functions as an incubator for harnessing the natural potential of its members. It is, he states, "a flexible and nurturing environment to create and experiment with out-of-the-box ideas."

Of his performance for KBI7, Agariah writes:

"A spontaneous view in my garden of delights, where I live under a tree. In a suitcase full of various paraphernalia: fabrics, threads, needles, ropes, wires, and other textural elements. After I rise, I start taking out the objects from the suitcase and start arranging them around me as far as my reach goes, without stepping out of the suitcase, I build and I stitch myself to the structure, getting tangled and eventually immovable. So, I stop. And then the whole process goes into reverse. Until I lock myself up again."

GUIDO VAN DER WERVE

Born in 1977 in Papendrecht (The Netherlands) | Lives and works in Berlin (Germany)

Weary of continuously situating his physical self before live audiences, without a clear sense of how he was being perceived, Guido van der Werve began to document his performances. During this practice, the artist established a fondness for film and cinematography, discovering an emotional directness akin to the romance and fluidity of music. Characterised by long meditative shots and a stubborn refusal to work with actors, the artist explores both historical and philosophical themes. The key element of his work is still performance, in which he incorporates music, text, sport, and atmospheric scenes as returning elements. Heavy with a dreamlike melancholia, elements of humour and satire emerge, sporadically, as the artist investigates the loneliness and absurdity of life.

Describing van der Werve's video on view at KB17, Tom Morton writes:

"Here, we see the artist walking steadily across the frozen waters, while behind him looms a vast ship, its prow smashing through the ice, then rearing up like a monstrous killer whale. Filmed in longshot, van der Werve seems frail and tiny, forever about to be swallowed by the abyss opening up behind him, forever hearing its great creaks, gulps, and rumbles ringing in his ears. The icebreaker, though, lags continually behind, and we get to thinking about the effortlessness of his passage when compared to that of the behemoth to his rear. We might read it as a parable of man's superiority to machine, until we remember that without the protective shell of the ship, van der Werve would never have been able to reach this

inhospitable zone in the first place. This is not an image of man at one with nature, then, but of an excessive survival strategy, both sublime and ridiculous."



Nummer acht, everything is going to be alright, 2007

16 mm film to HD, 10:10 min

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Juliette Jongma, Amsterdam



Talking in Transit, 2017

Sound, 16 min

The artist's work was showcased as ambient
sound in the exhibition space depicted

HAAMID RAHIM

Born in 1989 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works in New York (USA)

Enthralled by the music of bands including Radiohead, Postal Service, and the Chemical Brothers, Haamid Rahim dwells within an evocative universe of sound. From the tender age of 13, the electronic music producer has actively contributed to Karachi's avant-garde, underground music culture. Operating under the eccentric alias Dynoman, Rahim creates fluid, melodious electro fusions of Eastern and Western music. Alongside drummer Bilal Nasir Khan, the artist co-founded, and continues to run, Pakistan's premiere electronic music record label, Forever South.

Of his sound work for KBI 7, Rahim writes:

"Set in New York City, *Talking in Transit* highlights the immigration process via audio scenes. The piece captures questions, thoughts, feelings, emotions, and conversations which are prevalent throughout the immigration application, and the piece was inspired by Pakistanis living in New York. The field recordings used are recorded in various parts of New York City and Upstate New York."

HURMAT UL AIN RABBYA NASEER

Live and work in Islamabad (Pakistan) and Lahore (Pakistan), respectively

These two interdisciplinary artists and art educationists have been working collaboratively for over a decade, while maintaining their individual practices. Hurmat ul Ain's (born in 1984, Islamabad, Pakistan) work is performative in nature and deals with concerns relating to body, gender, food, hospitality, and service. Rabbya Naseer (born in 1984, Rawalpindi, Pakistan) investigates narratives of the everyday, re-examining them within an artistic context.

Of their performance, *Dropping Tears Together II*, Hurmat ul Ain writes:

The audience is invited for a sensorial experience as Naseer and Ain shed tears and share intimate stories over the course of a long durational performance. The chopping of onions, a mundane and domestic task, is accompanied by story-telling as a distraction, but also as a reward, for bearing the sting. The work is durational and may be experienced at any moment in time depending on the endurance of the audience.



Dropping Tears Together II, 2009
Performance
240 min



Mega Project, 2017
Fiberglass
Seven works, 178 x 55 x 30 cm, each
Courtesy the artist

JAMIL BALOCH

Born in 1972 in Nushki (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Drawing from personal and collective experiences of his hometown in Balochistan and the tumultuous world around him, Jamil Baloch traverses the spheres of identity and socio-political reality through a meticulous language of form, structure, and line. Visual elements are reconstructed and re-evaluated to present alternative narratives. Of his practice, the artist states:

“As an artist, I always tried to work with issues that concern mankind and nature... and to explore diverse media and a variety of themes, which are somehow related to one another and through them to me.”

Baloch's sculptural installation for KBI7, *Mega Project*, revolves around the concentrated power within the elite and how such an imbalance tramples the excluded. While the work can be read as a critique of the social structure of Pakistan, it transcends specific categorisation. Addressing a globalised concern, *Mega Project* denounces the pervasive exploitation of human rights and the maleficence of those in positions of power and authority, who deny other people opportunities. This duplicitous denial is disguised and propagated as good intentions for the public's welfare. The artist's anonymous, enwrapped bodies, with tire tracks disfiguring their forms, symbolise this detached disregard for the downtrodden, creating a haunting narrative that compels us to question ourselves and the world around us.

JIBRAN SHAHID

Born in 1992 in Islamabad (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Rawalpindi (Pakistan)

Exploring the classical standards of beauty within the art world, Jibran Shahid deconstructs and reassembles formalistic elements to fashion otherworldly, hybrid creations. Bizarre, illusory, and ethereal, the artist's work appears to transcend allegiances to any physical universes. Fluctuating between elusive drawings, paintings, and daunting, tangible sculptures, the figure of the horse features frequently in Shahid's oeuvre. Amalgamating with the anatomical components of men, unfamiliar, new beings are birthed. A harmonious celebration of aesthetic physicality wars with a tempestuous conflict between man and beast, as the artist toys with exaggeration, identity, and form.

Shahid's artistic practice is epitomised by his ceramic sculpture, *Embrace of Death 2*, for KB17. By merging anatomical elements of the horse and the human figure, the artist develops the idea that the horse is an icon of human civilisation, at once befriended, domesticated, idolised, and exploited by man; the hybrid form visually represents such cross-species entanglement. The highly-stylised form, deliberately exaggerated in parts, establishes a connection with the equine strength and power that has fascinated and inspired mankind throughout art history and, more generally, human history. The evolution of the work's hybrid form perfectly captures the aspects of the horse that have eternally characterised it as an expression of certain desiderata of human nature: unadulterated dynamism, aesthetic satisfaction, and spiritual aspiration.



Embrace of Death 2, 2017
Cold porcelain, resin
243 x 91 x 76 cm
Courtesy the artist



Any Last Words, 2017
Performance

KANWAL TARIQ

Born in 1990 in Faislabad (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Kanwal Tariq investigates the fleeting realm of transition, the vacuum that lingers between opposing states of being in continuous negotiation.

Her performance at KB17, *Any Last Words*, included human beings trapped within shiny, black trash bags, writhing and floundering within their plastic prisons to no avail. A manifestation of the *band bori lash* (dead body within a sack), the performance sheds light on the city's victims of political and ethnic violence, who are bound in sacks. Initiating conversation over the suppression, brutality, and fear embedded within the very essence of the city, Tariq deliberately evokes discomfort and distress.

Tariq writes of her performance for KB17:

"This work is a dialogue between being and nothingness, movement and stillness, rawness and realness, reality and fiction."

KONGO ASTRONAUTS

Born in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo), 2013 | Live and practice where time and place allow

Curated by SPARCK

Brought into being by artists based in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Kongo Astronauts navigate the vertigo effect of occupying multiple, parallel worlds. Faced with the violence of today's robotically enhanced planet, the Kongo Astronauts respond with art. Never fixed – for it is a collective whose membership is ever in flux – the Kongo Astronauts build upon differences. Upon the confrontation of diverse experiences, they corralled all in an attempt to resist the psychological ghettos that characterise lives lived in the postcolonial era. The collective manifests in the interzones of digital globalisation, where past, present, and future collide, impacting the politics of intimacy and identity in urban and rural settings alike. At work and at play in the field of post-disciplinary action, the group materializes cosmic appearances and polysemic fictions (performances, films, texts, photos, etc), immersing the audience in a multidimensional engagement with the experience of exile and the quest for survival.

Curated by SPARCK, three films by the Kongo Astronauts collective were showcased at KBI7, all associated with a series titled Postcolonial Dilemma. The videos demonstrate the artists' refusal to take the world they inhabit at face value and their insistence on seeking alternative ways of engaging with and bypassing its political, economic, and psychological violence. In the third film, Postcolonial Dilemma Track #03 (Unended), an astronaut ambles through

a tropical forest, making his or her way toward a massive waterfall. The astronaut plays the protagonist in several of the collective's "works": unscripted performances in the streets of Kinshasa, photographs, films, and music videos. The astronaut is a perplexing character; anonymous, baffling, and ever-changing, as the artists transform its appearance. Here, the notion of the cyborg exits the realm of science-fiction to enter that of the every-day world; richly poetic imagery is employed to question terms of engagement with a post-capitalist order determined to do away with exquisite spaces, such as the landscape the astronaut is traversing.



Postcolonial Dilemma Track #03 (Unended), 2014
Video, 6:31 min
© Kongo Astronauts
Courtesy of the artists

LALA RUKH

1948 – 2017 (Lahore, Pakistan) | Lived and worked in Lahore (Pakistan)

Exploring the arithmetic and musicality of drawing within her meditative artworks, artist, activist, and founding member of the Women's Action Forum, Lala Rukh traverses quiet realms of loneliness, transience, and the passage of time in her creative expression. Diligently studying human anatomy three times a week, the artist grew increasingly intimate with line and form. Comprehension of the figure eventually condensed into mark-making and mimicking calligraphic script. The artist is recognised for her abstract landscapes, replete with shining, silver formations of phantom water bodies – profound with a sense of movement. As her practice developed, Lala Rukh moved closer and closer towards pure abstraction, recognising the poetry in emptiness. Melodic, haunting, and dreamlike, the artist's oeuvre is highly celebrated within the Pakistani, contemporary art world today.

Lala Rukh's sound piece at KB17, titled *Dawn of Hope*, includes hundreds of lawyers calling out in unison for the independence of the judiciary under General Pervez Musharraf. Recorded during demonstrations in Lahore and Islamabad, the voices heard in this sound piece eulogise the struggle of the lawyers and of women's organisations, the media, and student groups. Waves of urban sound succeed one another: morning rain and bird calls move into slogans and songs, ending in a classical ragga piece, upbeat and akin to a dance, performed by singer Sarah Zaman, an active participant in the demonstrations. As Rukh wrote to a friend at the time the 2007 lawyers' protests began,

imagination of the people. It has given rise to poetry and graphics, slogans and slogan leaders who can carry on adlibbing nonstop for 15-20 minutes. One slogan leader is a woman lawyer, who, when she starts, walks backwards, facing the demonstrators, and never falters either in her step or the rhythm of the slogans."



Subh-e-Umeed, 2008

Sound, 9:47 min

Courtesy the collection of Hetal Pawani, Grey Noise, Dubai
The artist's work was showcased as ambient sound in the exhibition space depicted

"This movement has truly captured the

MANDARJAZAIL COLLECTIVE

Founded in 2015

The Mandarjazail Collective consists of an eclectic mix of visual artists hailing from a variety of creative disciplines including architecture, graphic design, textile design, photography, filmmaking, and fine art. The collective represents a platform for symbiotic artistic relationships, collaboration, and dialogue from which they offer one another support, guidance, and inspiration.

The Collective's work for KBI7 comprised four large-scale photographic portraits of the four members, Abdul Fateh Saif, Fahad Naveed, Shahzaib Arif Shaikh, and Veera Rustomji. The work forms an investigation of the role that popular imagery plays, in the formation of our essentialised perception of beauty and identity. The basis of the work's subject matter is the ubiquitous fame of Steve McCurry's image of the 'Afghan Girl,' Sharbat Gula, which was published on the cover of *National Geographic*. After the publication and mass-circulation of her piercing gaze, Gula unwittingly became the symbol of the Afghan refugee crisis. The Collective placed themselves within this paradigmatic exemplar of the power of the media in order to show how photographs characterize and create a trajectory for an anonymous individual, thereby questioning the ethical implications of witnessing narratives through the media's prying lens. The scale of the work becomes a visual metaphor for the intense circulation of the media's photographic currency, while the element of self-portraiture raises an almost existential concern with the fact that, in global culture, one 13 year-old girl can be deemed representative of an entire culture.



Starry-eyed, 2017
Photography, print on Panaflex
426 cm x 416.5 cm



Being There, 2017
Performance

MANIZHE ALI

Born in 1972 in Lucknow (India) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

A constant, burning passion to tell stories informs Manizhe Ali's multi-disciplinary interests in painting, video, photography, installation, and performance art as channels of expression and actualisation. The artist believes that each story ultimately demands its own medium. Even as mediums vary, however, the passion to relate narratives of human pursuits remains constant.

Ali's performance for KBI7 featured her metaphysical interpretations of memory. The artist describes the thematic underpinnings of her piece as follows:

"Every day our brain stores, encodes, and retrieves memories. In this performance, the artist is both the protagonist and the observer. Visitors are invited to share a memory on a piece of paper which is then added to the pile of growing memories on the floor. As the memories accumulate, the artist is slowly surrounded by them and in this way, the memories are both shared and preserved."



The Way of Being, 2010
 Tempera on wool Reda fabrics
 300 x 150 cm each
 Courtesy the artist

MARCO NEREO ROTELLI

Born in 1955 in Venice (Italy) | Lives and works between Venice and Milan (Italy)

Curated by Paolo De Grandis

Marco Nereo Rotelli, a name practically synonymous with light installations, has researched light and the poetic dimension for several years. Curator and art historian, Harald Szeemann defines this as “an expansion of the artistic contest.” Forming connections between art and other disciplines, the artist has worked with philosophers, musicians, photographers, and film directors. His primary interest, however, remains in the relationship between art and poetry, which has become a constant reference in his work.

Of his installation on view at KB17, Rotelli writes:

“These long flags are spiritual and existential spaces. The way I see it, poetry is not just poetry for its rhymes and contents. From the art point of view, it is the possibility of visuals in the world of words, even a possibility to think the sound and the space in the time of a verse. These fabrics are like standards which wave the rights of humanity.”



Witness as Continuity, 2017
Mixed media
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

MEHER AFROZ

Born in 1948 in Lucknow (India) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Meher Afroz's reputation as a prolific printmaker and painter reflects modernity rooted in a traditionalist approach to image-making. Of her practice, the artist states:

"I observe and interpret human emotions, expressions, values, and attitudes. My work is a journey concerned with the various phases of the evolution of man. My work also expresses my reaction to the present-day rat-race."

Afroz's installation for KB17 responds to the theme Witness in an abstract and non-literal manner, reflecting her wider art practice since the 1970s. As one in dialogue with the social through an indirect critique, the artist has constantly borne testimony to the value system in her surroundings. The questions that arise out of this dialogue between self and society question the legitimacy of narratives both in and outside the art world. The suspended *masnad* evokes an enquiry into many levels of witness and provides a space to seek the physical and spiritual manifestation of its form. Bearing in mind its references in historical text and practices, this is an object of mediation and desire and holds the promise of a reward. The beauty associated with the richness of colour and *zardozi* on textile provides a momentary anchor to reflect on the existing nature of shared spaces, dialogues, and their subtext.

MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO

Born in 1933 in Biella (Italy) | Lives and works between Biella and Turin (Italy)

Curated by Paolo De Grandis

One of the pioneers of Arte Povera, a radical art movement that utilises mundane, commonplace materials, Michelangelo Pistoletto attempts to dissolve the baffling barriers between spheres of art and the everyday. His oeuvre includes two interrelating, visual journeys, conceptual sculptures within the understanding of Arte Povera and a vivid series of Mirror Paintings, where figurative images are applied to sheets of mirror-finished stainless steel. As light, interiors, and the audience reflect within the physical space, the sphere of fiction is rendered fluid, remaining in perpetual motion as alternative narratives simultaneously enter and exit the frame.

Of his work for KB17, Pistoletto states:

"The Third Paradise is the third stage of human society. The first is the ancestral stage dominated by nature, the second is the artificial stage dominated by art, science, and technology. Today, we are entering the third stage, which will evolve in equilibrium between nature and artifice. Creating this equilibrium is the job we will do together; there is work for everyone."



The Third Paradise, 2017
Installation



Icarus, 2006-2007
Video, 5:04 min
Courtesy the artist

MITHU SEN

Born in 1971 in Burdwan (India) | Lives and works in New Delhi (India)

Mithu Sen's practice stems from a conceptual and interactive drawing background that later extended into video, sculpture, installation, poetry, sound, and performance. Her journey critiques subtle hierarchical codes and hegemonies imposed on society, especially in those areas where humanity becomes a minority, whether sexual, political, regional, emotional, or lingual. Swinging between distance and intimacy, Sen makes the private public by engaging spectators into a game of active voyeurism. Her works not only open the barrier of intimacy to the public space but also highlight the increasing importance of interaction with the audience as a part of the production of the artistic experience.

Shot on a beautiful morning following a storm in Bahia, Brazil, the work on view at KBI7, *Icarus* brings forth tragedy in two ways: first, through the lamentable myth of Icarus, who perished after the sun melted the wax holding together his wings mid-flight, and second, through the sorrowful death of the embryonic bird seen in the video. An army of ants gathers around a dead bird in an attempt to lift its lifeless body. In the process, the ants make the wings perform in a mock flap. As the horrific image merges with the splendour of natural existence, it reveals the futility of dreams and the inevitability of death. In the context of these mythic allusions, the bird, a dreamer, becomes a martyr at the hands of fate and misfortune.

MOMIN ZAFAR

Born in 1981 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Spontaneity is a driving force behind the real-time evolutionary development of Momin Zafar's performance art pieces. The artist enjoys keeping interactions with the audience and the milieu in which they are situated organically instinctive. He believes that documentation and abstraction, ostensibly disparate practices, collectively create room for the metaphysical in their analogous role as gateways to self-knowledge and relational acuity.

Zafar describes the material details and thematic concerns informing his performance at the KB17 opening ceremony as follows:

"*Halt and Flow* is an interactive piece played out akin to yoga on a Twister mat, with a grid of textured circles forming a colour-coded map of Karachi. With allusions to physical threat, personal agency, traffic density, and unconventional spirituality, it is about the specificity of locating oneself in space; how location and interaction may distort personal rhythms; and how the affectee perseveres to maintain intention and motion."



Halt and Flow, 2017

Interactive performance on reflective vinyl, sandpaper, and carpet
60 min



Let Me Take a Selfie, 2017
Mixed media
175 x 95 x 82 cm, each

NAUSHEEN SAEED

Born in 1968 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Nausheen Saeed's feminist practice sculpturally takes the body as the site of contention, conflict, and controversy. Her work celebrates the female body, extricating her figures from the residue of the male gaze so that they exist as independent entities, proclaiming their individuality as their strength.

In her sculptural installation for KBI7, Saeed simultaneously explores the prevalence of violence in our society by using technology as an analogous visual metaphor. Two identical female sculptures are placed in separate cubicles of mirrors, one taking a 'selfie,' the other holding a handgun to her head. The initiated dialogue represents a cutting critique of the contemporary commonplace, drawing attention to the commensurate pervasiveness of smartphones to that of guns, and the proportional ubiquity of 'selfies' to that of violence. The complexity of Saeed's statement goes beyond the ostensible simplicity of its visual analogy; it excoriates both component parts – the gun and the smartphone, the process of taking a 'selfie' and shooting a gun. The work subtly insinuates that we collectively partake in a form of violence against our individual selves by our narcissistic obsession with online self-presentation.

NOORJEHAN BILGRAMI

Born in 1950 in Hyderabad (India) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Noorjehan Bilgrami's atelier, KOEL, has been influential in the revival of hand-block printed, handloom, and natural dyed fabrics in Pakistani high-street and prêt fashion. The KOEL Gallery, established in 2009, has provided a vibrant platform for emerging and established artists.

Of her installation for KBI 7, Bilgrami writes:

"My art practice is informed by four decades of apprenticeship with the master craftsmen of Sindh. I have previously rendered, in book form and as documentary, the traditional art of *ajrak* making. This labour-intensive and mysterious process continues to inspire—and it serves as the basis for my current installation piece, *Witness Creation Unfolding*. Traditional *ajrak* making is a sacred knowledge, handed down through centuries within local family ateliers. The process begins with a tearing of the *kora*, or unbleached cotton, and in repeated rhythmic cycles this fabric is steamed, beaten on stone, washed and wrung out, spread under the desert sun—its lengths softening, made supple and ready to receive. At each successive stage of its development, the craftsman draws upon indigenous materials. And, both in its physical sense and in its philosophy, *ajrak* making mirrors the path of spiritual practice in Sindh. In its final impression, a jewel-like hue emits from the textile—a deep ruby and indigo—not imposed upon, but a part and substance of its very fibre. The bearing of this process forms the core of my installation. Matiari-based artisan, Muhammed Shafique, will develop the base materials, and I will work on them from within my resources as an artist, in my studio. The collaboration culminates as a spread of panels, each pair 13 feet in height, suspended across an open light-filtered space. The project

serves as personal homage to a dying textile form. In the same gesture, we are witness to the mounting journey from emptiness or *kora*, towards essence."



Witness Creation Unfolding, 2017
Mixed media installation
370 × 234 × 1270 cm
Courtesy the artist

OMER WASIM SAIRA SHEIKH

Based in Karachi (Pakistan)

Visual artists, Omer Wasim (born in 1988, Karachi, Pakistan) and Saira Sheikh (born in 1975 and died in 2017, Karachi, Pakistan) collaboratively cast a retrospective glance at the present to radically examine and mine contemporary art practices and the recent, albeit superficial, interest of the global West in their region. They aimed to reconfigure, re-articulate, and disrupt the complacent contemporary modes of artistic engagement and production.

Wasim and Sheikh's work, titled *1371.2, 2016*, on view at KB17, makes visible how human societies and their residential locales were stratified according to socio-economic groups and sub-groups, which are apparent in the dichotomous relationship between palaces and the structures that housed the sub-species guarding those palaces. Aspirations of grandeur and permanence are reflected in their drawings. And, while the fixedness of the palaces and related systems may have helped the owners to keep their fears at bay by maintaining a facade of safety and invincibility, this permanence was a mere illusion since the processes of perpetual and compulsive deconstruction irrevocably intensified their intrinsic ephemerality. These palaces become representatives of a broader spectrum of economic and exclusionary politics, hinting at the condition of the nation-state and its varying institutions – also highlighting the tendency for excess prevalent in that culture. The palaces thus act as apparatuses of and monuments to power and oppression.

Other remains, dating from the same period in history, show that the predominant dialectic

of these human species was centred around multiplicities, pluralities, and the death of the meta-narrative. On the contrary, the analysis of our findings irrefutably argues that even though the philosophical discourse may have attempted to break out of a unitary dialectic, the human species still stayed within the confines of polarities and universal conditions—conditions that were the meta-narrative of that age.



1371.2, 2016
Charcoal and conté on reinforced canvas,
with metal hanging mechanism
335 x 183 cm

ORLAN

Born in 1947 in Saint-Étienne (France) | Lives and works in Paris (France)

One of France's most illustrious artists, ORLAN creates sculptures, photographs, performances, videos, videogames, and augmented reality, using scientific and medical techniques like surgery and biogenetics. Those are only mediums for her; ideas prevail, and the materiality persists. ORLAN makes her own body the medium, the raw material, and the visual support of her work. It takes place as the 'public debate.' She is a major figure of body art and of 'carnal art,' as she laid out in her 1989 manifesto. Her commitment and her liberty are integral parts of her work. She defends innovative, interrogative, and subversive positions in all her offerings.

Photographs from ORLAN's *African Self-hybridisation* and *Pre-Columbian Self-hybridisation* series were on view at KB17. Shelley Rice has written of these series:

"The *Pre-Columbian Self-hybridisations* (1998) are in colour and mix her face with those carved on ancient sculptures, leaving her skin rough-hewn and stony. The second, *African Self-hybridisations* (2000), use 19th century ethnographic photographs (always in black and white) as their models, and superimpose (often extreme) African facial decorations and deformations onto ORLAN's contemporary European visage. The *Self-hybridisation* pictures are, in fact, masquerades: travels in time to distant places, cultural displacements into what Pierre Restany has called "a collision of times." There is, of course, a lineage to these series; in works as diverse as Hannah Hoch's *Ethnographic Museum* collages from the 1920s and Wangechi Mutu's fantastic woman-beasts

of today, female artists have expressed their fractured and symbiotic relationship with the Other. ORLAN's *Self-hybridisations* are neither anthropological nor expressive in a surrealist way. They are, instead, arenas for action and inquiry, allowing her to explore the limits of the face, of physical branding and expression in a global world where the boundaries of time and culture must by necessity be stretched and redrawn. An extension of her previous work, the *Self-hybridisations* mark the ways in which self-presentation forges identity and relationships in an increasingly interconnected world, where people, traditions, and images are continually on the move. Contemporary art has recently caught up with ORLAN, in its dialogues about refugees, displacements, and hybrid identities."



ORLAN, *Self-Hybridation, Série Africaine*, 2000, Photographs

PALA POTHUPITIYE

Born in 1972 in Deniyaya (Sri Lanka) | Lives and works in Mullegama (Sri Lanka)

Raised in a village of traditional, southern Sri Lankan craft-artists and ritualists, Pala Pothupitiye's oeuvre incorporates and reinterprets the material and philosophical content of traditional art. Pothupitiye confronts issues of colonialism, nationalism, religious extremism, and militarism and extends his inquiry to questions of caste, the distinction between art and craft, and tradition and modernity, in addition to generating a critique of Euro-centrism.

In his installation, which was on view at KBI7, Pothupitiye addresses the lingering, detrimental effects of British colonialism on South Asia. He narrows in on two colonial legacies: tea and education. The British colonisers popularised tea both in Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The artist states:

"Today, tea is considered to be something soothing, refreshing. Locals and tourists alike perceive the plantations to be idyllic places. Few give much thought to the massive environmental destruction they have slowly caused over the centuries. Nor do they consider that the workers on these plantations do not benefit equally from the industry."

Similarly, the artist sees the Sri Lankan educational system as beholden to a colonial mindset. He believes Western colonial rule institutionalised its oppressive power through its schools. In his work, contemporary tea bags are used to decorate a degree cloak with the intention of generating a focus and discussion on the negative colonial influences that still prevail in South Asia.



Colonial Dress, 2017

Metal, clothes, threads, ropes, fibre resin, used tea bags from Pakistan and Sri Lanka, acrylic
Dimensions variable



Tribute to Nahid Siddiqui, 2017
Performance, 8:00 min

REHAN BASHIR JALWANA

Born in 1982 in Dubai (UAE) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Initially, Rehan Bashir Jalwana's oeuvre lingered within a two-dimensional realm. His practice, encompassing painting, drawing, and printmaking, has now evolved into a more transdisciplinary pursuit. Under the tutelage of Nahid Siddiqui, a renowned Kathak dance exponent, Jalwana embraced classical dance and performance, enthralled by the poetry being produced through limb and muscle. Drawing inspiration from yoga, the artist incorporates the peace, meditation, and painstaking discipline found within the spiritual practice, into his own performances.

Of his dance recital in collaboration with seasoned musician and producer, Mekaal Hassan, performed at the KB17 opening ceremony, Jalwana writes:

"It's an homage to my Guru, Nahid Siddiqui. Our focus while working on this piece is quietude and silence, and how they can be conveyed through movement and sound and their relationship with space. These are concerns that have been a part of my training as a dancer and important components of the Kathak that Nahid Siddiqui has researched and developed over her career as a performer and teacher. Based firmly in its roots of tradition and my training in yoga, I want to explore moments of abstraction within the piece which will be composed by the maestro Mekaal."

RICHARD HUMANN

Born in 1961 in Suffern, NY (USA) | Lives and works in New York (USA)

Described as a neo-conceptual artist, Richard Humann meticulously condenses his artwork. His oeuvre is considered minimal, not so much in an art-historical sense, but through the way he strips away noise and distraction. Humann endeavours to have his work read like poetry, a distilled concept that touches both heart and mind. This intimacy runs throughout his drawings, sculptures, videos, and installations. Language, words, dissected letters, codes, and visual metaphors often become the mechanism for the dissemination of his intent.

For his installation at KBI7, *A Tide of Credence*, Humann revisited his 2013 work, *The Same River Twice*, in which he took a map of the Hudson River; from its source, north of Albany, New York to its mouth in Manhattan. He then transposed the shape onto a large pedestal and cut out the river from it, filling it with excerpts from beloved books, including *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Gulliver's Travels*, and other writings that inspired the artist's move to New York. As Humann states, "The river lifted me up and floated me downstream, where I began my life as an artist." Like New York, Karachi is a city of migrants. In *A Tide of Credence*, he has recreated the Indus River with its tributaries that flow down through Pakistan to the Arabian Sea. Pakistani immigrants living in New York were asked to write down their hopes, dreams, and beliefs in Urdu. The written text was cut up in an effort to reduce it to its purest meaning and then placed into the riverbed. The artist acted similarly with excerpts from poetry, history, and literature,

both historical and contemporary. The collection of personal and collective accounts flows with the tide of the river; from its northern, eastern, and western borders, and works its way south, towards Karachi.



A Tide of Credence, 2017
Wood, paper, ink
5 × 985.5 × 125 cm
Courtesy Elga Wimmer Gallery, New York



The Many Faces of a Karachi Woman, 2017
Performance
Image Courtesy: Rumana and Mukhtar Husain

RUMANA HUSAIN

Born in 1952 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Karachi and the architecture of its sociocultural, institutional, and physical constituents – the city's everyday activities and transactions – are prime concerns for Rumana Husain. As an artist, graphic-designer, educator, writer, and social mobiliser, Husain has sought multiple channels of expression and response to her city and the many existential challenges that its residents encounter.

Husain shifted gears to perform a piece, entitled *The Many Faces of a Karachi Woman*, whereby she deconstructed the diverse identities and strictures within which Karachi-based women live and function, at the KBI7 opening ceremony. She writes:

"My performance not only gives a glimpse of the diversity of this city's women but also highlights our society's controlling patriarchy. Controlling the way a woman dresses is a potent way of imposing man's power over her; while matters of much graver importance such as rape, violence, harassment, and maternal health do not often prompt a noticeable collective concern. The burqa, hijab, nigab, rida, chaadar is often being worn by Karachi's women to protect themselves from the male gaze, and to secure a degree of anonymity as they go out to work. The flip side of this is: restrictions on the woman not to wear any of the above also means that she is being denied a certain freedom of choosing what she wears. Thus the free will to dress as the Karachi Woman pleases, displeases many in our misogynistic society."



Begum-sahiba after her diet, 2012
Wood, fabric, paint and polyester filling
Approximately 100 x 100 x 100 cm, each

SABA KHAN

Born in 1982 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Saba Khan synthesises painting and object-making within her artistic practice. Her work is saturated with satirical humour, exploring class divisions and proscribed social structures through layers of endemic aesthetics, yet without sermonising or moralising. Connotative visual motifs characterise her acerbic commentary on socio-political conditions, exemplified by her use of gaudy palettes, glitter, and diamantes to comment on the upper-classes, along with the ceremonial, residential, and mercantile ostentatiousness that they display.

The title of Khan's sculptural installation for KBI7, *Begum-sahiba after her diet: Sheer-Maal – Sweet Delights*, inspired by the eponymous pastry-like flatbread implying a certain dietary decadence, epitomises her culturally-attuned, incisive satire. Khan appropriates and vulgarises the embellished frames of Punjabi-Baroque chairs, yet their voluptuous mass, almost bursting at the seams, becomes a burden of their own excess. The subtle acidulousness of Khan's satire signifies that the bloated chairs do not only symbolise the authority of the privileged. The kitsch, blush-pink stuffing and the meretricious frames also reference the exhibitionistic excess and elitism of the emerging bourgeoisie, synthesising an acute commentary on widening class divides.

ALI S. HUSAIN | FAIZA ADAMJEE | MUSTAFA MEHDI HINA FANCY | SALMAN JAWED | ZAID HAMEED

Live and work in Karachi (Pakistan)

Graphic designer, Ali S. Husain's style is illustrative, minimalistic, and edgy. He has recently launched a line of paper products, aimed at transforming perceptions of graphic design in Pakistan. Faiza Adamjee is a concept writer and thinker. She focuses on big ideas, concepts, and copywriting, along with graphic designing. Hina Fancy is a textile designer, who works as a teacher and independent print designer. Famous for her unique style of experimental printing with natural dyes, she has exhibited her art in Pakistan and abroad. Mustafa Mehdi, an architect who also practices graphic design, photography, and product design, is the co-founder of Coalesce Design Studio. Salman Jawed is co-founder of Coalesce Design Studios, a house of multidisciplinary designers that go beyond form and function to interpret the intangible into a tangible built product. Zaid Hameed is a textile designer by profession, celebrating the indigenous crafts of Pakistan. He fuses traditional techniques and patterns with contemporary techniques and forms, contributing to the revival of the dying art of ceramics in Sindh.

The six independent designers, all working to redefine design, collaborated to create this immersive project for KB17. They describe their project, *Daalaan*, as follows:

"*Daalaan* is an abstract playground where visitors are invited to revisit the utopian worlds they create as children. A place where anything is possible. A space without borders, where imagination has no bounds. Where people get together and enjoy a playful moment in time... a setting where strangers become friends. The pieces evoke conversation. A setting that is incomplete without its participants, each one is designed to make people interact through

play. The space is an open platform that is inviting to ideas and change. Feel the nostalgia, evoke the memories, and become a child. Leave all inhibitions behind. Rethink how you have changed, how you can change back, what was, what is, and what should be."



Daalaan, 2017
Silk, wood and metal
Dimensions variable
Private collection



lo Combatto, 2017

Video documentations of a simultaneous
performance between Venice, New York,
Moscow, Istanbul, Paris, and Karachi
May 12th, 2017, 5:30 pm, Arsenal of Venice
57th Biennale of Venice

SARAH REVOLTELLA

Born in 1971 in Geneva (Switzerland) | Lives and works in Venice (Italy)

Curated by Paolo De Grandis

Sarah Revoltella's work includes writing, art, and film direction. Her approach is a literary one. She begins by envisioning a plot, the crux of the idea, and then develops it with the most appropriate technique.

A video documentation of her performance, *lo Combatto* ("I Fight"), was on view at KBI7. The work arises from the notion that the artist can flip the vicious function of weapons by destroying the very objects in turn. The "object" that has been created with the purpose of destroying the lives of men ultimately reveals itself to be an empty crock, broken and unusable, as part of the wreckage of houses, villages, and environments, which are the only evidence and only "survivors" of the carnage. Breaking weapons into a thousand pieces symbolically evokes the madness that results from the volatile act of killing and destroying "for its own sake." Of her performance and motivations, Revoltella writes:

"For the weapons I used ceramics because I needed a fragile material that would allow me a striking destruction. Depending on the project of what I'm interested in transmitting, I use different craft techniques, trying, as far as I can, to master them to the fullest. When I make a film, I always write the story, usually I publish it and then I write the full script. It is a long and very complex work, but it allows me to almost always have a very consistent rendering of my idea."

SEBASTIÁN DÍAZ MORALES

Born in 1975 in Comodoro Rivadavia (Argentina) | Lives and works in Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

Reared in relative isolation between the Atlantic Ocean and the Patagonian Desert, Sebastián Díaz Morales believes his upbringing contributed to his idiosyncratic way of perceiving reality. From digitally manipulated, appropriated news clips to lengthy, self-filmed narrative works, the artist utilises a variety of formal strategies to create his videos. Within his oeuvre, Díaz Morales explores the relationship between large-scale, socio-political power dynamics and individual action, evoking unease and agitation. His films are often surreal, establishing a tension between social reality and its abstract and phantasmagorical representations. Multiple forms of dependence are explored, including interdependent relationships between people, the environment, and social structures.

Pasajes I and *II*, the first two films within a series of four, were on view at KB17. A lone man, played by Federico Zuckerfeld, opens doors, climbs stairs and ladders, walks corridors, and turns corners. Like a sleepwalker, he searches the interior spaces of Buenos Aires for a seemingly elusive destination. In the videos, Buenos Aires, appearing both shabby and elegant, reveals itself to be an endless maze in which an alternative image of the viewer can potentially materialise. As Díaz Morales states,

"These works, their surroundings, and characters picture at first a reality that sometimes can be interpreted as oneiric or dreamlike. Another way to see them is by thinking of them in the opposite way: The characters who populate these realms are those who envision us; I see our reality being dreamed by them and in their dreaming, shaping our world."



Pasajes II, 2013
Digital video, HD format, 15 min
89 cm monitor with copper taped frames
Courtesy the artist and carlier | gebauer,
Berlin

SEEMA NUSRAT

Born in 1980 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Investigating the politics of public obstructions and barricades, and the tangible and symbolic roles they occupy within Karachi's complex framework, Seema Nusrat delves into citified narratives encompassing elements of space, structure, and control. Through sculpture, drawing, and installation, the artist scrutinises the consequences of apprehension, exclusion, and public regulation of movement amidst constructed identities of security and safekeeping.

Of her work for KB17, Nusrat writes:

"Barricades, entrenchments, and barriers that were introduced to cordon off areas during unrest in Karachi are now an integral part of the city's landscape. The security infrastructure that looked alien at the time of its inception has become a regular feature at public spaces and government institutions. This could evoke fear and anxiety among denizens of Karachi, but it could also be intertwined with the architecture such that it becomes a design element. *Containing the Metropolis* is a continuation of *Proposals Towards a New Architecture*, one which could meet requirements of a city in conflict while maintaining design aesthetics fit for a metropolis."



Containing the Metropolis, 2017
Burlap bags and sand
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist



The New Gate, 2017
Paint on Lasani board
243.8 × 415.4 cm
Courtesy the artist

SEHER NAVEED

Born in 1984 in Quetta (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Seher Naveed's curiosity lies in temporary barricades and obstructions that are a constant feature in the urban growth of Karachi. Interested in urban geography, she views these barriers as additions, subtractions, and alterations to our everyday movement. She sees these as superimposed, architectural spaces that appear and disappear, slowly becoming part of everyday banal objects.

Of her work on view at KBI7, entitled *The New Gate*, the artist writes:

"For the past couple of months, I have been interested in documenting the gates seen in Karachi's residential areas. I feel the city's uncertain security situation reflects in their layered construction, making these gates function more as barriers and defences in which we protect and barricade ourselves. These new gates of Karachi, which are ornamented with iron spikes and barbed wire, are not meant to welcome one in; in fact, they require a password, camera surveillance, and credentials."

SHAHANA AFAQ

Born in 1991 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

As a multidisciplinary artist, Shahana Afaq's technical practice strives to articulate her concerns and investigations through a wide-range of mixed media. The artist describes 'Mushahadah,' a Sufi concept of witnessing, as the basis of her art practice, which she defines as: "to look, to observe, and to gain experience with observation." The artist consistently experiments with diverse media and aesthetics, making deliberate choices based on her conscious and subconscious observations, in order to visually elaborate a specific experience to the audience.

Afaq's site-specific video installation, *Let's Celebrate*, is a joyful expression of the guileless pleasures she experienced as a child. Within her work, a phantasmagoria of sporadic memories has been visually translated to fashion a kaleidoscopic homage to the beauty of childhood and the nostalgia that comes with retrospection. Situated in an isolated ceramic studio within the premises, Afaq's installation finds an ideal atmosphere for exhibition. The audience steps into a wistful, rose-tinted universe, reminiscent of simpler times. The work also makes a poignant statement on the importance of art for the sake of children's creative expression.



Let's Celebrate, 2017
Video installation, 3:37 min
Dimensions variable
Collection of the artist

SHEBA CHHACHHI

Born in 1958 in Harar (Ethiopia) | Lives and works in New Delhi (India)

Sheba Chhachhi's lens-based works investigate contemporary questions about gender, the body, the city, cultural memory, and eco-philosophy through intimate, sensorial encounters. Chhachhi's career started off as an activist and photographer, documenting the women's movement in India. By the 1990s, she progressed to create collaborative staged photographs, eventually transforming them into large multimedia installations. Her works retrieve marginal worlds – of women, mendicants, and forgotten forms of labour – and often draw on pre-modern thought and visual histories to calibrate an enquiry into the contemporary moment.

Chhachhi writes of her work on view at KBI 7:

"Water has become a commodity. Today, we are beleaguered consumers trying to meet our needs in the midst of contamination and scarcity. The video reminds us of water as part of our symbolic, cultural, psychic life. Evoking pleasure, loss, and rejuvenation, the elephant, a symbol of wisdom, power; fertility, becomes emblematic of cultural memory, of an eco-philosophy which has been submerged and must be recovered."



The Water Diviner, 2008
Video projection, 183 x 244 cm, 3 min (looped)
Courtesy the artist

SHEEMA KERMANI

Born in 1951 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Renowned within the spheres of Pakistani art and performance, Sheema Kermani is a theatre practitioner, women's rights activist, trained classical dancer, choreographer, and dance teacher. The celebrated artist founded Tehrik-e-Niswan (Women's Movement) in 1979, a cultural action group striving to promote art and culture and create awareness about women's rights and their status within society. Kermani has also acted in a variety of beloved TV plays and serials and has performed in several countries all over the world.

Kermani described her performance for KBI 7 as follows:

"I will be presenting a dance theatre piece, which I call *Where Do We Come From, Where Are We and Where Are We Going*. This is the cycle of life – a poetic visual journey, a choreographic poem, travelling through our past: a ritual of wisdom, the ancient civilisation, and heritage of culture, discipline, and geometry of meaning. All is destroyed, but out of this debris, we survive into the present bringing our memories and enter the theatre of the real – a crazy city with chaos and violence at every corner. Man/monster – woman/wisdom – a labyrinth and confrontation between love and hatred, a spiral of life and movement to the desire of harmony, freedom, and peace!"



Where Do We Come From, Where Are We and Where Are We Going, 2017
Performance, 30 min



Untitled, 2017
Wood, bandages, found objects
Dimensions variable

SONYA BATTLA

Born in 1971 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Enraptured by the poetry of natural and cultural motifs, Sonya Battla crafts vivid, intricate clothing within her atelier, which she established in 1999. The artist and designer embraces negative space as fondly as positive spaces within her imagery. She is especially interested in the human form and its correlation to movement and the space created by negative reversals.

Of her untitled installation for KBI7, Battla writes:

“This work is about the shelter a home provides, in contrast with how the destruction of a home creates refugees for whom a roof becomes more than that.”

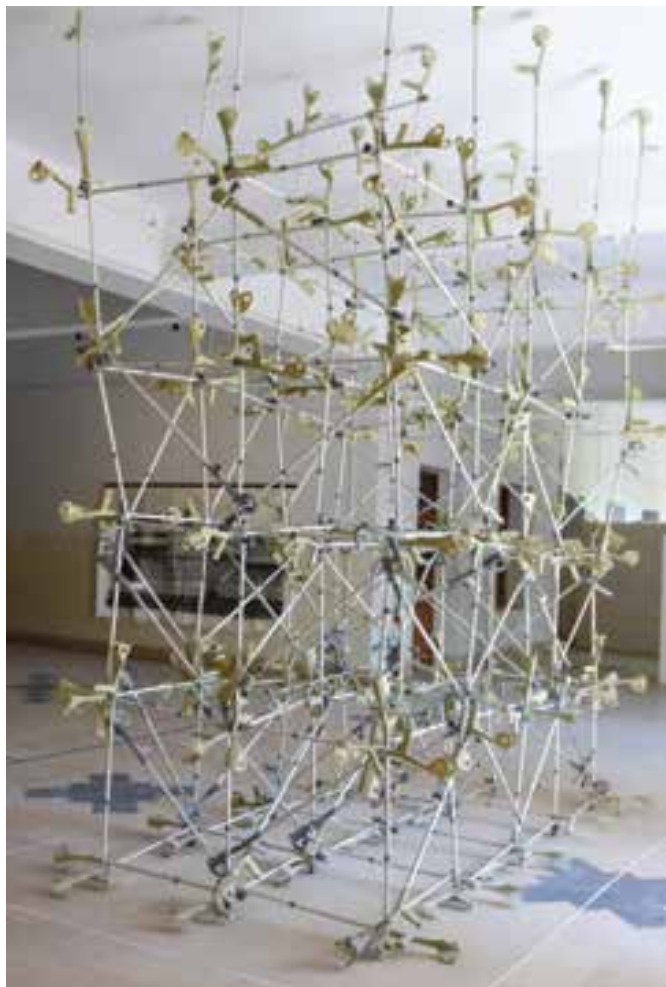
SYED SAFDAR ALI

Born in 1983 in Tando Jam (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Syed Safdar Ali's artistic practice traverses, in the widest sense, the human being's inability to identify with the structures that we ourselves create. Ali elaborates:

"My work takes as its starting point, the contradiction between our distrust of social structures and our desire to fit into them."

Ali's sculptural installation for KB17 creates a visual metaphor, representing the rigid social structures which we inhabit in our daily existence by constructing a cage-like, cubic structure from crutches – a symbol of the everyday. Ali's choice to use crutches to create this structure, not only symbolises the commonplace but, represents the injurious nature of these socially dictated structures on our psyche, capturing the sense of inadequacy that we feel when confronting harshly defined sociocultural boundaries and norms. The paradox embedded in Ali's work is that whilst we require the crutches to remain standing, they prevent our free-mobility; a manifestation of our purgatorial reliance on and resentment of societal structures.



Crutches, 2017
366 x 244 x 244 cm



Implosive Karachi, 2017
Live video stream, 360° camera, mobile locations in Karachi
The duration of the Karachi Biennale 2017

SYED YASIR HUSAIN

Born in 1971 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Yasir Husain is a Karachi-based artist, urban farmer, and environmentalist. His artistic practice revolves around the consistent baseline of an environmental thematic, engaging with this through electronic media and new technologies. The contextual stage on which he plays out this conceptual dialogue comprises of according to Husain:

“Cultural change; intellectual rubble; global, personal, and social media apparatus; hyper-information; and the continuing impacts of globalisation, urbanization and the omnipotence of the internet.”

Implosive Karachi, on display at KB17, exemplifies Husain's technological approach to the process of artistic creation. In a partially performative piece, he utilised live-streaming and a 360° camera to act as a wandering witness to the frenetic and chaotic environment that defines urban Karachi. The roving camera streamed its vision of the city back onto a screen at the NJV School creating a continuously shifting discourse between the viewer and the viewed, the exhibition space and the urban space, and the city and the Biennale. This is furthered by the fact that the marauding live-stream also navigated its way around KB17's other venues, creating meta-exhibitions as it traversed each space and beamed back its vision, allowing for the opportunity to have a virtual tour of the Biennale's venues since it was posted on the KB17 Curatorial Website for global consumption.



What We Left Behind..., 2017
Sculptural performance (yarn, acrylic and stuffing)
Variable durations

THOMAS C. CHUNG

Born in 1981 in Hong Kong | Lives and works in Sydney (Australia)

Thomas Chung's practice offers a perspective on the world through a child's lens. The artist has, over the years, employed food, toys, paintings, drawings, and installations in order to flesh out the dreams and anxieties that constitute a child's consciousness. He often creates knitted objects that come to represent his motifs and gestures as part of his performances. He ultimately endeavours to offer insight into the human condition, as it traverses history, landscape, and culture.

Delineating the praxis of his performative work, *What We Left Behind...*, which was performed by Adam Fahy-Majeed for KBI 7, Chung writes:

"Inspired by an image of a Pakistani attendant named Omera, her gesture of handing out bonbons to orphaned children in Karachi was most heartening. Relaying this conceptual piece from afar, I'll be presenting 100 knitted white candies to commemorate this narrative, my artwork being part sculpture and part performance." Seen as a sign of kindness and a gesture of openness, these knitted white candies represent a child-like point of view, where a gift is seen as a willingness to receive friendship. The whiteness of the objects is a poignant reminder of innocence and wonder in a world that is often dark and breeds cynicism."

VIRGILE FRAISSE

Born in 1990 in Paris (France) | Lives and works in Paris (France)

Virgile Fraisse scrutinises the politics of information and its production by cross-examining the consequences of globalised access to individuals across borders and the pervasive misuse of their digital liberty. The artist explores the intersections of communication, surveillance, and privacy within a geopolitical context, provoking uneasy questions about autonomy and confidentiality.

Fraisse's installation, *SEA-ME-WE, Chapter Two: Of All Wired Blocks Holding a City*, is on view at KBI7. Regarding his process, Fraisse writes:

"In response to an anthropologist method, my work invests communication protocols by film and installation. By criticising neoliberal strategies, my films investigate cultural influences of transcontinental relationships, for example, through the image of a submarine fibre optic cables deployment (*SEA-ME-WE*, 2015-2018), or through absorption mechanisms and extension of occidental patterns (as in *Prédiction/Production*, 2016, or in *Situations Suivantes*, 2014, with the South African community's Americanisation process). Therefore, how are the possibilities measured to counter the colonisation of image circulation? With a pastiche tone, parodying the film format becoming then playgrounds, characters embody contradictory positions one after the other: Pursuing this dialectical logic with an in-situ dimension, the installations, convoking architectural gestures, shape and mould our physical access to information."

The presence of this artwork was made possible by French liaison Abi Tariq, with support from Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris.



SEA-ME-WE, Chapter Two: Of All Wired Blocks Holding a City, 2017
Filmic installation, two screens
Courtesy the artist

WOLFGANG SPAHN

Born in 1970 in Ingolstadt (Germany) | Lives and works in Berlin (Germany)

Wolfgang Spahn's oeuvre encompasses light and sound performance, interactive installations, and miniature-slide-paintings. The sound and visual artist navigates the technological realms of analogue and digital media, focusing on their contradictions and correlations.

Of his work for KBI7, Spahn writes:

"The media installation *Noctilucent* aims at re-mediating Pakistani truck art. A burnt out mini-bus located on the premises of the biennale in Karachi serves as both an artefact and a canvas. By using multi-coloured LED's to up-cycle the bus, *Noctilucent* creates patterns that are luminous only at night or at twilight. In the same way as noctiluent clouds are visible only when the sun is already below the horizon and is illuminating them from below, *Noctilucent* is representing mediated patterns at night while the actual paintings are hardly visible. During the day, *Noctilucent* showcases black and white patterns of frost flowers to match the ice-crystals noctiluent clouds are made of. From dusk to dawn, multicoloured LED's move to-and-fro in the spectrum of colours, motioned by the algorithm the installation is based on. The surface of the bus functions as a palimpsest – a valuable 'parchment' that had been written upon twice, with the first writing washed away to make space for new writing, in this case for the re-use of media. Yet the LED's changes are influenced by cosmic rays: whenever a cosmic trigger hits the installation, the contemplative movement gets disrupted, the LED's flare and flicker before it finally tranquilises. Thus, *Noctilucent* uses re-mediation as a translucent process that does not want to efface the old medium nor does it want

to efface itself entirely. By using strong contrasts for day-or-night display, *Noctilucent* emphasises the difference between the old medium and the new one rather than erasing it."

Spahn also riveted audiences with *Entropie*, a live-performance in which he generated sounds inspired from live-generated abstract projections, during a special public event in the park around Frere Hall.

Spahn's projects and participation throughout the Biennale were supported by the Goethe-Institut.



Noctilucent, 2017

Media installation: van, RGB-LEDs, controller, and paint

Dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist



"What is separation's geography? Everything is just that mystery" (Series 1 and 2), 2014-17

Digital inkjet print on archival cotton fibre sheet

33 x 48 cm

Courtesy the artist

YAMINAY N. CHAUDHRI

Born in 1979 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works between
Karachi and Guilford, CT (USA)

Yaminay Chaudhri is a visual artist with a background in architecture and combined media studio arts. She works in multiple media with an emphasis on socially engaged and participatory projects responding to place, longing, urban infrastructures, and aspirations of progress. She writes, teaches, and is the founder of the Tentative Collective.

Chaudhri's submissions for KB17 include a 7-minute video, salvaged text from real estate advertisements, and a series of digital prints entitled *"What is separation's geography? Everything is just that mystery."* Of her prints, the artist states:

"The title of this series of prints comes from a book of poems by Agha Shahid Ali, *Rooms Are Never Finished*. It conjures up the viscosity of separation and distance from home, from the perspective of a poet in exile. In the context of this series of prints, the separation referred to is more local, but the implied distance may be as vast. Before the viewer, are profiles of large suburban homes filled with the textures and details of their walls. Floating in fields of white, the flattening of these homes and removal from their original contexts offer meditations on distance, separation, and perspectives of living in Karachi."



Onochord, 2004
 PAL Video, 16:16 min
 Premiered as an installation at the OPENASIA 7th International
 Exhibition of Sculptures and Installations 2004
 From the collection of and courtesy the artist. ©Yoko Ono 2017.
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YOKO ONO

Born in 1933 in Tokyo (Japan) | Lives and works in Nutopia

Curated by Paolo De Grandis

Revolutionary, Avant-Garde, and radical, Yoko Ono upends the traditional boundaries of art-making within her practice. A prominent figure in the 1960's New York underground art scene, the artist's earliest performative works were instructional in nature, compelling the audience to participate and engage with the work – in conversation, communication, and negotiation. Within her practice, Ono draws parallels between art and the everyday, and makes impassioned statements about social justice, peace, and feminism. Having made significant contributions to the spheres of experimental music and filmmaking as well, the artist is highly celebrated within the contemporary art world today.

For KB17, Ono presented *Onochord*, an instructional installation, where the audience is invited to communicate 'I love you,' to whomever they wish, through a code constructed by the artist herself. The oft-despairing barriers of language are ruptured as a universal tongue is temporarily established, to communicate the simplest yet most profound of phrases. Of her work, Ono states:

"There is so much fear, confusion, and anger in the world and it's nice to have a moment when we think of love, instead of anything else."



We're All in This Together, 2017

Performance

120 min

ZAYED MALIK

Born in 1991 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Zayed Malik is a performance artist based in Lahore. His work explores the relationship between performer and audience, the limits of the body, and the possibilities of the mind.

The performance, entitled *We're All in This Together*, featured a standard, ceramic toilet, casually placed in the corner. Sand overflowed, sprinkled with garish, pink rose petals. Of this work for the KB17 opening ceremony, Malik writes:

"The work revolves around the idea of being ashamed of yourself and being witnessed by people who judge you as something disgraceful. I will be on my knees, and my head will be stuck in a toilet so that I and the toilet are seen as one object. The performance will be a comment on both the performer and the audience."

Jamshed Memorial Hall



*MA Jinnah Road, Saddar Town, Opposite Radio Pakistan
24.861, 67.01777*

Jamshed Memorial Hall is named after Karachi's first mayor, Jamshed Nusserwanjee, who is fondly referred to as 'The Builder of Modern Karachi.' The building was renovated to serve as the site of the Karachi Theosophical Society in the 1950s. Its purpose was "form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood, without distinction of race or colour; to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science, and to investigate unexplained laws of nature." Annie Besant, the moving spirit behind the Theosophical Society of India, visited Karachi in 1896. Her presence inspired the creation of the society within the city, and a bust honouring her memory currently rests in the hall's library. Over 10,000 books of philosophy, mysticism, religion, and theosophy are devotedly stored there. The building's third floor houses the Jamshed Memorial Montessori School, which was founded by Gool K. Minwalla, who is also the founder of the Pakistan Montessori Association. The stage in the hall's Art Deco auditorium, possibly one of Karachi's oldest theatre performance venues, was once the city's largest stage.

ADEEL UZ ZAFAR

with Noman Siddiqui & Hasnain Ali Noonani

Born in 1975 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Tombstones bear myriad silent testimonies. In *Katbay*—i.e. tombstones—a work conceptualised and created with Noman Siddiqui and Hasnain Ali Noonani, Adeel uz Zafar explores themes of mortal memory; its paradoxical fragility and tenacity in the context of Karachi.

This work began with the artists gathering photographic documentation from over 182 graveyards, encompassing Karachi's geographic, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic divergences. Zafar transposed selected cenotaphic inscriptions onto cardboard lightboxes that, in most cases, contained the deceased's name, date of birth, date of death, funerary art, and, at times, funeral prayer in stone relief. In doing so, the artist has created his own microcosm of silent witnesses to Karachi's historical and contemporary realities. The installation bears a multitude of engraved voices engaging in a dialogue between memory and the present, with each individual voice playing its part in exhuming histories of the city's sundry cultural identities and coexistences.

A site-specific installation, Zafar's aesthetic interpretation of sociocultural division, subverted by the collective tolerance of his post-mortem community, perfectly corresponds with its venue, The Theosophical Society of Karachi, which was instituted on the following tenet:

"To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour."

Zafar's role as a National Illustration Consultant for the Northern Areas Education Project in Northern Pakistan, has borne a critical influence

on his practice. The absence of conventional artistic media within that context forced Zafar to experiment with substitutes for paints and surfaces, precipitating the development of his characteristically reductive technique – engravings on exposed photographic sheets. Persistent repetitions of a simple mark-making action yielded intricately textured forms imbued with a meditative and contemplative aesthetic.



Tombstones/Katbay, 2017
Light boxes made with cardboard, LED light, print
on transparent paper
Dimensions variable



Of Yore and Lore, 2017
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable

AKRAM DOST BALOCH

Born in 1958 in Nushki (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Quetta (Pakistan)

Born in Nushki on the south-west border of Balochistan, a province known both for its deep mineral wealth and for its legacy of neglect, marginalisation, and strife, the personal and the political find few distinctions in Akram Dost Baloch's work. To say that his art is concerned with human rights or even the human condition would be reductive. Baloch takes an interest in negotiations that shape our individual and collective consciousnesses, especially as the outcome of a dynamic interplay of the social, political, and historical forces that chaotically act upon them. Art, an expression and extension of human concerns, thus bears a redeeming power for Baloch, who writes:

"Art for me serves two functions; first comes its redemptive quality, and second, its capacity to bear witness to, and speak for the despairing side of human existence. While the first raises us, it is only with a keen perception of the latter that the aching need for and the requisite perception to find redemption can be attained. Such has been the prime motive for my practice over these many years."

Baloch's work for KBI 7 comprises 40 wooden boxes, which he purchased at a Quetta auction and used as a surface for engraving. He describes their history as a "curious one." Originally used by the British army as ammunition storage, the boxes eventually languished in bunkers and warehouses at the Quetta Fort after the British departure in 1947. The Quetta Fort itself stands as a symbol of the complex layering of histories. The British built the military garrison as the Raj's westernmost military frontier upon the mound of an extant precolonial *Qila* (fortress). The *Qila*, the British, and these ammunition caches all seamlessly tie into narratives forming the thematic core of Baloch's work. Used as symbols of the region's trysts with militarisation and intervention, during and after British rule, Baloch's boxes are potent reminders of Balochistan's tumultuous history in South Asia – a haunting legacy of cultural upheaval, economic exploitation, and political conflict.

BIRGITTA HOSEA

Born in 1965 in Edinburgh (UK) | Lives and works in London (UK)

Drawing upon historical and theoretical research, Birgitta Hosea offers a conceptual approach to the moving image. Instead of using animation to create short films, Hosea is concerned with deconstructing conventional ideas about animation and exploring the many expanded forms that time and motion, as recorded and manipulated by technology, can take. Combining animation, video, interactive technology, drawing, and live performance, Hosea explores animism, the vital spark of movement that brings the still and lifeless to motion, in her practice. She is interested in how technology and media, which are now at the tip of our fingers, nearly harmonised with our gestures and actions, lead us to construct our identity. Particularly, gender identity.

Hosea's video on view at KBI7 is a documentation of a performance that was done in an exhibition called "gHost IV," curated by Sarah Sparkes at the Crypt of St. Johns, Bethnal Green, London in 2012. Taking the role of a techno-medium, Hosea channels messages from film and radio through her multiple digital doubles and live projections of automatic writing, electronic ectoplasmic drawing, and animation. Inspired by archival research into Victorian spirit photographs, which are amongst the earliest examples of photographic manipulation, this *tableau vivant* explores acts of mediation involved in the digital image-making process. It examines the connections between technological medium and psychic medium. The former, including forms as diverse as film and digital code, enables messages to be encoded, stored, and transmitted. The latter, as manifested in the form of a living, breathing human, transmits messages from the spirit world.

The words in the soundtrack are sampled from two classic films in which human beings mediate between the world of the living and the world of the dead. June, the radio operator from *A Matter of Life and Death* (Powell and Pressburger, 1946), picks up radio transmissions from a WW2 pilot on the verge of death: "Are you receiving me?" The housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, thinks she hears her departed mistress walking through the corridors of her former home, *Manderlay*: "Sometimes I hear her." (Rebecca, Hitchcock, 1940),



Medium, 2012
Video, 10 min (looped)
Projected animation, manipulated video, live digital drawing and performance
Collection of the artist
All photos by Caroline Kerslake



Dust Grains, 2014
HD Video, 3:32 min
Courtesy the artist

ELISABETTA DI SOPRA

Born in 1969 in Pordenone (Italy) | Lives and works in Venice (Italy)

Curated by Paolo De Grandis

Gestures speak the language of the body. Every movement, often inconspicuously, reveals something of its agent's unvoiced emotions or conscious and subconscious thoughts. Bodies move deliberately and viscerally, delicately and flamboyantly, joyfully and melancholically, in gestures that mirror the inflections of cerebral activity and verbal communication.

The body, specifically the 'female body,' thus plays a key role in Elisabetta di Sopra's expression. Her practice is rooted in her research, which pursues the overlooked, or sometimes deliberately concealed, narratives of the everyday. The artist turns the body into a metaphor of existence – female existence – in videos that lay bare the sensitivities of women's interior meditations. Di Sopra describes the motivations behind her approach as follows:

"I'm the protagonist of my videos, the body is the privileged tool of expressing my work; it becomes a metaphor for our being in the world and thus in the video art. Like music, like dance, it is a delicate gesture that actually materialises our feelings. Almost no dialogue exists in my videos. The body speaks through minimal gestures."

By dint of the silent expressiveness of her art, the artist chooses a pithy phrase to describe *Dust Grains*, her work at KB17:

"Distant memories, those of childhood, are like dust grains in the eye..."

MADIHA AIJAZ

Born in 1981 in Multan (Pakistan) | Died in 2019 in Karachi (Pakistan) |
Lived and worked in Karachi (Pakistan)

The camera is a vehicle of expression and representation that affords an artist the capacity to explore liminal spaces between fiction and reality. Madiha Aijaz works with photography, film, and fiction to investigate experiences of privacy and pleasure, and of performance and authenticity, in reordered urban spaces.

Aijaz's works can be read as interpretations of the instinctual human consciousness and ensuing human behaviours in their unfolding. The artist draws from the immediacy of our ocular and aural sense of the world, with the chance situations and conversations they make us privy to. She thus remarkably infuses an equivocality into categorically veristic visual works.

Aijaz's project for KBI7 lends a lens to public libraries and the librarians, who have tenaciously held the fort at such institutions as the Theosophical Society, despite the challenges they face from an ever-transforming urban metropolis – Karachi. Her emphasis on these librarians lends credence to the struggles of the city's aging intelligentsia, many of whom belong to its migrant communities, wrestling to remain bastions of a foregone era.

Working with a combination of photographs, film, and text, the artist also offers an insight into how Karachi's shifting urban context has progressively shaped the content in these libraries; their content stands as a tangible barometer of the city's cultural trajectory over its short history of growth and reordering from a colonial port in the Bombay Presidency to a sprawling metropolis. The site-specific

work was framed from the fabric of shelves in the Theosophical Society's Library, among the oldest remaining public libraries of Karachi, with publications dating back to the 1890s. The artwork, now part of the library, perfectly consummates the historiographical motivations of Aijaz's project.



These Silences Are All the Words, 2017
Photographs and a two-channel video projection
Courtesy the artist

MUHAMMAD ALI (MIRCHI)

Born in 1988 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Mirchi thinks of himself as an artist of the senses. He likes to manipulate, create, render, and coax abstract and literal worlds of fantasy. While creating, inventing, and articulating are, for Mirchi, his professional vocations, it is his skill with emotion and self-christened “desire radar” that he considers the most important elements of his facility to express and flesh out unresolved thoughts, helping him engage in meaningful dialogue.

Mirchi's installation for KBI7 was composed of the repeated image of twin elephants, mounted onto the stage of the auditorium in Jamshed Memorial Hall. Of this work, which was accompanied by a performance, *Mom! There's an Elephant in My Room*, Mirchi writes:

“The theatre and its twin dichotomies of tragedy and comedy, which encompass all the elements of human emotion as well as layers of personas which constitute our ‘realities,’ are a significant inspiration. All the polarities of emotion, such as compulsion and revulsion, alienation and acceptance, dreams and waking fantasies, are addressed in a manner that evokes mythological archetypes, presented as re-tellings in a critical manner.”

The artist also conceived two other performance pieces for KBI7. Speaking of the first, in which he performed the intimate ritual of brushing his teeth before audiences at the opening ceremony in NJV, Mirchi writes that it “revolves around the ideas of cleanliness, purity and impurity, and obsession and catharsis.” His last performance for the Biennale, *You won't get spoiled if you don't do*

your own ironing, captivated audiences in an event at VM Gallery.



Mirchi's performance at the Opening Ceremony at NJV



Mom! There's An Elephant in My Room, 2017

Stickers, paint, furniture, fabric

Dimensions variable



You won't get spoiled if you don't do your own ironing,
Performance, 2017

MUNAWAR ALI SYED

Born in 1975 in Hyderabad (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

A specialist of three-dimensional mixed media art, Munawar Ali Syed has enthusiastically embraced and tapped into the interest that performance and public art have generated as modes of expression, facilitating artists to expand the scope of their concerns for wider audiences. His work, which has a self-reflective, existential flavour to it, addresses the issues humanity faces in an age of deception, and thus reads as Syed's incisive critique of the proliferation of mass media, propaganda, and society's general sense of self-absorption and duality.

Syed, whose installation for KBI 7, *Where Lies My Soul*, visually emulates his artistic process of self-reflection, states:

"This block of wrapped objects is simultaneously an arrival and departure from my art practice."

Where Lies My Soul is a commentary on the nature of artistic production in relationship to imagery and imagination, and art and non-art, among other dualities that are inherent in the artist's multi-disciplinary concept and process. It acts as a witness to his artistic journey and art practice, both of which have been shaped by reflections on living the urbanity of Karachi. By combining all the available sculptural pieces in his studio with books, drawings, carvings, framed art works, easels, and other pieces of general studio equipment and then wrapping this motley of paraphernalia in a black sheet of plastic, he constructs his own artistic narrative that occupies an indeterminate space between the paradoxes of function and non-function, and the tangible and intangible. The artist thus bares out a metaphor of ambiguity for viewers, forcing them to curiously imagine exactly what this structure withholds.



Where Lies My Soul, 2017
Mixed media installation
240 x 240 x 240 cm



Encounters of Another Kind, 2017
Banarasi fabric, velvet, polyester filling and metal
Approximately 56 x 157 cm. each

ROOHI AHMED

Born in 1966 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Roohi Ahmed draws on cartographical references to unpack the ontological curiosities of contemporary human existence, as fashioned by our degenerative socio-political and cultural climates. Her works investigate an individual's relationship with society and the spaces that the two independently and collectively inhabit.

Ahmed challenges a purely static notion of inhabited space. Borrowing from the conventions of map-making and sewing, she pushes for a temporal logic that reflects our fluctuating interrelationship with the invisible infrastructures that comprise the social and incorporeal frameworks of our existence.

Ahmed's work for KB17, *Encounters of Another Kind*, constructs a narrative using the human figure as an interpretative tool of perception. Ahmed delineates the way in which the sewn figures, eerily resembling body-bags, enable this perception in the following words:

"Every mark I make articulates a response to the world around me. For me, mark-making can be interpreted through the act of sewing. By relocating and bringing together different elements, their meaning and use is transformed and re-contextualised."

The sculptures are thus the artist's intensely personal response to the world, as manifested in the ostensibly modest acts of sewing and stitching together. These figures simultaneously embody an expression of physical histories framed from divergent narratives and contexts, forming a collective and somewhat equivocal unconsciousness. Viewers' interpretations of these objects ultimately add a last layer of complexity, bringing several unique perspectives to what began as the artist's private response to the world around her.

SANKI KING

Born in 1990 in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Sanki King is a self-taught street artist, who has produced works in seven different languages, including some of Pakistan's largest single-artist graffiti compositions, to date. As a member of two of the world's most respected graffiti crews, Queens (NY) based BMK (*Beyond Mankind Krew*) and Brooklyn (NY) based *Ex-Vandals* (*Experienced Vandals*), King is at the helm of pioneering, promoting, and hopefully burgeoning the growth of this discipline in Pakistan. King's practice derives inspiration from textual structure, linguistics, and literature, manifesting in an ever-modulating style, most adeptly described as a kind of futuristic street calligraphy.

In his site-specific project, *Mind Palace*, which inhabits and unfurls itself across the rooftop of Jamshed Memorial Hall, King bares out his personal meditations on freedom, thought, and space, on the historical site of Pakistan's Theosophical Society. The artist hopes to subvert existing notions of the limits of art genres, specifically street art and calligraphy, by engendering discourse over divergent perspectives through this interactive work. The urban environs of the rooftop, including densely populated apartment blocks, provide a natural audience for this work, which was designed for public consumption from the very moment King began painting it.

Osmotically diffused throughout the rooftop, King's visual spectacle is based on his own writings, collectively entitled *Freedom of Thought*. King initiates multifarious dialogues with his site in the larger context of Karachi, with the concept of the exhibition space, and with viewers who are allowed access to his

inner consciousness. Visitors are, in a literal sense, able to enter, walk, and exist within King's artistic representation of his musings and psyche – his *Mind Palace*.



Mind Palace, 2017
Graffiti

SHAHID SAYEED KHAN SHAHBAZ HUSSAIN UMER BHATTI

Live and work in Karachi (Pakistan)

Shahid Sayeed Khan (born in Karachi, Pakistan), Umer Bhatti (born in 1983, Karachi, Pakistan), and Shahbaz Hussain (born in 1981, Karachi, Pakistan), all of whom are practising architects, began to collaboratively experiment on their own homes, using recycled and discarded materials to create artistic yet functional furniture in 2013. The three architects' experimental projects culminated in a group show at Karachi's Faraar Gallery.

In 2014, the three concretised their collaboration by establishing Prometheans Studio. This new venture was driven by their aim to blur traditionally established lines between tools, hardware, and ornamentation, consequently realigning relationships between form, function, and sustainability. The three architects' design philosophy is to recycle materials in a manner that exposes their covert beauty and to resist rampant cultures of homogeneity in design.

Their site-specific installation for KB17, *Forest of Hope*, is a visual statement of the reality of climate change, expressed through functional art comprised of recycled industrial material. A densely packed bamboo 'forest' surrounds a chandelier made from skip-chains, gears, sprockets, wheels, and other discarded materials. The sculptural installation depicts a 'forest' that has been impregnated and adulterated by a man-made machine, symbolising humanity's heinous contributions to alarming global deforestation rates. The light emitted from within the piece is nonetheless emblematic of a few faint glimmers of hope for a more sustainable future. The work, which condemns our industrialised destruction

of the earth's fragile environment, also simultaneously demonstrates the possibility of an alternative future if industries, states, and global societies collectively recognise their role in making sustainability an intuitive part of their conscience.



Forest of Hope, 2017
Recycled industrial material, bamboo, lights
3 x 3 x 3 m

TAZEEN QAYYUM

Born in 1973 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Oakville, ON (Canada)

The cockroach is a recurring refrain in Tazeen Qayyum's work ever since the United States launched its putative 'War on Terror' in 2002. The atrocities that this supposed bid for global peace and stability unleashed, especially in Pakistan and the Middle East, profoundly shaped the artist's sense of her world and different people's positions therein.

The lens of entomology, referencing the curatorial practices of museum insect displays built around the reductive taxonomies of their subjects, serves as Qayyum's trenchant mockery of prejudiced and stereotype-inducing global propaganda. The lethal implications of such agenda-driven classifications, are expressed through the cockroach motif. The cockroach is, after all, a creature that human beings love to detest for their inability to either control or eradicate it. For *Façade*, her site-responsive installation for KB17, Qayyum shifts her lens back to her country and the grim hypocrisies that are shaking its human core. She writes:

"Installed at the historic and important site of Jamshed Memorial Hall in Karachi, which houses the Theosophical Society, *Façade* is an outward exploration of the ideology and teachings of the society, which is based on universal brotherhood (without distinction of race or colour) and encouraging the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science. Taking advantage of the site's architectural history, function, and the survival history of the Society in the community, the front façade of the building is delicately painted with an ornate pattern of interlocking shapes of a household cockroach."

Qayyum's drawing performance for the Biennale's opening ceremony at NJV School brought the concerns lurking beneath *Façade* to the surface. The artist completed a mural on a large 10'x10' canvas for a live-audience at the KB17 opening ceremony.



Façade, 2017
Site-responsive installation



Unvoiced, 2017
Drawing performance, 120 min



Repertoire, 2017
Performance
30 min

WAHEEDA BALOCH

Born in 1977 in Mirpurkhas (Pakistan) | Lives and works between
Jamshoro (Pakistan) and Karachi (Pakistan)

Artist, educator, and curator, Waheeda Baloch's performative works are profoundly influenced by her historical research and writings. Historical narratives and memory, as they are shaped, altered, and rewritten to influence individuals and collective society are her primary reference points and concerns. *The Left to Choose*, her seminal 2014 performance, coalesced art and music in a laborious but deeply emotive performance.

Baloch describes the intention and process behind *Repertoire*, her performance for KBI7, as follows:

"It intends to represent and witness the erasure in context with the individual and collective histories. Libraries are the spaces of knowledge, in fact, whoever wanted to destruct a nation, destroyed their libraries. The famous event of the burning of the library of Alexandria resulted in a huge loss of ancient knowledge that was recorded in those burnt books. However, it is also true that the existence of any book on a shelf in a library doesn't ensure the transmission of the truth. Erasure takes place on all levels in society, the books are also a witness of such erasures, they are considered as a treasure of knowledge, but the knowledge may be fabricated and twisted. This is a point of departure for me to work with the idea of erasure, censor, and rewriting in the context of libraries especially in the time when these spaces that are called libraries mostly remain empty."

Pioneer Book House



*Sami Chambers, Opposite Dow Medical College, MA Jinnah Road, Karachi
24.85686, 67.0113*

One of Karachi's oldest running book stores, Pioneer Book House was brought to life during the 1940's by businessman, Inayat Hussain Dalal. Homed in an exquisite Victorian building, the shop remained in the family and is currently run by the founder's grandson, Zafar. Due to its proximity to the City Courts, the store hosts an extensive array of law books. Pioneer Book House once held the printing rights of the Pakistani government's publications, publishing over 250 books, reports, and magazines. It also boasted regular visits from notable individuals, including former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, and Anita Ghulam Ali. From the discontinuation of trams to Karachi's overwhelming urban development, the store was witness to the considerable transformations that transpired on Bunder Road. Despite being declared a protected site by Sindh's Archaeology Department, the ramshackle shop eventually fell into a state of severe disrepair. Fortunately, author, Maniza Naqvi recognised the store's cultural worth and intervened to prevent its decline. Physically unmodified, it now embraces the contemporary technological era, having established a presence in social-media and cultural dialogue across the city.

HUMA MULJI

Born in 1970 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Bristol (UK)

Huma Mulji stirs latent perplexities, contradictions, and prevarications brimming in her audience's minds. Working with sculpture, photography, drawing, and painting, Mulji lays bare an appreciation for the very precise and idiosyncratic consequences of interactions between materiality and space in her practice. She playfully, provocatively, and sometimes sardonically highlights the unsettling, often intangible, consequences of human design, especially in the way it both deliberately and accidentally, influences relationships of mutual-dependence and mutual-hostility between materials and space.

The city, the everyday, and the overlooked are all subjects of Mulji's musings. She is, as an artist, deeply sensitive to the human spirit – one that is easily tortured by failure or neglect, nonetheless enduring and nimble. Her works thus stand as awkward but graceful, restive but placid, accessible but obscure, and at times antagonistic but empathetic emblems of the paradoxes that shape contemporary urban life. Mulji describes her own site-specific work for KBI 7 in the following words:

"The installation *Ode to a Lamppost that Got Accidentally Destroyed in the Enthusiastic Widening of Canal Bank Road* shifts from buoyant absurdity to a paradoxical and monumental decline, simultaneously quiet and disconcertingly momentous. The fallen lamppost flickers, gasping for life, refusing to die. The site of Pioneer Book House, equally worn, gives sanctuary but also illuminates the enormity of the moment, the slow passing of time."

Staying true to her characteristic investment in the incongruous and contradictory, Mulji describes her work, placed in an analogously neglected and declining but tenacious and extant Pioneer Book House, as "a complex palimpsest of Karachi's simultaneous and perpetual growth and decline." The idea of a palimpsest – an altered surface that still bears traces of its older forms – is both cynical and hopeful; it creates room for the new but at the cost of oft inimical erasures.

This project was realised with support from the Plymouth College of Arts.



Ode to a Lamppost that Got Accidentally Destroyed in the Enthusiastic Widening of Canal Bank Road, 2011-2017

Site-specific installation

Lamppost, electric cables, LED lights and mixed media

Dimensions variable

PABLO LAUF

Born in 1989 in Munich (Germany) | Lives and works in Berlin (Germany)

Pablo Lauf was trained in documentary and photography art at Ostkreuz Schule in Berlin. While describing his work on view at KBI7, Lauf recalls experiences of entrapment between states of dreaming and wakefulness. These unsettling recollections from the disconnected and dystopian worlds of his slumber are the ones he attempts to reify and document in this collection, aptly titled *Dissolve*. Lauf writes:

“In my dreams I often find myself in strange surroundings: empty cities, family houses, streets that seem as if they were disconnected from time. There is no one except for me, but still, those surreal rooms I explore do not seem deserted. It feels as if I slip into another layer of reality, roaming through transcendental worlds just like a ghost. One night in 2014, when I hiked in the remote mountain areas between Austria, Italy and Switzerland, I found myself in a small mountain village that made me feel as if I were dreaming awake. The sensation that overcame me while I wandered through its narrow alleys was very familiar to me. I just had never experienced something similar in my waking moments. I lost myself in a labyrinth hidden from the rest of the world by a thick, impenetrable curtain of darkness. I got carried away by the overwhelming silence of the night that was only interrupted by the buzzing noise of electricity that followed my every step. It felt as if time had stopped.”

Lauf's participation at KBI7 was supported by the Goethe-Institut.



Dissolve, 2014
Black and white negative-film scan, fine art inkjet print
60 x 60 cm

Sadequain Gallery, Frere Hall



Fatima Jinnah Rd, Saddar Town, Karachi
24.84751, 67.03304

Constructed in 1863, the iconic Frere Hall is situated between Abdullah Haroon Road and Fatima Jinnah Road. Named to honour the British administrator, Sir Henry Bartle Frere, the Venetian-Gothic building was designed by architect and British Officer, Henry Saint Clair Wilkins. The pale, orange-brown stones used to construct the building were quarried from the Gizri Hills. Once intended to serve as Karachi's town hall, the 19th century structure has been converted to a Museum since 1947.

Today, the building functions as a library and a venue for exhibitions. The Sadequain Gallery, where the works of legendary artists have been showcased, is on the second-floor. Its iconic ceiling, consisting of over one 100 hardwood panels, features the doyen, Sadequain's radiant mural, *Arz-o-Samawat* (Earth and the Heavens). The mural is tragically fated to remain unfinished since the artist passed away before its completion in 1987.

AGHA ABBAS

Born in 1969 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Architecture, Agha Abbas recognises, is more than the mere design or assembly of buildings. It is the metaphysical tenor structures infused in space. Buildings do not stand estranged from space, from time, or from their natural and manmade ecosystems. They necessarily interact and negotiate with and within them. Architecture lies in the shadows buildings cast on the ground and on proximate edifices, in the ambient lights that playfully glimmer off windows and facades, and in piles of discarded rebar and scaffoldings that have yet to be cleared from construction sites.

In his untitled collection of photographs, Abbas invokes layered visuals of an industrialised cityscape, unleashing stories that it taciturnly conceals and materialities it bears unresolved, as they brim with a cornucopia of interpretive consequences.

Buildings bear unhonoured histories of creation, of exploitation, and of occupation. By lending his lens to the unresolved and haunting space of the construction site, Abbas shifts our gaze from developers, designers, and occupants, from disputes over the concrete structure's sublime elegance or formidable oppressiveness, to the labours behind its creation. The incomplete building site, bereft of a human presence, stands as a paradoxical and disquieting reminder of the significance of human labour: After all, a labourer must rise at dawn and journey long distances to ceaselessly toil in spaces that will ultimately become central only in another's quotidian ventures and imagination.



Untitled, 2017
Digital photograph
81 × 122 cm

ANUM JAMAL

Born in 1988 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Artists are, in the mainstream, often positioned as distant observers or critics, witnessing society and reacting to it, in ways that curiously estrange them from the spontaneity of communal life and the elementals of living, experiencing, suffering, and flourishing as full-bodied members and participants of society. Anum Jamal's is just one among countless practices that upends this reductive notion of art and the artist, of motive and action, of observation and experience. In *Locus*, a work created for KB17, Jamal examines the psychosocial implications of life and its tormenting vicissitudes, asking whether tedium is in fact the privileged ideal that people ought to seek. She writes:

"Repetitive schedules, rules, laws and regulations, jobs, and security measures dog our everyday lives. The uncertain political situation makes us yearn for the mundane."

Locus questions the notions of tedium and monotony and whether they are a luxury or a struggle. The work is based on the physiognomic profiles of the strangers of Jamal's daily interactions and their impact on the architecture of our lives. Jamal believes that each stranger and strange interaction bears unique idiosyncrasies that merit attention.



Locus, 2017

Digital drawing, graphite, and colour pencil on paper
and foam-board
183 × 183 × 152 cm



Absent/Present, 2017
Sound installation, school bags, sensors, and speakers
Dimensions variable

ARSALAN NASIR

Born in 1990 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Memory, paradoxically the most elusive and concrete feature of our human consciousness, is unique to every individual. Perception factors just as strongly in shaping memory as reality. Yet, as communal creatures, with shared societies, cultures, and histories – collective experiences – human minds have been inclined to recognise the concurrent power of collective recollection. These collective memories, as Arsalan Nasir observes, traverse generations and are passed down as edifying experiences but are, nonetheless, eternally fragile and vulnerable to alteration. Nasir endeavours both to explore and complicate our sense of memory and its relationship of mutual influence with the human consciousness by relaying memories through everyday objects and stories. As a multidisciplinary artist, with a practice that spans drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, installation, and new media, Nasir perseveres to push boundaries. His drive to explore and experiment has yielded a practice that seamlessly incorporates interactive technologies into works of art.

Nasir's sound installation for KB17, *Absent/Present*, comprising a circle of school children's backpacks, investigates the ways in which we embed memories in spaces that we associate with our everyday goings-on. The project explores the nostalgia one experiences while encountering objects and spaces of prior significance. This nostalgia triggers a sense of detailed recollections, personal narratives, and specific experiences, creating an internal dialogue between memory and the realities of an irretrievable past. The school bags, which sound off upon the triggering of motion sensors, thus provide a visual and sonic representation of the capacity of a space or an object to provoke collective recollection, mediating a dialogue between the past, individual narratives, shared experiences, and the subjectivity of memories.

BANI ABIDI

Born in 1971 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Berlin (Germany)

Bani Abidi can most aptly be described as an artist-satirist. Working primarily with video-installations and photography, Abidi is an audacious and arguably flamboyant critic of the politics and culture of conformity, state-controlled narratives, altered histories, blinding cognitive dissonances perpetuated by nationalistic sentimentality, and of the prejudicial structures in which people are thence forced to exist.

The enduring legacy of South Asia's 1947 partition and the schismatic damage it continues to wreak upon individual minds and personal relationships in the region, predominate the central concerns of Abidi's work. The artist has been noted for the whimsical, wholly original, and consummately sardonic sense of humour with which she addresses these tragic, terrifying, and ultimately disarming realities and the epistemological limitations of our contemporary lives. Of her work at KBI7, the artist writes:

"The city has come to a halt. A state dignitary is about to arrive. Traffic is blocked to make way for the unhampered movement of four luxury vehicles. School children with crumpled paper flags in hand wait patiently to wave at the passing motorcade. An anxious reception committee of officious bureaucrats paces up and down a red carpet."

Abidi solely focuses on Pakistan in *RESERVED*. She nonetheless employs her characteristic whimsy to highlight just another one of those absurdities that pervade civic life and political attitudes in this region. This is a state that

engineers mindsets of blind commitment to the very values and institutions that stand at odds with people's interests. Yet, even as the artist's visually and intellectually provocative pieces air her concerns for the audience, she hopes to serve as a mere catalyst for introspection. The responsibility to interpret the phenomena in question, to challenge and demand change, ultimately rests with individual viewers.



RESERVED, 2006
Double channel video installation, 9:00 min
Commissioned by the Singapore National
Arts Council for the Singapore Biennale 2006

FAISAL ANWAR

Born in 1970 in Murree (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Toronto (Canada)

Faisal Anwar is passionate about innovating within the fields of contemporary art and hybrid design. His new-media practice is centred around configuring idiosyncratic integrations of culture with technology. Anwar uses the technological lens to traverse varied perceptions of the public and private and to trace their bearing on social interactivity and collective behaviour in modern urban milieus. Sources of data, social media, and Augmented Reality, all serve as his mediums for examining perception and expressing a response to ideas of identity, notions of power, and the indelible pain of dislocation. Globalisation's engendering of visually homogenised urban landscapes ('world cities'), and the consequent alienation of contemporary life, all feature in Anwar's participatory projects, which invite audiences to interact with and evolve with the evolving work.

Anwar's work at KBI7 transpired from a workshop he conducted many months prior to the event at NJV School. At the school, Anwar asked students to map their city using cell phone photography. Speaking of the project that ensued, Anwar writes,

"I See my Streets/I See Karachi is a new-media installation driven by youth and community participation. With a population of over 24 million people and with a remarkable 80% expansion over the past decade, Karachi is the world's fastest-growing megacity. Her streets are a chaos of movement – people, traffic, graffiti, landmarks, and a dense network of colonial, modern, and makeshift architecture and spaces. My interest is in creating a new

form of visually rich, image-centric street views capturing hidden patterns of flow – no maps or numbers, only contemporary social networks will be used."

Anwar's work was realised with funding and support from the Ontario Arts Council.



I See my Streets/I See Karachi, 2017
Participatory interactive installation, video projections,
social media interaction
457 cm cube
Courtesy the artist



You Said You'll Never Leave, 2017
Single channel video, 100 min (looped)
Courtesy the artist and Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

IVAN LAM

Born in 1975 in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) | Lives and works in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)

A variety of mediums and ideas inspired by popular culture, autobiography, current affairs, and everyday vistas feature in Ivan Lam's practice. The concept of duality has persisted as a thematic concern throughout Lam's journey as an artist, with contrasts and opposites playing a recurrent role in his works.

Lam's video for KB17 references a workshop he conducted with students at the NJV School, earlier in 2017. He states:

"The artwork that I will be showing is the last of its many incarnations – from the workshop with the NJV students, to the building of a three-dimensional colour wheel, and now to this video installation. The video consists of moving images of all the artworks the students did during the workshop, along with some hidden footage blended in. It's a pensive work; the colour dots lull in a maze of quiet discontentment and beauty."

JEAN HUBERT

Born in 1987 in Ivry-sur-Seine (France) | Lives and works between Paris (France) and Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

Jean Hubert's films eschew the plot as a storytelling foundation. The artist gives simple elements of speech extracted from reality – i.e. text messages, hijacked phone conversations, lists of proverbs – an added resonance as he translates them into film. He establishes a protocol – rather, an ersatz protocol – weaving the excavation of lost documents, a political meeting, and the likes into rehearsed and professionally enacted scenes. The 'action procedure,' however, undoes itself as the film progresses and becomes an essentially visual procedure. That is, a re-appropriation of a film genre (spy film, love story, propaganda clip). The process, Hubert claims, gives him a personal insight into the initial material that sparked the film and its making.

In *Waiting for Sleep*, Hubert investigates the form of a diary through computer-generated animation. Grounding the work in the fantasy genre, he creates an animated film, chronicling the daily life of a character, Will, who is a sleepwalker surrounded by zombies. Keeping with Hubert's idiosyncratic style, Will narrates his tale via text messages and phone conversations.

"1:33 – I'll save you. 3:49 – How is dad?
3:51 – How are you? It's okay, I take care of everything. How's dad? 3:58 – Good. Good.
4:01 – Yes I am careful, I am very careful..."

Mundane dialogue becomes the perfect foil for the action. Hubert's characters, often beleaguered by uncertainty and inner conflict, recount a fictive world other than the one they inhabit. They speak of daily worries and

banal endeavours through this briefly relieving window of fiction. The other world, after all, is reality.

The presence of this artwork was made possible by French liaison Abi Tariq, with support from Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris.



Waiting for Sleep - Part One, 2016

Video HD, 6:50 min

This work was supported by the Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst and by the Aide individuelle à la création de la Drac Ile-de-France

(LA) HORDE

A collective of three French artists: Marine Brutti, Jonathan Debrouwer and Arthur Harel | Founded 2013

Three artists, Marine Brutti (born in 1985), Jonathan Debrouwer (born in 1985), and Arthur Harel (born in 1991) have collaborated to form the collective, (LA) Horde. Codes of different artistic scenes for contemporary art and living are constantly swapped, reconfigured, and questioned in (LA) Horde's work. This scrutiny and resistance to artistic convention has served as the tripartite collective's leitmotif. The three artists have developed their practice by working and fusing together stage direction, filmmaking, video installation, choreography, and performance.

Larger than Life is the result of a four-hour-long performance. The artists deliberately elongated the production as a metaphor for an intimate gathering that lasts several hours, sometimes without warning. Taking the idea of a family reunion as their point of departure, (LA) Horde created a minimalist setting of a dinner table. As this dance-based video opens, men and women are seen gathered around the table. One by one, they gather on top of the table and begin to dance, directly engaging the viewer by approaching the camera and staring into it, ostensibly energised by this engagement from the outside. Further exploiting the idea of voyeurism, (LA) Horde included those watching the production of the video in the video itself: the audience was both assisting the video and participating in it. Throughout this time, the participants move both in unison and alone, producing a continuous movement in which the body can endlessly reinvent itself. As the video ends, the table is folded up and taken away; the dancers are left frozen in space – seemingly together

but consumed by their own thoughts. The collective superimposed new designs, shapes, and imagery upon existing ones through an editing process called 'datamoshing' – their subtle comment on the concept of fluidity.

The presence of this artwork was made possible by French liaison, Abi Tariq, with support from Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris.



Larger Than Life, 2016
Video, 5:55 min
Courtesy the artists

MUHAMMAD ZEESHAN

Born in 1980 in Mirpurkhas (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Artist and curator, Muhammad Zeeshan's practice defines a new attitude in art that sets out to foreground the urgencies of our time. His shows and work complicate the dynamic between artists, the audience, the work, and each party's expectations from it. The artist commands the discerning voice, the dissenting voice: audiences cannot simply lean back and submit to his vision.

Zeeshan, who started working as a cinema board painter in his hometown of Mirpurkhas from a very young age, drew on this elemental skill in his offering for KB17. Describing its thematic context, Zeeshan writes:

"It's the worst fear of all. The seed of acute despair. But for me, 'Failure' has always been a great vision. It has allowed me to grow and gain motivation to resolve the challenge of the unfinished, the unsolved, the mysterious. This project is based on a selection of rejection letters sent to me by various organisations."

Zeeshan's work thus reads as an ode to his failures. In so celebrating his setbacks, the artist serves an equal nod to all that goes behind delivering success and to those efforts and struggles that never receive due acknowledgement, leave alone acclaim.



Sincerely Yours, 2017
Reflective sticker on cloth encased
in acrylic sheet
Eight works 120 x 91 cm each
Courtesy the artist



Virdh, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
640 x 457 cm
Courtesy the artist

NAHID RAZA

Born in 1948 in Delhi (India) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Women's enduring struggles with frustrated rights, violence, skewed social expectations, and the oppressive standards levied on their very identities and existence take centre-stage in Nahid Raza's artistic voice. Raza capitalises on the privilege of her vocation to explode boundaries between the deliberate political tenor of an activist, the disembodied narrative voice of a commenter; and the emotive force of the artist who is, by virtue of her gender, oppressed.

Raza's visuals inhabit and embody her subject's consciousness, evincing the sharp psychological damage that structures of oppression deliver against women, instead of simply depicting their physical manifestations. Audacious and piercing, Raza dares to show the world how the woman sees it.

Raza's painting for KBI7 will be part of her ongoing *Virdh* series. The word '*virdh*' is a reference to repeated incantations – a common practice among many religions. Composed of recurrent motifs, her canvas becomes a metaphor for spiritual deliverance, for the artist emphasises their power to relieve a person from agony and frustration. As someone who finds serenity and solace in the realms of divinity and devotion, often through the practice of *virdh*, Raza firmly believes that every person bears the capacity for spirituality. By thus baring out her inner beliefs on her canvas, Raza uses it as metaphor for her own feminine consciousness.

SHARMEEN OBAID-CHINOY

Born in 1978 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy has garnered global acclaim for telling stories of human struggle and resilience; stories that are geared towards unshrouding systems of oppression – traditional and institutional – with the inequities that they perpetuate. Her goal is not to fixate on bleak realities but to seek opportunities for introspection.

Look But With Love, Chinoy's five-part documentary film series at KBI7, pioneered the use of Virtual Reality filmmaking in Pakistan. This immersive experience is Chinoy's direct response to the bleak cycles of alarming news about her country that she and other Pakistanis have grown accustomed to witnessing. She aspires to highlight and consequently prompt positive movements of change, even as she focuses on the very regions that either suffer the worst of repressive extremist ideologies, that struggle to preserve long-held creative traditions, or that have been most acutely estranged from life's bare necessities. The films in this series map Pakistan's cultural topography, underscore the challenges that communities in different regions face, and highlight those who are working with and within these communities to seek collective solutions for their contemporary challenges.

The immediacy of the VR experience, lends audiences a critical insight into unfamiliar spatial frameworks and social consciousnesses, stimulating them to question and reconsider persisting narratives about what they might otherwise presume as familiar realities of their own country. By making audiences privy to pathbreaking efforts to transform difficult

realities, Chinoy subtly provokes her audiences to reimagine their own social realities in creative and ultimately transformative ways.



Look But With Love, 2017

Five VR Films, 2k, Sphere 360, plays on mobile phones with a headset

Produced by SOC Films in collaboration with WITHIN & HERE BE DRAGONS

SONIA KHURANA

Born in 1968 in Saharanpur (India) | Lives and works in New Delhi (India)

Sonia Khurana works with lens-based media, moving image, performance, text, drawing, sound, and installation. Using the performative mode, Khurana structures the self through states of strangeness, alienation, displacement, interiority, and embodiment. Placing the body in an oblique relation to diffused feminist aesthetics of the counter-spectacle and performative resistance, she engages with persisting negotiations between body and language, and the self and the world. Through these deliberately poetic intimations, she explores and redefines the space of the political.

Of her video installation at KBI7, Khurana writes:

"The two-screen, silent video plays out aspects of a hand-held camera carried along a shoreline. Fixed one above the other, at the upper level, this appears as the shadow of my head and shoulders cast across shingle and muddy brown sand. Below, on the other screen, my lower body walks along various terrain. The discontinuity between upper and lower sequences splits the body into separated frames of time and location, exciting the need to combine and rejoin them, coupled with the knowledge that fractures do not repair easily. But even in this separation, there is belonging and unity, for this time is not historical; it is eternal; played out in the water's ebbs and flows, the grains of sand beneath my feet. My fragmented body experiences these landscapes distinctly. The journeying self rejects the need for a single whole."



I'm Tied to My Mother's Womb with A Very Long Chord, 1998
Two channel video installation
Colour; silent, 5:00 min (looped) Hi-8 transferred to SD

STEPHEN SHEEHAN

Born in 1986 in Birkenhead (UK) | Lives and works in Birkenhead (UK)

Stephen Sheehan's work reflects a whimsical fascination with ideas of human morality and behavioural tendencies. Acts of repetition and refrain are of particular interest to the artist, who predominantly works with film, performance, and video art. Sheehan showcased multiple works, including two performance pieces, *Playing Darts* for the biennale's opening ceremony at NJV School and *Throwing Nothing at a Stuffed Duck* at Frere Hall.

Parrot Reflection, which was on display at Frere Hall, is an idiosyncratically Sheehanisue comment on existence, morality, and the self. Sheehan created the film during a one-month residency at ALN in Albany, New York in 2016. In the film, Sheehan captures a moment in which a character wearing a hat (played by Sheehan) discovers his reflection in a mirror found lying in the snow. The film then proceeds to capture various characters, who find themselves in challenging conversations with their own physical reflections within an absurd alternative reality. Sheehan used Averill Park, a hamlet in rural New York, as the backdrop of his film, blending real life situations with performance, unifying fantasy and reality in his expression.

Cambrian Explosion: I Arrived at the Circus at Two Minutes Past Eight, on display at 63 Commissariat Lines, was Sheehan's specific creation for KB17. The work, completed during a one-month residency with Karachi's Vasl Artists' Association, references the Cambrian Explosion and the brief of 'sight' as its narrative and visual foundation. The Cambrian Explosion is a brief historical period,

wherein the fossil record cites the emergence and development of sight, enabling animal life to flourish. Sheehan transforms and places the Cambrian Explosion in modern day society while exploring and presenting the absurd, beautiful, fragile, and transient existence we find ourselves in.



Throwing Nothing at a Stuffed Duck, 2017
Performance



Cambrian Explosion: I Arrived at the Circus at Two Minutes Past Eight, 2017
Performance
Completed during Vasl Residency

SYED JAMAL SHAH

Born in 1956 in Quetta (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Islamabad (Pakistan)

Jamal Shah's ambitious project was on display at Bagh-e-Jinnah, a public park on the grounds of Frere Hall. The work consists of a 25-foot metallic cage with wings, which is surrounded by a number of life-size human figures, all crouched in the submissive *murgha* position (used as a punishment against non-conforming children).

The performance around the work featured poetry recitals by renowned media personalities; dances by Amna Mawaz and the NPAG group of PNCA; music by Sain Khawar; Ustad Hamid Shahid, and Sindhi Faqirs; and artists who were working on live paintings and graffiti. The work invited cross-disciplinary interactivity, engaging a public audience in an exchange that was simultaneously projected and recorded.

Of his own work, Shah writes:

"The work is a playful comment on the dichotomy of freedom, un-freedom, inviting interactivity, questions, and interpretations. Being based on the eternal paradox of the cage within, invisible cage, or the relativity of freedom and free will, the project wishes to initiate a dialogue on several levels. At one level, it is about subjugation, submission, and dehumanisation; on others, it reflects hope, dreams, and the human struggle for liberation and situations in life that might have encouraged human beings to engage with life intimately in a creative and critical manner thereby triggering evolution and change. It is also about the inborn need of humankind to connect despite ironies, absurdities, and

playfulness from ancient history to living cultures with aesthetic crossovers. *SITUATION 101* as an art activity also questions the essence of art as a vehicle for change and aesthetic decision-making. It is as much about the function of art as it is about the art as an object which is why it presents itself to be a non-museum work that seeks spontaneous interaction with people."



SITUATION 101, 2017

Sight-specific project of sculptural Installation involving 101 sculptures, performance, poetry, music and video projections

UMBERTO ZAMPINI

Born in 1958 in Occhiobello (Italy) | Lives and works in Venice (Italy)

Umberto Zampini is an artist, photographer, curator, publisher, clandestine traveller, and a Venetian. He has lived many years in various Italian, European, and US cities and towns. Before returning to Venice a few years ago, he lived among wolves and wild boars on top of a hill between Modena and Bologna. He travels incessantly, photographing through the Po Valley, but always avoids crossing the Ticino River.

Works from two of Zampini's photo-series, *Shift on a Plain* (2016) and *A Mile Around* (2014), were on display at KB17.

The first comprises photographs taken from a train window. Regarding this series, Zampini writes:

"Space designed by movement, signs that remain impressed in the traveller's memory. Those for whom the destination does not count, but whose final aim is the actual journey. The underlying interest is in the clear and distant time-spaces, and the sudden elusive and confused nearby apparitions within them. The calligraphies of speed hence provide new insightful perceptions into the apparent immobility of the plain where my grandparents lived... These photographs have been voluntarily printed on poster paper to maintain their window-like nature onto the world. They are two dimensional, almost immaterial openings in the walls that always surround us. Through them appear sudden trees, dusk, disappearing fields swallowed by the fast pace of our lives."

The second series comprises black-and-white photographs placed within small black boxes. The photographs were taken within a one-mile radius of the gallery in Modena, Italy where they were later exhibited. Zampini writes:

"Modena is a sunny and cheerful city where life is enjoyable. I dug deep into her inner fears and a darker city was drawn through my lens and came to life. People did not recognise the roads they had walked to come visit the exhibition. They did not know where the photos were taken; almost fearing to recognise their beloved city. I'm not a photo reporter: I use photography to paint what the eye does not see; the mind's eye."



Shift in a Plain (2016)
Photoseries



Journeys Taken 2014-2016 (Installation of 1095 Drawings), 2017
 Valchromat, transparency films, pen, acrylic sheet, SMD backlit
 23 x 1097 x 9 cm
 Courtesy the artist

WAJID ALI

Born in 1981 in Daharki (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Gujrat (Pakistan)

Wajid Ali's artistic practice derives from his passion in land travel and in roaming Pakistan's diverse regions in buses, trains, trucks and automobiles. His work often takes the viewer on a virtual voyage through his experiences. These experiences have led the artist to discover and immerse himself in new cultures and their modes of expression. In doing so, Ali establishes a novel dialogue between the audience, his own personal journeys, and the places to which he has travelled.

Ali's work for KBI7 constituted a series of lightboxes, which served as artistic travelogues depicting his wanderings from January 2014 to December 2016. The concept of an artistic travelogue has been a long-term project for Ali, which he began developing in 2009. Ali has marked – visually documented – his journeys in a diary every day ever since. In the three years over which he conceived this project, however, the artist produced a complex web of 1095 drawings. The final work then came together as a grand installation of 36 lightboxes, divided in three rows of 12 drawings, where each row represented the abstract complexity of the journeys he undertook in a separate calendar year. Describing his own project, Ali states that:

"Through lines and mark-making I have recreated journeys that have been taken by me over several years, on paths trodden a hundred times or sometimes only once. The continuity of the lines reflects time and space, taking the viewer on a trip through my personal experiences."

Claremont House



12CL Claremont Road, Civil Lines, Karachi
24.84433, 67.03329

Situated near the bustling train station of Karachi Cantonment, the Claremont House was built in August 1863. The Sindh Cultural Heritage Preservation Act of 1994 listed the building as a heritage site. National Foods Ltd. acquired the privately-owned residence, utilising the space as a corporate office, shifting its purpose and narrative with their move. Its restoration was spearheaded by architect and heritage consultant, Marvi Mazhar.

The architecture of this site, which has been constructed with Gizri limestone, a terracotta roof, and grey, yellow, and black floor tiles of geometric plant-like forms, is reminiscent of Karachi's colonial past.

ABDUL JABBAR GULL

Born in 1969 in Mirpurkhas (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Abdul Jabbar Gull wistfully recalls his early upbringing in Mirpurkhas and its formative influence on his artistry. Although the small city, situated in inland Sindh, was in Gull's view cut off from Pakistan's metropolitan art circuits and their practices, Gull cites a sign painter, who worked on portraits and calligraphy, as one of his earliest influences. Simply watching the sign painter served as motivation enough for Gull's early attempts at calligraphy and his inclination to sketch in schoolbooks endlessly. As an artist, Gull has undertaken many journeys – physical and intellectual. His work and themes reflect on the wonder and unpredictability of journeys, so he writes:

I have no conclusions. My work speaks of the mysteries and ambiguities faced in the process of life and discovery.

Upon pursuing a formal art education at the National College of Arts, Gull recalls how his knowledge and interests diversified, affording him space to explore various disciplines. Sculpture became a preferred mode of expression for its ability to, as he says, “develop [his] senses and increase [his] awareness of the world.” As a sculptor, he was experiencing his surroundings more consciously and shaping radically new perspectives about its goings on. Wood and metal became the sympathetic mediums through which the artist explored numerous questions arising from the vicissitudes of his life.

Of his work at KBI7, Gull writes:

“My work is a comment on wars and

destructions going on in the world; wars that I have witnessed over the years or that I have read about in history books. On one side of the balance, we have primitive weapons mixed with hi-tech missiles. Whereas, the other side carries innocent souls as symbolised by birds. Unfortunately, the destructive tools weigh heavier than souls.”

Gull's work thus engages audiences in a dialogue about the invisible psychological and moral damages conflict wreaks on our consciousness. People no longer seem able or interested in reacting to or responding to the barrage of information which we are made privy to, no matter how unsettling or alarming. Beholders of Gull's pieces are thus forced to ponder just how immune and dehumanised we have become with the tides of our time, to think about how readily we reconcile with concepts like collateral damage, and possibly resist this urge to numb ourselves in the face of enduring conflict and destruction.



Ordinary Souls, 2017
Wood, brass and aluminium
167 cm high
Courtesy the artist

AFSHAR MALIK

Born in 1955 in Bahawalpur (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Afshar Malik's capricious, jewel-toned paintings exhibit elements of re-assemblage and collage. Figurative imagery amalgamates and juxtaposes to create rich, fantastical narratives. Humour, nostalgia, and tragedy can simultaneously be read through Malik's work. The artist is recognised for utilising a diverse variety of techniques and art forms within his oeuvre, creating flamboyant, dreamlike visuals that appear to illustrate another world.

Of his work, *Far Away Now*, on display at KBI7, the artist states:

"Once, we began to say what we knew and write our own histories of the lives we were living. Coming of age, as it were, at 40, we walked up and down, negotiated and redefined our preferred ascents and descents of life. History was written right there and then, on the same page, with invisible inks of memory and anticipation – everything, like scales, numbers, erased or unscratched stories from the past and future, road maps, mediums, and their methods of practice. History appeared like a photograph, a mirror, or a flower in our hands, telling one's own self a story and writing the sounds from the past. Life is always on the move to varied ascents – or descents – every second, every moment. One 'falls' down and follows one's own descent. The age of realisation is marked – one has to choose, walk down the hill to where one started, back to the waters and be a fire to warm it. 'I'm the eyes,' she said once....and said, 'we live, we fight to survive and keep the very true instinct in us alive so as to keep the blood warm in our veins'. This is about those people who

dared to think and took pride in becoming and being – lone fighters, combating in the battlefield of life or fighting the war against dying. They also believed in their core that the war was not meant to be won or lost – it was the struggle which made them go on and gave them strength. To live and breathe, to sing a song while making a mark with a stitch, a non-ending thread, twisting and turning to form a living pattern. A thread holds a needle, weaves their tears, and gives moisture to a dry cloth."



Far Away Now, 2017
Oil and acrylic on canvas
168 x 137 cm

AISHA ABID HUSSAIN

Born in 1980 in Peshawar (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Marriage is touted as the equivalent of wellbeing and success in several South Asian traditions. While Aisha Abid Hussain's series of photographs *Two Not Together* might appear like the ordinary nuptial images at first glance, subsequent viewings reveal the artist's audacious protest against the ritualistic sanctity of this gendered tradition. Finding references and inspiration in her family's photo archives, Hussain imbues her images with the satirical air of pseudo-nostalgia.

In addition to capturing the flashy iridescence of an occasion that is almost inevitably too extravagant for hosts to afford, Hussain draws attention to the event's skewed gender and power dynamics. The inequities of the betrothal – far less a union of two individuals than a familial transaction – are dramatised in Hussain's decision to use the same woman as the so-called 'bride' and 'groom.' Attire, gesture, and stance serve as ultimate gender signifiers with these images embodying the stark psychosocial contrasts between two parties to the same marriage. Hussain subversively exposes the institution's rigid oppressiveness, especially with its implications for the bride, who must celebrate and honour her surrender to an oft stifling commitment.

Hussain's art practice is profoundly rooted in research. She is fascinated with histories relating to her personal experiences and beyond. Her intellectual inclinations inform her creative process as she persistently excavates archival documents, scripts, photographs, and texts for visual interpretation. While her training as a miniaturist has influenced certain

techniques and aesthetic sensibilities found in her work, she vacillates between this acquired tradition and contemporary media, perhaps as a statement of her personal ambition of exploring and safeguarding such narratives from being lost in the woodworks of history and contemporary human memory.



Two Not Together, 2014
Archival print on Hahnemuhle photo rag
83.82 × 59.69 cm



Untitled, 2017
Oil on fiberglass
Dimensions variable

EHSAN MEMON

Born in 1989 in Larkana (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Ehsan Memon's sculpture-based art practice toys with perception and notions of reality, manifesting itself in his work with the hyper-realistic re-creation of objects as souvenirs from personal narratives. An integral component of Memon's work is its interaction with the viewer: Its aesthetic verisimilitude deceives the viewer, subverting perceptions of reality, and in so doing, visually mimics the duplicitous facets of human behaviour.

The artist applies his practice of veristically replicating the form of objects to types of local flatbreads, creating a multitude of these convincing panary imitations with painted fibreglass, in his untitled sculptural installation for KBI7. The realisation of the artist's work brings to mind the reputed verisimilitude of Myron's bronze Heifer, memorialised by dozens of epigrams in *The Greek Anthology*, one of which, written by Dioskorides, proclaims: "O, bull, in vain you mount this heifer, for it is lifeless. The sculptor of cows, Myron, has deceived you." The illusion of veracity imbued within Memon's sculptures provides a commentary on superficiality and deception in our society; simultaneously a representation of the ability of the human eye to be deceived by appearance and the reality of deceit as an aspect of human behaviour.



Kedgereee, 2014

Publication, found photographs of colonial tiger hunts, abused
ceramics, paint/stains/pigments, wood, ink on paper
Dimensions variable

FAZAL RIZVI

Born in 1987 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Fazal Rizvi's practice began as an intensely personal investigation of changing familial relationships within the framework of the discovery and articulation of sexuality. Later, it expanded to incorporate the use of outwardly disparate socio-political, cultural, and historical events in order to draw parallels and highlight disjuncture. Rizvi is engaged with the vocabulary of loss and absence, difference and dislocation, within the sphere of an increasingly open-ended approach spanning a variety of technical methodologies. His work initiates a dialogue that is intimate, yet also pluralistic, questioning notions of identity, memory, and erasure.

The exegesis of Rizvi's work for KBI 7, *Kedgereee*, lies in the artist's introspective investigation into his formative years, from a linguistic standpoint. Beginning as an exploration of language politics within his own trajectory, based on his predominantly Urdu-speaking familial background, the work transcends Rizvi's individual concern, becoming a collection of visual metaphors, which delineate the role that language plays in establishing and preserving class-divides. Displaying his multidisciplinary approach, Rizvi utilises a variety of media as component parts within a minimalist aesthetic framework to play with the notions of exclusion, division, accessibility, and social mobility that are inherent within the landscape of a post-colonial society, through the scope of their linguistic manifestations.



The Beautiful Beast, 2009

Video and sound installation projected on a bed of sesame seeds, 4:38
(looped) © Goddy Leye

Courtesy of the artist's estate and Galerie Peter Hermann, Lomé, Togo

GODDY LEYE

1965 (Mbouda, Cameroon) - 2011 (Bonendale, Cameroon)
Lived and worked in Bonendale (Cameroon)

Curated by SPARCK

Goddy Leye's oeuvre engages with themes of memory, myth, and mythologies embedded within the postcolonial African landscape. Memories are recognized as subjective, constructed spaces by the artist, modified to harmonise within and perpetuate a fabricated social narrative. Leye forms a critical interrogation of the politics of historical representation through his practice, drawing connections between images and cross examining the deceptive transmission of fact and knowledge.

Leye's iconic video, *The Beautiful Beast*, was on view at KBI 7. In it, a man writhes on the ground against a pixelated field. We know nothing of him, save that he seems in pain. Or might he be grinning? The image is violently disturbing. Overhead, coming in waves, is a soundscape: Fritz Lang's 1927 masterpiece, "M." A Hitlerian voice battles with another; a voice of reason and demand: a demand that the man on the ground be treated with care or perhaps, simply, with basic human sympathy. We will never know which voice wins out.



Mom & Me, 2017
Stop-motion animation, 4:10 min
Courtesy the artist

HAMIDA KHATRI

Born in 1985 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Baltimore (USA)

Especially within a Pakistani context, women's bodies, stripped down to their physicality, are regarded as vexatious and burdensome articles to be supervised, handled, and manipulated. Their autonomy is often denied within both private and public spheres, leading to a fracturing of identity, liberty, and desire. Through figurative drawings, puppetry, and animation, Hamida Khatri probes and scrutinises this cultural oppression and the detrimental psychological and physiological transformations female bodies undergo as a result. Recognising the indelible costs of experiencing violence, Khatri's work pays homage to women and their relentless spirits.

Khatri's current body of work pays homage to her mother, who has always supported her dream of having an independent life. *Mom & Me*, a 'witnessing' stop-motion animation, portrays the familiarisation of the routine tasks she executes every day being in a foreign land away from her mother. The screenshot montage on view at KBI 7 is a documentation of her conversations with her mother — living in Karachi, Pakistan — over the phone while she was in the U.S.

HAN SEOK HYUN

Born in 1975 in Seoul (South Korea) | Lives and works between Seoul and Berlin (Germany)

Han Seok Hyun interacts and communicates with artificial nature and its absurd, imitative nature. A critical awareness of Mother Nature and the environment has undergirded his pursuit for fusions between creative construction and ecological practice. Through works that amalgamate explorations between social science, art, and ecological engineering, Hyun develops fully-fledged art-making projects that expand our concept of “artificial nature,” as it manifests itself in such forms as urban gardens and backyards.

In the installation *Super-Natural*, on view at KB17, Han created an undulating landscape of mass-produced green products that he sourced locally. He writes:

It is, of course, no coincidence that so many companies use the colour green to package allegedly healthy goods; marketers associate it with harmony and peace, growth, luck, and energy. The title *Super-Natural*, a nod to the supermarkets in which these products are sold and to the elevated properties they are claimed to possess, reminds us that these products may be greener in colour than in substance. Green hues are often used to make unhealthy products seem more acceptable to impressionable shoppers, and words like natural and healthy have little or no correlation to a product's contents or to the practices used to produce them.



Super-Natural: The Borrowed Landscape, 2016
Installation with mass-produced green-coloured products
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

HEBA Y. AMIN

Born in 1980 in Cairo (Egypt) | Lives and works in Berlin (Germany)

Heba Y. Amin probes the complex, political interrelationships between infrastructure, technology, and construction. Her research-intensive practice looks towards contested territories and their narratives and examines the influence of forced architectural spaces on the human psyche.

Amin writes of her video on view at KB17:

“On January 27th, 2011 Egyptian authorities succeeded in shutting down the country's international Internet access points in response to growing protests. Over one weekend, a group of programmers developed a platform called Speak2Tweet that would allow Egyptians to post their breaking news on Twitter via voicemail despite Internet cuts. The result was thousands of heartfelt messages from Egyptians recording their emotions by phone. A few years later the messages are no longer accessible to the public. Speak2Tweet composed a unique archive of the collective psyche; as the voices disappeared in the depths of cyberspace, this project brings forth the unique narratives and, in turn, connects them once again to the physical realm. Project Speak2Tweet is both a research project and a growing archive of experimental films that utilises Speak2Tweet messages prior to the fall of the Mubarak regime on February 11, 2011 and juxtaposes them with the abandoned structures that represent the long-lasting effects of a corrupt dictatorship. The project interrogates the re-imagining of the urban myth, of visualising the city from the 'personal' perspective through the highly problematic constructs of (un)

democratic tools. It explores the emergence of the imagined city from internal monologues and investigates historical narratives via glitches in digital memory. Through the multi-layered spatial relationships, the project attempts to portray the psychology of the urban realm. As the visual archive grows, Project Speak2Tweet changes and transforms into an altered space that mimics the hallucination of the inner voice.”



My Love for You, Egypt, Increases by the Day from Project Speak2Tweet, 2011
Video, 6:18 min
Courtesy the artist

HEIDE HATRY

Born in 1965 in Sindelfingen (Germany) | Lives and works in New York (USA)

New York-based German artist, Heide Hatry is best known for her body-related performances and her work employing animal flesh and organs. She is often described as a neo-conceptualist and, to the extent that the “space” in which her work operates ,transcends, transgresses, or transforms the normal relationship of artist to both audience and work, this is accurate – her work does not reside in the pictorial plane, the sculptural space, or filmic time. Among her fundamental preoccupations are identity, gender roles (specifically what it means to be a woman), the nature of aesthetic experience and the meaning of beauty, the effects of knowledge upon perception, the human exploitation of the natural world, and the social oblivion that permits atrocity to persist in our midst.

The portraits from Hatry’s series *Heads and Tales*, on view at KB17, are startling, photographic documentations of sculptures addressing issues of brutality, death, and gender identity. Published within a book, the portraits were accompanied by fantastical, poignant narratives, fraught with meaning, from a variety of female writers invited by Hatry. Despite the tales accompanying the portraits, it is easy to read meaning within the details. Sexual, physical, and psychological violence permeates the essence of the images. The play of light and shadow, the dishevelled hair, the expressions, desolate, yet pregnant with feeling, all contribute to a universal narrative that encompasses the collective trauma faced by women.



Jennifer, 2008
Silver Halide C-Print
50 x 70 cm
Courtesy the artist

IRFAN HASAN

Born in 1982 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

An intimate amalgamation of cultural and aesthetic influences from the Eastern and Western worlds manifests in Irfan Hasan's oeuvre through content, medium, and form. This fusion, birthed through the artist's training in traditional miniature painting alongside the study of European Renaissance and Neoclassical masters, results in figurative investigations of lush, Western-classical bodies through neo-miniature painting. The languid forms engage in a series of culturally significant practices and postures, both local and foreign, exploring themes of identity, boundaries, and sociocultural reality.

In the artist's words:

"My works pay homage to the portraiture of the European masters and the practice of stylisation within Indo-Persian miniature painting; a personal synthesis of aspects of classical portraiture and miniature painting."

Hasan's painting for KB17, *Holy Man*, epitomises his artistic practice. His work is a tribute to Abu'l Hasan Khan Ghaffari Kashani, commonly known as Sani-ol-Molk, one of the master watercolourists in the Qajar court in Iran. In his emulation of Sani-ol-Molk's works, Hasan has utilised a traditional technique of miniature painting; hand-ground opaque watercolour and gouache on Wasli paper. The subject of Hasan's portrait is represented in profile and naturalistically, forcibly recalling the portraiture of Italian Renaissance artist, Piero della Francesca. This reveals *Holy Man* as an intersection of artistic historical influences, synthesised by Hasan as the contemporary

mediator. Indeed, it is a fitting homage to Sani-ol-Molk, who himself spent four years in Italy, studying the works of Italian masters, before returning to the Shah's court.

Hasan's performative painting, *Self-portrait*, was part of the KB17 opening ceremony at NJV School.



Holy Man, 2017
Opaque watercolour on paper
102 x 152 cm
Courtesy the artist



Ghosts, 2017
Archival prints on metal
244 x 30 cm
Courtesy the artist

JAMIL DEHLAVI

Born in Calcutta (India) | Lives and works between Karachi
(Pakistan) and London (UK)

Radical, independent filmmaker Jamil Dehlavi probes Pakistan's tumultuous sociopolitical and cultural fabric, encapsulating the nation's sinister, indignant, and wistful narratives within his projects. The artist's films – explicit, provocative, and transgressive – have been banned within the country on numerous occasions. Narratives of militarised tyranny, sexuality, religion, and political satire remain in perpetual discord with the nation's austere conservatism, resulting in aggressive censorship and suppression. Despite this, Dehlavi maintains a resilient commitment to his beliefs, winning critical acclaim and recognition within the cinema industry.

Dehlavi writes of *Ghosts*, which he made for KBI7:

"My work for the Biennale is a series of images extracted from 8mm film which my father shot in the 50s. The footage deteriorated over the years and I managed to salvage some frames which capture a sense of memory through fading and disintegrating images. These works are suggestive of the presence of absence and the fragility of life, evoking memories which are both personal and collective."



Boxing, 2009
Photographic print, performance
176 x 366 cm
Courtesy the artist

LI WEI

Born in 1970 in Hubei (China) | Lives and works in Beijing (China)

Li Wei's artistic practice is a dynamic amalgamation of performance art and photography. Using acrobatics, props, cranes, and wires, the artist surprises the viewer with dramatic, often amusing, performance installations that depict him in photographs in gravity-defying situations, giving the impression of flight.

One of the photographs selected for KB17, *Boxing*, embodies Wei's artistic practice, depicting the artist (himself) falling from a skyscraper in Beijing during an apparent bout with another figure. The timing and composition are immaculate. The artist is seen at the point of the punch's impact, an act of violence, falling backwards off an edificial precipice, the bottom of which, neither the artist nor the audience can see, imbuing the photograph with fear and danger. Wei's matching chequered costume blends in with the surrounding buildings, confirming the reality of this danger by implying that he will soon dissolve within the architecture. The fact that the artist's work is not a computer edited illusion, but a partially performative piece, forcibly provokes the viewer's instinctive reactions and subverts the justified cynicism that pervades our perception of photographic media in contemporary society.

A series of Wei's photographs were on view at NJV School as well.

MALALA ANDRIALAVIDRAZANA

Born in 1971 in (Madagascar) | Lives and practices in Paris (France)

Curated by SPARCK

By way of the photographic medium, Malala Andrialavidrazana's practice interrogates barriers and interactions within cross-cultural contexts, thoughtfully shifting between private spaces and global considerations to explore social imaginaries. Based on extensive in-situ as well as bibliographic and archival research, her visual compositions unleash the possibility of alternative forms of storytelling and history-making.

Andrialavidrazana's recent series of works, titled *Figures*, was on display at KBI7. Within the installation, the works are shown as large-scale projections. This is unusual; typically, they are displayed as physical prints over one meter in height. Overlays of 19th and 20th century maps, bank notes, and stamps – cut, reshaped and rethought by the artist – give rise to novel cartographies that speak narratives of truth and power. Individually, and as a unit, the resulting works highlight falsehoods inherent in the colonising powers' claim to objective and rational "knowledge" – to the North's (ongoing) deployment of science as a weapon in the subjugation of peoples and territories. Clichés and misconceptions are at once subtly and incisively brought to the fore, as are fundamental misunderstandings about how maps function and to what end. The resulting works demand audiences to (re)consider their positions, not only as subjects gazing at a work of art but, as actors in the forging of a world ridden with the violence of power relations.



Figures 1853, Kolonien in Afrika und in der Süd-See, 2016
Pigment Print on Hahnemühle Cotton Rag, 110 x 151.5 cm
© Malala Andrialavidrazana
Courtesy of the artist, 50 Golborne – London, Afronova –
Johannesburg, C-Gallery – Milan, Kehrer – Berlin



Dying Inayat, 2016
Video animation
Courtesy the artist

MUHAMMAD ARSLAN FAROOQI

Born in 1992 in Faisalabad (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Arslan Farooqi breathes life into the frozen, radiant landscapes of traditional, Indo-Pak miniature paintings and their fictional and historical inhabitants. The painstaking disruption of staticity within motionless spaces is achieved through contemporary animation. The elaborate topographies, now in motion, exhibit a surreal musicality, acting as living, breathing maps where retraced histories intersect with contemporary cultural narratives. The moving characters seem almost bewitched; historical ghosts come to life.

Farooqi's series of works for KB17 translates Mughal miniature paintings into a series of digital animations, and one accompanying, life-size sculpture. The artist's intention was to identify the tone and trajectories of action within motionless artworks and then reanimate them in an aesthetic style reminiscent of Italian 'Commedia dell'arte' puppetry. In doing so, Farooqi heightens the emotional response of the spectator to the work, almost as if the viewer has been transported back in history, to when these works were created, reimagining the elevated impact that each painting would have had on its audience.



No, 2012
 2 channel video installation, 4:19 min
 Commissioned by the Liverpool Biennial 2012
 Co-produced by the Kamel Lazaar Foundation
 Courtesy the artist and Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai

NADIA KAABI-LINKE

Born in 1978 in Tunis (Tunisia) | Lives and works in Berlin (Germany)

A personal history of migration across cultures and borders has greatly influenced Nadia Kaabi-Linke's artistic practice. Her work gives physical presence to that which tends to remain invisible, be it people, structures, or the geopolitical forces that shape them. Using a variety of materials and methods, the artist often works in-situ on projects that relate directly to their exhibition sites.

Border crossings of many kinds, European and North African, Islamic and Christian, East and West Berlin, have often served as the impetus for Kaabi-Linke's endeavours. In *No* (2012), on view at KB17, she reflects on the absurd difficulties of her own application as a Tunisian for entry into the United Kingdom for the purpose of delivering a lecture. A pair of disembodied lips recite the accusatory questions found on British visa application forms, as a crowd of churchgoers violently oppose the authoritative voice in unison.

Also on view at KB17 was Kaabi-Linke's performance entitled *Healing*, done in collaboration with Karachi-based artist Samina Islam at the IVS Gallery. The work involves stitching, text, jasmine flowers, and their perpetual upkeep.

OMER WASIM

Born in 1988 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Omer Wasim's practice is anchored around the subversive potential of queerness, which he applies to urban and developmental milieus, as well as their effects on and interactions with, nature. His work aims to undermine conventional and hegemonic perceptions/representations of desire in the ever-changing landscape of Karachi, while attempting to reveal that which remains hidden from public imaginary. While employing minimal aesthetics, the work invokes queer narratives to critique power, development, and its ravages on the environment.

Of his installation for KBI7, Wasim writes:

"My work bears witness to two lovers who fall in and out of love by the Indian Ocean — with broader implications for my relationship with Karachi, family histories, and our collective relationship with the ocean and its ever-shifting boundaries. The work was made using relics of companionship and what happens when these come in contact with the ocean. The onlooker, for example, witnesses how the ocean changes the hue of fabrics, and how metal reacts when it comes in contact with seawater. I am interested in exploring the material possibilities that come with living and making work in Karachi. Karachi has been a recurring geographical point of arrival and departure in my life, both conceptually and historically—it is a place that I am bound to in perpetuity. However, my relationship with Karachi is contentious at best. Are there ways to address, disrupt, revisit, and perhaps rewrite these relationships?"



Props from an Unrealised Play, 2015-17

Metal, shirts, concrete planter, soil, Cestrum Nocturnum, water, pencil on paper, wood, glass, concrete, 175 pounds of nails, sea water, archival prints, fabric, glass bottles, sea salt, sand, and rust
Dimensions: variable

ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO

Born in 1990 in Damascus (Syria) | Lives and works in San Francisco (USA)

Violence, colonialism, and historical prejudice shape and construct the notion of identity. Through fear, intimidation, and indoctrination, we subconsciously fracture our selfhood. Artist, curator, and drag performer, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto examines the anxious crossroads where Islam intersects with homosexuality and the politics of gender. His performative and visual works challenge and contest the pre-coded, cultural perceptions of both masculinity and the Muslim identity.

In the works from the series *Mussalmaan Musclemen*, on view at KBI7, the images have been taken from a translation of a book supposedly written by Arnold Schwarzenegger, muscleman icon, actor, and former governor of California. There is no original English version as the book is a pirated mishmash of various books. This kaleidoscope of exercise manuals, the Urdu translation, and accompanying images of what appear to be white or white-passing men projects this book into a world of its own creation, existing neither completely in the East nor in the West. Rather, it occupies a liminal space. Bhutto explored this liminality by feminising an otherwise ultra-masculine conversation. The artist scanned and printed these pages onto cotton fabric, blown up several times the size of the original; he then intervened by replacing hard muscle with soft flowery fabric and brightly coloured embroidery thread, utilising feminine practice to reveal the softness behind the muscle. The artist sought to create his own version of masculinity, making new men out of old ones and satirising the very serious and robust pride behind bodybuilding by inserting elements of humour and playfulness into it.



Pao, 2016

Archival inkjet prints on cotton fabric, embroidery thread, polyester fabric, satin backing

Courtesy the artist

Mahvash & Jahangir Siddiqui Art Gallery, Alliance Française



*Plot/St-1, Block 8, Kehkashan, Karachi 75600
24.83313, 67.03659*

The Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui Art Gallery is located within the Alliance Française, a thriving, non-profit organisation that has dedicated itself to preserving and promoting francophone culture and shaping intercultural dialogue since 1954. The space of the gallery has been repurposed and renovated with help from philanthropists, Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui, after whom it is now named. Since its launch, this gallery, which has hosted a spectrum of exhibitions, performances, and workshops, including many of the Biennale's collateral events, has become a thriving hub of art-activity and engagement through the arts.

AFFAN BAGHPATI SYED ARSAL HASAN

Live and work in Karachi (Pakistan)

Aasaih-e-Manzil, Affan Baghpati's (born in 1991, Karachi, Pakistan) and Syed Aarsal Hasan's (born in 1989, Karachi, Pakistan) visual interpretation of Faiz Ahmad Faiz's immortal verses in *Do Ishq* (Two Loves), brings together a motley of abandoned objects to represent the elusive ideological 'motherland' of the poet's yearning.

Baghpati's practice is concerned with re-contextualising discarded domestic objects into the artistic sphere and identifying their notional value through design, functionality, and structural and aesthetic form.

Hasan's practice draws inspiration from Faiz and Mirza Ghalib's verses. He employs them as a lens to examine South Asian culture from a structuralist perspective. Hasan deliberately works with a malleable visual vocabulary, affording him the liberty to seamlessly transition between film, theatre, and art.

Together the artists have transposed notions of cultural instability, displacement, and loss from Faiz's verses into their installation. Objects have been composed and arranged as an aesthetic imitation of Faiz's poetic structure. The distinctive pieces of their selection amalgamate to evoke imagery from a past, lost to the active consciousness. Viewers thus find themselves transported to the contemplative and poignant, nonetheless paradoxical, space of forgotten memory.



Aasaih-e-Manzil, 2017
Found objects, furniture
Dimensions variable



Fairytale, 2017
Performance
20 min

AMY KINGSMILL

Born in 1991 in London (UK) | Lives and works in London (UK)

A London-based performance artist, Amy Kingsmill employs visually disarming pain-based ritualistic performance pieces and pieces that use costumes as body-installations to deliver potent commentaries on habitual societal mores. Since graduating from Central Saint Martin's in 2013, she has performed at Spill Festival of Performance (2014), Franko B's *Untouchables*, and recently presented a collaborative work, *Tender Blood*, with Sheree Rose.

Kingsmill creates her own mythology through performance, drawing upon her own internal cast of characters or using performance to push her body through self-designed rituals. Of her performance on view for KB17, she writes:

"*Fairytale* draws upon a romanticisation of relationships, how we can write our own fairy tales within them and the reality of these fables may be purely based on your own dedication to this narrative. I reflect upon what we can sacrifice for our relationships to sustain them or the fantasy of them and the dependency resultant from this. The flowers after the performance will be kept on display on a plinth."



Dekhna manaa hai, 2009

Lenticular prints
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

FARIDA BATOOL

Born in 1970 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Visual artist and researcher, Farida Batool's works captures people's conflicting emotions when they estrange themselves from their country and home. While her pieces serve as metaphors of political upheaval, reflecting the fear and sense of domination from which many people living in Pakistan suffer; they also highlight the non-resident Pakistani's guilt and nostalgia as someone who no longer experiences the realities of being Pakistani. Batool explores, negotiates, and then projects such psychological conflict using lenticular prints and three-dimensional holographs.

The artist, who had two lenticular prints on view at KBI7, used the duality of her surface to manipulate visual perception and portray contrasting realities. Superimposed lenticular images offer a fluid spectrum from coalescence to complete separation, controlled by every slight shift in the viewer's vantage point.

Batool has explored the dilemmas and persistent personal negotiations that are part of the social and political realities of being Pakistani with a novel visual nuance and poetry. Her images are related through notions of memory and history; they stand as metaphors of recollection, erasure, and moving time. Each image captures a different moment of time, with the first being partially erased but also partially constitutive of the latter; whenever the viewer shifts their gaze.



Witness Club, 2017
Video, 8:30 min
Courtesy the artist

FEDERICO NERO

Born in 1977 in Padua (Italy) | Lives and works in Milan and Venice (Italy)

Curated by Paolo De Grandis

Italian video and visual artist, Federico Nero's photographs and installations are born out of ongoing research between the inner and outer world, between religion and science, and between philosophy and history. After attending the Institute of Photography and Visual Art of Padua, where he later became a professor, Nero gained early recognition for his brilliance as one of the most talented young Italians working in the 'creative image' field at Macintosh Quadra 700. Nero's dedicated passion for innovation and appreciation for shared ideas have led him to collaborate with several individuals including artist, Michael Lin in Shanghai; director, Pedro Almodovar in Madrid; and sculptor, Adolfo Barnatan.

Taking on the theme of KB17, Nero throws a direct gaze at his generation. As he explains: "We occidentals, passive and blind, sons of superficiality and ego, simply don't see." In his video, an open-air party near a water purification plant starts while faraway noises of shooting, helicopters, and bombings grow ever near: "The world falls apart and we dance," says the artist

GUILLAUME ROBERT

Born in 1975 in Nantes (France) | Lives and works in Hotonnes (France)

Points of View draws on Guillaume Robert's inclination to sidestep regulation in the pursuit of stories and objects, reflecting on conditions that shape human experience – language, history, politics, science, architecture, representation, and perception. The filmic appearance of his projects fluctuates between documentary and dreamlike narrative, varying between humanist tales and magic realism. During the Algerian civil war, the military, public services, and private companies built several lookout points and watchtowers around their premises. Robert, who was interested in the transversal shape of these wartime structures, surreptitiously photographed them so that he could render them into technical drawings and architectural plans. This amalgam of 10 architectural renderings, titled *Points of View*, and a video, titled *Drina*, came together as Robert's work on view at the gallery in Alliance Française.

Elements of Robert's other site-specific work, *Up to the Big Eye*, could be found at different points in Alliance Française, from which he generated a video using drone footage. Describing this video, on view at NJV School, Robert wrote:

"The size of the letters allows them to be seen from the sky. While entering, spectators can see the inscription UPTO in the yard. The roof will remain inaccessible to them.

This project is directly generated by the way I began to explore Karachi: using Google Earth to discover the city, its streets, houses, playgrounds, parks, harbours, swimming pools, rivers, etc. Using this kind of discovering

technology gives you a strange feeling of proximity towards an object you haven't directly experienced or put an eye on yet. The Big Eye relates to any kind of witness from the sky: a satellite, as I experimented with Google Earth, a drone as the video experiments it, or more poetically, the moon, angels, God... However, this intervention does not forget the specific context of recent Pakistani history, which has watched witnesses transformed into hunters; US killers coming from the sky, responsible of extra-legal raids, jeopardising the existence of whoever enters in the halo of its field of view."



Up to the Big Eye, 2017
Video installation, 3 min



Drina, 2012
HD video, stereo, 22:30 min
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Françoise Besson, Lyon



Clifton Bridge Is Falling Down, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
152 x 305 cm
Courtesy the artist

MOEEN FARUQI

Born in 1958 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Artist and poet, Moeen Faruqi's work captures the everyday alienation of modernity, and serves as an existential investigation of contemporary urbanity. Feelings of estrangement and separation, which result from the relentless forces of globalisation and international uniformity, are his fundamental premises. Primarily narrative in nature, his thoughts find their voice in figures who confront the viewer; almost as if they are pleading for relief from dysfunctional relationships and artificial interactions. As such, the actors in the most bizarre theatres of his canvas are there to provoke introspective responses from their audience. His technical practice reveals a profound fascination, almost a primitive enjoyment, with the creative process of painting a surface and in manipulating and cajoling the flow of paint on a plane to explore new directions and avenues.

Faruqi's diptych for KB17, *Clifton Bridge Is Falling Down*, represents a stylistic transition from his narrative work to a concern with forms and experiments in abstraction. The figures in the work are part of schematic colour fields, symbolising the dispossession of individuality and destruction of selfhood in a contemporary metropolis. Commenting on the new artistic direction displayed in his work, Faruqi states:

"It is almost as if the figures have become part of the background, or a part of the larger scheme of fragmented blocks of colour. The idea is to fabricate and present a new imagery, but also to reduce characters in the painting to mere forms, not personalities."

Although it departs from his previous work aesthetically, *Clifton Bridge Is Falling Down* conforms to Faruqi's general focus on urban existentialism and his penchant for perpetual experiments within the medium of painting.

RABBYA NASEER

Born in 1984 in Rawalpindi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Rabbya Naseer is a Lahore-based artist, curator, writer, critic, and teacher. Her practice is broadly concerned with exploring the parallels between art and everyday life and with highlighting their similarities in production, representation, reception, and interpretation. She views herself as a facilitator in the realm of cultural production, orchestrating situations of discourse and reciprocity through a variety of mediums and disciplines. Her work examines the ways in which commonplace encounters can spur the process of artistic creation.

Naseer's video work for KBI7 is part of her ongoing project, which aims to develop an archive of Pakistani performance art. Her project investigates the many unique aspects and challenges found within the discipline of performative art. The ephemeral nature of a performance piece entails a necessity for photographic or video documentation, yet this residual evidence can never appropriately capture the experiential and sensory nature of the work for members of the audience. Neither can this documentation fully describe the context of the performance, with time and space being essential aspects in its realisation. Without the compilation of these recordings in an archive, however, the only remaining testimony of the work, which must ideally transpire in mandatory ekphrasis, comes from the highly subjective perspective of the viewers and the artist themselves. The project thus examines the divergent, often oppositional aspects that constitute a performative piece of art. Explaining the thematic relevance of her project for KBI7, Naseer states:

aligned with the subject of my project. It's a perfect setting to share a few works through a form that aims to explore the role of the 'witness' in relation to performance art."



Witness, 2017
Video, 42:31 min

"The Karachi Biennale's theme is closely

SHAHZIA SIKANDER

Born in 1969 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works between New York (USA) and Seville (Spain)

Winner of the KBI7 Shahneela and Farhan Faruqi Popular Choice Art Prize

Shahzia Sikander's pioneering practice has taken Indo-Persian miniature painting as its point of departure. The artist has attained global recognition for producing dazzling spectacles that defy strict medium-based restrictions and tropes of miniature painting with their novel use of scale, technology, and media. Sikander's process involves artistic collaborations and diverse media, including animation, videos, and murals. Her approach, which elicited a resurgence of interest in miniature painting among students at the National College of Arts in Lahore, foregrounds new possibilities for the ways in which artists can spur an exchange and dialogue between tradition and technology. This approach is informed by Sikander's own intellectual interest in investigating and complicating contested cultural narratives and political histories.

Disruption as Rapture, which was on display at KBI7, is a 4K single-channel video animation with original music by the Pulitzer-Prize winning composer Du Yun, featuring vocals by Ali Sethi. The work was born from selected folios of the 18th century *Gulshan-i-Ishq* manuscript and is permanently installed in the South Asian Galleries of the Philadelphia Art Museum.

The *Gulshan-i-Ishq* or the Garden of Love, an epic allegorical poem, was written sometime between 1657 to 1658 by Nusrati, court poet to Sultan Ali Adil Shah II of Bijapur. The poem, which is also written in Deccani Urdu and Persian Naskh script, the language of the Muslim elite in South and Central India, is a North Indian Hindu love story recast as a Sufi tale for an Islamic court. The story is a classic tale of star-crossed lovers who face many

challenges and a painful separation before they can unite. The poet recounts this tale of connection, separation, longing, and the final union of lovers by creating a world suffused with lush gardens and magical beings; the love story emerges as a metaphor for a soul's search for and connection with the divine.

Sikander's work calls into question the philosophical and the political, with the unfolding of a narrative based on shifting migratory patterns, interactions, cultural quarantine, autonomous verbal and poetic languages, and the quest for the sacred in the personal.



Disruption as Rapture, 2016
HD video animation with 7.1 surround sound, 10:07 min
Music by Du Yun featuring Ali Sethi
Commissioned by the Philadelphia Museum of Art for the Permanent South Asian Galleries



Notice Board, 2017
Oil on canvas
91 x 91 cm
Courtesy the artist

SHAKEEL SIDDIQUI

Born in 1951 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Died in 2018 in Karachi (Pakistan)
Lived and worked in Karachi (Pakistan)

Shakeel Siddiqui observed, commented, and emoted in the language of hyperrealism. The artist mastered his technique to the degree of photographic flawlessness and stood apart for an obstinate commitment to his style. Although the style enjoyed less attention than the growing contemporary influences of abstract and semi-abstract expression, new-media art, and the likes, Siddiqui audaciously continued to imbue life, texture, and meaning in the seemingly ordinary objects of his gaze. Contrary to common perception, mundane materials of the everyday are not necessarily static or lifeless nothings but can in fact contain and convey details of the predispositions, concerns, and conflicts that factor into the human experience.

Siddiqui's audacity, however, was not simply rooted in the stylistic or thematic novelty of his work. Its greatest cost possibly related to the disproportionately extensive time the artist was compelled to invest in capturing and perfecting every detail of his work, with the effect that Siddiqui could only complete a few pieces at a time, unlike some contemporaries. Of his work for KBI 7, Shakeel Siddiqui wrote:

"I am submitting one painting. The subject is a noticeboard. I have tried to capture the third effect of a noticeboard which everyone of us has experienced. I went through almost all the details including the lettering on the papers. Almost all the papers are white and overlapping each other (white on white) but they are still easily differentiated."

SOPHIA BALAGAMWALA

Born in 1987 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Karachi-based artist, illustrator, and curator, Sophia Balagamwala explores the intersectional space in which history, fiction, and nonsense converge. Her practice is propelled by her interest in stories and, therefore, draws from the visual languages of history, children's books, political caricatures, and animated film. The ways in which stories are constructed, particularly serving histories of 'nations' and 'national heroes,' and how these stories embody a subjective dialogue between so-called historical reality, apocrypha, and mythification, are among the intellectual inquiries Balagamwala motivates.

Hopes and Prospects epitomises Balagamwala's approach. Various caricatured candidates, each running for election as head of a fictional state, whimsically come together in a collection of colourful television sets the artist presents. The sets, which are shaped like life-size illustrations of brains that could be straight out of the pages of a vibrant children's book, are visual representations of each candidate's 'soapbox.' The artist aptly describes the beauty and danger of caricature as follows:

"The humour of the caricature, in addition to acting as a metaphor and carrying a history of political critique, can be deeply complex. Things have the liberty to get carried away, and to become abstracted and nonsensical."

Balagamwala's work masterfully walks this artistic tightrope. She primes her audience to be a discerning one. So, even as each of these candidates – supposed 'prospective leaders' – voices ostensible hopes for a nation, they

easily come across as mere interchangeable caricatures, expounding hackneyed political spiels from their own soapbox. The satirical brilliance of her sculptural caricature lies in the interchangeability of the candidates and their meaningless rhetoric – all too familiar in our disillusioning contemporary political context.



Hopes and Prospects, 2017

Fiberglass, wood, enamel, and animations with audio on a loop
Courtesy the artist

UNVER SHAFI KHAN

Born in 1961 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Unver Shafi Khan prefers the label of a 'contemporary painter,' not an artist, for he believes that it is the very specific intellectual and physical exercise of painting that has shaped his idiosyncratic vocabulary of expression and introspection. The artist, whose oeuvre stands apart as largely formalist, marking a rich engagement with several painterly traditions, sometimes works intimately within and sometimes departs from these modes of reference.

As an art practitioner, Shafi Khan finds himself compelled to serve justice to oneself and one's consciousness as opposed to fulfilling a social or political function. His approach, he believes, helps him elide restrictive labels and resist tendencies to work within a narrow scheme of issues that Western institutions expect people of his geo-cultural origins to concern themselves with. His identity, he believes, transcends a single nationality and can in fact trace its trajectory through several transitioning cultural and geopolitical contexts. Reflecting on such organic experimentations and subtle transitions in style, Shafi Khan highlights that such shifts in medium tend to reveal a painter's evolving concerns and changing subject matter.

Titled *HOLY SHIT!*, Shafi Khan's giclée print of a large pink pig mixed with acrylic layering on canvas, emanates the bold stylistic and thematic audaciousness found in many of his notable works. Contextualising the piece during an interview for ArtNow magazine, Shafi Khan commented:

"What bothers me most is the hypocrisy of the

way we live and especially because we bang this bloody drum about religiosity. You would be drinking, commit adultery, paedophilia, not pay income tax, commit murder; behead someone, but when it comes to pork, you can't eat that, that's *Haram!* I'm very open-minded when it comes to religion, I feel it's personal. Don't judge me and I won't judge you. But if you judge me, I have a problem with that. This hypocrisy, I have a big problem with."



HOLY SHIT!, 2017
Giclée print on canvas and reworked again
183 x 137 cm
Courtesy the artist

FOMMA DHA Art Center



*Zamzama Park, DHA, Phase 5, Karachi, 77500
24.81632, 67.03839*

The Foundation of Museum and Modern Art (FOMMA) was instituted to support creativity in art and architecture and foster critical discourse. Its Director-General, Jalaluddin Ahmed, envisioned the creation of an accessible art space, which would provide an open floor for engagement over the arts. His vision was realised by way of a collaboration between FOMMA and the Defence Housing Authority (DHA), with the latter providing a 19th century army barrack in the lush grounds of Zamzama Park. The space was renovated into a gallery by the city's prominent architect, Ejaz Ahmed. Although this publicly accessible art space served as a venue for numerous artist talks, exhibitions, book launches, and collaborative cultural events for 12 years, it was unfortunately closed in early 2018, shortly after KB17.



SANAM, 2017
Graphite and powder pigment on archival paper
116 x 198 cm

AAKIF SURI

Born 1982 in Dera Ghazi Khan (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

SANAM – the word literally translates as ‘beloved’ from Arabic – bares out and complicates intimacies inherited through tradition and culture, especially when they make contact and negotiate with a world beyond their peripheries. Murad Khan Mumtaz’s concern that “miniaturists are now encouraged to invoke ‘ethnic’ aesthetics” even as they continue to work under the influence and judgment of “an established European canon” resonates particularly in this work and in Suri’s wider choices as an internationally exhibited artist.

Trained in miniature painting, Suri expands on his skilled sensitivity for naturalistic details even as he, almost subversively, departs from the technical standards of its contemporary practice, both in scale and subject matter. In so eschewing the expectations that the global art market levies on miniaturists – themselves postcolonial heirs to the Mughal tradition of *Mussawari* – he creates a visual metaphor for a deeply personal experience of global exchange and the existential threat it poses against organic ethnocultural relations.

Suri’s work is marked by exploratory introspections of the socio-political, economic, and cultural challenges of his community in Dera Ghazi Khan. It reflects the pursuit to lend a voice and legitimacy to consciousnesses that are silenced by local and global establishments. With an economy centred around the region’s cattle industry, the cow wields near transcendental significance in Suri’s birth community. His chosen subject-motif – a modestly adorned cow against an ostensibly murky backdrop – therefore stands as a potent symbol of the intimacies that are obscured and attenuated by global contact and intervention.

ADEELA SULEMAN

Born in 1970 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Art often serves a biographical function. Consciously rooted in tradition, Adeela Suleman's work is imbued with motifs from and references to her religious and cultural context. While her pieces bear narratives of the personal – her context and origins – they remain remarkably intimate with the political realities that inform her urban Karachi experience. Bringing together the sociological underpinnings of her sometimes parallel and sometimes conflicting worlds, Suleman's offerings ought to be interpreted as a poetic account of her life.

In *Falling Down*, Suleman scrutinises the ravages of sectarian and gang violence in Pakistan. Drawing from the tradition of Islamic art, Suleman moulds hardened steel and incorporates it with discarded objects to memorialise Pakistan's unenviable plenitude of killings in recent times. Of *Falling Down*, on view at FOMMA, Suleman writes,

"The continuous and escalating cycle of violence and unrest plaguing Pakistan is not only leaving its mark on the awareness and memories of individuals but has begun seeping into every space and landscape of its citizens' daily experiences and collective consciousness."

Describing the observations and concerns informing her KB17 work, *Leaning One Against the Other*, at Claremont House, Suleman writes:

"If governments do not change with the times, they become less and less capable of

addressing people's needs, and citizens grow more dissatisfied and disenfranchised. When the system breaks, it'll break big, and when our political reality shatters, it impairs our nerves."



Leaning One Against the Other, 2017
Metal Frame, Wood and Mirror
220 x 100 inches



Falling Down, 2012
Stretcher, stainless steel, powder paint
185 x 350 x 13 cm

ALI AZMAT

Born in 1973 in Multan (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Ali Azmat's practice embraces aesthetics from both the figurative and landscape painterly traditions of Punjab. Azmat uses this traditional sensibility to frame themes and highlight issues that are relevant to his contemporary struggles. His works exposes prevalent social hierarchies and explore the nuances of what it means to be "local." In so doing, the artist silently subverts what he sees as supposedly "peripheral" visual cultures' growing tendency to pander to western notions of neo-exoticism.

Dangal, Azmat's painting for KBI7, derives its theme from his father's obsession with *Akhara* culture throughout the artist's formative years. The *Akhara* is a place of practice, which includes lodging and training facilities, for sports and martial arts in South Asia. These spaces are generally exclusive to men, where traditional expectations of masculinity are valorised. Azmat explains that:

"The influences, inspirations, and even the morals of *Akhara* culture were in practice in our home. In this context, the psychological patterns of my youth developed into series of symbols and metaphors that I have subjectively interpreted and furnished in my artwork."

The work is infused with dichotomy and contrast, representing the inherent paradoxes that the artist finds in societal stratification. Azmat's depiction of a strident, muscular, and rigid figure is a visual embodiment of masculinity. The *Dangal's* placement in an antithetically contemplative and emollient setting offsets the chauvinism found in this sub-

culture. The painting, however, transcends its own specific critique, metaphorically capturing the hypocrisy and contradictions immanent within structuralised misogyny.



Dangal, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
122 x 91 cm



A Casual State of Being in a Soul Hunting Haven, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
152 x 274 cm

ANWAR SAEED

Born in 1955 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Homosexuality and homoeroticism, conversations that are dogmatically suppressed in Pakistani society at large, feature most prominently in Anwar Saeed's work. The artist's practice distinctively reflects on his measured effort to destabilise blinkered social norms that dictate the limits of life, sexuality, and desire in the guise of moral righteousness. Vivid and compelling figurative visuals, which the artist recognises as a possible trademark of his work, tell fundamentally human tales, dealing with the throttling behavioural, aspirational, and emotional confines that society imposes on the individual. Reflecting on his own practice, the artist comments that:

"Parallel to all kinds of changes in medium, technique, materials, and more, what I can see as almost constant in my work, over the years, is the presence of figure – the physicality of it. The pleasure of drawing and painting the body is the thing that keeps me coming back to my work. It also appears as a site where you can locate discussions of marginality, dispossession, love, betrayal, sin, violence, death, and rebirth."

As Saeed suggests, the human body, with its myriad transformative gestures, serves as a revealing portrait of the psychosocial trappings that shape human perception, communication, and coexistence. His figures thus take on a satirical disposition, emblematic of the artist's frustration with those individuals and groups, who uphold an artificial moral status quo and doggedly propagate self-serving beliefs as truth, at the cost of human dignity and freedom. He thus aptly describes his works as works of "love, pleasure and decadence."

EEMAAN RAJA

Born in 1995 in Lahore (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Visual artist, Eemaan Raja's penchant for travel, adventure, and cross-cultural exchange informs her varied professional interests, encompassing production design, art direction, styling, image and PR consulting, photography, and graphic design. Raja finds that the concurrent sense of anxiousness and kick of adrenaline that come with displacements felt in a journey can, if channelled thoughtfully, spawn compassion and audaciousness.

Of her KBI7 performance, Raja writes:

"The work talks about the importance of body as self and its relationships in our region. Not just the male or female body but a general presence of one's body, separating it from the conscious and the subconscious mind and looking at it only as a presence. We relate to people through the conversations they make; we value verbal communication as the basis of every interaction and at times disregard the bodily presence. The work explores that bodily presence and the urge to connect to it even without a verbal link.



Step In, 2017
Performance, 120 min

GORDON CHEUNG

Born in 1975 in London (UK) | Lives and works in London (UK)

Fishing for Souls is originally a 1614, oil-on-panel painting by Adriaen van de Venne, a Dutch Golden Age artist, in the collection of the Rijksmuseum. It was made during a period that putatively marked the birth of Modern Capitalism, upon the rise of the East India Company; an imperial institution, built on the foundations of militarised trade routes, colonisation, and slavery.

Protestants stand at the left of the original painting and Catholics on the right. Both groups fish for souls in the wide river dividing them. The painting is as an allegory of a schism that emerged between the North and the South during the Beeldenstorm, a period that was marred by destructive and divisive religious conflict and symbolism in the Netherlands.

Gordon Cheung is best known for his epic, hallucinogenic landscapes constructed using an array of media including stock page listings, spray paint, acrylic, and inkjet and woodblock printing. With his video installation, however, Cheung transforms a high-resolution photograph of van de Venne's iconic painting using an open source sorting algorithm to reorganise its pixels into over 4,000 images without erasure, destruction, or duplication. All stitched and looped together in an animation programme, the images form a visual spectacle generated from deliberate glitching.

Commonly understood as a mistake in a technological representation of an image, the glitch, in this context, reveals multiple dimensions of the work it represents, serving as an ode to its aesthetic and historical

significance. The digital fracturing of the image simultaneously reveals the technological space behind its creation, the physicality of the screen, and the illusion of visual symbolism. Taking us through multiple dimensions of reality, Cheung offers us a space to reflect on and question the historical narratives that we imbibe passively. His use of a simple computational code, resulting in a mesmerising digital sands of time effect, plays out as a metaphor for the repetitious historical cycles of contest and conflict that have vexed human society from the classical to the digital age.



Fishing for Souls (After Adriaen Pietersz. van de Venne, 1614) 2015
6 min film (loop) with 3-hour soundtrack (loop)
Courtesy Edel Assanti and Alan Cristea Gallery, London

HAMRA ABBAS

Born in 1976 in Kuwait City (Kuwait) | Lives and works between Lahore (Pakistan) and Boston (USA)

According to Hamra Abbas, prayer rugs embellished with *Kaaba* imagery were once common among Muslims but have recently fallen out of favour. For the artist, whose practice has come to reflect a deep fascination with representations of the *Kaaba* and the use of colour, however, such prayer rugs are of immense nostalgic significance. They remind her of a fleeting moment of warmth and solidarity that she shared with a woman, who handed her a bag with a prayer rug inside it right as she exited the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. Abbas fondly remembers that gesture and prayer rug, complete with a threaded rendering of the *Kaaba*, as her own personal *Barakah* gift. *Kaaba* rugs' recent dip in popularity, Abbas claims, has made it near impossible to find them in the markets of Lahore. Her first work at KBI7, *One Rug, Any Colour*, honours that memory of human benevolence. Made up of a selection of nylon prayer rugs that the artist bought on Amazon, the work is thematically reminiscent of the artist's 2013 series, *Kaaba Picture as a Misprint*.

Abbas's second work for KBI7, *Bodies*, contains piles of intricately carved wooden footwear that references photos Abbas had taken outside entrances to holy sites and family homes in Lahore. The respectful removal of shoes is a marker of segregation between the inside and outside, clean and dirty, and the sacred and the profane. Carved from *sheesham* (rosewood) and hand-painted by the artist, this hyperrealist sculpture, which teases out the resplendence of the ordinary, is a testament to the artist's keen and intimate insight into the everyday life in the homes and historic streets of the city. Abbas attempts

to render each of these sculptures timeless, infusing a weight and presence that is veritably beyond the accidental into what some may consider objects that fulfil a mere functional role in mundane human endeavours.



One Rug, Any Color, 2016,
Travel prayer rugs, 179 × 330 × 2 cm,
Courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.



Bodies, 2016
Sheesham wood, oil paints
35.6 × 15.2 cm (each)
Courtesy the artist and Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai

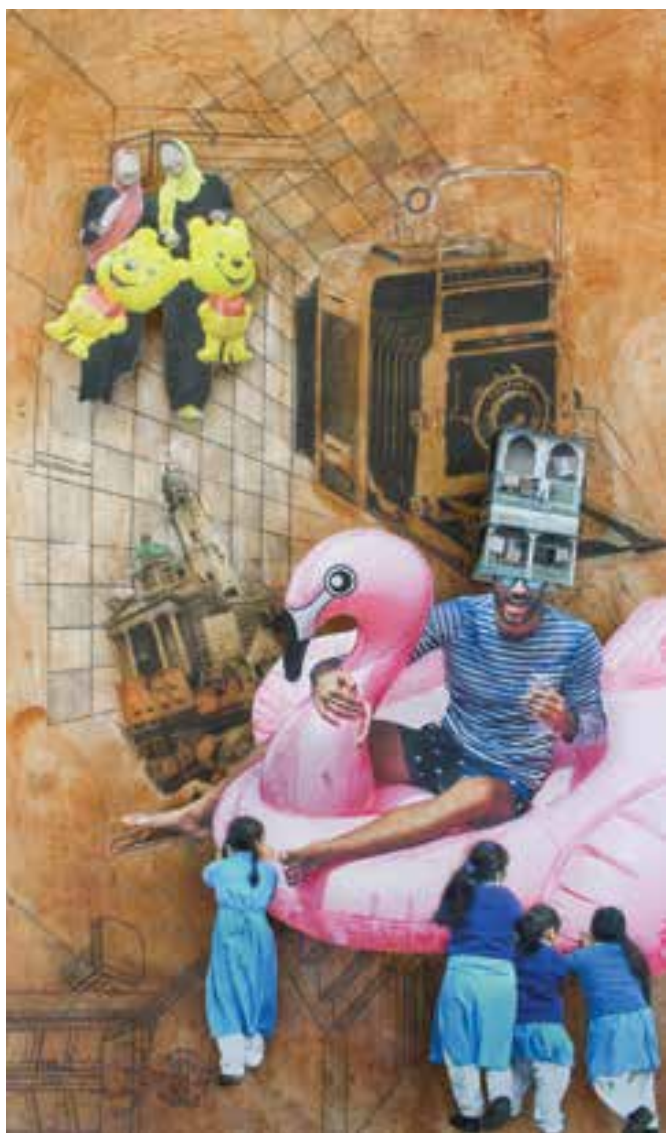
MOHSIN SHAFI

Born in 1982 in Sahiwal (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Mohsin Shafi is an artist-activist, who is dedicated to making public spaces conducive to peaceful coexistence and a vibrant exchange of ideas, experiences, and traditions between Pakistan's sundry communities. He is an active member of the Awami Art Collective, a unique amalgam of artists and activists, who carry out such public space interventions in the service of organic cultural exchange. Shafi, who seamlessly incorporates the themes of his socio-political musings into his practice, describes his work for KBI7 in the following words:

"The visuals in the installation intend to articulate the notions of safety within physical and intellectual spaces of representation: the safety of being visible for having non-conforming ideas within a militant-state and of being proclaimed the 'Other' by the spectator's eye. This is the danger of being seen through the lens of sexual taboos, gender binaries, ethnic hierarchies, religious freedoms, and the public availability of that information. These are the struggles of being looked at and judged, of being reduced to a cliché or a cultural smear. Questioning how to bear witness to the complexities of the present times, the installation responds to the aesthetic ambiguities of our society."

Shafi's profound sensitivity to the social trappings of spatial politics surface buoyantly in his work, which is both a vibrant glance into a world where the cognitive and physical limitations infused in space can be overcome and a grim reminder of fissures and boundaries that continue to segregate society and humanity.



This is Not the Way Home, 2017
Mixed media installation
305 x 549 cm
Courtesy the artist

SADIA SALIM

Born in 1973 in Hyderabad (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

As an artist with decisively academic leanings, Sadia Salim does not shy away from acknowledging the challenges that ceramic art in Pakistan confronts. On the one hand, trained ceramic artists struggle to sustain or sometimes begin their practices for the burdensome costs and limited resources that they work against. On the other, several existential dilemmas lurk over Pakistan's local *kashigars* and *kumhars* – traditional specialists in glazed forms and unglazed pottery, respectively – who have been the subject of the artist's research over the past 25 years. Their work, though sentimentalised in urban circles and exploited for restoration projects, remains profoundly undercompensated. Meanwhile, urban art academies, which are in Salim's view, detached from craftsmen's struggles, have yet to make an earnest effort to incorporate craft intervention as a serious discursive science in their curriculums and consciousness.¹

Salim's core humanistic concerns with the ways in which the traditional foundations of her discipline and contemporary urban aspirations interact, surface in her work for KB17. Her site-specific brick-installation, the artist asserts, defies any meaning she could attribute to it. The red building bricks, that make up Salim's installation, are indigenously produced under conditions of bondage but stamped and sold with the proprietor's branding. Describing this playfully inanimate work, Salim writes:

"A brick – a found object, ubiquitous and functional, centuries old or new, quiet and observant, made by hands of an unknown

person and stamped with a factory's logo. Within its mass, as Antony Hudek asserts, "is a trove of disguises, concealments, subterfuges, provocations, and triggers that no singular, embodied, and knowledgeable subject can exhaust." Therefore, the site-specific brick installation proposes nothing to the viewers through the words of the artist, enabling them to witness, sense, interpret, and make meaning of the visual. However, as these reticent objects stare back at us, they witness us and our lives, and those who came before us or will come after. What is it that we want these objects to see and interpret?"



Untitled, 2017
Clay brick, glazed and Raku fired
Dimensions variable

1. References taken from Veera Rustomji interview, published on ArtNow website, retrieved 22 September, 2018, <http://www.artnowpakistan.com/15117-2/>



Untitled, 2012
Lenticular print

SAMRA ROOHI

Born in 1990 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Concerns about the mushrooming influence of global mass media, in its ability to promptly shape and skew the way, not just individuals but, entire societies perceive truth and reality, are at the heart of Samra Roohi's practice. While the subjectivity of reality has traditionally been a subject of philosophical discourse, the scale of contemporary media and its power to advance selective versions of reality or to manipulate fact for mass consumption appears to be unprecedented in the artist's view. Such altered realities, she believes, either pander to our intuitive preferences, or sometimes, even deceive our instinct to seek objective evidence.

Lenticular prints are the tangible frame in which Roohi captures the psychological phenomena she observes. Describing her prints for KBI7, Roohi writes:

"My work talks about changing perceptions. I use others' ways of presenting reality and manipulate it according to how I perceive it. My work debates the actual projection of what is happening in our society, but it only provides you with a picture. How you perceive it depends upon who you are. Changing images show changes of perception. When an image is changed, it leaves behind an imprint of its presence on the forming of a new reality."

SHALALAE JAMIL

Born in 1978 in Karachi (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Karachi (Pakistan)

Shalalae Jamil investigates how perception and meaning are fashioned, altered, and negotiated around the shifting parameters of private and public space. Her photography, films, videos, and installations, sometimes accompanied by performative elements, which stand apart for their direct straightforwardness and occasional poetic cadence, are nonetheless always infused with the inflections of a shared human experience. For Jamil, accessible, generic, and sometimes banal elements of life serve as channels to address that which has been obscured and express that which has been left unstated, or deliberately silenced. Jamil describes her work for KB17 as follows:

“The name Kodak and its visual branding have been, for the major part of the last century, synonymous with the rise and dominance of photography as a popular art form. This body of work brings attention to the brand’s signage as it appears currently in Karachi: beleaguered, fading, and becoming increasingly irrelevant. Witness to an era, to the processes of change and disintegration, to the inevitable clash between old and new, the at once beautiful and distressed symbol is emblematic in the most profound way, carrying with it the past, present, and future of photographic practice. It is this history and ‘now-ness’ that I grapple with, through a series of photographs that are simultaneously a tribute and a space for reflection.”



The Lock from The Kodak Project, 2017
Photograph
187 x 140 cm
Courtesy the artist

SUNGJIN SONG

Born in 1974 in Busan (South Korea) | Lives and works in Busan (South Korea)

Urbanity connotes a worldliness and sophistication attained exclusively via the demands that life in the dynamic and shifting social and structural landscape levies against the individual. Dramatic urban flux, with a requisite structuring and restructuring of cities, has, most will argue, reached an unprecedented pace in the decades leading up to and following the turn of the millennium. Sungjin Song's body of work evinces his fascination with the spaces, mindsets, and lifestyles of the 21st century urban dweller; documented through photography, installation, video, and interactive art.

Song initiated his project *Postures*, which playfully captures the postures and pretences (aka 'posturing') of people in private and public space on life-size digital prints, a few months before KB17 in Berlin. While part of his photographic documentation from Berlin was included in the collection on display in Karachi, Song built on it by documenting the urbanity of Karachiites for some of the prints in his installation at KB17. Song's idiosyncratic profundity and effervescence reflect in the way he writes about his project and process:

"Suppose a virtual city has things in common with a real one, then make people who live in an actual city play a game which is very simple and physical, like hanging onto a horizontal bar or standing on a balancing beam all together at the same time. I then capture their collective postures in photographs and on video. The aggregate of images confronts the viewer with people from different backgrounds all engaged in a single activity. The question is: will

the viewer be able to identify who is who? The exercise is intended to make us think of our perpetual efforts to move forward and keep our balance, of why we keep on doing this, and of what we feel about the present."



Postures-Hang on, Balance, 2017
Digital print, photo installation
90 x 250 cm

IVS Gallery, Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture



*ST-33, Block 2, Scheme 5, Clifton, Karachi, Pakistan, 75600
24.81157, 67.01558*

The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, founded in 1989, is one of Karachi's leading art institutions. The Nusserwanjee Building, where the institution's art gallery is located, originally stood in Kharadar, a neighbourhood close to the Karachi Port. The structure, which originally served as a warehouse and office space, was on the verge of demolition in 1991. Due to its intriguing history and significance in Karachi's architectural heritage, eminent architect, Shahid Abdullah stepped forward to have the building moved brick-by-brick and restored on the IVSAA grounds. The laborious undertaking of dismantling, transporting, and reconstructing all 26,000 stones, which now prominently stand as two wings of the campus, was completed in 2004. The IVS Gallery is a multipurpose space, hosting a variety of exhibitions, dialogues, and book launches, amongst other events.

ALI KAZIM

Born in 1979 in Pattoki (Pakistan) | Lives and works in Lahore (Pakistan)

Winner of the KBI7 Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui Foundation Juried Prize

The physical and ideological seamlessly come together in the works of Ali Kazim, for whom materiality and medium are not mere methods of articulation, presentation, or spectacle, but the crux of his metaphors and motifs. The artist persistently probes the substructures of our everyday worlds, using the very matter it constitutes.

In his untitled installation for KBI7, Kazim has used human hair to create three-dimensional drawings in space. The work derives from the artist's interest in the complexity of the human body, both for its physiognomy and for the thematic concerns it can raise. His use of human hair reflects the foundations of his artistic practice, in which he utilises the most effective, yet oft surprising and obscure, material to provoke his audience's interest in and reflections on a concerned theme.

For his meticulously constructed piece on display at KBI7, Kazim has rendered hair, by nature an exterior feature of anatomy, into representations of the structure of our bodies' interior compositions. By doing so, he creates the sense of a dialogue between the interior and exterior. Although hair growth is visibly perceptible as an ongoing bodily process, the naked eye cannot consciously witness or control any incremental growth underlying the phenomenon. By using hair to represent the interior structure and functions of our bodies, Kazim exteriorises the internal, just as growing hair makes the functioning of our bodies visibly perceptible. Kazim's work thus serves as a powerful comment on how our inability to completely witness the latent

internalities of our own bodies reveals the contemporaneous limits of our understanding regarding that which we believe we can know and fully control.



Untitled, 2011
Hair, hairspray, invisible thread
Dimensions variable

CLAUDIO CRESCENTINI

Born in 1961 in Rome (Italy) | Lives and works in Rome (Italy)

Curated for KB17 by Paolo de Grandis

Claudio Crescentini is an art historian, critic, and author of numerous essays and books. Cultural transitions, stirred by shifting visual languages and a revolutionising media landscape over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, are his primary field of inquiry. His research and writing, however, often delve into artistic and aesthetic synergies with architecture and urban planning.

Crescentini's project, displayed at KB17, is an attempt to explore the peculiarities of individual cognitions and their requisite implications for the subjective processes of seeing, knowing, and feeling. The relativity of such intangible realities is conveyed in a three-part video installation that brings together a unique amalgam of artists and a poet. Describing this work, Crescentini writes:

"Three artists and a poet start from the 'hybrid' concept. Their view is now overturned. The three videos are not evidence of something that happens once but the recording of what continuously happens in the artist's brain: an uninterrupted and gratuitous flow of images. The natural and urban elements melt the specificities of the three works presented: Irony 'Nature' – but not natural – by Candy Candy with a poetic concept by Patrizia Chianese; a wild 'Urbanisation' vision by #MIH Made In Heaven; and 'Emotion' in motion by Laura Federici. Each artist is lost in reality but their reality is a different thing from what you actually see."



HYBRID SUITE/lost in reality

A project curated by Claudio Crescentini that includes: Candy Candy/Patrizia Chianese, *Natural Groove*, 2016, video (sound, words, colour), 1,20", private collection (courtesy Roma Centro Mostre)

Laura Federici, *Bolla*, 2014, video projection (sound, color), 7,20", collection of the artist. #MIH Made in Heaven, *City Inside*, 2016, video (sound, words, color), 10', private collection (courtesy Roma Centro Mostre)

DAVID ALESWORTH

Born in 1957 in London (UK) | Lives and works between Lahore (Pakistan) and Bristol (UK)

The garden is the key metaphor through which sculptor, photographer, and garden history researcher, David Alesworth probes people's culturally specific ideations of nature and the discrete vantage point each society assumes in understanding human relationships with the natural world. Alesworth thus ascribes an expanded meaning to his motif. In the world of his imaginings, the 'garden' embodies a 'global forest,' subsuming our broader lives and cultures, as opposed to a mere urban garden, though that may factor into his observations of this relationship of mutual-dependence and mutual-destruction, or both.

Aspects of the artist's hybrid identity, as a Pakistani citizen with white British origins, have borne an assured influence on his international practice and research interests. Besides teaching at various Pakistani art schools, maintaining his practice, and pursuing research projects, both locally and globally, Alesworth has continued to work as a landscape designer and horticulture consultant for the past 25 years.

The artist wryly refers to his piece at KBI7, a map of Lahore's Lawrence Gardens (*aka Bagh-e-Jinnah*) woven into a large Kashan carpet, as a "carpet intervention." He writes:

"A sense of place has been fundamental to my understanding of the world, the landscape, and its living elements in particular. Over the last decade, as an artist and researcher, I've become more and more involved in issues of

identity and post-coloniality. Lahore's central city park, known today as *Bagh-e-Jinnah*, was formerly Lawrence Gardens. Under the British Raj, it was one of the numerous globe encircling botanical gardens of empire that were central to the British colonising project. Initially intended as a garden of 'acclimatisation' for English fruit trees and loosely based upon the design of Kew Gardens, Lawrence Gardens has continued to evolve through the intervening decades. The work is based upon a mapping of Lawrence Gardens from the 1970's and the park and its broader environment are a veritable lab for the study of post-coloniality."



Lawrence Gardens (Bagh-e-Jinnah), 2014
Hand embroidery in dyed sheep's wool and other fibres
into an antique Kashan carpet
366 cm x 305 cm
Courtesy the collection of Dr Furqaan Ahmed



Higher than the Mountains, Deeper than the Oceans, Stronger than Steel and Sweeter than Honey, 2017
Performance/Installation, 60 min
Courtesy the artist

ERIC PETER

Born in 1989 in Dordrecht (The Netherlands) | Lives and works between The Hague (The Netherlands) and Davao City (The Philippines)

Eric Peter brings together performance with installations, discussions, gatherings, interventions, drawings, texts, or video works. His projects explore socio-political questions about the normative framing of history, culture, and social interactions, through a semi-anthropological and associative approach. Peter's practice is often driven by collaborative efforts emerging from periods of immersion with (sub)groups, communities, or individuals.

Eric Peter describes his work for KBI7:

"The performance and installation *Higher than the Mountains, Deeper than the Oceans, Stronger than Steel and Sweeter than Honey* explores compassion within trade agreements between Pakistan and other nations... What does it mean if we buy products from abroad instead of locally fabricated ones? Are the extensive trade agreements really beneficial for the nation at large? But most importantly, can trade agreements constitute a more compassionate understanding of each other — as individuals and societies at large?"

This performance is part of the long-term project *Sweetness Lasts Forever*, in which Eric Peter researches economics in relation to art and (positive) social change.



Last Light, 2008

(25 images made in the last month of your life with three kinds of cameras and exposures ranging from split seconds to one hour)

Archival pigment prints

Edition of 5 with 1 AP

Courtesy the artist

JOCELYN LEE

Born in 1962 in Naples (Italy) | Lives and works between
New York and Maine (USA)

Art, a potent expressive medium, transcends language in its ability to be accessed, perceived, and interpreted beyond any cultural and geographical barriers that frustrate the essential human yearning to be heard and heeded. Jocelyn Lee's work for KBI7, however, taps into the other formidable dimension of art. That is, its redemptive quality as a channel through which artists emote and capture emotion, love and evince passion, mediate pain and ultimately disclose the experience thereof.

The artist poignantly recalls the context and process behind her photographic installation, titled *Last Light*, for KBI7:

"I've always used photography as a way to forcibly slow the events of my life. While my mother was dying of lung cancer, I compulsively made thousands of images with three kinds of cameras at every possible increment of time, from split-second to hour-long exposures. As long as my mother was still breathing, I felt the world urgently required my record. Using a medium-format camera, I photographed my mother, her home, our family, and friends. With a primitive box camera, I made colour pinhole photographs of the landscape around us: my mother's garden, the view from her hospital room, the fields, and yards of neighbours. In the low-light environment of the hospital, I used a digital camera. Together, these images are a meditation on love, the beauty of the physical world, and the transience of both. As my mother struggled to breathe, I made long exposures of the last foxglove, dogwood, and delphinium to bloom during her life. I watched the heavy-headed peonies outside her bedroom window flower, ignorant of her pain, and then drop, petal by petal, day by day, to the ground. I took a pinhole photograph of white phlox blowing in the wind during the final hour of her life."

MIRO CRAEMER

Born in 1969 in Weißenburg / Bayern (Germany) | Lives and works in Munich (Germany)

Fashion and social designer, Miro Craemer initiated conversations around the interplay between art, textiles, fashion, and culture upon launching his eponymous fashion and cultural label in 2007 and founding the interdisciplinary symposium, *Wert @ Frei*, in 2011. His subsequent works reflect on his interdisciplinary rigour and interest in both continuing and strengthening discourse about collaboration through performative projects, workshops, and exhibitions.

OVERxCOME, Craemer's performance piece, adapted for KBI7, explores the interrelationship between bodies, borders, surfaces, and materials, with constructive movement as its nucleus. A week-long workshop between Craemer; German dancer and choreographer, Katrin Schafitel; Pakistani actor and choreographer, Sunil Shanker; Cairo-based curator and writer, Sara-Duana Meyer; and Pakistani *tabla* player Yousuf Kerai, in collaboration with German brass-player and Indologist, Simon Otto, and several Karachi-based actors, dancers, and musicians, saw the genesis of this scenic-choreographic performance.

Craemer developed costumes that utilise and subvert the semiotic implications of colour, material, and shapes, prompting the audience to second-guess the meaning of visual identifiers. The design carries hints of the South Asian tradition of kite-flying, in its oppositional interpretations of freedom and attachment, and serenity and volatility. The yellow and blue palette of the costumes references Albrecht Altdorfer's painting, *Alexanderschlacht*

(1529), which depicts a battle between the 'orient' and the 'occident' and in which the artist schematically distinguished opposing sides through colour. Working these codes into the textile design, Craemer fiddles with notions of opposition and compatibility, pressing the audience to reinterpret historical and contemporary assumptions of concepts such as distance and proximity, or separation and connection.

Craemer's performance ensemble was realised with assistance and support from the Goethe-Institut.



OVERxCOME, 2017
Workshop and performative installation
25 min

RUBY CHISHTI

Born in 1963 in Jhang (Pakistan) | Lives and works in New York (USA)

Over the past 17 years, Ruby Chishti has produced a series of lyrical sculptures and installations that deal with issues such as Islamic myths, gender politics, migration, memory, universal themes of love and loss, and the implications of being human. Her early life was marked by pain and recurrent loss. The decade-long experience of caring for her sick mother delivered a profound emotional and psychological blow on a young Ruby. Echoes of this transformative but early loss, compounded by Pakistan's repressive political climate during General Zia-ul-Haq's regime, continue to find their way into the artist's consciousness and practice. Of her installation for KBI7, Chishti writes:

"Architecture bears witness to historical acts of domination, man-made atrocities, and political violence. *We Leave, We Never Leave, We Return Endlessly* is an abstract form that appears to be a distorted world map as if drawn from memory, suspended from the ceiling. The overall form is a juxtaposition of architectural and human body structures, a witness of lives ripped and rebuilt, where I see links to personal and political narratives. It is a framework I use to explore the co-dependent relationship between personal experience and the socio-political narratives amplifying the voices of those who have survived emotional and physical trauma resulting from conflict, war, and the universal subject of mortality. The work is an audio-visual installation created from unknown people's clothing. I am interested in exploring the function of clothing that is beyond social status or sexual and cultural differences. It is my way of engaging

with the persistence and tenuous fragility of human existence, while exploring materials and reinventing sculptural forms that can forge a sense of collective human connection."



We Leave, We Never Leave, We Return Endlessly, 2017
Recycled textile, wire mesh, thread, wood and archival glue
210 x 330 x 35 cm
Courtesy the artist

SABINE BACHEM

Born in Oldenburg (Germany) | Lives and works in Raesfeld (Germany)

German artist Sabine Bachem spent her formative years in Mexico and England. In England, she attended the Michael Hall School in East Sussex, where arts and crafts were the core mediums of education. Bachem recalls these early experiences with fondness, for the unconventional wisdom they conferred on her young and maturing consciousness. The artist, who learnt to speak and navigate between three languages by the time she was seven, learnt the unreliability of semantic communication equally soon. She thus found solace in art, which enabled her to “reap and gather life’s secrets.” Art has thus served as Bachem’s most enduring and prized mode of discovery, meaning, meditation, and expression. Describing her journey and process in her own words, Bachem writes:

“Through my work, I examine the structure of the human mind, which continually fascinates me. I search for images that on the one hand reflect the narrative, i.e. the translation of reality into a story, and on the other hand reflect the zone that appears when culture nudges up against nature. Both these states of human psychology create an artificial (in German, *kunst-lich*) reality.”

Bachem’s two portrait sketches for KB17 have been derived from images that she found on social media sites and synthesised with natural landscapes. In this work, the artist traces the crafting of human narratives through interventions in nature, offering her subtle comment on the ways in which our persistently shifting cultures interact with and alter the natural environments we inhabit.



Amruts, 2017
Graphite, acrylic, charcoal on 230 gram paper
122 × 169 cm
Courtesy the artist

STEPHEN SLAPPE

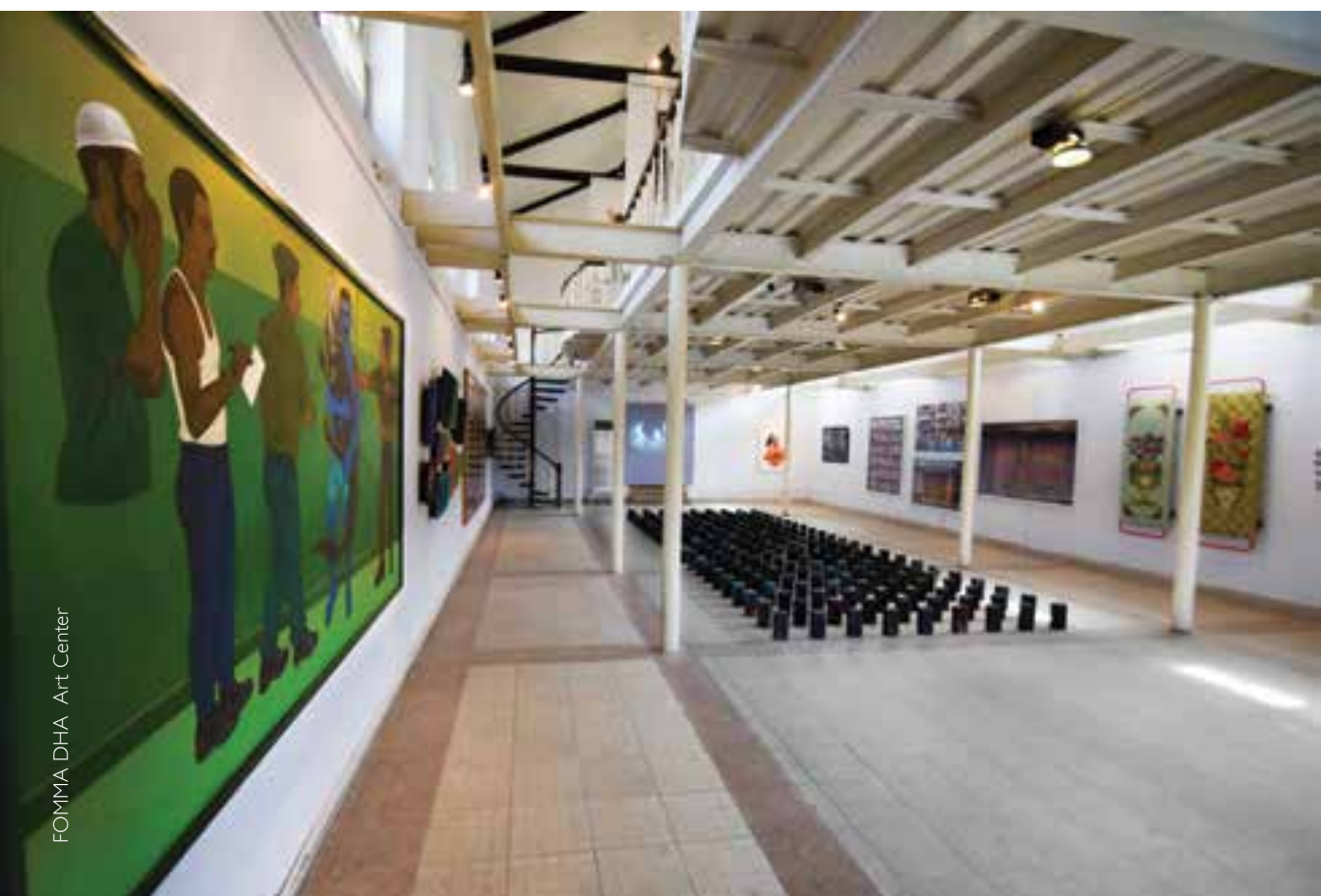
Born in 1973 in Charleston, WV (USA) | Lives and works in Portland, OR (USA)

Images sometimes divulge uncovered truths and engender new meanings through processes of alteration, manipulation, deconstruction, and reworking. The playful, nonetheless deeply consequential, process of image reconfiguration is central to Stephen Slappe's practice. Employing video, sound, installation, and interactivity, the artist strives to uncover and "understand the meaning and power" of visuals in shaping our 21st century consciousness. In his most recent works, the artist has decisively shifted his practice toward seeking and introducing alternative education models purposed to improve media literacy and accessibility to tools of media production in underserved communities.

Slappe's recent project, on display at KB17, is an immersive iOS app entitled *8*. Available on iTunes and Future Forum, this is an experimental education programme introduced at Open Signal, a community media centre in Portland. Part short film, part game, and part video installation, *8* places users in the middle of an immersive video environment, where physically moving the device reveals events unfolding and repeating in your virtual surroundings. Users can wander through a maze of 24 looping scenes by simply tapping the screen. Navigation symbols can be used to learn patterns of movement through the app without a real beginning or end. *8* has been designed as an anti-app, in so far as it emphasises physical space and movement while frustrating the user's desire to have complete control over the direction of their on-screen experience.



8 (version 1.2), 2015
iOS app, dimensions variable, duration variable
Courtesy the artist





KB17 Prizes

At KB17, the two most evocative exhibits were awarded art prizes. The prizes reflect our sustained commitment toward recognising the effort and impact of participating artists' work.

KB17 Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui Foundation Juried Prize

The *KB17 Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui Foundation Juried Art Prize* was awarded to Ali Kazim at the Opening Ceremony on October 21, 2017. He received a cash prize and a trophy by sculptor, Fahim Rao.

Kazim is a Lahore based-artist, who received a BFA from the National College of Arts (Lahore) in 2002 and an MFA from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2011. His prize-winning work, displayed at the IVS Gallery, was an untitled installation composed of snakelike forms, constructed with human hair.

The JS Group, which sponsored this prize, shares KBT's commitment toward identifying and supporting exceptional talent. Founded in 1970, the group is an international business conglomerate. Since its inception, the group has cemented its position as one of Pakistan's most

diversified and progressive financial services groups, operating market-leading companies in commercial banking, securities brokerage, investment banking, and asset management.

Promoting arts and culture for social integration is an important cause for the JS Group and has driven them to engage with diverse regional and international artists in an effort to put Karachi on the global art map. Some key initiatives undertaken in this regard include joint projects with the Alliance Française, such as the refurbishment of its art gallery and collaborations with French and Danish music groups. Focused on this objective, the JS Group, which has a long association with the arts, served as the lead partner for KB17.

The prize jury comprised three notable individuals – renowned German art critic, Ingo Arend; esteemed art historian, Savita Apte (India and Singapore); and one of Pakistan's leading contemporary art collectors, Khurram Kasim.

Rao, who was specially commissioned to design the trophy, took inspiration from Karachi's resilience through repeated struggles and cycles of renewed optimism for his design.



Mahvash Siddiqui, Chairperson of MJSF, presenting Ali Kazim his trophy at the KB17 Opening Ceremony



Ali Kazim standing with his Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui Foundation Jury Prize-winning work at the IVS Gallery

KB17 Shahneela and Farhan Faruqui Popular Choice Art Prize

The KB17 Shahneela and Farhan Faruqui Popular Choice Art Prize was awarded to Shahzia Sikander at the KB17 Closing Ceremony on November 5, 2017. The winner received a cash prize and a trophy by ceramist, Shahzia Zuberi.

This prize is designed to engage the audience and was awarded to the artist with the maximum number of votes in a public ballot during KB17. EY Ford Rhodes offered their services with the counting and auditing of the secret ballots.

Sikander is an internationally renowned artist based in New York. She received her BFA from the National College of Arts (Lahore) in 1991 and her MFA from the Rhode Island School

of Design in 1995. Her prize-winning video installation, *Disruption as Rapture*, made for a riveting display at the Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui Gallery, Alliance Française.

The KB17 Popular Choice Prize was sponsored by Farhan Faruqi, a Hong Kong-based art collector and patron of the arts. While presenting the trophy, Faruqi, who is a banker by profession, shared with the audience that he was very keen to support initiatives like the Karachi Biennale because it presented Pakistan in a positive light and had the potential to revitalise the city where he had grown up.

Zuberi, who was specially commissioned to design the trophy, harkens back to the rich clay traditions of the Indus Valley Civilisation at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, in her design.



Farhan Faruqi presenting the trophy to Jameel Yusuf Ahmed, Chairperson of TPL Corporation Ltd, with whose support Shahzia Sikander's work was displayed in Karachi, she was unable to attend the KB17 Closing Ceremony



Shahzia Sikander standing with her KB17 Shahneela and Farhan Faruqui Popular Choice Prize-winning work at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where it is permanently installed (Photo Credit: Philadelphia Museum of Art)

KB17 PechaKucha

Emerging Artists Intensive

May-November 2017

The Karachi Biennale's Emerging Artists Intensive was an enabling platform for young artists that helped them develop the required communication skills to effectively present their work to audiences.

Since all artists do not enjoy access to opportunities that nurture strong oratory skills, KB endeavored to address this gap. We helped young artists cultivate sharpened coherence, clarity, and accessibility in Urdu and English.

PechaKucha

Over 80 artists from around the country responded to our first open call for presentations of their work in 2017. The format for this first intensive was PechaKucha, an inventive digital presentation format that originated in Tokyo and is swiftly establishing a global presence. Its 20-slide design, with 20 seconds awarded to each slide, presses on a presenter's ability to communicate with efficient speed and precision. The method invokes the beat of our contemporary technological age, appealing to shorter attention spans and the focused communication modes that we are now accustomed to.

Fifteen artists from Karachi, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Tando Allahyar, Lahore, and Quetta were shortlisted. The selection committee assessed articulation, clarity of vision, and the level of an artist's narrative engagement with audiences. Selected artists attended an intensive workshop in Karachi in July 2017, receiving mentorship from educators, critics, and designers.

This guidance helped artists develop and refine skills and streamline their presentations before the final jury selection at Alliance Française. Ten winners were finally awarded a trip to the first Karachi Biennale, where they presented their work in a ceremony at the ZVMG Rangoonwala Centre on November 3, 2017.

This seminal project was the first to introduce the PechaKucha format on this scale in Pakistan. Keeping with the vision of KBT, it has expanded opportunities for artists to seek fresh vocabularies of discourse and sharpen critical evaluation skills, which are crucial to emerging practices as they seek success in the global art world.

Jury for shortlist: Naima Rashid, Nusrat Khawaja, and Aziz Sohail

Final Jury: Naila Mehmood, Nusrat Khawaja, and Aziz Sohail

Workshop Mentors: Farzana Tunio, Tazeen Hussain, and Atteqa Malik

PechaKucha Finalists:

1. Abeerah Zahid
2. Ayesha Khaliq
3. Bahrera Basit
4. Batool Zehra
5. Haya Zaidi
6. Shabir Baloch
7. Sana Burney
8. Shameen Arshad
9. Kiran Saleem
10. Shakir Ali





Jamshed Memorial Hall

KB17 Critical Knowledge Lab: Strategies for Reclaiming and Building Memory

The Critical Knowledge Lab (CKL) addresses what Gayatri Spivak calls 'epistemic violence'; erasures of knowledge ensuing from a marginalisation of the intellectual capital of people who were native to European colonies. In Pakistan, residues of this intellectual suppression manifest in vacuums of independent documentation and critical research on its deep cultural corpus.

Critical knowledge more often emerges from a vibrant exchange of perspectives between those who negotiate their contributions to the societies they dwell in than from isolated authorities. Karachi's perennially shifting realities beckon the investigative fluidity, dialectical dynamism, and interpretive rigour of an exploratory platform. The function of the Biennale's ongoing discursive core is thus clear in its naming as a "Knowledge Lab." Aimed at disrupting cultures of passivity in art discourse, the CKL aims to consolidate existing but unsynthesised knowledge. Interdisciplinary exchange, dialogue, and documentation rooted in a sensitive understanding of Karachi's intractable frameworks of incidence, reaction, and reflection are our core concerns.

Guided by the thematic, WITNESS, the CKL prominently undergirded the Biennale's exhibitions, public programming, and outreach activities. The forum commenced with an interdisciplinary roundtable series, lending credence to the contributions of activists, writers, architects, resource mobilisers, musicians, and artists. The Roundtables offered opportunities to trace how ideas evolve and converge across disciplines while acknowledging a need for many more voices. The aim was to document a body of work, expressions, and perspectives that have emerged in the last decade, seek linkages between Karachi's many contributors, and forge new frames of reference

for art researchers and critical thinkers.

The South-South Critical Dialogue, another key component of CKL, was designed in anticipation of a panel scheduled during the main events of KB17 in October 2017. The study circle preceding this panel with Latin American critics, curators, and thinkers was steered by the rigour of academics including Gerardo Mosquera, Nelly Richards, and Walter Mignolo. Karachi-based art critics, art educators, curators, and young graduates came together to explore patterns of difference and convergence with geographical regions that share our struggles with foreign interventions, coloniality, and episodes of authoritarian rule.

During the Biennale, Meher Afroz's public conversation with Savita Apte, and Saquib Hanif contextualised the artist's contributions as a thinker who interprets contemporary concerns through the lens of cultural continuum. The evolution of biennales beyond conventional European models was examined in a panel titled 'The 21st Century Biennale.' International curators from Cuba, Germany, Korea, and Pakistan shared experiences of shaping biennales as interventions that instrumentalise art to address social and political concerns. Marcella Sirhandi, a global authority on Abdul Rahman Chughtai, presented her latest research. Her keynote, supplemented with novel images (some seen for the first time in Pakistan), renewed interest in a critical reading of the influential pre-Modern Master. Paolo de Grandis, the founder and curator of 'Open' in Lido, Venice, offered the final keynote, introducing his exhibition as an alternative space that has uncovered hitherto untapped potentials for global artists and expanded opportunities for engagement through the arts.

First Roundtable: Women as Witness

Women stand as collective witnesses to systems of oppression and patriarchal control. Each woman, nonetheless, bears witness to different realities and ought to be contextualised by her independent experience. Women are, therefore, not a monolith even when they unite in an ambition to seek a collective voice, to assert their dignity as people, and to demand equal rights.

CKL's First Roundtable, **'Women as Witness,' held at the Alliance Française on 15th February 2017**, was designed to tap into the diversity of women's narratives, offer a lens to their perspectives, and acknowledge universalities that patriarchies and requisite socio-political systems impose on their consciousness while recognising the latent power of their individual identities. The conversation brought together intergenerational women artists – Meher Afroz, Roohi Ahmed, and Marium Agha – and feminist activists – Hilda Saeed, Maliha Zia, Raheema Panhwar, and Fareiha Aziz – in a dialogue moderated by Nilofur Farrukh, Aquila Ismail, and Qurrat Mirza.

While the artists have explored womanhood through distinct motifs, the activists have participated in the struggle to demand gender equity over various stages of its development in Pakistan. The panellists collectively offered nuance on the ways in which their professional and personal occupations inform their derived meaning of witnessing the contemporary world as women. The motive was to share and negotiate perspectives on how gender shapes women's realities and scrutinise the expectations it levies on them.

Art as a Lens on Womanhood

Meher Afroz's prolific opus marks her deep concern with the female consciousness as it shapes itself around, sometimes despite and sometimes in response to, the conditions of brutality, oppression, and inequality inflicted on many women. She opened the dialogue with a

disclaimer that she would much prefer eliding the vocabulary of *zulm* and *farq*, respectively translating from Urdu as oppression and discrimination. Women's unfortunate positions in society and the violence they endure, however, leave little choice but to employ antagonistic language. Directly addressing the concept of 'witness' in this stream, Afroz highlighted its potency in serving truth and justice and imbuing a measured sense of respect in human interactions when treated responsibly. She cautioned that the act of witnessing ought not to be taken lightly but must be accorded the credence of a conscious and informed witness, guided by strong principles and intentions.

Afroz's thoughts are telling of the motives behind her work. She arguably becomes the rational witness, observing and documenting the female condition and preserving its history within the uneven textures and built layers of scratch-painted surfaces. She believes that our circumstances shape our dispositions and leverages this understanding to create artistic manuscripts, in which her characters and their personalities, situations, and conflicts come together as unsettling critiques of the narrow roles society relegates women to.

Afroz focused on a selection of her works in which two sets of symbols stood apart. The first were those of religion and tradition, which, the artist asserted, are exploited as tools of oppression across not one but many societies. Remarking on her close encounter with Hinduism during her formative years in India, Afroz highlighted the paradox of contemporary Hindu society, where it is hard to reconcile the valorised power of female deities with the way women, their roles, and freedoms are doggedly undermined in reality, as an example. The symbolism of the closed closet, on the other hand, marks Afroz's aversion to the way society stifles women, their movement, and their aspirations under narrow rules of identity, propriety, and status. Acknowledging these unsettling truths and the consciousness that systemic repression

engenders, Afroz believes, is a formative step in the process of living empathetically and equally. Identity is, she asserted, a valuable possession and right; one to which all human beings are entitled, irrespective of gender:



Meher Afroz, *Niche*
Acrylic on wood
38x50cm, 1997



Meher Afroz, *Zindaan*
Etching print on paper,
20x27cm, 2004 (7)

Switching gears, **Roohi Ahmed** commented on works that chart her personal challenges while navigating Karachi in the pursuit of a career and mobility. Using art as a channel of introspection, Ahmed mapped the strangely treacherous daily journey she once undertook from Nazimabad, a locality in Karachi's extreme North, to IVSAA, in its extreme South. What should have ideally been a comfortably routine commute was, in the artist's recollection, looming with insecurity. As a female driver, she was forced to always remain alert; prepared to make intuitive decisions should she draw unwelcome attention or get caught between conflict.

Ahmed conceived the series about these journeys with a few years distance from them. The passage of time gave her room to introspect and contextualise her memories of this decisive phase of her life. Coming together as a mapping of her own womanhood, the routes of Ahmed's recollection are a reminder that patriarchy and oppression are not limited to emotional or personal interactions, not even to our individual consciousnesses, but that they translate in serious practical and financial consequences for women. Ahmed thus makes a deliberate effort to eschew conventional tools of sculpture or painting in favour of materials that are common to and reflective of women's everyday undertakings.

Ahmed's charting of her journey is not merely an 'inward looking' statement on the self. It subtly evinces the dilemmas that Karachi's concurrent spirits of uncertainty, chaos, and interminable resilience raise for residents. The artist intersperses a chosen cartographic vocabulary with material and metaphysical details that capture the sensory and experiential meanings of being a Karachiite – a fluid identity – which differ by circumstances related to community, class, and gender. By contextualising herself within those spaces of Karachi that are inhospitable to women, Ahmed thus ignites a wider dialogue about the costs of residing, working, and surviving within her city.

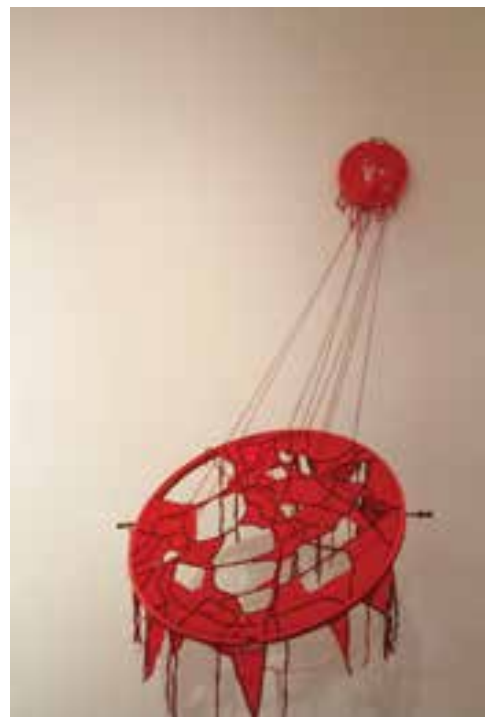
Relating a personal anecdote, Ahmed offered an example of a situation that problematises any

romantic notions of Karachi as a 'city by the sea' since opportunities to enjoy the lavishes of its coastal status are unequal. A Vasl Residency at Gaddani Beach was only her first overnight stay at the beach. Although she did not directly address the role gender played in that situation, several Karachi women are frequently cut off from overnight access to the beach by two factors: Publicly accessible beaches are often considered unsafe for women at night. Whereas quieter beaches implicitly limit access by wealth and class, only to those who can afford owning or renting expensive weekend homes and huts there.

Nearing the end of her discussion, however, Ahmed identified that boundaries imposed on women through gender are not limited to any geographic or cultural context but extend to many societies. Her residency in Bangladesh was an interesting reminder about the pervasiveness of gender classifications. Featuring a dialogue between artists regarding their craft, preferred materials, motives, and thematic concerns, and seeking both similarities and divergences between female and male practitioners, the residency became an educative insight into how gender influences the way artists negotiate their positions as witnesses and actors to their circumstances and times.



Roohi Ahmed, *Constellation I* (bottom left) & *II* (right)
Fabric, silk thread, and zari
2013



Shadow of My Love, 2013
Fabric, silk thread, zari, 18" wooden embroidery frame,
two lights and a corner
Dimensions variable

Throughout her relatively short and remarkable career, the youngest of the three artists, **Marium Agha**, has audaciously tackled the rules and shifting definitions of love, sexual taboos, and religious and social control as they act on women's bodies. She questions gender identities and binaries, and the epistemic, cultural, psychological, and social violence that they impose on organic development. Primarily working with yarn, tapestries, and found fabric, Agha renders women's emotions and inner conflicts to complicate notions of heteronormative love.

Agha began by commenting on her misgivings with the liberties people take with the word 'love' in common parlance. She believes that we so casually use it while expressing approval, preferences, familiarity, and intimacy that we inadvertently collapse distinctions between its many modes: for God, for money, for mothers, for friends, and for significant others, to name a few. To love and to be in love have different connotations. So, it is, according to her, important to distinguish between the word's usage, implications, and requisite contexts. Such problematic uses of 'love,' relationships between the concepts of contemporary love and feminism, the veil, and the policing of female anatomy are Agha's prime concerns.

Agha turned to work from the late 2000s, when she was a student who was reconciling with adult independence in London — a life removed from the shelters of a familial home. She encountered her first jarring experience with an unfamiliarly casual attitude toward romantic love there; a male friend described a transient and ostensibly physical infatuation with her as 'love.' The experience was unsettling for the clashes of culture it evoked. Although attention was welcome and desirable, the artist was beleaguered by a nagging inner voice. Her culture and religion did not permit entertaining, leave alone enjoying, sexual attention. In her linear drawing of a woman's face, Agha draws on the impermissibility of seeking validation from such a gaze, highlighting the obedience, conformity, and voicelessness that our society demands of her gender. Such notions of submissiveness, where the concept of agency in matters related to sexual

desirability is putatively absurd, violently control the limits of women's desires and ambition.

The period between 2009 and 2010, following Agha's return to Pakistan, was marked by intensified religious violence, when suicide bombings were on the rise here. Humour became a coping mechanism. There was, in Agha's view, a disturbing twistedness to the idea of joking about facts related to death, loss, and violent bombings. Even as we acknowledge that estranging the self from grim realities might help one retain sanity in conflict, it is hard to reconcile human morals and humanity with such rampant desensitisation.

Online jokes about suicide bombers, who allegedly attain 72 virgins in heaven for sacrificing their lives in the name of God, fuelled one of Agha's seminal projects. She rendered a visual translation of *72 Virgins for My Suicide Lovers* as a subversive depiction of the violence, extremism, and misogyny that are normalised on female bodies based on a common religious myth, with little evidentiary support from the Quran. She conceived 72 models of vaginas using drawing, embroidery, and sequences. While the work expectedly elicited shame and disdain for its challenging content from many, embarrassment was, for Agha's close family and associates, superseded by valid fears of extremist backlash. Though artists commonly struggle to find platforms for subversive works, two Pakistani forums — ArtChowk and the *No Honour in Killing* project — bravely accommodated Agha's installation. When the project travelled to Barcelona, two vaginas were stolen in transit. An instance of delicious irony followed, where two men had to be enlisted to stand before and guard the remaining vaginas from theft.

Transitions through marriage and motherhood changed Agha's outlook on the limits of her power and the role men play in dictating womanhood. To begin with, Agha's wedding day, when her father presumed it appropriate to negotiate a *mehr* with his daughter's future husband without her input, upset her. Much to her and her husband's family's alarm, Agha refused to have any *mehr*-value attached to her, for she ultimately considers the

practice as akin to the offering of a bride-price - a humiliating and perverse fate that she refused to resign to. In her early marriage years, Agha's recognition of the power and importance that men demand grew deeper. Marriage, she remarked, can often become a vicious and damaging partnership that forces roles of submissiveness on one and of dominance on the other partner; at times, justifying an emotional disregard for and a perverse sense of ownership over another person and their body.

In her practice, Agha often explores concepts of a woman's body, once reduced to its physiological form as flesh. For, it is in this state that society wilfully turns segments of the female anatomy into objects of desire, often only to fuel or fulfil notions of male lust and power. Women are thus implicitly forced to either consider or vehemently reject becoming what men want them to be. Many of Agha's works thus compare the consumptive and exploitative hunt for a woman's flesh to rampant slaughter; something that she believes goes hand in hand with our predominantly meat-based diet as a country.



Marium Agha, *Eat My Heart Out*
Yarn on tapestry
36"x 60"
2016

Seeking Rights: Women in the Fight

The Women's Action Forum (WAF) activist, Qurrat Mirza moderated the second part of the roundtable, focusing on the trajectory of Pakistani women's resistance within the framework of the Biennale's theme, Witness. While artists have foregrounded oppression and its implications for women's psychologies and bodies, activists have steered social, legal, and political policy to negotiate women's rights and positions as citizens of the state. Despite their common motive to seek justice and equitable gender relations, the activists in the roundtable brought a multiplicity of perspectives since they have all witnessed the struggle from different vantage points, professional backgrounds, and ethno-regional positions at different points of history. Hilda Saeed, a microbiologist and forensic scientist, is a founding member of WAF; Maliha Zia is a human rights lawyer and activist; Raheema



Marium Agha, *Perfect Love and Other Stories*
Thread and rope on montvale acid free paper,
11.5" x 16.5"
2016

Panhwar has been a community development worker for nearly 20 years; and Fareiha Aziz is an award-winning journalist and educationist.

Many Pakistanis from **Hilda Saeed's** generation wistfully remember Karachi as 'the city of lights'; home to endless opportunities for recreation, cultural exchange, and intellectual engagement. The city of their recollection enjoyed and celebrated its diverse communities for their contributions to its eclecticism, arts, and unique amalgam of cultures. Even as she acknowledges that inequality, poverty, and elements of strife prevailed in those early days, Saeed marks General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime as a decisive phase that radically damaged the future of tolerance and gender equity in Pakistan.

The totalitarian order, which legalised instruments of dogmatic control by seeking legitimacy in narrow interpretations of Islam, nonetheless birthed a spirit of resistance among young activists, who opposed brute force and religious repression under the newly instituted Hudood Ordinances. The case of Fehmida and Allah Bux, who were respectively sentenced to 100 lashes and a brutal public execution by stoning at the Karachi Racecourse for daring to marry of their own volition, gave impetus to Saeed's burgeoning activism as a member of Shirkat Gah. Saeed and her peers successfully mobilised all resource and influential contacts to obtain a stay-order against this horrific punishment under General Zia's Hudood Laws. A pivotal moment in the history of Pakistani women's movements, the case gave birth to a pressure-group and laid the seeds of the Women's Action Forum (WAF), now Pakistan's longest running women's resistance group. WAF has since proliferated with chapters in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Hyderabad, and Peshawar and plans to expand and intensify the pursuit for justice in Quetta, where some of Pakistan's most marginalised communities reside.

Despite Saeed and her contemporaries' early victory against the perverse punishment, a barrage of oppressive laws, including the Blasphemy Laws, followed and delivered their strongest blows against society's most vulnerable – i.e. women and religious minorities. While Saeed and her

fellow activists spent their early years reacting to events – petitioning and protesting on the streets – subsequent years of struggle, she claims, saw a transition from reactive to proactive modes, as they organised to move laws and policy in a positive direction.

Comparing our contemporary struggles and General Pervez Musharraf's more recent military regime with the defining Zia-era, Saeed alluded to ruptures that remain unaddressed, despite surface improvements. Specifically responding to Mirza's suggestion that spaces for political participation appear to have contracted in recent times, Saeed identified the dangers of a figure like Musharraf, who leveraged a softened image to perpetuate regressive ideals and repression. A salient memory she related was from Musharraf's speech in North America; spewing contempt for survivors of rape, the dictator – callously, unforgivably, reprehensibly – dismissed their pleas for justice as ploys for securing "Canadian Citizenship." Despite seeing successful democratic transitions over the past decade, Pakistan's road to sincere representation and equity is long and arduous since the military and other dogmatically patriarchal institutions still wield asymmetrical control over decision making in Saeed's estimation.

Maliha Zia offered personal insight into her feminist upbringing in a 1990s post-Zia-ul-Haq era when religiosity and hyper-patriarchy were on the rise. While her mother was the notable activist, Shehla Zia, her extended family also subscribed to feminist values regardless of their gender. That nurturing shaped her to be discerning about and challenge discrimination, oppression, injustice, and hypocrisy where she saw it. Instances like her parents being summoned and reprimanded for her sixth-grade essay criticising the Zina Ordinances or their decision to make her transfer schools after she and her male peers were bizarrely suspended for "touching each other" while interacting, however, consistently reminded a young Maliha of the glaring value differential between her household and the burgeoning socio-cultural politics around it.

The 1990s, Maliha Zia's adolescent years, were

in her memory an interesting time, marked by heightened cultural paranoia and diminishing clarity about Pakistan's unifying 'national' identity. Artificial measures to seek that collective identity through religion, ethnicity, sect, and elusive value-systems took centre-stage. This proved inimical for how women, religious minorities, and disadvantaged groups factored into emerging narratives of nationhood. General Zia's legal indoctrination of narrow interpretations of Islam had precariously exposed religion to political weaponisation, even after his death and the fall of his dictatorship. Such was its influence that Nawaz Sharif, an ostensibly democratic Prime Minister, campaigned to be declared *Amir-ul-Mumineen* through a proposed Shariat Bill. Despite its failure to receive a nod from the Supreme Court, the bill was an alarming reminder that credence from the religious establishment had become entrenched in the scramble for political power. Schools, where classes, PE lessons, and play-time became gender-segregated and where conservative girls' uniforms were introduced, were but one manifestation of the new order. There was, Maliha Zia retrospects, a generational divide in the comfort people felt with questioning authority. Younger voices were, she recalls, bolder than those of older people who had grown circumspect by dint of the previous decade's horrors. Since identifying, challenging, and negotiating society's cognitive dissonances was nonetheless subversive in the mainstream, living safely and comfortably forced an implicit provision of silence on citizens, who lived and breathed "under masks."

Moving into a more optimistic mode, Maliha Zia invoked her late aunt, Nigar Ahmed's faith in "the social economy of people" as she considered the growing influence of social media and communication channels, which have lent women the space, courage, and opportunity to speak up, share their stories, and organise. Even the political and legal spheres have, in her estimation, witnessed optimistic developments. Despite its many shortcomings and dictatorial hold on power, one boon of the Musharraf era, for example, was increased political participation for women following from the local government ordinances

of 2003 and 2005. They were preceded by a 2001 development that reserved 33 percent seats in local councils and opened representation up to 40,000 women, according to Maliha Zia. Not only were women's voices effectively being heard but they were finally in a position to steer policy leading up to 2017, when many were now Members of the National Assembly (MNA). Maliha Zia, who believes that the development bore remarkable fruit, with several newly elected women becoming the assemblies' most active and influential participants, thus buoyantly asserted that "things will change but people need time to change."

Further underscoring optimistic developments, Maliha Zia remarked on the quality of issues that are raised on parliamentary floors. Although the process of passing laws that effectively address these problems will require better organisation through a passage of time, she finds solace in the fact that matters of reproductive rights, domestic violence, child marriage, forced conversions, and women's health are, at least, on the agenda. By bringing these conversations into mainstream dialogue, women have, as political participants, already paved the way for incremental policy change. Maliha Zia's optimistically measured outlook on the evolution of socio-political perceptions of gender equity, behavioural binaries, and identities concluded with a word of caution about legal policy. The pursuit for change requires a careful and earnest approach to the punishments, standards of evidence, and screening systems we demand, for, they must, in her opinion, ultimately be reasonable enough to serve accountability.

While Hilda Saeed and Maliha Zia's struggle and critical views have been shaped by their urban context, **Raheema Panhwar** spoke of familial and social pressures that issued from a comparatively conservative upbringing in Hala, Sindh. The activist, whose career began with an NGO in her hometown, recalled being the subject of taunts, having to drape a thick black *chadar* (shawl) on her daily commute, and being forced to take her brother to a work-conference in Hyderabad so that her family would permit her to attend. Panhwar's personal account was a reminder that many activists continue



(left to right) Niilofur Farrukh, Meher Afroz, Marium Agha, Roohi Ahmed, Fareiha Aziz



(left to right) Maliha Zia, Raheema Panhwar, Qurrat Mirza, Aquila Ismail, Hilda Saeed

negotiating their positions in their own homes even as they embark on a wider struggle for other women's rights and mobility. Hers was an interesting perspective since she has been a first-hand witness to struggles for basic schooling and healthcare for women in interior Sindh and thus understands just how critical every positive development for rights and representation can be. Despite appreciating the nuance her background gave her, Panhwar also remarked on the alienation and identity-crises she experienced due to the paradox of the world she came from and the urban mindsets she was exposed to in Karachi. She thus fondly spoke about WAF as an outlet where she found comfort, safety, and dignity in talking, exchanging experiences, and negotiating with other women.

Panhwar concurred with Maliha Zia's optimism about the enthusiastic commitment of female legislators, who now command the respect and political influence that could contend with the power of some of their complacent male counterparts. She is nonetheless cognizant of the limits of women's influence on a decision-making level, especially in key departments like the Treasury, which are still jealousy hostile to women's input.

The contemporary age of information-technology, the Internet, and social media have, **Fareiha Aziz**, recognised, given women platforms of expression and access to information. Despite opening-up

space for resistance, however, virtual channels of assertion and organisation have, for their speed and ubiquity, also produced a paranoia of power and heightened control. Aziz drew specific attention to the duplicity of laws like the draconian cybercrime laws, which are introduced on the pretext of safeguarding people, especially women, from harassment but, in practice, used to bolster control and quash decent. Despite its challenges, the internet, in her recognition, ultimately enables women to take control of their narrative, engage with authorities, and hold powerful people accountable, giving them a degree of protection and anonymity, where required. If the government was sincere in its motive of tackling harassment, she opined, it would not impose overarching regulations on a medium but target specific attitudes, behaviours, and individuals who threaten social equilibrium and women's safety. Far from offering relief and protection, the laws have instead intensified state surveillance, silencing women on another channel through which they could have come together, organised, and exerted collective pressure for socio-political change.

Aziz ended with a more general comment on the role of women as equal citizens and political participants. Women have independent identities, political orientations, and outlooks and must thus, Aziz believes, assert their right to have opinions about and steer policy in all matters affecting

society, including but not limited to negotiating women's rights.

Seeking Synergies: Gender and Witness in Women's Collective Consciousness

Moderator, Aquila Ismail identified that creative spaces like art, literature, and culture account for the human condition in ways that legal and historical texts cannot. Together with journalists, lawyers, and other seekers of truth and justice, however, artists and influencers lend a voice to those who can no longer assert their own, thereby accounting for the unaccounted.

Drawing from Ismail's ruminations, an audience member raised a salient question for the art community. She pointed out that Pakistan's close-knit gallery circuit might be culpable in limiting engagement around art only to those who enjoy privileged access to often alienating gallery spaces, with the worry that such limitations dilute the role of artists as witnesses to the human condition and influencers of change. Acknowledging these concerns, moderator and KBT CEO, Nilofur Farrukh stressed that biennales, public exhibitions, art in the public space, and endeavours like the *No Honour in Killing* project that travelled across regions in Pakistan, seek to attenuate gaps between artistic expression and audiences. Exhibitions can serve as outlets of solidarity, where the voices of artists, narratives of individuals, and ideas of social influencers come together. It is within these spaces that opportunities for synergies across several groups and cross-sections of society can be found.

Nearing the end of the dialogue, Anita Weiss, an audience-member whose oeuvre as a sociologist testifies to her profound knowledge of the trajectory of women in Pakistan's cultural and political spheres, referenced Bella Abzug, optimistically forecasting that "women will change the nature of power; rather than power changing the nature of women." Her comment subtly invoked feminism's fundamental purpose as a movement that will liberate all people, not only women, from the ravages of unequal power. Although it is often stigmatised as a battle between the sexes, the

feminist movement, Farrukh pointed out, seeks to relieve all genders from the burden of identities, roles, and expectations that have been imposed on them.

A conclusive realisation issuing from the activist's diverse vantage-points was, in Saeed's words, that "the picture is still amorphous." While pressure groups persist in their resistance and while they can celebrate some victories, women's overall status in the socio-political and economic spheres remains elusive. As activists continue to struggle and seek alliances with other social actors – artists, writers, poets, thinkers, legislators, and cultural influencers – they must recognise the intersectionality that shapes female identities. For, it is by recognising the heterogeneity of the female experience and its bearing on the diversity of women's aspirations from law, society, life, and interactivity that we can demand safety, dignity, and equality for all, not some, women.

This First Roundtable, where women came together as collective witnesses of society, collapsed its own proposed taxonomies – i.e. artists and activists – of the different vantage points from which women experience and respond to their personhood. The seven participants thus offered a decisively hopeful account of the many shapes that women's demand for an equitable role and position in the world can take. After all, it is in being treated as individuals, with distinct identities, politics, vantage points, and modes of expression that women can find the space to act as liberated agents, acting on and deconstructing power structures, which have been designed to estrange them from the vibrancy of their agency and the vitality of an autonomous life and consciousness.

Umme Hani Imani

Second Roundtable: Testimonies from the City

Once a prominent colonial port of the Bombay Presidency, Karachi has consistently grown and extended its boundaries since Pakistan's independence in 1947. Even after losing its status as the national capital in 1967, the sprawling megacity has continued to serve as the chief financial and social hub, attracting immigrants from across the country. This is a city where people's rights to survive, seek opportunity, and assert their voice compete with insatiable forces of urbanisation, commercialism, resource-scarcity, and conflict. Persons and land ownership disappear overnight, some fortunes are forged as easily as others are destroyed, and paradoxical feelings of cynicism and optimism inform everyday choices.

Even through Karachi's heightened conflict and uncertainty, voices of thinkers and the grief of fallen activists critically strengthen a resolve to resist erasure, to bear witness and offer testimony to one's space and time. Desires to rebuild and reconnect fuel aspirations for cross-community engagement. Theatre, literature, and art offer reflective opportunities on and respite from the chaos of surviving and thriving in the 'big city.'

With an eye to these realities, **'Testimonies from the City,'** held at Alliance Française on 18th March 2017, explored narratives from Karachi. This Second Roundtable included three artists, Moeen Faruqi, Munawar Ali Syed, and Yaminay Chaudri; artist-environmentalist, Yasir Husain; architect and urban designer, Fariha Ubaid; and developmental-activist, Sahar Ismail. They reflected on the contradictions, uncertainties, and questions their city provokes; the legacies of collaboration and contributions through which it has progressed; and the attitudinal and systemic changes that will spawn future developments.

The Artist and City in Dialogue

The artists built on Chair and Moderator, Nilofur Farrukh's prefacing outline of Karachi's art history. She emphasised that the city has elicited strong

emotional responses from artists and residents across generations. The pioneering Modernist, Zubeida Agha's painting, *The City of Lights*, is among Karachi's most notable early cityscapes. She recalled how its vibrant, nocturnal views and luminous streets projected a sense of optimism. Sadequain, however, used darker imagery, born from the angst of a frustrated immigrant, who began feeling the broken promise of the city and state by the 1960s and 70s. With the passage of the century, concerns shifted, and the city's developmental challenges intensified. By the 1990s, works by David Alesworth, Durriya Kazi, Huma Mulji, and several others began referencing street culture and contributing to discourse about rampant commercialisation and its consequences for the city's skyline. Contextualising themselves and their work within these trends, the artists examined ways of bearing witness, negotiating, and responding to Karachi's shifting political, economic, cultural, spatial, and security challenges.

Moeen Faruqi captures the simultaneous sense of growth and oppressive alienation that restively feature in urban life and meditates on the emotional and psychological ramifications of urbanity through prose, verse, and visual art. Beginning with a painting from his first solo exhibition in 1993, however, Faruqi reminisced an early interaction with Farrukh, whose review of the exhibition included the comment that "at last, somebody is painting about the city." Well-versed in the legacy of responses the city has drawn from artists, Farrukh was, Faruqi recognised, neither naïve nor sardonic. Her comment was a simple nod to his audacious, undiluted, and discerning reflections on a reality familiar to him. He dared to put a mirror to the superficiality of the 'aspirational' Karachi-world he inhabited as one that estranges and alienates people who live in it, even as it appears to shelter them. The artist, who showcased his maiden exhibition at the iconic Indus Gallery, run by Ali

Imam, shared concerns underlying his work in its brochure stating:

"My art is primarily concerned with my experience of living in a large metropolis. My paintings are a response to being imprisoned, as it were, in this city. I am one of a generation that has seen the world change, traditions disappear; and new, uncomfortable modes of living come into our lives. I am convinced that my experiences are shared by many people in the country. We share the feelings of belonging, and yet not belonging, of alienation, as well as an unhealthy dependence on given realities. This feeling of common estrangement is also a strong inspiration for the paintings. This alienation and dependency, this contradiction in existence, is painful and bewildering, and my work is an attempt to reconcile this incongruity."

Voicing doubts about the extent to which Karachi's psychosocial makeup has changed in the 24 years since, Faruqi highlighted how its status as a 'city of refugees' further complicates its paradoxes. Home to a majority of *Muhajirs*, who migrated from the Indian side in 1947, Karachi bears a relationship of mutual influence with the consciousness of migrant communities and their progeny. Born after 1947, the artist, for instance, still feels associated with the horrors of Partition since he was privy to his parents' lingering pain. Among the first to seek the promise of the city, Karachi's early migrants have been at the forefront of witnessing and partaking in its development and survival through subsequent waves of migration, intensified socio-political strife, and mounting inequities.

Notwithstanding its geopolitical situation, Karachi's enormity, global connectedness, and social and developmental motivations bring it closer to international megacities like New York and London than to rural and semi-rural cultures within Pakistan, by Faruqi's estimation. He went on to suggest that people within certain quarters and sections of society in Karachi lead lives that could, in theory, be led in any global city. He thus finds a universality in urban realities – in teeming, mushrooming, racing concrete jungles – that does, strictly speaking, estrange them from their larger regional context.

Several works by Faruqi capture universalities of 'big cities,' which destabilise traditional notions of relations, of proximity and privacy, and of the general theatre of our lives. *Stories from the Blue Room*, for example, spotlights the strange nature of human relationships in urban hubs, where people from across the country and beyond coexist, where the familiarity of familial and childhood relationships is often non-existent, and where many connections are only transitory. In another work, a composite of nine canvases, Faruqi gives viewers a sense of looking into different rooms, making them feel like they are inadvertently privy to completely unfamiliar lives and narratives; much akin to the collapsed sense of privacy that commonly factors in city-life. Motif and technique also play a significant role in the artist's textured portrayal of urban space. Rickshaws, animals, and streets, for example, denote everyday goings-on, while his use of the eliminating-the-background technique, simple colours, and unusually positioned figures "reflect," in Faruqi's words, "our topsy-turvy lives."



Moeen Faruqi, *Clifton Bridge Part One*
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 60 inches
2017



Moeen Faruqi, *Clifton Bridge Part Two*
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 60 inches
2017

Munawar Ali Syed contended that a city – not simply its social or political temperament but its physiological organisation – informs an artist's outlook and practice. Syed's early work was, he remarked, thus smaller in scale and more finely detailed based on his aesthetic perceptions of Lahore. When he moved to Karachi, its concrete enormity, rapid expansions, tall buildings, and massive billboards appealed to his interest in the monumental quality of sculptures, shaping the subsequent modalities of his practice.

Syed's works in clay addressed the alarming chaos, violence, and gore that became entrenched in Karachi, especially around 2007 when suicide bombings grew relatively frequent. A head, presumably that of the suicide bomber, was, in the artist's recollection, found at nearly every blast site. Syed thus foregrounded the dissociative dehumanisation, stemming from mechanised violence, in an installation made of disembodied heads that transform into hand grenades. Another

work, crafted with ceramic heads floating in a container, is Syed's comment on a lack of judicious censorship vis-à-vis triggering and repetitive media coverage of violence and blasts. Although the works were respectively showcased at galleries in Lahore and Islamabad, they were indeed conceived in and as a response to Karachi.

Walls across Karachi, graffitied with images and phrases denoting people's shifting interests and frustrations, have been a palimpsest of expression through the city's political and cultural vicissitudes. Syed, who finds resonance in relationships between space and textuality, photographed and recreated some of these walls on his canvases, highlighting layers of conversation built on phrases like "Amreeka murdabad" ("Down with America") and "Kaun karega rahnumai?" ("Who will show us the way?"). With his subsequent installation, *Forbidden Texts*, Syed extended his dialogue with the city and its latent cultural challenges in the realm of language and communication. Investigating Urdu's existential status in relation to English, the artist expressed apprehensions about the latter's slow disappearance from social interactivity in the city—reduced to faded wall chalking that is, at best, transient.



Munawar Ali Syed, *Wall Stories*
Acrylic, pen, and print on canvas
16x10 inches
2005 from the show *Labyrinth*, VM Gallery

Joining the dialogue via video call, **Yaminay Chaudhri** incisively problematised notions of the wall and its socio-economic politics as a tool that demarcates

Karachi's 'private' and 'non-private' spaces. Chaudhri, an artist and architect, is a founder of the Tentative Collective, which creates site-sensitive, participatory, and interdisciplinary works that enter poetically "ephemeral conversations with the city's rhythm and infrastructures" through collaboration and resource-sharing. She shared insights from the collective's socially engaged art projects, which look beyond gallery or museum spaces to challenge constraints that boundaries, notions of difference, rules of engagement, and spatial separations violently impose on a city's people.

Karachi, Chaudhri understands, persistently undergoes transitions, especially in its demographic makeup. *The Pakhtun Memory Project* weaved concerns about the city's problem regarding ethno-racial profiling with wider discourse about spatial ownership and implications of public space. A recent influx of Pakhtuns, including many Afghan refugees and internally displaced people, has strengthened their large community in the city. The new comers and their culture are often viewed through the speciously narrow lens of the Afghan War or putative 'War on Terror,' reducing them or to stereotypes—'aggressors,' 'trouble-makers,' 'terrorists.' Set at a vacant roundabout, the performative project featured hour-long enactments of Pakhtun folk music near their migrant colony. Inviting participation from neighbourhood residents and passers-by, it aimed to unsettle attitudes of power, which manifest in concepts of ownership over or displacement from space, nebulous definitions of the 'native' and the 'other,' and psychologies of belonging and not belonging.

In Karachi, privilege, politics, and power aggressively work in favour of controlling access to a majority of axiomatically public spaces – parks, cinemas, markets, beaches, and roads – often through restrictive and intimidating boundary walls. Such boundaries are, Chaudhri asserted, also a kind of encroachment, which estranges city-dwellers from their fundamental rights to enjoy a full gamut of shared common spaces. In one of the collective's projects, Chaudhri and her peers thus gathered a group of 50 that sat on a park boundary to collectively question and

discuss what boundaries imply for the politics of separation, difference, and fear.

Mera Karachi Mobile Cinema was a cross-disciplinary project, in which the collective collaborated with an ethnic and economic cross-section of residents in colonies and urban intersections across Karachi. The germ of their idea, Chaudhri recalled, came from a desire to address walls, this time in a metaphysical context as boundaries that artificially divide people based on creed, ethnicity, caste, or class. Participants self-made cell phone films, which were then showcased in free screenings across the neighbourhoods where they were produced.

Projections, also conceived in response to a city in transition, was a project where the collective examined and experimented with potentials and limits of public art engagement. Luminous imagery, capturing the idiosyncratic personalities, histories, and concerns of locals, was temporarily projected on Karachi's varied surfaces. While some of these public locations – markets, intimate residential neighbourhoods, defunct cinemas, construction sites, and other transitory spaces – were obscure, others consistently feature in our everyday pursuits. Chaudhri's contribution to the project, *Ephemeral projections of a beached ship becoming*, was projected on the Bahria 'Icon Tower' in Clifton, Karachi.¹ This monumental construction project has generated much controversy; its legal sidestepping (construction in park space, narrowing of roads, and reconfigured roads around the site) have been witnessed and extensively reported in the media. Chaudhri, who recorded and projected a stranded ship's arrival on Karachi shores, believes the event was "timed perfectly to the rising spectre of this rising construction project," as a "precarious symbol of expectation...longing and aspiration" that surface with the glaring inequities of the city and its spaces.

Witnessing, Responding to, and Participating in Urban Alteration

Yasir Husain, Fariha Ubaid, and Sahar Ismail respectively view Karachi through the lens of the environment, its architectural framework, and

its entrenched developmental challenges. Despite their disparate vocations, the three individuals all contribute to creative reimaginings of their city via their vocations and beyond.

Artist-environmentalist, **Yasir Husain**, uses art, specifically technology and new media art, to foster dialogue about the environment. He clarified that he is not a trained artist but nimbly explores creative modes to convey urgent ideas. Aspiring for a sustainable city, he traverses channels of community, culture, education, and urban farming in the pursuit of sharing knowledge and stimulating critical discourse about environmental protection.

Trees, emblematic of organic life and the movement for environmental protection, consistently factor into Husain's visual process. Their interrelationship with the sun is critical since the vitality of the former depends on the latter keeping it sustained throughout the day. Even as dusk ushers in night's darkness, trees continue functioning with the solar energy they absorb from daylight; "a natural solar panel," Husain remarked.

As an artist, Husain imbues varied meanings, questions, and concerns into the leitmotif of the tree by manipulating images of these custodians of our terrestrial ecosystems using editing software. Musing on our broken attitude towards the environment, he thus showcased an image in which he digitally deconstructed trees—cut and broken up! Another upcoming project, Husain shared, would invite people to sit in front of a 100-year old tree on the grounds of the National Museum, while listening to an audio of synthesised sounds from activities taking place around the tree. Called *Spirit Tree*, the project draws on a tree's many interactions with its milieu, made of the air, sun, sky, earth, soil, dawn, day, dusk, night, branches, birds, microorganisms, and other elements in our changing ecosystem. A molecularly complex organism and machine, ostensibly inanimate but vitally functional, Karachi is therefore much like a macrocosmic tree for its varied interactions with physical space.

While the Sun and its natural light are key to life and sustenance, Husain has consistently experimented

with the practical and aesthetic possibilities of artificial lighting, specifically LEDs. On a visit to a school, he observed that nearly half the school was cloaked in darkness while the other half was only partially exposed to sunlight. He used this as an opportunity to initiate a hybrid science and art project, in which students designed their own LED lighting system to self-alter their circumstances in their school. Husain subsequently turned to the potency of light when he created a barbed wire installation, fully lined it with LEDs, and connected it to a solar panel for display at the Frere Hall *Numaish*. The project, appearing as an alienating barrier in the day, consciously reflected on Karachi's violence, ongoing security crisis, and growing barricade culture. At night, however, the wire lit the building up—luminous enough that its original form was no longer clear; perhaps as Husain's remark on the optimistic spirit of human enterprise, which enables us to constructively leverage technology's relationship with nature and seek creative solutions for the very destruction we have wrought.

Conversations about the environment, especially in a teeming, pressurised, and polluted metropolis like Karachi, naturally prompt questions about air quality. Husain thus assumed the charge of mapping the prevalence of noxious gases; their varied sources from traffic, industries, residents, etc; and the size of their particles in the city. He traced patterns and represented information from his findings in a visually evocative project that amalgamated science, technology, and art.

Husain has also initiated kitchen gardening and urban farming projects in collaboration with Zahra Ali. Invoking Martin Luther King and Prophet Muhammad's guidance on sowing even the few seeds we have available, Husain highlighted how he endeavours to inculcate everyday practices from these teachings in his projects. He has, therefore, developed school farms and farming kits, as workshop tools that guide people about how to develop urban farms in spaces with varying conditions and dimensions. His reach extends to several communities and age-groups, including schools at the Orangi Pilot Project, on which Sahar Ismail elaborated later.

Observation, meditation, and self-reflection are, like Moeen Faruqi, also central to Husain's contextual understanding of his urban environs. A moment in the 60s, when Neil Armstrong became the first man to successfully venture to the moon, subtly heralded a new metaphysical reality, in Husain's estimation. The event, he believes, helped humans estrange themselves from that which they considered familiar and symbiotic with themselves, their world, their lives, and their environment, and use this distance to reflect on how their activities impact the Earth and its resources. He thus concluded with the legendary poet, Mirza Ghalib's comment on self-reflection—"the purpose of our creation was self-reflection—that should be our motivation."



Yasir Husain, *Overview Effect Karachi*
Razor Wire, LED lights, Solar Panels
40 feet length. 4x100W panels
2015
Photo: Humayun Memon

Architect, city planner, urban designer, and educationist, **Fariha Ubaid** considers Janus, the Roman god of doorways and archways, her spirit god - "a multiface Janus," she said. Worried that

the bustle of work and teaching affords her little time to pause and ponder, Ubaid appreciated the roundtable as an opportunity to reflect on paths she has tread and doors she has opened over 20 years. While she is a practicing architect and urban-planner, Ubaid's challenges as a public university professor pivot her concerns for Karachi's future. She thus shared the social and cultural changes she has observed in the city since 2000 through the lens of her vocations, primarily her academic role at NED University.

Ubaid identified three factors – research, teaching, and institutional development – as chief among an educator's concerns. The balance of time spent on the three in Pakistan, however, is asymmetrically tipped toward the last. Sparse opportunities, a vacuum of robust academic infrastructures, and what Ubaid dubbed the proliferating "intellectual consumerism of the West," all contribute to the burdens of local academia, especially in a climate of growing income or class-based stratifications. Since the privileged (occasionally those without privilege but with exceptional talent) seek an education abroad or in elite private universities at home, according to Ubaid, public universities like hers draw a motley of students, some of whom have immense potential but suffer for a lack of opportunities and exposure. Working with and encouraging students to critically view their city, their lives, and their practice, has been testing, rewarding, and enlightening for Ubaid.

Ubaid's early instruction and references, she confessed, were heavily influenced by the western academy. A 10-year process of curricular revaluations, academic discourse, and intellectual unlearning, however, have been crucial in instituting a more inclusive syllabus that de-centres the west in reflections on cultural and intellectual histories. Successfully upending the ubiquity of western critical thought in our colonised consciousness, however, will, Ubaid understands, require a continued strengthening of colloquia and many more critical revisions of our outlook on knowledge and thought.

Consistently probing students about their aesthetic references over the years, Ubaid has learnt that western influences are not the sole limiting factor.

For many students, their principle referential frames are limited to narrow religious imagery, aesthetics, and symbols that are, in strictly cultural terms, also foreign imports from Middle Eastern centres of power. Discovering and engaging with broadened aesthetic worlds – local and global – through their education, is thus cathartic for some students. While many students engage with the city on a quotidian level as they commute on buses, experience streets, and eat at local and franchise eateries, their exposure is still limited.

Karachi's outlook on architectural space and design is, Ubaid asserted, informed by its colonial past. She thus believes it is sometimes academically prudent to begin with the renaissance, progress through a series of thinkers, and return to one's own context. Students are encouraged to avoid passive deference to references, problematise the buildings they study, and scrutinise details that estrange locals from the edifice and from the colonial process behind it. An estrangement that, Ubaid believes, can only be "bridged by the kinetic relationship that is established with these real buildings." Once such colonial elements and principles are accepted as imports, hybridised into our reality, they can then be reclaimed as part of our mixed intellectual heritage. Addressing Pakistan's acute lack of documentation and an accessible library, Ubaid consolidates her findings with other knowledge, data, maps, and writing in a publicly available archive she founded in 2002. She followed it with another initiative to "keep the flame of history alive," through a history group founded in 2007. The group empowers fiercely intelligent, self-motivated women with informed perspectives and includes many local graduates, who teach and conduct research in diverse communities across Pakistan.

Recognising the city as a dynamic space with altering priorities is, Ubaid asserted, a formative step towards ensuring that our urbanism and requisite projects are prudently imagined. While Karachi's reality is that of a "dense, dirty, and complex" city, mindsets that fixate on injecting "icons" (swanky foreign-looking edifices) even as the city's core decays, continue to pervade its developmental

enterprise. Dissonances that manifest in the cityscape are, Ubaid worried, entrenched in schisms on the ground. As violence and economic strife escalate, so do the excesses of the city's wealthy and powerful, who comfortably shelter themselves behind walls. Such imposing boundaries, arguably a consequence of global capitalism, have been instrumental in shifting Karachi's urban crux from accessible public spaces like parks and city-squares to oppressively exclusionary spaces like malls and restaurants.

Ubaid, nonetheless, ended on an optimistic note, citing the promise she finds through her work as an architect. She has observed that spaces and architectural elements never remain static. Karachi's perplexing energy and magical eclecticism play their part in modifying them. Gates and walls are consistently altered since owners intermittently paint or embellish them and passers-by graffiti them. Spaces remain nimble in their purpose; the same grounds on which construction workers labour in the day can, for example, become a young yoga group's workout spot in the evenings. Ubaid thus accepts that work in her shifting milieu will never be complete; hope lies in becoming a skilled, informed, and sensitive contributor to its organic growth.

Karachi, **Sahar Ismail** proclaimed, "is a part of me and embedded in me." Ismail, who grew up in the United Arab Emirates and studied Economics in the United States, feels rooted in the city, not for her mere ancestry but, because of its "immense beauty" and for all there is to "learn from the people who live in it." The incumbent Director of Programmes at the Orangi Pilot Project, run by her aunt, Parveen Rahman, until her murder in 2013, stressed the importance of approaching Karachi, its people, and their developmental endeavours with humility. She thus eschews an interventionist approach, maintaining that the city and its problems are best understood by those who experience them. She, therefore, cautioned that working in development from a position of relative privilege or distance requires individuals to understand that their role is merely to support Karachi's people as they help themselves.

Ismail cleared misconceptions about Orangi, a 2.2

million strong neighbourhood that constitutes approximately 10 percent of Karachi, being labelled the “world’s biggest slum” at the outset. Contextualising its origins in 1947, she explained that Orangi housed refugees who, unlike middle or high-income migrants, could not rent houses or seek shelter with families who had spare rooms. While Pakistan’s fledgling government lacked a structured housing policy for its new citizens, it accommodated them in Orangi’s empty plots. When mechanised farming triggered mass rural unemployment in the 1960s, a wave of immigrations saw Orangi’s population swell. Considering this history, its regularisation in the 1980s, and the government’s promise to provide sanitation, water, and electricity, it is, in Ismail’s estimation, a gross disservice to reduce what is really a low-income settlement to ‘*katcha*’ (impermanent) or ‘slum’ status.

While OPP’s name marks the neighbourhood of its origin, Ismail shared that their activities cover neighbourhoods throughout Karachi, extending to Sindh and Punjab. Since the focus of the day was Karachi, however, she highlighted key programmes within the city. Among them is the Secure Housing Project, which was one of Rahman’s last projects before her untimely death. This programme is geared to secure leases for people whose homes are situated in one of Karachi’s 2,173 *goths* (axiomatically peripheral spaces), which are erroneously labelled ‘villages.’ Since most people residing in these semi-urban outskirts do not bear formal land titles, they are most vulnerable to displacement on account of large-scale construction or development projects. OPP thus initiated an effort to map these areas, quantify homes and residents, and then liaise with the government to have the low-income homes regularised. Ismail, however, lamented the government’s motivations and inability to protect the country’s most vulnerable by pointing out that there are over 1,000 pending applications, a figure that remains unchanged since Rahman’s death.

On a more optimistic note, Ismail noted the entrepreneurial spirit in Orangi, where nearly every household engages in a business or activity

contributing to the community’s wellbeing. The spirit of survival and the support network are, she alluded, instrumental to the community’s endurance without any “interventions” or supposed help from the outside. OPP has, with fidelity to this sentiment, developed a savings group to which all members contribute for a year without using the money. The collective pool, in turn, supports an interest-free internal lending system. Where microfinance loans exclusively back enterprise, this homegrown loan successfully empowers women to make autonomous decisions for their personal care, family’s health, and children’s education. Already receiving skill-training via OPP, women can also borrow from the pool to facilitate low-cost sanitation projects and neighbourhood maintenance.

Despite a government obligation for the provision of basic utilities, OPP and residents of Orangi understand that the process of waiting on the government is long-drawn and frustrating. Their Component Sharing Project is thus a two-pronged strategy, where community-members learn to solve their own infrastructural problems on a manageable scale and then exert pressure for the government to step in and address larger issues. In the case of the sanitation system, for example, residents repair lines on the street level but call on the government to repair external lines. The same applies to education, where the community collectively sets up private low-cost schools but expects the government to make university education accessible for their graduates.

OPP’s Component Sharing model goes hand in hand with other endeavours to work with the community and guarantee them complete ownership over their space and its maintenance. Their mapping workshops, for example, teach community youth a marketable, transferable, professional skill, while enabling them to keep track of their neighbourhood’s population, households, and requirements—sanitation, housing, and schooling. Another such programme is their teacher-training partnership with Oxford University Press (OUP), which Ismail considers the optimal education programme for such a large community. Instead of employing a sizeable body of trained

teachers, they train teachers from within the neighbourhood, who in turn train more teachers, to achieve a multiplying effect. The only caveat to the model, Ismail observed, is that, once trained, the programme cannot begrudge individuals better opportunities, should they find them. Anticipating the high turnover, OPP nonetheless ensures a large pool of trainees to keep the programme self-sustained.

Contextualising Erasures in Legacies of Collaboration, Transit, and Change:

Artists have, throughout Karachi's young history, stirred discourse as witnesses reacting to and engaging with the city's influence on their consciousness. KB17's thematic, *Witness*, was, Nilofur Farrukh stated, conceptualised in one such phase around 2015, which saw a worrying build-up of trauma, exacerbated by purposeful state erasures and heightened historical amnesia. The spiralling chaos and contemporaneous silence beckoned the collective voices of artists, who have astutely expressed dissent, broken silences, offered testimony, and resisted erasures through periods of chaos, violence, and repression.

This Second Roundtable, however, established that artists do not assume their expressive and critical roles in isolation. As part of a pulsating organism of 20 million, Karachi's artists poignantly buttress the struggles of other actors, who play their part in responding to urgencies raised by the city and its people, in the pursuit of imagining change – evolutionary or revolutionary – on the path to progress.

The seven participants of the roundtable acknowledged their city's unforgiving clashes of social, economic, spatial, and ethno-cultural interests, all while celebrating the romance in its metropolitan dynamism. Although they build on muddled land, where power politics, ideology, and greed jealously control tides, their efforts are indicative of a spirit of collaboration, comfort with organic alterations, and stubborn perseverance, which are the quintessence of growth and progress. As they persevere to expand their city's social, economic, and cultural space, Karachi's diverse body of actors and collaborators resolutely contribute to their city's resilience, collectively "suturing ruptures with hope."

Umme Hani Imani



(from left to right) Munawer Ali Syed, Sahar Ismail, Moeen Faruqi, Nilofur Farrukh, Aquila Ismail, Yasir Husain, Fariha Ubaid

Third Roundtable: Resisting Erasure

In Pakistan's young history, the pioneering visual voices of Anna Molka Ahmed, Sadequain, Shakir Ali, and Ismail Gulgee have dovetailed with the literary eloquence of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Intizar Hussain, and Fehmida Riaz to ascribe meaning to memory and critically resist erasure. These thinkers employed evocative visual or literary expression to record the truths they witnessed, urge introspection, and demand progress—framing society's collective consciousness.

Irreducible to their aesthetic, emotive, or creative functions, visual artists and stalwarts of Urdu literature are, despite twain trajectories, related by pursuits to document their times and resolutely shape struggles against forms of repression – ethnic, cultural, religious, or institutional – that threaten the country's social fabric. The CKL's Third roundtable, **'Resisting Erasure: Art and Literature as Witness to a New Century,'** held at the Alliance Française on 22nd April 2017, thus brought together artists, Waheeda Baloch, Shahid Rassam, Sanki King, and Sabah Husain with writers, Kashif Raza, Saira Ghulam Nabi, Shakil Jafri, Afzal Ahmed Syed, and Asad Muhammad Khan. Participants identified their symbiotic influence in the theatre of moral and cultural thought.

Shaping Art through the Lens of Literature

Moderator, Aquila Ismail, opened dialogue with a pithy remark on 'memory and erasure.' History books, she suggested, cannot document a true picture of the human condition as accurately as art and literature. Fiction and poetry transcend humanity and spotlight the wider consequences – creative, destructive, and dispossessive – of human actions on nature and life. Just like literature, visual modes of expression explore negotiations and the dynamic interplay between inner thoughts and external realities. The goal of the dialogue, she asserted, was to identify how expressive mediums interact and synergise while shaping cultural and political progress in society.

The poet, Zeeshan Sahil, touched visual artist, **Waheeda Baloch** emotionally, intellectually, and personally. Baloch, who values context in examinations of an artist's or writer's body of work, related intimate personal anecdotes of Sahil, with whom she shared the experience of an upbringing in poverty. Sahil lived in a small apartment, in Karachi's Gulistan-e-Johar neighbourhood, where his most animated interactions were with a pet-parrot. The artist, who could not walk, spent hours in a work-room, immersed in the words and visual energies of other artists, writers, and thinkers. One of his most prominent wall-hangings was a poster of the celebrated Mexican artist, the magical realist and feminist icon, Frida Kahlo. Baloch fondly recalled Sahil's predilection for life's simple joys and treats, which she tenderly encapsulated in *Mithoo, Sahil, and Frida* upon his passing in April 2008. This is, Baloch mused, a canvas in which an artist's contemporary concerns intersect with the potency of personal human connections.

An art historian and academic, Baloch segued to comment on theories of modernism and post-modernism. Post-modernism, Baloch explained, is not hinged to a line of reasoning but is an amalgam of movements, philosophies, and art practices, underpinned by discourse that rejects rigidities in modernist theory. Since post-modernist works are motivated by the goal of upsetting paradigms, no style stands out; diversity and an occasional incongruity are their trademarks. Baloch believes post-modern artists, writers, poets, and thinkers command wider space as they explore independent identities, personal experiences, and broader human behaviours. The burgeoning prominence of feminist artists, Baloch flagged, is importantly associated with this climate of shifting narratives and progressive inclusion.

Baloch then shifted gears to post-structuralism's role in deconstructing hitherto accepted ideas, concluding that Sahil fit into its fold after revisiting his works. The poet closely engaged and connected

with Karachi through his verses, often commenting on the violence that Karachi's 20 million are constantly privy to. Sahil's graphic imagery, however, is not situated in the context of its origin but on the bodies and spaces of those it afflicts, sometimes as inadvertent 'collateral damage.' Quoting Sahil's own reflections on his art, Baloch flagged that:

"Poetry, like love, is a personal act. Verses first make their place in the poet's heart until they are written down on paper. Once written or said, the verses set themselves up to find new variations in meaning, as the readers read the words through the filters of their own experiences and concerns to find meanings they can identify, challenge, or engage with." (*translated from Urdu*)

The artist then related Sahil's words with works by her contemporaries, underlining how art reifies poetic description, offering visual testimony to shared experiences of a world, space, or time. Ayaz Jikhio and Riffat Alvi, for example, share in Sahil's reflections on Karachi's periods of intensified violence. While the former mirrors Sahil by juxtaposing a pen's might with a bullet's destruction, the latter renders terror in the form of frightened birds, echoing Sahil's observation that violence permeates all life in its milieu. Meher Afroz's concern with the patriarchy's complex shaping of a woman's consciousness also manifests in references to nature, specifically the motif of the flower—a relationship that often featured in Sahil's verses. Sahil's bewilderment at the mechanised scale of destruction in modern warfare and global conflict finds visual resonance in works by Imran Qureshi, who employs flowers, foliage, and trees to denote death and the diminishing value of life and Aisha Jatoi, whose audaciously satirical works lampoon 'honour' and 'bravado' as the specious values undergirding devastation.

Many of Sahil's meditations on the aesthetic and contemplative value of the everyday reflect Arif Mahmood's and Roohi Ahmed's examinations of the quotidian intricacies of life and the pursuit of survival and self-sufficiency in a teeming metropolis—Karachi. Meanwhile, his observations on identity, nationality, and collective memory,

are relatable to Mahbub Shah, who complicates notions of national identity by deconstructing the symbolism of the flag and Imran Channa, who questions memory – collective, blurred, or constructed – as and when it serves individual and collective self-perceptions.



Waheeda Baloch, *Mithoo, Sahil, and Frida*
Pastel on paper
2008

Shahid Rassam, a visual artist, finds inspiration in Ghalib's stunning surrealist imagery. Rassam identified that traces of the idiosyncratic style featured in Ghalib's verses nearly one-hundred and fifty years prior to the western surrealist movement's formal inception in the early 20th century. To show just how closely the poet's abstractions precluded surrealist thought, Rassam read quotations demonstrating direct parallels between Ghalib and the words of western philosophers.

Invoking contemporary South Asian thinkers, Rassam pondered on Ghalib's rich language and abstractions, suffused with personal, social, political, religious, and mystical references, with which the young Rassam established an early intimacy. While

he has read Ghalib since childhood, the artist's discovery of the poet and his many dimensions has been ceaseless, consistently broadening the canvas of his visual and emotive expression through a 30 year career. Presenting a selection of his works, Rassam recited Urdu verses that informed his expression, with their English translations. Ghalib's meditations on human conditions of grief, longing, and desire were of particular resonance:

"Matters of grief and the bondage of life are but
the same
Why should a man be afraid of grief before his
death?"

.....
Smoke rises from the candle after it is snuffed
out
The flame of love wore the black robe of longing
after my death"

Surrealism's appeal, Rassam posited, lies in its positively "destructive" effect, which shatters any influences that "shackle" our perspectives on reality or our visions for progress. To illustrate this point, Rassam turned to a contemporary writer, who identified that surrealist poetry is not potently evocative for mere aural aesthetics or eloquence but because it offers a poetic route to a more decisive world vision, clinched by Ghalib in verses such as the following:

"Entrust yourself to non-existence
If you want to know your worth
.....
My every breadth is a wave of the ocean of
ecstasy
I do not complain of the indifference of the cup-
bearer
.....
All through my life, I was nagged by the thought
of death
My face was pale in apprehension even before I
took flight"

Poets have exhibited a singular ability to capture strange realities and the most seemingly inexplicable thoughts in pithy phrases since time immemorial. Ghalib's comment on the tragedy of human desire is one

such example. The poet wrote:

"I worship lightning
But am remorseful of the gain"

We are, Ghalib believed, sometimes tormented by the very things we most deeply desire, both for privation and for unanticipated outcomes. After all, the desirous often forget that the sparkle of lightning sets ablaze all it finds in its course. "Freedom" is, in Rassam's view, one such idealised desire of the modern age. Few understand its essence, often seeking incomplete or superficial trappings of the ideal, thereby self-imprisoning themselves in a web of dissatisfaction. While working on one of his sculptures, Rassam turned to the poet, who weighed in on the paradox of freedom using imagery of a chained figure that was born free. Ghalib thus helped Rassam revisit and deconstruct his own meanings and expectations from the ideal, which is rendered illusive by the social and psychological contradictions of human activity.



Shahid Rassam, *Kafir I I*
Oil on Canvas
122 x 91 cm
2018

Sanki King, born Abdullah Khan, traced the origins of his pseudonym to childhood play. Friends christened him 'sanki' (eccentric) based on his characteristic temperament while playing counter-strike. King's early inclination to activities and street arts – hip-hop, b-buoying, parkour, and beat-boxing – that society traditionally considered 'crazy' earned him notoriety. Ambient voices either deemed his interests too dangerous or inappropriate, based on culturally prejudicial preconceptions associated with class, race, and national origin. King nonetheless persisted, adopting the moniker once given in jest, to take ownership of his personality and creative interests.

King spent his formative years in Saudi Arabia, where his father, a polyglot of 19 languages, was an interpreter. The artist fondly recalled his childhood home as a 'literature haven,' where he enjoyed access to his father's library and to his seven elder sisters' sub-libraries. The young King, immersed in classic and contemporary Urdu novels, poems, plays, magazines, and journals, drew inspiration from Juan Elia and Shafiq-ur-Rahman. When he reached adolescence, King's father deepened intellectual discourse, introducing him to the layers of history and shaping context around the legacies of poets like Ghalib and Iqbal.

Young trauma influenced King's dependence on the arts as an expressive space. He lost his mother at nine, and his father, who anchored his intellectual curiosity, died when he was a mere 21. Although the ensuing years were isolating, his passion for art, King emphasised, enabled him to bare out inner thoughts, conflicts, insecurities, and frustrations. Emotional afflictions paved a spiritual awakening, since King learned to cultivate a network of enduring human relationships after recognising that no single presence is eternal. With this new disposition, King began questioning writers whose word he hitherto accepted as sacrosanct, discovering new thinkers like Mushtaq Ahmed, from the east, and Machiavelli, from the west.

Returning to earlier influences after this catharsis, King found fresh perspectives and undiscovered meanings and techniques in the words of his beloved

writers, poets, and lyricists. He no longer read their words as passive or unprocessed commentaries on observed realities. The thinkers had, in fact, mastered the craft of reifying the emotive and theoretical worlds of their imagination, of their internal cerebral dialogue, in tangible, readable, relatable words. King came to acknowledge decisively wider meanings of art for he discovered that writers, musicians, fine artists, and cultural contributors, in general, do not function in isolation but share bonds of mutual-inspiration.

At the time of his initial introduction to hip-hop culture and graffiti art, King was fixated on technical consistency and line-quality. Artistic expression was punctuated by stricter letter formations, aesthetic soundness, and scale. Showcasing works from 2014 to 2017, King demonstrated maturing confidence as he became nimbler while deploying line, colour, and texture. King actualised his literary stimuli in evocative visuals for his maiden solo exhibition at Karachi's Sanat Gallery in 2016. The collection entered an experimental space, where the artist explored fresh possibilities with attributing visual meaning to and expressing intimacy with the written word, as a vibrant, animated form. Describing the process behind his large calligraphic mural, *Solitude*, King elaborated on his evolving stylistic fluidity in subsequent years. The red text in the middle of the mural features a *ghazal* by Juan Elia, whereas the bordering green formations draw from ballads in English. The stirring spectacle, rendered in King's now emblematic calligraphic style, disjoined the continuity of Urdu's *Nastaliq* script into discrete letters.

Educations that are dogmatic, punishing, or that forcefully "stuff knowledge down students' throats" are, King conclusively reckoned, pernicious for human development. As someone who grew up in a literary household that fostered a love for reading, only to realise that many peers consider books tedious, difficult, or a simply haunting reminder of oppressive schooling, King observed that people often grow to vehemently reject that which is forced on them through intimidation as children. The consequences can be tragic, for we could end up in a society that resents books, knowledge, and ideas instead of wholeheartedly engaging with them.



Sanki King, *Solitude*, Installation
9×19 ft; enamel, acrylic, spray on canvas & wall, 2016

After foraying into abstraction during a postgraduate degree in Graphic Arts in Kyoto, **Sabah Husain** shifted narratives, incorporating research on South Asian arts in her practice. She contextualised her presentation, titled 'Negotiating a Third Space,' with the following statement:

"I see myself as a cultural anthropologist, exploring and mapping particular areas of interest and concern as I move between cultures, experimenting and exploring concepts. I am interested in what Edward Said said about culture and imperialism. What is cultural imperialism? Essentialism? What was the representation of the 'other'? Could representation exist outside binary oppositions between contemporary and traditional, art and craft, abstraction and realism, west and east? Could there be a 'Third Space'?"

Husain's *Ragmala Series*, conceived in the late 1980s, drew references from and narrowed in on the elementals of music, dance, and literature—time, space, and dimension. Works in this series were inspired by Rajasthani paintings of various schools, where not just the image but the Rasa theory emphasising the emotive force of art, as expounded in Bharat Muni's *Natyashastra*, takes precedence. Husain's influences, however, are not limited to a single South Asian epoch but fluidly

range from eastern to western artists, exploring the liminal space between aural and visual art.

After Husain featured Faiz Ahmed Faiz's verses in a paper-work piece following her time in Japan, poetry became more prominent in her practice. The celebrated Urdu poet, Noon Meem Rashid, and his abstractions on time, the artistic journey, and the transitions of life, specifically in his four-part series, *Hasan Koozagar* ('Hasan the Potter'), became an enduring muse. The poem, set in Baghdad, on the scenic banks of the river Tigris, is framed as an allegory. Characters are symbolic reminders of personal and civilisational growth and decay at four distinct stages in the poet's life, congruent with Husain's own personal and artistic trajectory. Rashid's verses thus enabled her to pause and reflect on time and its uncharted dimensions. Love was an emotion that Rashid distinguished for its power to alter our sense of time—to change how we perceive the distance between every moment, offering readers perspective on the importance of going beyond death and celebrating transitory life. The concept of *Kalachakra* ('wheels of time'), which subsumes within itself all kinds of time (astrological, mythical, cosmic, sacred, and calendrical), persistently features in her work, tracing the many moods and phases, silences and dissonances, inertias and transitions, or simple highs and lows of an artist's life.

Husain's series, *Folios from the Baghdad Manuscripts*, she remarked, directly educes elements that condense Rashid's striking mastery of visual stimulation through written meaning. Citing one such work, Husain demonstrated how she used visual references of the ceramic pot from an Indus Valley artefact and multiplied its deconstructed form in mirror-imagery, as a nod to Rashid's abstractions on the "body as a vessel." She then linked this reference to Rumi's immortal ruminations on human life, which is, in Semitic theology, constructed by the creator from clay and earth only to eventually become one with earth. Other elements, which feature in Husain's work, include the double-helix symbolising connections between the human spirit across time immemorial, the paper boat representing journeys through life,

hues evincing mood, and occasional departures to pure poetic calligraphy for an emphasis on the poet's message.

Husain's conclusive remark drew on a paper installation from the *Folios* series. Complete with black, finely crafted ceramic ramekins on a blazed surface, the work essays the destruction that contemporary politics and war have wreaked on Baghdadi life, culture, and interactivity.



Sabah Husain, *Folios from The Baghdad Manuscript*, Installation [Detail]
Sumi ink, acrylic, watercolour; crayons, coloured pencil on bamboo paper and indigo dyed paper; with clay vessels, ash, and burnt manuscripts.
37" x 72"
2017



Folios from The Baghdad Manuscripts, Installation
Sumi ink, acrylic, watercolour; crayons, coloured pencil on bamboo paper; and indigo dyed paper; with clay vessels, ash, and burnt manuscripts.
37" x 72"
2017

Offering Written Testimony to History and Life

Signalling the transition from artists to writers and poets, Aquila Ismail identified that the former divulged how they reify words in visual form, while the latter are concerned with provoking graphic and sensory stimulation in lettered form. Offering "inconvenient testimonies" erased from official histories, writers contributing to the country's cultural and creative corpses continue to upend extremist narratives, addressing and assuaging fissures born from violence, distrust, and intensified global surveillance.

While growing up, the poet and writer, **Syed Kashif Raza** was not just inclined to poetry but beguiled by the sound of music, by the grace and power in a game of cricket, and by objects of beauty. He explained his chosen vocation by way of a confessional quip, stating he was "not skilled enough to translate [beautiful things] in drawings, so [he] tried to paint them in words." Enveloped by violence and strife as an adult, however, this consummate admirer of beauty turned to deconstructing social ruptures, hoping to expose and obliterate the ugliness that impedes harmony.

Raza lamented the immunity to violence that he observes in his people by reading verses of protest after repeated episodes of violence in early 2017. Writing that "the lines I was meant to draw on paper can now be traced on my body," the poet raised a sense of urgency in society's apparent sluggishness to its own escalating devastation. Raza, in part, attributed this moral listlessness to proliferating social media influences. He worries that, by impressing a taste for constructed fantasies, such channels allow a privileged few to inhabit false realities even as the world around them descends into chaos.

Raza then read a verse commenting on how fears of violent backlash breed anxious reticence among witnesses of oppression. "The brain eating amoeba is," Raza sallied, "with our air and environment, also available in 'government packaging,'" whilst cautioning that resignation to silence is akin to closing one's mind off and alienating oneself from

life's vitality. Raza, nonetheless, conceded that the cost of candour, of living more, of demanding better in regimes of silence is grave—possibly, death. Referencing another verse, however, Raza clarified that death holds a singular appeal in the face of repression. Dark and disquieting, the poem is written from the perspective of the departed, who are grateful for finding life in death; circumstances might otherwise have driven them to suicide.

While verses of protest are the need of the hour, Raza maintained that he is, nonetheless, devoted to life's beauty and optimistically seeks deliverance in love. He thus concluded by reciting a zestier *ghazal* about life, beauty, and perception, wherein his only affliction is that of finding something in the Universe that can measure against the beauty of his beloved.

Saira Ghulam Nabi struck a friendship with books in her childhood, forging a bond that has endured throughout her life. Voicing her appreciation for artists, who record reality or reify ideas with line, shape, and colour, Nabi echoed Raza's reflections on writing as a pursuit to "draw a picture with words." Infinitely grateful for finding her career in this passion, Nabi uses her literary space as a writer to lend a voice to those who are silenced and compromised by the malice of power and socioeconomic inequality.

The short story Nabi read for the roundtable, titled *Sehmi Hui Tasveer* ('A Repressed Picture'), scrutinises the cruelties, and consequent psychological trauma, rooted in hierarchies of the capitalist order. Set in a framing workshop, the story explores the terror, insecurity, and sense of inferiority that is imposed on workers under the tyranny of their *seth* (master). Inhabiting the consciousness of a worker, Nabi incisively underscores the damage that power inflicts on the powerful. After all, the master is nothing short of a bitter, sluggish, irrational, and unbecoming character, whose authoritarian contempt for his supposed "subordinates" betrays the dissonances that fester in his own insecure assertion of power.

Shakil Jafri's tryst with literature began nearly 50 years ago when he was 12. Over the course of his

career, the writer and poet cultivated an interest in literature's shifting significance through time. While no two literary epochs are comparable, Jafri held that connections between its role in the now and yesterday can still be sought, as reflected in an autobiographical account of his evolving relationship with literature.

Growing up in a family of 10, Jafri drew on different family members' varied literary interests. While his personal account chronicled emotions of adolescent love and adult discoveries of the bitterness of unrequited love, Jafri also delved into expanding literary, social, and political influences as he matured. He harked back to the plethora of 20th century Urdu-language writers, who filled his universe, and to a dormant interest in western thinkers, who took him longer to read and absorb. A politicised family, with socio-political interests, subsequently shaped Jafri's inclination for progressive forums, progressive discourse, and progressive literature as a young adult. His embryonic socio-political interests, however, matured his perspective on love. Moved by Sahir Ludhianvi's *Taj Mahal*, Jafri wrote a ballad, placing love against the backdrop of the severity of Karachi life and its ambient privations and poverty, with the poetic persona asserting the courage and grandeur of his emotions despite his modest simplicity. Jafri has since followed with several poems on Karachi's recurring episodes of violence.

General Zia's authoritarian regime left a legacy with ramifications that continue to be felt today. There were many subtle and radical transformations in society and Jafri, as a poet, participated in the effort to put a mirror to society's growing apathy. Although artists, writers, and individuals who audaciously challenged the new status quo of religious and institutional repression often paid with their lives, they doggedly continued in their movement for an inclusive, tolerant, and free society. An incisive thinker, Jafri seldom misses the hypocrisies that undergird prejudice, intolerance, and social somnambulism in the face of dogmatic control and strife. Much like Raza, he thus infuses a voice of protest, rage, and urgency, hoping to stir readers about matters that do not directly

affect them but shape their larger milieu, in many of his works.

Even if ideas are eventually reified in lettered prose, poetry, or research, **Afzal Ahmed Syed** asserted that they first germinate as visual imaginaries or reveries. Circumstances and visual references suffused with chaos and devastation can, therefore, be destructive for a society's capacity to innovate and progress. Reading a contemporary's poem, Syed lamented an intellectual drain and shrinking poetic voices, which create vacuums of the very people who could have held his city's fort in circumstances of chaos, alienation, recklessness, selfish pursuits of power, and the elite's self-obsession. To elide such altering influences, sincere poetic reflection, Syed suggested, beckons a poet's reclusion.

Syed appended with more verses by the fellow poet, exploring loss, death, and a city's inability to protect its own against raging intolerance. Chronicling an episode of genocide, the poem dissects psychologies of trauma, violence, and dehumanisation, as they displace communities within the illusively 'safe space' of their own home. Framed within this context, Syed identified violence as a dominant group's unjust exertion of power. The intermingling of power and injustice, Syed reckoned, produces lethal consequences, since society's ensuing atomisation weakens it before external threats.

With desolation interlaced in the lyric of his times, it was thus only fitting for Syed to conclude with verses from his own poem, *We Need a Myriad Flowers*. Here, the poet dismantles the cruel non-causes – politics, oppression, violence, terror, and inequality – underlying countless inexcusable deaths in his city. His role in witnessing and documenting cataclysmic episodes of violence – the 1971 Bangladesh Independence War in Dhaka, the Lebanese Civil War in Beirut, and Karachi's recurrent violence – Aquila Ismail worried, could be disillusioning. When questioned whether he still sees a "glimmer of hope," however, the writer-poet responded affirmatively. Cautioning against a resignation to unjust or gruesome realities, Syed encouraged the youth to actively fight

disillusionment since they otherwise risk killing the spirit of survival. Challenging our current inequities is, Syed thus asserted, cardinal in our pursuit for progress, which keeps us alive, moving, and resilient, irrespective of life's enduring severities.

Counted among the foremost voices on Karachi, **Asad Muhammad Khan** remains a veritable optimist, relishing life through its relentless tribulations. As a writer, who produces vibrant portrayals, contextualising the layers, details, and nuances of his city's history, Khan stressed the significance of retaining self-belief. Motivation to live successfully, he deliberated, rests in knowing that "it was important to sing yesterday, it is important to sing today, and it will be ever more important to sing just like this tomorrow."

Khan has always been fascinated by music as a space that marries literary and sensuous expression. Illuminating the depth of this passion, he related an anecdote of when he chanced upon an anthology of songs by Hindustani greats – Tagore, Madan Mohan Mandvia, and Lala Rajpat Rai – in a mound of discarded books. Although he struggled with Hindi, a young Khan read the book cover-to-cover, gaining rich insight on the 600-year legacy of these lyrics, each of which explores different dimensions of emotion, moulded by different contexts, withstanding the test of time in South Asia's cultural memory.

Remarking on the lithe beauty of Khan's work, Aquila Ismail probed him on his referential sources, especially since he was far removed from idyllic country-life; he grew up in the Indian city of Bhopal and migrated to a bustling Karachi in the 1950s. Khan addressed Ismail's question by reading from an upcoming book, *Yaadein*, which chronicles the sweet idiosyncrasies of his idyllic upbringing in a city home, suffused with fond memories of his doting parents. Unlike other fathers, who organised hunting excursions, Khan's father introduced his children to the arts, deepened their thirst for knowledge, and took them to kitchens, where he tinkled their culinary interests as he cooked for and with them. With interdisciplinary intellectual curiosity at its fulcrum, Khan's childhood household was, he

remembers, indifferent to society's judgmental gaze. Religious knowledge was never dogmatic since Khan and his siblings were introduced to narratives from multiple faiths. An introduction to Jesus through art theory referencing Da Vinci's, *The Last Supper*, endures as one of Khan's most cherished memories of his father:

Reconfiguring DNAs of Creative Progress

Rahat Saeed, a guest moderator and member of the Progressive Writer's Movement, raised concerns about an increasingly atomised and disconnected world. Worried that connections between thinkers, artists, and people, in general, have diminished and been displaced by the hegemony of commerce, Saeed opined that a holistic approach to humanity and our collective creative capacities is fundamental to progress.

All speakers of the roundtable identified that literature and visual arts share ideas and truths in their pursuit to offer testimony to fractured realities. Saeed, however, observed that, while the participating artists directly cited writers, poets, and language as inspirations behind their works, the writers did not focus on the role artists play in

informing the written word. The writers, instead, felt connected to artists by their motive to generate visual impressions with words. Saeed further apprehended that such invisible fissures might run deeper since artists who are firmly rooted in literary traditions are swiftly becoming an exception as opposed to the rule.

With technology influencing the growing precedence of the image – still or moving – over oral traditions and the eloquence of language becoming abbreviated by sound bites and 'quick speak,' ours is an era that beckons reimagined limits of interactivity between creative modes. While the conversation aired underlying disconnects between the arts, its diverse amalgam of speakers nonetheless acknowledged their symbiotic contributions as thinkers and witnesses to society. The historic, embryonic, and prospective connexions that can be drawn between their creative vocations thus mark promise for mutating DNAs of creativity, capable of consistently renewing collective outlooks on experience, expression, and resistance in even the most fractured times.

Umme Hani Imani



(from left to right) Aquila Ismail, Sanki King, Syed Kashif Raza, Afzal Ahmed Syed, Waheeda Baloch



(from left to right) Shahid Rassam, Rahat Saeed, Saira Ghulam Nabi, Shakeel Jafri, Asad Muhammad Khan

Fourth Roundtable: With and Without Rupture

In Pakistan, new technologies, burgeoning electronic media, and collaborative interests passed the integration of music in Contemporary Art, specifically video and performance art, around the late 1990s. Boundaries have continued to collapse with the subsequent proliferation of 'sound art.' Its growing influence as an expressive mode, which hinges on sonic design to evoke visual and spatial stimulation, has created a new provocative space between two artistic disciplines.

Pakistan's music industry, on the other hand, suffered a blow for intensifying violence, uncertainty, and economic decline in the late 1990s and 2000s. Rising religiosity led to music's fallacious branding as a foreign perversion. Meanwhile, large-scale concerts, a cherished activity of the 1980s, were frequently cancelled for a declining sense of security and fear of violence. Since access and opportunities were often monopolised by a privileged few, contracting spaces for music led to heightened insecurity for music-makers, exposing them to exploitation and disillusionment.

KB CKL's last roundtable, **'With and Without Rupture,'** held at Alliance Française on 20th May 2017, addressed the subtle alterations, evolutions, and departures that musicians and sound artists have witnessed and participated in as Pakistanis. It was, in this stream, a seminal dialogue between a group of artists – Waheeda Baloch, Razin Rubin, Zeerak Ahmed, Ustad Shahid Hamid, Schehzad Mughal, Yousuf Kerai, Burgees Bans, and Leena Ahmed – whose experimentations hinge on a fluid spectrum of vocations including visual art, sound design, instrumental expertise, music composition, and music production. Together, they examined the struggles, tools, and collaborations that inform their evolving practices; reflected on experimental motivations during periods of struggle; and forecasted futures of interdisciplinary partnerships for innovation.

Reifying Sound in Visual, Social, and Interactive Space

Waheeda Baloch, a visual artist, has both a professional and personal interest in music. While the artist incorporates musical pieces in her performance works, she considers herself privy to a musician's ongoing struggles courtesy her marriage to Schehzad Mughal. As a music producer, Mughal, who joined the industry in 1987, is, Baloch reckoned, specifically concerned with shrinking opportunities and obstacles with securing deserved remunerations for music-makers. The challenges facing Pakistani music, especially since 2000, thus feature in ongoing conversations between the couple.

Focusing on *The 'Left' to Choose*, her collaborative performance with Mughal, Baloch clarified that she is not a sound artist, for she does not create or work with sound bites, but a visual artist, whose unrestrained performative expression plays off the energy of live music. The work reflects on Baloch's other vocations – curator and art historian – for its facile social commentary, pushing audiences to confront and ponder those threads of their cultural fabric that suffer artificial suppression or violent erasure. Baloch's redolent visual and gesticular motifs thus respectively reference the Indus Valley Civilisation's red brick and its 'dancing girl' (a bronze female figurine found at Mohenjo-Daro). Baloch fondly reminisces playing with red bricks, which have endured as an architectural material over millennia, in her childhood. Fallacious narratives of traditional propriety, an Arabisation of Muslim identity, and the scramble for socioeconomic success have, however, marginalised creative vocations like music, art, and performance – veritable parts of South Asia's cultural heritage – to the fringes of indignity in Pakistan.

Baloch, who had blisters on her feet by the end, vacillated between embodying a labourer's plight

and society's gratuitous desire for free entertainment, which renders the musician's art and effort invisible. Physically separating herself from Mughal by a red brick wall, she therefore performed visceral gestures of contention while he played notes of aggression, love, and peace to demonstrate the mutable moods of music and the musician's conflicted consciousness.

The phrase *The 'Left' to Choose*, Baloch mused, is a play on the bizarre paradox of choosing a creative vocation since individuals who presume autonomy over their career are nonetheless degraded as "those who couldn't do better." After all, even as people in the arts escape social expectations when they eschew traditionally valued careers in medicine, law, engineering, finance, or the likes, society erroneously and boorishly dismisses their work as ineffectual. Coupled with sparse opportunities and challenges with sustainability, the disregard adds a layer of insecurity that can dissuade even the most confident and prodigiously talented artists.



Waheeda Baloch and Schehzad Mughal
The 'Left' to Choose
Performance
2014

Razin Rubin, an emerging artist with an interest in sound's influence on social space, revisited an experimental project that amalgamated performance and public engagement. The work was inspired by an experience during her residency with Vasl Artists Collective. While exploring Karachi's locales, the residency's five artists (from Afghanistan, Lahore, and Karachi) met a gentleman who shared anecdotes of his parent's experiences during Partition. When probed further, however, he refused to divulge for his distrust of creatives who heard his story and used it in their work without according him due acknowledgment in the past. Rubin thus became

interested in seeing what happens when people, whose voices are otherwise muffled or marginalised, find an opportunity to express themselves.

The artist sourced a pickup truck, on which she installed six large loudspeakers (a loaded reference to the Muslim clergy's socio-political control through the loudspeaker) and 10 microphones. Parked in Karachi's Kashmir Colony, the truck welcomed all – children, shopkeepers, hawkers, passers-by, and neighbourhood dwellers – to participate and say whatever they wished. Rubin shared some amusing and insightful vignettes to describe how the project engaged with its temporary milieu. She recalled the little girl who, when invited to speak, ran to find her brother. The brother, who could not decide what to say despite his eagerness to speak in a mic, was encouraged to begin with a simple 'hello.' Before long, the two were comfortably conversing, attracting 20-30 children as the buzz disseminated over loudspeakers. In another comically endearing instance, a man requested the mic since he was locked out and needed his brother to open the house door for him. Later, when two elderly men showed disapproval over the noise, Rubin quelled suspicions by explaining that she simply hoped for neighbourhood denizens, young or old, to sing, speak, or express themselves as desired. Right when she had managed to convince them about her "programme" (event), they heard a loud thud. A third man broke her amplifier! Although worried co-workers prompted Rubin to indoor safety, she was comforted by reassuring neighbourhood dwellers, who showed appreciation for the unusual activity and apologised for unanticipated damage.



Razin Rubin, *Chinese Whisper*
Six horn speakers, 10 microphones with 10 mic-stands, amplifier; wires, and a Suzuki pick up
15 minutes
Kashmir Colony, Karachi

Zeerak Ahmed spoke of her fascination with electronic media and hardware as mediums for generating elusive sounds to reify space and visual imagery. Ahmed frequently journeys between three continents with members of her tripartite collective, TBP, all of whom are currently pursuing Masters' degrees through the Transart Institute. Despite their independent practices, all three employ similar hardware and their sensibilities converge over a singular "sonic core." Danial Hyatt is a video-game programmer and developer; Abi Tariq is a text and performance artist, while Ahmed primarily focuses on installations and performance work. The three do not simply consider themselves music-makers or electronic producers but value their collaborative artistry in creating spatial sound installations that interact with and draw from minimalist environmental objects (natural or industrial) in a process called 'sampling.' Further delving into the spatial qualities of sound, Ahmed recalled participating in a recent exhibition at the Amin Gulgee Gallery. Her intervention, which invited visitors into a beaker-shaped enclosure with music blasting on them, forced people to test their ability to withstand their own company and to engage with their own senses. Observing different people's varying thresholds within this sonic corral was, Ahmed reflected, revelatory.

Ahmed initially hesitated to participate in Gulgee's *The Seventies Show*, which he co-curated with Nilofur Farukh. She reminded him that she is a '90s kid,' too young to understand the decade except through her parents' anecdotes. The curators, however, welcomed her perspective and thus began Ahmed's curious journey, traversing the in-betweens of familial conversations, stories, half memoirs, and half-truths. For Ahmed, sound is not merely elusive but a tool for concretising memory and enlivening auditory impulse in physical and visual forms. One way she reified this was through compass-mapping, marking sounds with tape on a cardinal plane and constructing them in sculptural pieces of steel. Working with sculpture raised interesting questions about an object's many dispositions; all informed by an interplay of its passive and dominant elements. Ahmed's project and the concerns it raised finally came together in

an exhibition and a live-performance, in which she routed down a bass note while collecting disparate sounds in sculptural speakers, at the FOMMA DHA Arts Centre (now closed). While many of her works seem meditative, Ahmed shares an equal appreciation for theatricality, which she found during an ensemble show at the National Academy of Performing Arts. Body, formation, and sound coalesced to shape expression in this non-linear narrative, where each artist performed a separate piece.

Ahmed's personal music project, *Slowspin*, grounds her engagement with a wider local audience beyond her independent and collective art practices. Influenced by a fixation on temporality, specifically its disjoined form as 'tempo-rality,' and by an interest in ambient sounds, Ahmed enjoys using the delay pedal to manipulate sound through distorted time and exploring echoes and reverb as modes of dialogue with the self. As an artist who contemporaneously inhabits the related but distinct worlds of sound artists and local indie-musicians, Ahmed hopes to continue in her quest to shape mood and manipulate perceptions of space through sound.



TBP
Recall
Sound Installation
2016



Zeerak Ahmed
c(h)ord – I
Sound sculptures
2017

A trained vocalist, instrumentalist, and author of a book on South Asian Classical Music, **Ustad Shahid Hamid** introduced himself as a fine artist, who draws, does calligraphy, and bears an avid interest in music. Drawing lessons, a fascination with film, and film art shaped Hamid's childhood preoccupations. While music was a foremost passion, he was not confident in pursuing it for fears of rejection from a religiously conservative family. When he finally started learning music, playing the *tabla*, harmonium, and *sitar*, however, Hamid's teacher noted his fine vocal skills. Although he trained extensively with traditional teachers, Hamid attributes his nuanced discovery of the art, its methodology, and its theoretical underpinnings to books and to becoming a teacher himself. Notwithstanding the passion, Hamid spoke of a meandering life trajectory through multiple disciplines, including his long stint at the State Bank of Pakistan until 2010, when he finally requested an early-retirement to fully devote to his musical calling.

Hamid drew attention to the eloquence and emotive power of sensuous gestures, fundamental to both art and music as channels of human thoughts, insecurities, and joys. Describing the many moods and emotions that musical notes reflect and create, he mused on their visual qualities in the realm of colour: *Sa*, the first note in Hindustani classical music, is, he proclaimed, a happy note with a cool temperature, denoted by the colour black. This phenomenon is visible in 17th Century South

Asian Art, which evinced a singular intimacy with the vibrant pictorial quality of sound by homing in on each of the seven notes' specific visual and emotional tenor. Unopposed to progress, Hamid nonetheless laments how classical forms have been marginalised by the force of popular trends and the market.

Hamid's succinct coda of his interdisciplinary outlook drew on his close artist friend's remark that his work is not done, not done right, until he successfully finds a voice in his paintings. He mused that the converse applies to music, where a musician's sound remains unemotive, hence uninfluential, until it is touched by the vibrant aesthetic of colour.

When **Schehzad Mughal** embarked on a musical career in 1987, internet and multimedia had yet to become the boundless sources of knowledge they now are. Despite his relative lack of exposure, Mughal was driven by curiosity's impulse, seizing every opportunity to attentively grasp synthesised sounds, especially Western sounds, on the radio. He often cut-off from people and devoted hours to musical experiments. While guitar was his preferred instrument, Mughal was riveted by arrangement; keen to discover how sound is layered, how individual contributions are prioritised, and how final compositions are synthesised. Experimentation was, of course, undergirded by theory; he purchased several books to master the complexities of different sounds and their interactions. The young musician was therefore quick to accept that his zeal for discovery entailed iteration, correction, and perfection since every accomplishment paved way for new goals that required resuming from scratch.

Mughal recalled that the changing music scene in the late 1990s and early 2000s roused apprehension about whether music and its essence had changed fundamentally. He firmly asserted that music, rooted in core knowledge, is the "fulcrum." Expression, shaped by emotion, is what he thinks changed. After all, several external factors – socio-political unrest, financial insecurity, and market forces – afflicted many a musician's psychology. Waheeda Baloch earlier alluded and he expounded that his role as

a Music Producer was his chief source of tension; there was growing uncertainty over how young musicians, eager to experiment and desirous of recognition, could be facilitated in a climate of dwindling resources and shrinking opportunities. Declining album sales and frequently cancelled concerts meant diminishing profitability in the business. Mughal thus became anguished by the spectre of disillusioned artists, who could, he feared, abandon their voices if recordings and videos were not seamless or failed to reach wide audiences. Beside external circumstances, Mughal was also cognizant of dishonesties within a hyper-commoditised music industry, remarking that television channels frequently dupe artists out of earnings by claiming that the publicity on offer overrides their obligation to share royalties. Expedited music-sharing in the digital age has further exacerbated matters, especially since intellectual property laws are not sufficiently developed or implemented to stay current in Pakistan. While young artists optimistically see sponsorships as the saving grace, they fail to acknowledge that sponsors, driven by corporate interests, use the musician to sell a product and not vice-versa. Prospects for such lucrative sources of funding are thus skewed in favour of established, not aspiring, talent. Turning to his own youthful spirit, Mughal nonetheless assured that finances become immaterial in the face of an immutable passion for craft. Mughal followed his encouraging remarks with a video that captured his philosophy; the artists in it come together despite their challenges and film themselves on a handycam when preferred alternatives fail. Perseverance even without the best resources is, he asserted, inherent to the spirit of success.

Mughal also offered a pithy response to Ustad Shahid Hamid's remarks from his personal outlook on artistry and expression. While he does not consider himself particularly attentive to the colours or mood of sound, Mughal agreed that music compositions do indeed serve as channels of thought, emotion, and frustration. Thoughts that he is closely attached to but fears that none of his close associates will understand commonly make their way into his work, powered by the hope that they might, after all, find a discerning listener:

While Mughal explored the costs of ambition, **Yousuf Kerai** traced struggles that helped him discover his passion; passion for a struggling art. Opening with his track, *The Essence of South Asia*, Kerai, a mathematician and skilled *tabla* player, brought a unique interdisciplinary perspective to the dialogue. Inclined to the visual arts and deft at maths, he chose to study architecture, often considered the most viable and lucrative amalgam of his interests, for his bachelor's degree. Kerai's initial time at Bennington, an American Liberal Arts College, was troubled. He did not find architecture as engaging as planned and his architecture professor was the first to identify and insist that music was Kerai's true calling. While he enjoyed collaborations with cross-disciplinary artists including dancers, jazz pianists, and contemporary musicians, Kerai was predisposed to his formative training in Hindustani classical music and chose not to pursue a music degree in the West. He instead found a creative channel for his interests, rendering musical notes into architectural space or vice-versa and developed a visual vocabulary for sound until he finally found an alternative passion, majoring in mathematics.

Upon returning home, Kerai, who "re-established [his] musical moorings" and resumed practice with Ustad Khurshid Hussain, discovered that the post-2000s were plagued by narrow assumptions about what sounds and music are saleable with audiences. While it was tempting to assume a purist stance and disparage trends, Kerai became interested in contemporary culture, seeking linkages or opportunities for collaboration. The exercise made him realise that producers and audiences naturally lean toward sounds that are familiar and easy to produce in the studio, unlike the *sitar* and *tabla*. Such factors are compounded by a relative absence of historical and musical knowledge, which gives young audiences who are already saturated with global influences little context to appreciate classical music, posing a serious existential challenge for the form.

Pakistan's musical and cultural landscape today is, Kerai lamented, obscured by the influence of billboard culture and market pressures, designed

to appeal to the audience's basest consumptive instincts. So even as some might argue that billboards and sponsored platforms are, despite corporate invasiveness, an art form connecting people, Kerai worries that there are few ways of avoiding their manipulative role in luring people towards certain themes or products. Though many laud *Coke Studio*'s popular fusions for reviving wide interest in South Asian musical traditions, Kerai aired measured scepticism about its intentions and impact as an 'experimental space.' Commercial interests aside, it must be noted that fewer artists have successfully released independent studio albums since its inception. Conversely, the space has, he believes, given some young artists a much-needed platform and recognition. From an artistic perspective, however; Kerai was clear that its 'experimental fusions,' preceded by such icons as Zubin Mehta, Ustad Zakir Hussain, and John McLaughlin, are not nearly as cutting-edge as presumed. He also fears the platform's influence on Hindustani classical music's future. Although classical musicians are sometimes part of the line-up, such inclusions, as he earlier implied, need more than a merely 'exotic' or prettying role and must hinge on truly collaborative experiments in sound. As it stands, however; one could worry that *Coke Studio* joins an already unhealthy and artificial contest between classical forms, folk genres (which are, he acknowledges, a veritable part of South Asia's diversely rich musical heritage), and the monumental influence of Bollywood music.

Classical music was fossilised in the Mughal Empire, where *khayal* and *thumri* vitally featured in *kothas* (courtesan establishments), which were once centres of cultural and artistic etiquette but were later relegated to 'brothel' status with the twilight of Mughal rule. Kerai, who remains progressive about the shifting currents of time, maintained that classical forms must evolve with contemporary sensibilities to triumphantly emerge from near oblivion. After all, audience interest cannot be presumed, especially where society suffers from contextual erasure and negligible access to music education. Kerai is thus deeply motivated by the question of whether he can, with classical music, pique an uninitiated listener's interest; that is, he believes, a critical step

in giving classical musicians the patronage, security, and recognition they deserve. While *ghazal* is a potent form of poetic eloquence, Kerai posited that music sometimes ought to be freed from the written word and appreciated for its pure melodies. He thus curates instrumental fusions, juxtaposing elements that are enjoyed in South Asian music with other musical genres, to offer audiences a novelty of sound. Though his work might appear revolutionary, Kerai carefully highlights that such experimental ventures are not particularly new to the world of music.

Though he is, like Ahmed and Rubin, intrigued by sound's interactions with space and visual imagery, Kerai wishes to scale such projects up and create citywide sound installations. For, while he sees the process of seeking accessible frames of reference for classical music – fundamentally abstract and obscured by time – as a sticky challenge, its triumph could create space for widened vocabularies of musical thought in a society that is largely unexposed to music education.

The events that prompted **Barjees Buns's** initial collaborations with bandmate, Rizwan Ullah, reflect on their instinctual chutzpah. Buns, who spent several early years earning comfortably as a Saxophonist in the Islamabad Marriott's jazz band, was forced to return to Karachi upon his father's passing. He met Rizwan Ullah when they were both coincidentally buying Indian music. At the time, they shared in the tedium of playing within restrictive genres and echoed a desire to start a new venture, combining modern and contemporary sounds with Hindustani and folk tunes. Buns fondly reminisces that this was a new phase of discovery, when he started playing the violin and *meena*; Rizwan Ullah helped him develop an ear for *qawali* and Sufi music. Their preference for acoustic over electronic sounds meant that experiments primarily happened in jam sessions and live performances. Although Buns considered some of their collaborative sounds transcendental, he ultimately took a break to play the trombone and trumpet in the St. Patrick's marching band.

When he returned in 2010, Rizwan Ullah inducted

him in a new venture, Azad Sur. Azad Sur identifies as a “folk-fusion Pakistani acoustic organic jam band.” Their process is arguably transpositional to Keraï’s approach. The classical *tabla* player’s experimentations and pursuit to seek a vocabulary connecting contemporary local audiences with South Asia’s rich musical heritage seem rooted in curated investigation, practice, selection, and alteration. Meanwhile, Buns and Azad Sur pride in their unstructured style, guided by improvisation and an impulse to find listeners in atypical spaces – farmer’s markets, galleries, parks, and other public places. Buns and Faran Qureshi, his bandmate in the audience, highlighted that they avoid practice since they consider spontaneity, synchronisation, and coordination the basis of their experimental evolution. Unconstrained by methods, patterns, or tunes, their sound takes shape within the context (space, atmosphere, audience, mood) of each performance. The guilelessness translates in Buns’s outlook on the band’s success for he admitted that they have yet to garner notable popularity or a following. They play, instead, to enrich themselves and uphold the extemporary spirits of folk music and ‘street art,’ especially in circumstances where Karachi’s streets have grown progressively hostile to such forms of engagement.

Leena Ahmed, the roundtable’s final speaker, channels a nuanced sensitivity for the tenor of Hindustani classical melodies into evocative interdisciplinary works. A practicing architect, Ahmed is distinguished as Pakistan’s first formally trained woman *tabla* player and is now being trained in Western classical music. Strengthened by her broad knowledge-core, Ahmed spoke of experiments with the visual and aural vocabulary accrued by her many vocations. Her work, whether independent or collaborative, whether visual art or audio composition, consistently challenges genres and limited taxonomies, which strain to classify the potency of sensory expression.

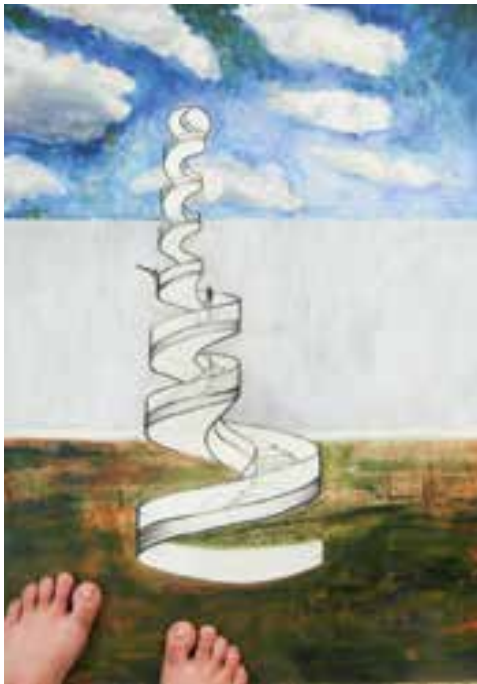
While she has received training from the great Ustad Abid Hussain, enjoyed several distinctions, and performed on influential platforms like the All Pakistan Music Conference, Ahmed’s spirit lies in her experimental audacity. Frequently questioned

about her decision to return to a childhood passion for music and for “wasting her architecture degree,” Ahmed asserted that knowledge is not disposable; like energy, it transfers and transforms. After all, her music, art, and architecture bear relationships of mutual-influence, helping her bridge and complicate cognitive distinctions between art and music, classical and popular; and the all too nebulous ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western.’

Ahmed’s pursuit for a visual vocabulary of sound is distinguished by her fascination with deconstructing the architecture of classical notes. The *Taal* series, for instance, plays off the spiralling quality of a *taal*, which denotes metre and timing in Hindustani classical music. The spiral staircase, which begins from the ground and moves in an upward trajectory, is Ahmed’s architectural interpretation of a *taal*’s helical sound patterns. Another project, *The Tin Dha’s Architecture*, interprets questions of sound and spatiality, pondering what forms the *tin* and *dha* take. Deep-toned *dha* sounds, Ahmed reckoned, manifest in materials like rocks or stones while metal or glass best enliven the thinner lilt of a *tin*. Rendering the invisible qualities of sound in recognisable shapes and patterns, which can be traced, followed, and explained through visual and mathematical references, can benefit Hindustani classical music’s accessibility for contemporary generations. Ahmed’s breakdown of the structural formations of sounds are thus being adopted as educational tools in India, where they could contribute to the tradition’s future endurance.

Beside her outlook on form, Ahmed also includes occasional socio-political comments in her works, as she did in *Taal Bikhari Gayee*. Based on the concept that everything in the world is rooted in a cadence, the work ponders whether contemporary society, plagued by strife and disorder, has lost its rhythm. One of Ahmed’s most fascinating audio works spurred from her 2010 study of the bus as a quotidian social space. For this installation, produced during a residency with Mauj Media Collective, Ahmed drew on noises and calls that bus conductors make while ushering passengers. The work was showcased in the *Rising Tide Exhibit* at the Mohatta Palace Museum.

Ahmed concluded with a unique genre-bender, employing the piano as the *lehra* for her *tabla* solo. The *lehra* is a melody loop that usually plays in the background to guide the beat of the *tabla* player. She cleverly incorporated a Western sound, using it to fulfil a key function, in a Hindustani classical composition.



Leena Ahmed
Taal Staircase
Mixed media
December, 2009

Evolving 'With and Without Rupture'

Superficially, the eight speakers in this roundtable can be distinguished for specific vocations and interdisciplinary interests: visual artists stirring fresh vocabularies of expression with music or sound, instrumentalists and sound artists visualising their sound, musicians concerned with engaging audiences, or artists teasing out works from a dynamic interplay of sensory forms. While variations of genre, medium, and style necessarily influence how artists manoeuvre their practices, the more interesting concern, considering contemporary technology and global exchange, addresses where artists' evolutionary processes are situated in the fluid spectrum of frameworks 'with rupture' and 'without rupture.'

"Rupture" implies radical departure where an artist's disciplinary interventions draw on unfamiliar or unanticipated points of reference, often establishing new rules of engagement with audiences. Zeerak Ahmed's response to a question about the accessibility of her work for wider audiences most patently exemplified this. She asserted that her works are not designed to attract a targeted audience or draw long-term engagement through documentation but are largely experiential and meant only to provoke or engage those who are present when the work is exhibited. She thus implied a deliberate shift from conventions of how interactions between art, the artist, and the beholder are envisioned in a local context.

Musicians such as Yousuf Kerai, Leena Ahmed, and Barjees Buns and the visual artists, Waheeda Baloch and Razin Rubin, dynamically mediate the extremities of intimacy with and departure from familiar references – sonic, spatial, or aesthetic. On the one hand, their effort to resuscitate and preserve local voices and aural or cultural threads – obscured by time and socio-political circumstance – places them in schemes of tradition. The artists, nonetheless, also function outside the familiar for their pursuit of sounds that have fallen out of the mainstream consciousness and for seeking non-traditional linkages, frames of reference, and technical shifts that will keep their sounds current with temporal and cultural contexts.

Ustad Shahid Hamid and Schehzad Mughal come closest to exemplifying evolution without rupture. Although they belong to different disciplinary perspectives as a classical musician and contemporary music producer, respectively, both follow a more introspective approach to the challenges facing historical and contemporary music traditions in Pakistan. Instead of seeking unconventional references, they both identify dissonances behind and solutions to our current challenges by returning to their disciplinary roots and personal narratives. Schehzad Mughal's collaboration with Waheeda Baloch, for example, remained within the bounds of his established genre even as it explored new synergies between the artists and their arts.

This last roundtable thus made clear that, despite sharing a desire to experiment, investigate, collaborate, and extend the limits of sensory expression, the eight speakers make vastly different contributions, with distinct positions and outlooks, in the realms of sound and art.

Developments in technology and advancing collaborations have, nonetheless, infused a new energy in their desire to resist erasures, reclaim their narratives, and innovate in sonic space.

Umme Hani Imani



(from left to right) Burgees Bans, Razin Rubin, Zeerak Ahmed, Niilofur Farrukh



(from left to right) Yousuf Kerai, Ustad Shahid Hamid, Schehzad Mughal, Waheeda Baloch

Roundtables – About the Speakers

Moderators

Nilofur Farrukh (All Roundtables)

Nilofur Farrukh is the Managing Trustee of KBT, CEO of KB, and the Chair of its Discursive Committee. Her career in the visual arts spans art criticism, art history, curation, art education, and art activism. Her book, *Pioneering Perspectives* (Ferozsons Pvt Ltd), was published in 1996 and she has since contributed to numerous publications. She is currently working on a collection of essays on Pakistan's eminent artist, Meher Afroz, and has co-edited *Pakistan's Radioactive Decade: An Informal Cultural History of the 1970s*, which was published in early 2019. She has contributed to *Intersections of Contemporary Art, Anthropology, and Art History in South Asia*, edited by Sasanka Perera and Dev Pathak.

Farrukh was the founder and Editor of *NuktaArt*, a contemporary art magazine, and a columnist with *Dawn*, writing for its op-ed section. She currently writes a monthly column for *Newsline Magazine* and contributes to *Herald* (Pakistan), *Jamini* (Bangladesh), *Depart* (Bangladesh), *Art India* (India), *Artetc* (India), and *Art Tomorrow* (Iran), among other periodicals. Her show 'No Honor in Killing—Making Visible Buried Truth', investigating gender violence as a socio-cultural phenomenon, toured five locations in Pakistan between 2007 and 2010. In 2014, she conceptualised and authored an informational booklet on the fundamental rights and reliefs that apply to women in Pakistan, titled *The Questions Pakistani Women want to Ask?*

Farrukh has served as Pakistan's Commissioner at The Asian Art Biennale, Bangladesh (2006); Tashkent Art Biennale, Uzbekistan (2009); and Kathmandu International Art Festival, Nepal. She is a nominator of the Abraaj Capital Art Prize in Pakistan and serves on the Board of Colombo Art Biennale. She was co-founder of the ASNA Clay Triennale, which was Pakistan's longest running Triennial. She has served on the Board of The State

Bank Museum and the Advisory Board of the National Art Gallery, Islamabad.

Farrukh is the President of International Art Critics Association, Pakistan (AICA) and was twice elected to serve as Vice President of AICA's International board based in Paris.

Aquila Ismail (All Roundtables)

Aquila Ismail has written extensively on development, women, and literature in newspapers and magazines. Her novel, *Of Martyrs and Marigolds*, was published in 2012 and is based on the emergence of Bangladesh from the ashes of East Pakistan. She has translated several Urdu works into English, including *Harvest of Anger and Other Stories*, *Godavari*, *Zindabahr Lane*, and *The Three Worlds*.

Her non-fiction work includes documentation of the endeavours of Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), a Karachi based development NGO. She is, at present, documenting work done by her sister, Perween Rahman, the Director of OPP, who was brutally shot by extremist assailants on 13 March, 2013.

Ismail is a former Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering at the NED University of Engineering and Technology.

Qurrat Mirza (Women as Witness)

Qurrat Mirza is a Karachi-based human rights activist, member of the Women's Action Forum (WAF), and development professional with over 12 years of experience in progressive work. She has, in the past, worked with the Asian Human Rights Commission in Hong Kong as an advocacy trainee on human rights (United Nations Mechanism), articulated several human rights violation cases, and prepared requisite petitions. During her work with the Jang Group, she was actively involved in publishing yellow papers with NGOs, corporate clients, and government departments. In her managerial experience, she has been associated

with Oxfam, UNICEF, and the Packard Foundation.

In the past few years, Mirza's work with UNICEF has focused on a non-formal education programme in Sindh. She is a member of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and a member of the Organising Committee at the Pakistan India Peoples' Forum for Peace & Democracy.

Rahat Saeed (Resisting Erasures)

Rahat Saeed is a writer, an influential literary critic, and a peace activist, whose writings deal with the socio-political aspects of society. He is the Secretary General of the Progressive Writers Association and the Founding Editor of the *Irtiqa Literary Journal*. He is also the Founder of the Irtiqa Institute of Social Sciences.

Speakers (In Chronological Order)

Meher Afroz (Women as Witness)

Meher Afroz is one of Pakistan's most renowned artists. In her career, spanning five decades, she has sustained philosophical dialogue by exploring cultural identities and the dualism of body and soul. A graduate of Government College of Arts and Crafts in Lucknow, Afroz's work embodies perceptions of sensitivity and spirituality from women's perspectives on life and history.

As an art educator, Afroz has been a widely respected mentor to several generations of Pakistani artists. She taught at the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts in the past and has recently retired after from her Senior teaching position at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. She was the founder of ASNA and a co-curator of three iterations of the ASNA Clay Triennale. She has been a part of Pursukoon, Karachi.

Afroz has exhibited extensively in Pakistan and abroad, with her works being displayed in Nepal, UAE, UK, India, Honk Kong, Iraq, Canada, Bangladesh, USA, and Australia. She is a recipient of the President's Pride of Performance honour and her art is part of institutional and private art collections all over the world.

Roohi Ahmed (Women as Witness)

Roohi Ahmed holds a graduate degree in fine

arts from the University of New South Wales, Australia. She is an Associate professor at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and has been a part of various workshops and art residencies in Pakistan and abroad. Her works in different media have been widely acclaimed, both locally and internationally.

A Karachi-based artist, Ahmed explores the relationship between ontological phenomena and human existence, examining consequences of degenerating social, political, and religious realities.

Mariam Agha (Women as Witness)

Mariam Agha is a Karachi-based fine artist and a graduate of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. She has garnered critical acclaim for works, which have been exhibited in several shows including 'No Honor In Killing-Making Visible Buried Truth,' 'Tea House,' 'Screaming Whispers,' and 'Parrhesia,' to name a few. She has been nominated for the Abraaj Capital Art Prize and has showcased her works in Spain, the USA, and the Netherlands.

Agha primarily works with yarn as her medium to explore identities, borrowed cultural theories, and the self. She also uses mixed media to represent visual imagery and concepts related to the narrative of everyday life and social institutions.

Hilda Saeed (Women as Witness)

Hilda Saeed, who holds a degree in microbiology, began with a career in teaching, medical research, and forensic science. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, her interest in activism and social development grew and she joined Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre. Issues related to reproductive and sexual health, gender, and population have been of special interest to Saeed, who is a founding member of (WAF) Women's Action Forum.

Saeed has contributed articles to *Dawn* and *Newsline* for several years and is the recipient of several awards, including the Global Media Award by the Population (Bureau for the UK Publication) and the Soroptimist Award by the Pakistan chapter of the Soroptimist Association.

Maliha Zia (Women as Witness)

Maliha Zia is an Advocate of the High Court, having practiced in Sindh and Islamabad. She primarily works in criminal, family, and constitutional law. She has worked for many years on issues relating to violence against women and the legal empowerment of women and other vulnerable communities. She also works on legislative drafting and has been involved in drafting laws related to domestic violence, honour killings, and forced conversion, among others.

She currently works with the Legal Aid Society as Associate Director.

Raheema Panhwar (Women as Witness)

Raheema Panhwar has 18 years of experience in the field of Community Development, with an emphasis on capacity building in community-based organizations, political parties, and civil society networks. Her key areas of focus are enforcing a Rights-Based Approach (RBA), combatting Gender Based Violence (GBV), and working towards Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), with an eye to organisational development and social mobilisation.

Panhwar is an expert in policy implementation for advocacy programmes with district and provincial government departments and legislators, seeking pro-people legislation and quality service delivery in the fields of health and education.

Farieha Aziz (Women as Witness)

Farieha Aziz is a Karachi-based, APNS-award winning journalist and teacher, and a co-founder and Director of *Bolo Bhi*, a digital rights and civil liberties group.

Aziz, who has a degree in English Literature, joined *Newsline* as an Editorial Assistant in 2007. She wrote on politics, women's rights, and social issues, ultimately rising to the position of Assistant Editor.

Aziz served as *amicus curiae* before the Lahore High Court in a case challenging the ban on YouTube in 2013. She has petitioned on behalf of *Bolo Bhi* in a case filed before the Islamabad High Court in 2014, challenging the government's censorship of the internet and the powers of the regulator. In 2015,

she led the campaign to stop the government of Pakistan from enacting (in its existing form) the recently passed Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016, and worked with other rights groups, business associations, legislators in the National Assembly and Senate, and the Standing Committees on IT of both Houses, to highlight its detrimental impact on civil liberties, particularly speech and privacy.

Aziz regularly conducts digital safety trainings and is a member of the Karachi-chapter of WAF.

Moeen Faruqi (Testimonies from the City)

Moeen Faruqi is a Karachi-based artist and English-language poet. His paintings convey the angst and alienation of living in an urbanised world. The artist, who has exhibited widely within Pakistan and abroad, had his most recent exhibition at the Canvas Gallery. His poems have been published in various literary journals.

Munawar Ali Syed (Testimonies from the City)

Munawar Ali Syed holds a degree in Fine Arts from the National College of Arts. He teaches in the Visual Studies department at the University of Karachi and has previously taught at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and Karachi School of Arts. Syed has had numerous solo and group shows to his credit, including exhibitions at Canvas Gallery, Rohtas Gallery, and Alliance Française de Karachi. He has also exhibited his works in the UK, USA, and Australia.

Yaminay Chaudhri (Testimonies from the City)

Yaminay Chaudhri, an artist with an architecture degree from Cornell University and an MFA from the State University of New York (Albany), has worked extensively in the space of public art and community engagement.

Chaudhri, who is primarily interested in socially engaged art projects outside the gallery-space, is a founding member of the Tentative Collective, a group of people who share resources to create interdisciplinary works of art. Their projects are designed to be site-sensitive, collaborative, and open to diverse participants, generating poetically transitory dialogue with the city's

unique rhythm and infrastructure.

Yasir Husain (Testimonies from the City)

Yasir Husain's work brings knowledge about the environment to wider communities through New Media Art and Technology, social and cultural engagement, urban farming, and education.

Husain has taught creative sustainability and Art+Tech at universities and DIY-tech as art projects in low-income schools in Karachi. An urban farmer and activist, Husain co-founded the Mauj Collective and researched 'New Media in Pakistan' for the Asia-Europe Foundation (2010). He runs Organic City, promoting green living practices, with his partner and wife, Zahra Husain. Their projects include Green Schools Pakistan (eco-friendly schools), Crops-in-Pots (grow your own food), Horticulture Therapy (mental-rehab through gardening), EcoStore (organic-food start-up), and events like Hamara Mahol at Jashn-e-Faiz.

Husain studied at the City University of New York and the University of Rochester in the United States and interned at the UN in Thailand, researching the environmental and social impacts of energy projects.

Fariha Ubaid (Testimonies from the City)

Fariha Ubaid is an Architect with bachelor's and master's degrees in Architecture and City Planning and Urban Design, respectively. She was awarded the Mehdi Ali Mirza Award, Bhai Ram Singh Award, and Sir Percy Brown Award for her academic performances.

Ubaid is currently an Associate Professor at NED University of Science and Technology, where she teaches Architecture, Design Studio, Advanced Technology in Architectural Practices, and Urbanism: Theory and Practice. As an architect, she has also designed numerous commercial, residential, public, and interior spaces.

Sahar Ismail (Testimonies from the City)

Ismail, who has a master's degree in Economics from Syracuse University, works as the Director of Programmes for Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), an NGO run by her aunt, Perween Rahman, until she

was murdered in 2013. Ismail has set up an organic farm, using recycled water, on the OPP premises in Orangi. She also runs a food security programme, where individuals, especially women, are taught how to grow vegetables in containers.

Ismail has also introduced an art education programme for teachers and children living in low income communities across Karachi, in partnership with VASL. The Karachi Biennale Trust partners with OPP in art education, having conducted several workshops in collaboration. The first reel in KB's 'Reel on Hai' programme is installed in the OPP offices.

Waheeda Baloch (Resisting Erasures; With and Without Rupture)

Waheeda Baloch is an artist, curator, and educator with degrees in Arts and Curating from the University of Sindh and Stockholm University, Sweden. She is currently pursuing a PhD at the Department of Islamic and Asian Art History in the University of Bonn, Germany. She has been engaged in research, writing, and curating exhibitions and has also worked as a performance artist. Her exhibition, *Items of Dual Use*, which was on display at the VM Art Gallery and WipKunsthal Stockholm, made its mark, bringing together conceptual art from Pakistan and Sweden. She is currently an Assistant Professor at University of Sindh (Jamshoro), where she teaches Art History.

Baloch frequently participates in international conferences and has presented papers about contemporary Pakistani art at Palacky University (Olomouc) in the Czech Republic, Penang University in Malaysia, and Zurich University in Switzerland.

Shahid Rassam (Resisting Erasures)

Shahid Rassam is a celebrated contemporary Pakistani-Canadian painter and sculptor. The name, Rassam ('the artist'), was given to him by the legendary poet, Jaun Elia.

Rassam received his primary and secondary educations from a Government school in Karachi's Korangi Township. He completed his masters' in Geology and, then, Urdu Literature from the University of Karachi. He was subsequently awarded

a scholarship by the British Council at Central Saint Martins College of Art, London in 1999. Rassam is a passionate human rights activist, educationist, and occasional writer: He has, since 2016, been the Principal of the Central Institute of Arts and Craft.

Rassam has exhibited his work around the world, including the UK, USA, Canada, France, Italy, UAE, India, and Pakistan. The famous art historian and art critic, Dr. Akbar Naqvi has authored a book, *Sense and Insanity* about Rassam's work and life; it was published in 2016.

The artist has, over time, practiced and experimented with various mediums such as oil painting, water colour, acrylic, mixed media, sculptures in gunmetal, newsprint drawing with charcoal, and the mono print technique.

Mushtaq Ahmed Yusufi, the great writer, once remarked that "Rassam does not paint with his brush but with his eyelashes."

Sanki King (Resisting Erasures)

Sanki King is a self-taught artist who is the pioneer of graffiti and calli-graffiti art, sneaker and sticker art, and b-boying in Pakistan. He is the only Pakistani artist who is a member of the most respected graffiti crews in the world, BMK (Beyond Mankind Krew) and Ex-Vandals (Experienced Vandals) in NYC. Since 2013, King has produced some of the largest graffiti works by a single artist in Pakistan and boasts a portfolio of work in seven languages. In 2015, he became the first Pakistani artist to have his works published in a global street art book called *Street Messages* by Nicholas Ganz, which included renowned artists such as Banksy.

Sanki is also a motivational speaker and has given talks all around Pakistan, most notably at YLC, TedX NUST (Karachi) and TedX NED University. Sanki lives and works in Karachi.

Sabah Husain (Resisting Erasures)

Sabah Husain is a visual artist and curator, with degrees from the National College of Arts (Lahore) and Kyoto University of Fine Arts and Music (Japan). She was an artist in residence at the department

of Indian and South East Asian Museum collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Her works have been exhibited extensively in Pakistan and across the world and are in the collection of the National Art Gallery (Islamabad, Pakistan), Victoria and Albert Museum (London, United Kingdom), and Okinawa Museum (Naha, Japan).

In 1996, she received the National Excellence Award at the 7th National Exhibition of Visual Arts, in Islamabad. In 1987, she received the Musrasaki Award at the Kyoto Museum Exhibition. Husain is also the founder and incumbent Director of the Lahore Arts Foundation. Her research interests centre on the politics of representation.

Syed Kashif Raza (Resisting Erasures)

Syed Kashif Raza is a poet, fiction writer, translator, and broadcast journalist. He has authored five books, including two volumes of poetry. His first novel, *Char Darvesh Aur Aik Katchwa* deals with socio-political and psychological issues of the younger generation after 9/11. He has written non-fiction and a volume of travel writings, *Deedam Istanbul Aur Dusri Safar Kahaniyan*, which will be published soon.

Raza's critical essays and political articles are published frequently. His Urdu translation credits include greats like Kundera, Borges, Joyce, and Chomsky.

Saira Ghulam Nabi (Resisting Erasures)

Saira Ghulam Nabi is a writer, editor, and incumbent Head of Content at Hum TV. She is the co-editor for magazines including *Khuwateen Digest*, *Shud'a, Loh*, *Aainda*, and *Mizah*.

Saira has also written inspiring short stories, most of which explore the vagaries of life and the spectre of loneliness. Her stories often explore the exploitation and frustrated rights of the impoverished and their suffering at the hands of power.

Shakil H. Jafri (Resisting Erasures)

Shakil Jafri is a prolific poet, writer, established senior journalist, and editor of *The Financial Daily*. He holds master's degrees in Economics and Business Administration from the University of Karachi. Jafri is the recipient of the *Faiz Ahmed Faiz Award* (2011)

and one of his poems has been used as the central concept in a feature film produced by *GEO*. He is also a member of the Progressive Writers Association.

Afzal Ahmed Syed (Resisting Erasures)

Afzal Ahmed Syed is an Urdu poet and translator based in Karachi. An author of modern poetry and classical *ghazals*, Syed is known for his layered poetic expressions in both classical and modern Urdu.

Syed's poetry was anthologized in *An Evening of Caged Beasts: Seven Postmodernist Urdu Poets* (New York: OUP, 1999). He has translated a wide and important body of works by contemporary poets, playwrights, and novelists and was one of the first Urdu translators of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jean Genet. His work has been widely published in leading Urdu literary periodicals such as *Shabkhood*, *Aaj*, and *Dunyazad*. Syed currently teaches at Habib University.

Asad Muhammad Khan (Resisting Erasures)

Asad Muhammad Khan is a renowned Karachi-based Urdu short story writer, lyric-poet, and television playwright. He has written several television plays and published five collections of short stories to date. *The Harvest of Anger and Other Stories*, a selection of his short stories, translated in English, was published by Oxford University Press (Karachi) in 2002 as part of its Pakistan Writers Series.

Razin Rubin (With and Without Rupture)

Razin Rubin is a Karachi-based artist from Sukkur. She received her BFA with a distinction from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi in 2016. Rubin's current work focuses on miniature painting, photography, and video. She participated in the 4th Annual Sanat Initiative Residency. Recently Rubin was a part of Taaza Tareen 9, which is an artists' residency, collaboratively organised by the Vasl Artists' Collective and the Henrich Boll Stiftung in Karachi. Rubin's highly interactive works engender dialogue about the activities and events she experiences, as a witness to her space and times.

Zeeraq Ahmed (With and Without Rupture)

Zeeraq Ahmed (AKA 'Slowspin') is a conceptual and performance artist. She constructs sound

sculptures and installations that investigate the elusive form(s) of the self. She aims to trace the desirable and undesirable physic architectures within the spaces people inhabit through spatial models and experimental sounds.

Born in Lahore in 1990, Ahmed grew up in Karachi, Pakistan. She attended Hiram College (USA), where she completed her BFA in Studio Art and Political Science in 2012. Over the last eight years, she has been exhibiting and curating work with her artist collectives, TBP and DEL/SER, and been an active member of the indie music community in Pakistan. She has performed and shown work at numerous shows and residencies and was awarded the 2016 Lux Style Award for Best Emerging Sound Artist under her pseudonym, *Slowspin*. Ahmed is currently finishing her low-residency master's degree in Creative Practice at the Transart Institute in Berlin and New York.

Ustad Shahid Hamid (With and Without Rupture)

Ustad Shahid Hamid is a vocalist, instrumentalist, and qualified music teacher. Starting with *Sitar*, *Harmonium*, and *Tabla* at the age of 18, he eventually found his forte in classical vocals. In 1976, he joined National Academy of Theatre Arts, (NATAK) in Karachi. He has performed on a wide range of platforms, including radio, TV, stage, and private gatherings. EMI recorded his music album, titled *Sham-e-Ghazal*, in early 1980s.

Hamid has also worked at the State Bank of Pakistan. He sought early retirement, in a bid to pursue his music passion, in December 2010 and has since devoted all his time to music. He recently authored a book titled *Raag Mousiqi*, with an English version, *Raag Music*.

Schehzad Mughal (With and Without Rupture)

Schehzad Mughul is a singer, musician, songwriter, and music composer, who has contributed to the Pakistan music industry since 1987. His songs *Bhoolay Na Kabhi*, *Yeh You Phir Bas Teri Yaad Hi Tou Hai*, *Saraab*, *Pakistan*, and *Bas Yunhi* have bagged top positions on local charts and desi-music charts in the UK. He worked for *The News International*, A&R, and the record label, VCI. He has managed bands such

as *Vital Signs* and *Junoon*. As a music director and producer, he has created background scores and title songs of numerous TV plays.

Mughal has also worked for a leading FM Radio station as a presenter for five years. His collaborative art performance with Waheeda Baloch, titled *The Left to Choose*, combined music and art, chronicling their life experience as a musician and artist, respectively. He is currently recording a new music album and is also working on different projects as a music producer.

Yousuf Kerai (With and Without Rupture)

Yousuf Kerai learned to sing and play the harmonium under the tutelage of the late Master Babu Khan. At 16, he was accepted as a student of the table maestro, Ustad Khurshid Hussain and has been playing Tabla for the last 18 years. Kerai is also the founder of Tarz Group, an ensemble of classically trained musicians committed to helping young listeners delight in their South Asian musical heritage.

Kerai holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics and an MAT in teaching mathematics. He has lectured and taught courses in music and mathematics for Agha Khan University, T2F, School of Leadership, TedX Karachi, and Habib University, and has held recitals and orchestra performances with master musicians in the USA and Pakistan. He currently serves as a faculty member at Habib University, where he teaches courses in mathematics and music.

Burgees Bans (With and Without Rupture)

Burgees Bans is a musician, who serves as the lead guitarist in the band, Azaad Sur. He began playing the guitar in the 1970's and founded the band Vioggers in the 1990's. He also plays the violin, piano, and drums and regularly creates tracks for *Art TV Pakistan*.

Leena Ahmed (With and Without Rupture)

Leena Ahmed has the distinction of being Pakistan's first professional woman *tabla* player. She received formal training in classical Hindustani music from late Ustad Faiyaz Khan and Ustad Abdi Hussain and

plays western classical piano. She enjoys participating in interactive events and has been invited to perform at the All Pakistan Music Conference and Mauj Media Collective.

Ahmed is also a practicing architect and visual artist, with a degree in Architecture from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Her works have been displayed at major galleries across the country.



The Algebra of Memory



A group of emerging writers and artists scrutinised implications of recollection, testimony, and post-memory in 'The Algebra of Memory.' The dialogue was hosted in collaboration with the Zabaan Writer's Collective on 29th April 2017, with the Ooperwallie Gallery of the historic Pioneer Book House as the venue. Together, the young thinkers examined what it means to engage with and 'witness' historical events through personal memory and memories inherited from parents, grandparents, and society's collective consciousness. With 'memory and erasure' as the fulcrum, conversation meandered into art, food, culture, and the many restive and quiescent layers of urban life.

Chair and moderator, **Niilofur Farrukh** opened dialogue on an informal note, questioning speakers about their respective views on the complexities of altering recollections and deliberate obfuscations. She underlined the Arabic meaning of 'algebra,' which is to restore or bring things together, and compared it with memory, as a tool that is instrumental to piecing the past together and making sense of things. Following from these reflections, discussion switched to a formal mode, where each speaker explored and complicated the relationship and the liminal space between 'memory and erasure' for the way it shapes their worldviews and discrete creative processes.



Afia Aslam, a writer and the Desi Writer's Lounge's (DWL) founding member and Director of Strategy, shared excerpts from her writings and from her editorial work in *Papercuts*—DWL's biannual literary magazine. Aslam, who was born in Karachi but grew up elsewhere, reflected on the experience of witnessing Karachi as an outsider:

Amna Rahman, an artist and recent graduate of the National College Arts, Lahore (NCA), meditated on memory's formative role in her creative process. Reminiscences of her mother and maternal grandmother persistently surface in her paintings, which explore the nuances of relationships between women.

Poet and author, **Asad Alvi** shared experiences of recording the personal and public memories of Sara Shagufta, a so-to-speak 'lesser known' Urdu-language poet of the 1980s, for his forthcoming book, *The Rebel Poetess: The Life and Works of Sara Shagufta*. The complex dimensions and manifestations of memory, specifically 'false memory,' predominated Alvi's discussion. Compiling biographical data on Shagufta has been insightful for the writer, who heard slightly different narratives upon probing each of her peers, to discover that one person's relationship with and opinions about another person critically shape the former's

recollections of the latter and vice-versa.

Relating memories of his late paternal uncle, **Asim Ali**, an art student, shed light on the role family can play in impeding ambition. His uncle, the family patriarch, never permitted him to study the arts and pushed him to complete a B.Com and ACCA instead. Ali was, therefore, only able to pursue his passion, enrolling at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, after his uncle's passing.

A graduate of NCA, Lahore, **Haider Ali Naqvi** shared how he was fascinated by the unique architectural attributes, which shape a city's mood and legacy and set buildings in different cities (i.e. Lahore and Karachi) apart. This fascination spurred his interest in architecture, which he pursued at college.

A young artist, **Jovita Alvares**, fondly recalled time spent with her maternal grandmother; with whom she enjoyed long walks through their neighbourhood in Karachi Cantonment. These childhood memories have been a key motif in her thought process and creative work. The dogs she befriended on these walks often feature in her art.

Characters, their memories, and dimensions of nostalgia are the chief focus of **Maazah Ali's** fiction. The writer and Associate Director of *Zabaan* shared how her varied interests in literature, theatre, and other arts have influenced and continue influencing her evolving writing style.

Artist and photographer, **Numair Abbasi**, whose practice is heavily influenced by constructed gender and sexual identities, scrutinised the nebulousness of artificial social binaries, with the damage they inflict on an individual's consciousness.

Soonha Abro, a writer and *Zabaan's* co-founder and director, delved into the effect of society's collective memory. Memory, she suggested, serves as an impetus behind her creative process and helps her abstract notions of the future.

Hamad Ali spoke about how dreams, memory, and experience converge in his creative practice.

Ali, who serves as *Zabaan's* Art Director, shared that he explored and discovered the relationship between these facets of human experience during his A-Level Art thesis project.

Two main threads of dialogue emerged when speakers engaged with audiences after articulating their reflections. Memory's bearing on and relationship with personal and collective social histories was the first. History is, after all, shaped by recollection, which is ever-so-susceptible to alterations in the fragile and impressionable human consciousness. Language, as a tool of mundane communication and of evocative expression, was the other focal-point. Conversation, here, was primarily concerned with Urdu's diminishing influence and English's growing prevalence for all that they reveal about social hierarchies, class, and intrusive western influences in postcolonial society.

Umme Hani Imani

Meher Afroz in Conversation with Savita Apte and Saquib Hanif



Meher Afroz spoke about her work and journey in KB17's opening discursive event

KB17's first discursive session was held on 22 October, 2017, at the Karachi Gymkhana. Acclaimed artist, Meher Afroz engaged in a public conversation with fellow panellists, Savita Apte, who is an art historian, and Saquib Hanif, who writes extensively about art. With art critic, Nusrat Khawaja as translator, Afroz responded to a variety of questions regarding her rich artistic trajectory. Shaped by tradition, transition, and cultural memory, the artist's oeuvre navigates the present. Her deliberations stem from an introspective understanding acquired by experience and history. The discussion offered listeners an insightful perspective on the intimate influences behind the artist's practice and the critical role that narratives of the past have played in her life and art.



(from left to right) Nusrat Khawaja, Saquib Hanif, Meher Afroz, Savita Apte

The 1970's, when Afroz journeyed to Karachi from Lucknow, were a tumultuous, traumatic time for Pakistan. While recalling the wearisome trials and tribulations she faced during migration, the artist firmly reiterated that these experiences were a veritable source of enlightenment and clarity, schooling her on the fickle nature of humanity, far more intently than a thousand books could accomplish. Reflecting on ephemerality, metamorphosis, and the passage of time, Afroz stressed that markers of the past continuously assert themselves on our present, constructing and establishing our narratives as we voyage through life.

The visible and invisible residue of time settles

on us like dust. Time performs as a recurring metaphor in the artist's work. Afroz's visual language incorporates a multitude of layers, symbolically illustrating the transition of the past into the present. Drawing on her vivid heritage, the artist confirmed how an acquired knowledge of Lucknow's culture and language migrated with her, illuminating and enriching her aesthetic vision. Embracing the coalescence of diverging customs, practices, and histories, Afroz emphasised the essentiality of existing in modes of constant motion and development, earnest in her belief that the near sacred learning received through experience and encounter is both authentic and divine.

When questioned about her approach to the production of her work, Afroz revealed that there is a natural and imperative pause between the completion of one series and the beginning of another; Imagery and references perpetually shift, alter; and progress, subject to the frenzy and many contradictions of time. Self-consciousness and contemplation is crucial in Afroz's process, enabling a metaphorical self annihilation, where ego, debris, and distraction are erased. This allows the artist to reflect critically and unwaveringly on her work.

Upon inquiry about her influence on the South Asian feminist struggle, the artist discussed how being raised in a household largely consisting of women subconsciously induced a quiet activism in her. Resolute in its implication and message, Afroz's oeuvre retained her personal truths and meanings, without yielding to any dominant discourse. As an artist who exercises her autonomy within her practice, while engaging with the feminist dialogue, Afroz is firm in her belief that fidelity to one's values is crucial in order to embark on an artistic journey with integrity and honesty.

Nearing the end of the conversation, the nature of Afroz's enigmatic work was scrutinised. Since the artist's work is recognised to be strongly esoteric, few people can truly access Afroz's poetry and symbolism through a simple deference to largely South Asian references. Afroz's sensitive and poignant visual language, which has been guided by the influence of a variety of artists, including the intense, abstract

works of Nasreen Mohamedi, was also underscored. As contemporary artists today grapple and engage with the immediate, Afroz's dialogue serves as a significant reminder to continuously acknowledge history and memory since they form the skeletons of our present narratives.

Rabia Saeed Akhtar

The 21st Century Biennale



(from left to right) Atteqa Malik, Juno Seo, Niilofur Farrukh, Dannys Montes de Oca Moreda, Ingo Arend

A panel titled 'The 21st Century Biennale,' moderated by Atteqa Malik, was held at the ZVMG Rangoonwala Auditorium on 23 October, 2017. The four panellists – Ingo Arend from Germany, Dannys Montes de Oca Moreda from Cuba, Juno Seo from South Korea, and Niilofur Farrukh from Pakistan – have, as curators, critics, academics, and cultural commentators, vitalised biennales in their respective regions. The speakers engaged with questions about their outlooks on the 21st Century future of interactivity for a proliferating global network of over 150 biennales and shared thoughts about witnessing Pakistan's and Karachi's inaugural biennale.

The German cultural journalist, Ingo Arend, shed light on the metamorphosing function of biennales as concurrent tools of dialogue, social commentary, political participation, academic research, and city development. As developing institutions, recognised as a sign, symbol, and inevitable outcome of globalisation, biennales, Arend observed, generate



A long-shot of the panel discussion at the ZVMG Rangoonwala Auditorium

immense scepticism for their oft unfulfilled goal of fostering global narratives of history, art history, and freedom of expression. National narratives have pervaded several biennales today. Compounded with their monumental budgets, long-established biennales like the Berlin Biennale might, Arend worried, have become an excessive extension of museums, art spaces, and global art communities, which many of these cities already support, in this era of widespread suffering. In a world beleaguered by terror and intolerance, it is important to 'instrumentalise biennales as interactive cultural spaces that inclusively invite participation from and establish relationships with local communities, irrespective of how well-versed they are in idioms of Modern and Contemporary Art. To persist as truly progressive spaces of democratic art exchange and discourse, they must, Arend thus asserted, remain receptive to criticism, address gaps, and push for fresh references relevant to their own context. Over the last 10 -15 years, emerging biennales, such as Sao Paulo and Istanbul,

have therefore interested him most.

Dannys Montes de Oca Moreda recalled that the Havana Biennial, of which she is the current Director General, upset trends when it was established in 1984. Instead of seeking international participation from influential countries that had long-dominated art discourse, the Havana Biennial prioritised participation from Latin American and Caribbean countries to expand platforms for artists from regions relegated to peripheral status. Coming at a time when several smaller biennales were struggling to survive against economic and political pressures, this biennale gave individuals from the putative 'third world' an opportunity to shape an independent intellectual and cultural discourse and establish wider international networks on their own terms. Moreda, however, also acknowledged the nebulousness of political terminology. Since binaries between so-called "first" and "third" worlds are, after all, inconstant and subject to change with trends of globalisation, Moreda held that it is equally important to embrace those who live in marginalised or peripheral situations in supposedly 'developed' countries. She thus emphasised on the importance of attentiveness to one's local context so that optimal synergies triggering progressive local and global dialogue can be established. Such dialogue could ultimately yield circular benefits, keeping the structures, compositions, and thematics of biennales dynamically conscious of the shifting contexts around them.

Juno Seo, a Seoul-based curator and artistic director, reflected on changes in South Korea's art scene and its proliferating relevance over the years. The 1970s and 1980s were a time in which there was a lack of widespread interest in art even though there was a burgeoning community of artists, who used their expression for political resistance against a martial dictatorship, finding widespread resonance with the 1980 Gwangju uprising, claiming over 600 lives according to estimates. Since the inception of South Korea's first biennale in 1995, the socio-cultural landscape in South Korea has, he remarked, changed dramatically. Biennales have gained resonance as dynamic spaces for exhibition, socio-political introspection, and cultural dialogue and

grown to command multi-million-dollar budgets—Gwangju, for one, works with \$10 million.

KBT and KB17 organisers, Nilofur Farrukh explained, turned to familiar references, closer to home, when strategising models for a biennale in Karachi. The Dhaka Biennale, which is one of Asia's leading biennales, was particularly influential. Formed shortly after Bangladesh's 1971 inception, the biennale comprised artists and individuals who had participated in its triumphant bid for independence and were eager to contribute to their nascent state's narrative in international quarters. This marriage of the state and its cultural mobilisers, however, came with costs. Farrukh observed that, especially since the 2000s, the inflexibility and requisite disingenuousness of state narratives have been detrimental to the introspective integrity of the art community. Farrukh then turned to Sao Paulo, for its noteworthy efforts to engage the youth through a dynamic and inclusive educational programme. She voiced aspirations to stir a comparable spirit of discourse, with an eye to addressing cultural gaps and disconnects in people's understanding of Modern and Contemporary Art. Gwangju Biennale, which emerged from an uprising of students struggling to assert a space and voice, is another context that drew her, especially considering Karachi's tumultuous history and concurrent cultures of silence.

Drawing on questions, challenges, and aspirations that motivate discourse around art, social engagement, and political resistance in different geo-cultural contexts, the speakers offered perspective on the global web of ideas, activities, and knowledge around a nascent biennale. Conceptualised in a period of heightened violence and political strife, the Karachi Biennale will, Farrukh and her peers hope, find enrichment from this network of references, especially from regions that resemble Pakistan, with its postcolonial context in a putative "Global South."

Rabia Saeed Akhtar and Umme Hani Imani

South-South Critical Dialogue with Latin American Critics and Curators



Niilofur Farrukh announcing Carlos Acero Ruiz's presentation since he attended the panel over a video-call; (seated from left to right) Dannys Montes de Oca Moreda, Argentinian High Commissioner Ivan Ivanishevich who served as a translator for Adriana Almada, and Adriana Almada

The 'South-South Critical Dialogue' was held at the Rangoonwala Auditorium on 23rd October 2017. A group of Latin American curators and thinkers, including Carlos Aceros Ruiz, Adriana Almada, and Dannys Montes de Oca Moreda came together to share and exchange narratives of post-memory, remembrance, violence, and resistance as viewed through the lens of contemporary art. The speakers cast light on South American artists who employ the constructed space of memory, as both source and subject, within their respective investigations, whilst navigating the landscape of history and transgenerational trauma. The essence of KB17's thematic, Witness, was thus examined within the comparative geo-cultural context of linkages between postcolonial societies or what has been christened the 'Global South'. Discourse

offered perspectives on how transferred knowledge, conveyed by generations of survivors, is painstakingly explored and reimagined—visually, orally, and textually.

Carlos Aceros Ruiz, a Dominican visual artist, art critic, curator, and university professor, delved into Latin American history. Christopher Columbus discovered the island of Hispaniola, present day Dominican Republic and Haiti, in 1492. The region remained under Spanish and French colonial rule for several tumultuous centuries. Countries soon began endeavouring for independence, with the Dominican Republic officially separating from Haiti in 1844 and Panama establishing autonomy in 1903. Providing critical historical context, Ruiz reviewed the varied practices of key artists. Coping with her

father's political disappearance during Argentina's Dirty War; Lucila Quieto investigates the pervasive nature of absence and fractured familial relationships through the introspective space of a photograph. Dominican artist, Tony Capellan dwells on narratives of contamination, debris, and destruction through his ocean-tinted art installation, *Mar Invadido* constructed from Caribbean detritus. Other artists, including Jesus Hdez-Guero, Orlando Barria, and Belkis Ramirez, were also discussed.

Recognising the power of testimony, Adriana Almada stressed on the fickle inconsistency of documented history and the fact that a single, distributed narrative will never be truly representative of bygone events. It is, therefore, through the sphere of contemporary art that the experience of memory is utilised to offer multiple and significant perspectives of the past. Amongst a variety of artists discussed by Almada, Matilde Marin probes the natural and artificial modification thrust upon the spaces we occupy. Collecting myriad pictures of fumes documented through modes of journalism and reportage, Marin forcibly highlights narratives of the collective catastrophes the world was subjected to. Obtaining information about sites of trauma, where human rights have relentlessly been violated, artist Huga Aveda manually reconstructs, documents, and implements certain effects within these spaces, creating videos or photographic artworks that scrutinise the stories of history, archives, and time.

The group of artists selected by Dannys Montes de Oca Moreda have all previously participated in the Havana Biennale. Moreda's interest in the artists stemmed from the coherent and expressive way they explore the aesthetics of colonialism, socio-politics, and experiences of the past within a Latin American narrative and from the multitudinous perspectives they offer. Erika Lopez and Javier Meza, who form an artistic duo, engage in recorded performances. Transcending mere documentation, the distinct, manipulatable space of video synthesises with the performative elements, creating complex, idiosyncratic artworks. In *The Weight of Memory*, the artists shed light on the persecution and indifference suffered by the Guarani people, one of South America's indigenous groups. A large picture of a

bare-breasted Guarani woman alludes to narratives of trauma, as well as the potent function of memory as resistance against oblivion and the destruction of culture and history.

Whilst various artists' oeuvres were touched upon, the speakers collectively evoked a critical concern: we have been entrusted with the duty to remember. As the guardianship of traumatic narratives passes down amongst generations, contemporary art can be employed as a compelling tool to legitimise the testimony of the eyewitnesses and restore discarded memories. Recalling Pakistan's own volatile history, the dialogue generated a shared understanding of the relevance of the past and of how the preservation or reclamation of memory is a potent tool of resistance and prevention, in the pursuit of impeding enduring cultures of oppression, erasure, and catastrophic violence—be it, institutional, political, epistemological, or cultural.

Rabia Saeed Akhtar

Examining Chughtai: Meaning, Message, Motif

A Keynote Address by Dr. Marcella Sirhandi



Abdur Rahman Chughtai
Persian Poet
19 x 11 inches
1940s
Private Collection

Dr. Marcella Sirhandi, a noted art historian, delivered a keynote speech, encompassing her intensive research on one of South Asia's most renowned pre-modern artists, Abdur Rahman Chughtai, at the ZVMG Rangoonwala Hall on 24 October, 2017. Sirhandi, who has published several books and essays on Pakistani and Indian art, retained a particular interest in the intricate, dreamlike worlds rendered by Chughtai, conducting her PhD research at the Ohio State University on the artist. The lush foliage, ethereal female figures, and communicative animals and objects of Chughtai's imagery, are richly layered with message and connotation. Sirhandi dissected this symbolism within her iconographic analysis and presented an intimate investigation on the artist and his vivid existence.

Delving into Chughtai's history, Sirhandi highlighted

the early days of the artist's career. Born in Lahore, 1984, Chughtai studied classical Islamic design under the tutelage of his uncle at the Wazir Khan Mosque during his late teens. This period strongly impacted his artistic sensibility. The study of *Hashiya*, the decorated borders in illustrated manuscripts, also played a noteworthy influence. Chughtai was enrolled at the Mayo School of Arts from 1911-1914 and later began teaching there. The most widely exhibited Indian artist at the prestigious British Empire Exhibition in Wembley (England), Chughtai soon established a successful, independent artistic practice.

Swayed by the mastery of the Bengal School painters, Chughtai borrowed several elements from their aesthetic style, including their monochromatic colour palette. Sirhandi revealed that despite the art movement's significant impact on Chughtai's opus, the artist displayed severe displeasure at being branded a classical Bengal School painter and endeavoured to develop an idiosyncratic artistic language. Underscoring the synthesis of miscellaneous visual traditions within Chughtai's oeuvre, Sirhandi drew attention to the illustrated Sufi metaphors of Ghalib's poetry and their intersection with Hindu Nayika iconography. Sirhandi also acknowledged the critical influences of Art Nouveau, Japanese aesthetics, as well as Aubrey Beardsley's characteristic manner of depicting the human figures.

Sirhandi chose specific artworks and provided a painstaking examination of their respective symbols and motifs. A nightingale is, for instance, tethered to the finger of a woman in *The Bulbul*. The bird, within this painting, is representative of the woman's suitor and is aware that despite her reciprocated affection, societal custom and tradition would never permit an outward demonstration of emotion. Torment is exaggerated within the poetry

and Chughtai ably translated the sentiment within his disconsolate composition.

At tombs, Islamic gardens represent Paradise. Solitary gardens, according to Sirhandi, are a place of whimsical romance, where the nightingale can seek his beloved. *In the Rose Garden of Persia*, the woman's elaborate *henna* designs and joint eyebrows signify a Persian or Central Asian ancestry. In poetry, she has been equated with the grace of a cypress tree. Sirhandi emphasised Chughtai's fondness for complimentary colour schemes, pointing out the hints of orange nestled within the clear greens of the painting. The green is also indicative of an Islamic identity.

Scrutinising Chughtai's narratives of pursuit, longing and transcendence, Dr. Sirhandi's lecture equipped the audience with invaluable insight regarding the artist's vibrant practice. The presence of Hindu mystical traditions, Mughal grandeur, and Islamic spirituality, is realised within the imagery. Navigating spheres of history and mythology, Sirhandi's detailed examination paid tribute to one of South Asia's legendary artists.

Rabia Saeed Akhtar

Open: Public Art, Public Engagement

A Keynote Address by Paolo de Grandis



Asma Ibrahim, the Director of the Museum and Art Gallery Department of the State Bank of Pakistan, presented Paolo de Grandis with a token of appreciation

Paolo de Grandis, who prefers being called a “creator” as opposed to a “curator,” has put his force behind over 118 exhibitions, including several iterations of the Venice Biennale, and founded OPEN, a public exhibition of sculptures and large-scale installations, which takes place in tandem with the Venice Film Festival annually. KB17’s Venetian international guest curator shared insights he has accrued via academic research, interventions in space, and sustained engagement with several international art communities at the State Bank Museum on 25th October 2017.

De Grandis began by underlining the cultural significance of art in public space. Recognising its socially transformative potential as a medium that

buttresses collective introspection and political resistance, he flagged the limitations of galleries and museums, which often tend to intimidate and alienate their prospective viewers and participants. Inspired by the life and contributions of the German artist, theorist, and pedagogue, Joseph Beuys, De Grandis has thus dedicated much of his career to challenging notions of white cubes and insular circuits as paradigms of exhibition and dialogue in the realms of art and expression.

Art, De Grandis remarked, does not always relay grand messages of unity but is often reactive, underscoring simmering fissures intended to provoke and unsettle. He elaborated on this provocative power by drawing attention to

Italy's influential *Arte Povera* movement, which literally translates as 'impoverished art.' Arguably spearheaded by Michelangelo Pistoletto, whose work De Grandis brought to KBI7, the movement rejected trappings of Modernism, American Minimalism, and technology to embrace the simplicity of context and memory, associated with a simpler past. Artists working within the nimble bounds of this movement use cheap, commonplace, or found materials to challenge dominant notions of aesthetic expression. Recalling the impact that work from this Italian movement has had globally, De Grandis exulted that this essentially communist art "blew the minds of the Americans" when he took it to a capitalist United States.

De Grandis then delved into the history of the Venice Biennale and its curious origins as a platform that was inaugurated by Venetian officials, particularly its Mayor, Riccardo Selvatico, himself a poet and playwright, in 1895. While foreign participants were invited to exhibit at pavilions around the city ever since its inception, De Grandis proposed to incorporate many of the city's unused buildings that were considered too old, to infuse renewed cultural connectivity and contextual intimacy in the Biennale. Since his involvement, De Grandis has, through his travels, influence, and independent projects extended the Biennale's international participation, starting with an invitation to Taiwan in 1995.

One such independent project is OPEN, where he was first introduced to Amin Gulgee, as a participant. De Grandis designed it as a forum that not only acknowledges the visual beauty and aesthetic functions of art but recognises its business side, offering artists a platform and support to sustain their work and expression, all the while ensuring that the wider community still feels a cultural ownership over art. As an endeavour in bringing art to the people, OPEN has appealed to the interests of over 1,000 participating artists from across the world over the past 20 years.

De Grandis concluded by returning to the fresh energy he witnessed at KBI7. While he enriched the two-week exhibitions with works from

renowned figures like Yoko Ono and Pistoletto, he was profoundly impressed by the passion and vitality that young artists brought to the forum. With an eye to future endeavours, De Grandis thus voiced his goal of facilitating a Pakistan Pavilion at future Venice Biennales.

Rabia Saeed Akhtar and Umme Hani Imani

KB17 Dialogue - About the Speakers

(In chronological order)

Meher Afroz (Meher Afroz in Conversation with Savita Apte and Saquib Hanif)

Meher Afroz is one of Pakistan's most renowned artists. In her career, spanning five decades, she has sustained philosophical dialogue by exploring cultural identities and the dualism of body and soul. A graduate of Government College of Arts and Crafts in Lucknow, Afroz's work embodies perceptions of sensitivity and spirituality from women's perspectives on life and history.

As an art educator, Afroz has been a widely respected mentor to several generations of Pakistani artists. She taught at the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts in the past and has recently retired after from her Senior teaching position at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. She was the founder of ASNA and a co-curator of three iterations of the ASNA Clay Triennale. She has been a part of Pursukoon, Karachi.

Afroz has exhibited extensively in Pakistan and abroad, with her works being displayed in Nepal, UAE, UK, India, Honk Kong, Iraq, Canada, Bangladesh, USA, and Australia. She is a recipient of the President's Pride of Performance honour and her art is part of institutional and private art collections all over the world.

Savita Apte (Meher Afroz in Conversation with Savita Apte and Saquib Hanif)

A scholar and art historian, Savita Apte was the Chair of the Abraaj Group Art Prize, Art Dubai, and Platform Projects, Singapore. She is also a founder and advisory board member of the Sovereign Art Foundation, ParaSite, and Asia Art Archive. A former expert consultant for Modern and Contemporary South Asian Art at Sotheby's, Apte writes and lectures on the subject, all while working on her doctoral dissertation at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Apte served on the jury of the KB17

Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui Juried Prize.

Saquib Hanif (Meher Afroz in Conversation with Savita Apte and Saquib Hanif)

Former Editor-in-Chief of *Herald*, Saquib Hanif has written extensively on art; he is the author and editor of books on acclaimed sculptor, Shahid Sajjad. Hanif hosted and directed the show, *'Framed'*, which aired on *DawnNews*.

Nusrat Khawaja (Meher Afroz in Conversation with Savita Apte and Saquib Hanif, Translator)

Nusrat Khawaja is a qualified landscape designer and horticulturalist. She writes on art and literature and is a regular contributor to *Newsline Magazine*. She majored in Cultural Anthropology at Mount Holyoke College, USA.

Atteqa Malik (The 21st Century Biennale, Moderator)

Atteqa Malik is the Vice Chairperson, Treasurer, and Global Outreach Committee Chair of the Karachi Biennale Trust. She is a freelance digital artist, writer, and cultural operator, who graduated with an MA in Media Studies from the New School University, New York in 2002.

As one of the founding members of *Mauj*, a media art collective in Karachi, Malik has organised several workshops and activities, engaging communities since February 2008. She was on the International Review Committee for ISEA (International Summit of Electronic Art) 2010 held in Ruhr, Germany. Her submission to Imagining New Eurasia Project was displayed with 88 artists at the Asian Cultural center in Korea and online in July 2016.

As Global Outreach Chair at KB17, Malik coordinated educational and art collaborations between Karachi institutions and Manchester Art Gallery, The Tetley, a Canadian media artist (Faisal Anwar), and two Berlin-based digital activists

(Wolfgang Spahn and Stephen Kovats) between 2016 and 2017. She is presently working on new Global Outreach projects leading up to KBI9.

Ingo Arend (The 21st Century Biennale)

Ingo Arend is a cultural journalist and essayist for the fine arts, literature, and cultural policy, who studied politics, history, and journalism in Bonn and Cologne. He was a cultural editor of *Freitag* ('Friday'), a weekly newspaper, from 1996 to 2010, and also served as the Editorial Director of its cultural department from 2007 to 2009. He worked as Editor for *Arts at Taz*, a daily newspaper, followed by work with *Deutschlandradio Kultur*. He has also done extensive freelance work since 2010.

Arend is a member of the Praesidium of NGbK - New Society for Fine Arts, Berlin. He was a member of the jury for the Award for Independent Project Spaces (2013), the Scholarship for Visual Arts of the Berlin Senate (2013), Berlin City Tax Scholarships for the Arts (2015) and served on the jury of the KBI7 Mahvash and Jahangir Siddiqui Juried Prize.

Juno Seo (The 21st Century Biennale)

Juno Seo is a curator and artistic director based in Seoul, South Korea. Before opening a curatorial laboratory he called 'Space O'New Wall' in Seongsu-dong Seoul on March, 2011, Seo worked as an independent curator for six years. Relationships between the elements of the life, people, and contemporary art are his key areas of interest. Seo persistently examines the role of art and the artist for discourse about people's life and the cities they inhabit. He, therefore, curates exhibitions examining social issues like gentrification-related redevelopment, environment, and war.

Nilofur Farrukh (The 21st Century Biennale)

Nilofur Farrukh is the Managing Trustee of KBT, CEO of KB, and the Chair of its Discursive Committee. Her career in the visual arts spans art criticism, art history, curation, art education, and art activism. Her book, *Pioneering Perspectives* (Ferozsons Pvt Ltd), was published in 1996 and she has since contributed to numerous publications.

Farrukh was the founder and Editor of *NuktaArt*, a contemporary art magazine, and a columnist with *Dawn*, writing for its op-ed section. She frequently writes for Pakistani and International periodicals on the arts.

Farrukh has served as Pakistan's Commissioner at The Asian Art Biennale, Bangladesh (2006); Tashkent Art Biennale, Uzbekistan (2009); and Kathmandu International Art Festival, Nepal. She is a nominator of the Abraaj Capital Art Prize in Pakistan and serves on the Board of Colombo Art Biennale. She was co-founder of the ASNA Clay Triennale, which was Pakistan's longest running Triennial. She has served on the Board of The State Bank Museum and the Advisory Board of the National Art Gallery, Islamabad.

Farrukh is the President of International Art Critics Association, Pakistan (AICA) and was twice elected to serve as Vice President of AICA's International board based in Paris.

Dannys Montes de Oca Moreda (The 21st Century Biennale and South-South Panel with Latin American Critics and Curators)

Dannys Montes de Oca Moreda is a researcher, curator, and art critic based in Havana, Cuba. She is the Director of the Wifredo Lam Centre for Contemporary Art, which organises the Havana Biennial. Since 2003, she has coordinated the theoretical conference that accompanies the Biennial. She is one of Cuba's most prominent voices on contemporary art.

Carlos Aceros Ruiz (South-South Panel with Latin American Critics and Curators)

Carlos Aceros Ruiz is a Dominican visual artist, art critic, curator, and professor at Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra de Santo Domingo. He studied Fine Arts and Social and Economic Sciences at the Universidad Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Santo Domingo and got his Master's degree in *Arte Actual: Análisis y Gestión* at Universitat de Barcelona, Spain. He is the Artistic Director and Curator of the International photography festival, PHOTOIMAGEN, President of the International Association of Art Critics, Dominican Republic,

and an Organising Committee Member for the National Biennial of Visual Arts of Santo Domingo. He was also a guest curator for KB17.

Adriana Almada (South-South Panel with Latin American Critics and Curators)

Adriana Almada is an art critic, writer, poet, editor, and independent curator based in Asuncion, Paraguay. She has been a member of curatorial teams for several biennials in Latin America and curated Paraguayan art exhibitions across Europe and Latin America. She contributes to several art magazines and currently runs TEKOHÁ projects, a cultural platform working to develop publishing and curatorial projects. Almada is the incumbent President of the International Association of Art Critics, Paraguay and chairs its Awards Commission.

Dr Marcella Sirhandi (Keynote Address)

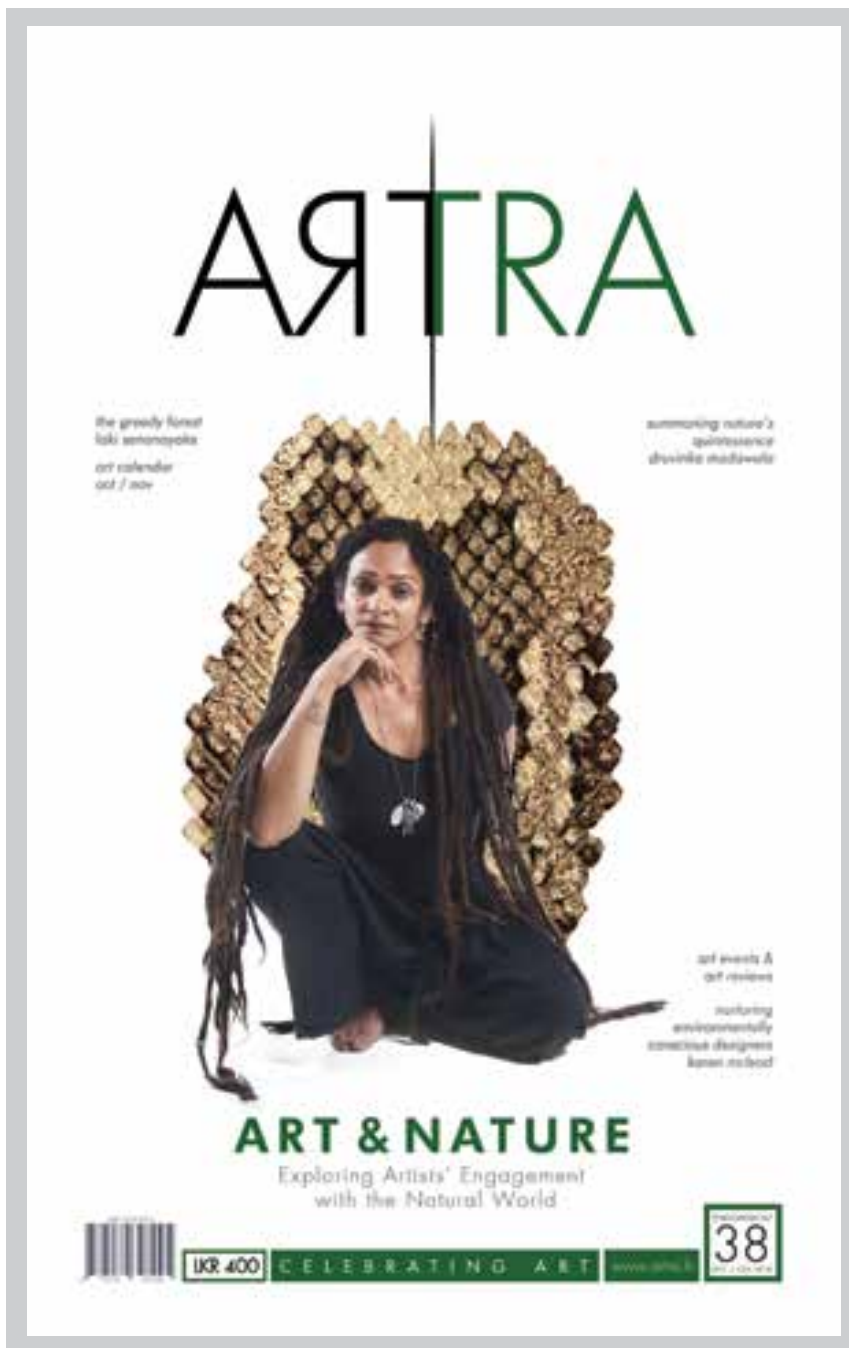
Dr Marcella Sirhandi earned a Master's degree in Art from California State University, Fresno and taught painting and design for 10 years. She chose Abdur Rahman Chughtai for her PhD dissertation at the Ohio State University. Her dissertation on Chughtai led to concentrated research on 20th and 21st century South Asian paintings. *Paintings in Pakistan* (1992) and *Antonio Xavier Trindade: An Indian Artist from Goa* (1995) are among her seminal publications. She taught Asian Art History at the Kansas City Art Institute and Oklahoma State University and currently teaches at the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

Paolo De Grandis (Keynote Address)

Paolo De Grandis is an Italian contemporary art curator and the President of PDG Arte Communications. He is the founder and curator of OPEN, a public art installation exhibition held in Venice that invites artists from all over the world. De Grandis works with the Venice Biennale as curator, commissioner, and organiser. In 2015, after 20 years of collaboration, he achieved 110 art exhibitions at the Biennale. He was also a guest curator for KB17.



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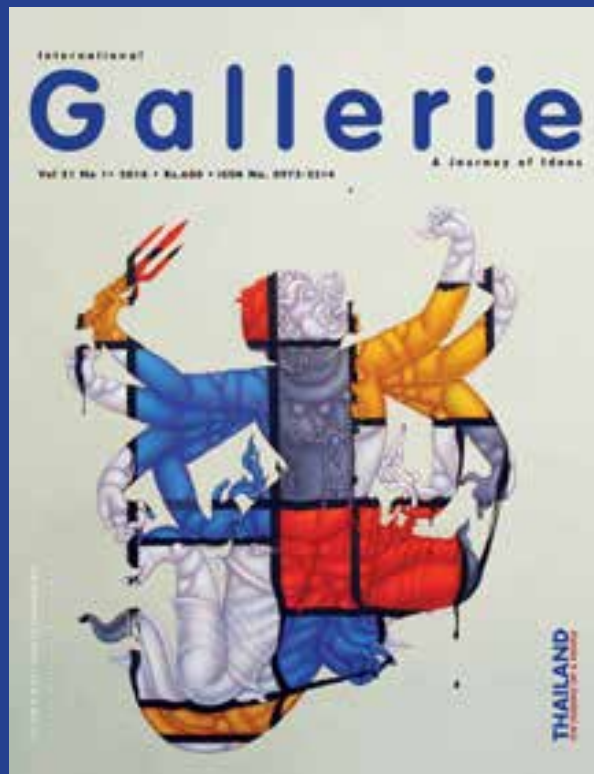
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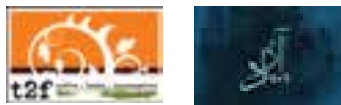
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