THE FACTORY

PROJECT 01

PHASE 2

Phase 1: Exhbition opened on the 30th of January 2022

Phase 2: Writing a Response





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Printed and bound in Pakistan

Thank you to Saadia Toor, Yasser Toor, Ifti Qureshi and Daanish Maqbool without whom this book wouldn't be possible.



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The muse behind this whole project has been Chawla Footwear, a fully functional shoe factory. Chawla Industry was first established in 1976, making it 46 years old. It's located in Sundar Industrial Estate, which is an area dedicated to Pakistan's industries. To give you an idea of the factory's scale; it covers an area of 30,000 meters or 9 acres, with 900 workers and more than 100 machines. Chawla Footwear produces more than 50 types of shoes, that are then transported all over the country. Shoes cover all price ranges, from low to high. They have their own brand and are original equipment manufacturers (OEM) meaning Chawla Footwear has a variety of Pakistani brands as their customers.

While taking a tour of the factory, it is unbelievable the types of shoes and art you would come across. This project has been a chance to read some literature and view some art but it has also been an opportunity to see how a functional shoe factory operates.



≡ditor's Note

In one way or another, we are all exposed to art. We appreciate art in some manner or the other. All of us have our own preferences, for sure, but what is certain is that we like art.

It's most definitely found in museums and galleries. Art also makes appearances in people's homes and when we're lucky we'll see some even in the streets.

From a young age, I had been exposed to the art world as I have parents who understand its merit and have taken me to museums since my childhood. However, it was after marrying an artist and interacting with artists that made me truly understand (if that's even possible) what art means. At least, I had started to realise what artists are thinking when they plan and execute. and I have learned how to look at art.

When the curator first approached me for this publication, I knew it was an opportunity to do something different. I wanted two things to come out of this. First, for people to be able to become acquainted with art, the way that I have in the last few years. It was a chance for them to understand the artists and be able to make connections with the art. For people to be able to penetrate the concept beyond the surface was important for me. We were building a bridge between the artists and their audience. And in order to unburden the artists, from thinking outside the visual, literary writers were asked to join in. Second, this publication is an independent part of The Factory, Project #1. Here, with the literary writers, we were also responding to the factory and the art created. The exhibition showcased the work of the artist, while our publication is displaying the work of the writers. Art and literature have come together. With this, you can take a piece of the art home with you. And everyone can help keep the the art alive beyond the opening and after the launch date.

Our writers were involved with the artists from the very beginning. They have been part of the planning in various capacities; from witnessing the artists' initial proposition on how to utilize the space to interviewing them while they worked on their individual ideas. And everyone has responded in their unique way. In the end, I'm excited and pleased with everything that has been published here. We have different voices, styles and genres, all responding to a singular site and experience.

After a whole year of planning, researching, following up with people, editing, so on and so forth this book has finally come to life. This feat has not been easy but it certainly has been worthwhile. And I sincerely hope that it brings the same joy to you as it has to me.

I would personally like to thank some friends who have taken time out to help me proofread for the sake of quality assurance (and friendship). Nur, for coming over despite various health issues. Schezre, though in a different city with a hectic schedule, made time to read my work. And Anosh, who I'm sure did not know what he signed up for but did go above and beyond to make time. Without everyone's assistance, this book would not be here before you.

Enjoy!



Emaan Editor Maqbool

1.1 Concrete Miracles

with the works of Dua Abbas Rizvi

1.2 The Lament of the Trees

with the works of Suleman Aqeel Khilji

1.2 The World's Best Shoemaker

Short story

Chapter 1

HASSAN TAHIR LATIF

1.1

Concrete Miracles

"Sometimes reality is too complex. Stories give it form" — Jean Luc Godard

The uniquely human ability to conjure up stories from nothing has been a hallmark of civilisation. Early humans used this to explain the world around them, and eventually, everything from celestial bodies to flora and fauna had its own origin story. The persistence of this need to communicate the mundane in the most fantastical manner has spanned the entirety of recorded history. And what is history if not the longest anthology of stories?

Storytelling became the earliest form of community. Elders would gather around fires and tell tales meant to keep the younger generation in check or provide wisdom. This tool became integral to creating myths that have raised and toppled empires, spread and sustained dogma (political and religious) and provided relief in the form of hope. Crafting stories and myths also enabled us to believe in the impossible and to rationalise inexplicable occurrences. This is particularly significant with regards to miracles.

Tales are spun centred around miracles to enhance the importance of enlightened figures, the benefits of certain practices or to cement the authority of a religion. Such tales often take place in or around hallowed places.

However, a myth (or a miracle) can be found anywhere—even a shoe factory.

Ever since the dawn of the Industrial Age, factories have dotted the human landscape; looming large over their surroundings, their brutish architecture in stark contrast to the often-pastoral settings they are placed in. A menacing reminder of human progress (and cruelty). Magical tales and mythmaking seem to be the last thing to be found there.

It is this peculiar connection between the concrete and abstract that Dua Abbas Rizvi set out to explore for this project. Even before first setting eyes on the factory, she knew she wanted to understand the human relationship with such a place and to express it through her work.

Dua's work has captivated me for quite some time. The way she deftly weaves complex narratives into her art, especially her installations, is storytelling at its core. All artists tell stories, but Dua ensures that a literary aspect becomes an intrinsic part of hers. It is, therefore, only natural that her idea for this show involved a story right from the start.

When I first met Dua to discuss how she was going to respond to the factory, it was at her studio at home. We sat surrounded by fragments of her works in progress and the afternoon light streaming in. Dua walked me through the idea she had at the time: a medieval-style altarpiece, with each section representative of a moment at the factory. She was already toying with the idea of narrating a story about a miracle worker and connecting it to the assembly line.

A major focus for Dua was to find parallels between the industrial setting of a factory and a place of worship. As she explained to me, both involve answering to a higher power without regard to personal circumstances; even the repetitive work done on the assembly line reminded her of the way prayer works, both working to quell any inner turmoil. She was also looking into the transformational aspect of a factory, wherein raw materials, such as animal hides are magically converted into beautiful, functional products that bear no resemblance to their origins. Just like alchemy. We also discussed various superstitions and old wives' tales we had heard about shoes and feet, and how there is a reverent place for them in a religious context. Pilgrimages for instance, or sayings that place heaven at a mother's feet.

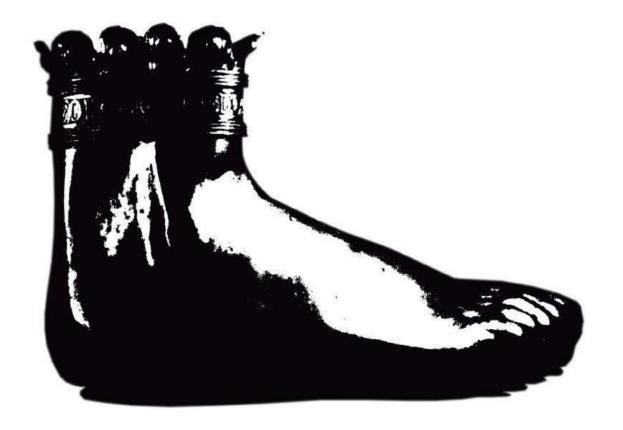
Her story, though, had to do with miracles. It was about a maimed man who regains a foot through the meditation of a woman of faith. Visiting the factory and observing the workers' camaraderie, Dua was certain that this miracle needed to be part of her response. Eventually, her idea changed from the altarpiece to a graphic story of

a

miracle

at the

assembly line



speculative fiction.

Miracle on the Assembly Line narrates the tale of an amputee who works at a shoe factory. Every day he works assiduously to create shoes for people who have both feet intact, until one day a mysterious miracle worker approaches him and blesses the boy with two feet. Subsequently, both the boy and his magical benefactor disappear. With original artwork by Dua and presented in a small, mass-produced style reminiscent of religious or political pamphlets, the graphic story combines the austerity of a factory with the wonder of a well-crafted tale. In just a few short pages, Dua manages to draw her audience into her world once An amputee working at a shoe factory brings up again.

I have been an admirer of speculative fiction and magical realism in literature for as long as I can remember, and this is one of the reasons that endeared Dua's work to me at the outset. We both bonded over this shared literary affinity and discussed the many elements in this genre and how they serve the narrative. Viewing the final product, reading the story, and diving into the sparse plot, it was obvious that Dua had paid attention to not just the visual craft, but the literary as well.

Writers who delve into art and, conversely, artists who write (cross-disciplinary creatives essentially), have been occupying my mind of late. Literature and the visual arts have had a long history together; but somehow both realms seem divorced in contemporary practices, each in their own rarefied world. Those who can bridge that gap tap into a wider array of creative expression. And that is exactly what Dua has presented with Miracle on the Assembly Line.

What is striking about the book is its spartan minimalism, signifying the harshness of a steeland-concrete structure, like a factory, which is further brought to mind through the illustrations depicting scenes inspired by the location. The small size and the mass-produced look emphasise the religious connotations (widely distributed pamphlets of prayers and sermons). Even the black-and-white nature of the book serves to reinforce the incongruity between the industrial setting and the abstract concept of the story.

Moving beyond the visuals, the simplicity of the narrative can easily convince us that this miracle was in fact real and that it indeed took place at this factory. I can imagine if this story were to be repeated often enough amongst the workers, it

would gradually seep into their local lore—the boy would become as real as any of them, and the miracle worker would be attributed to any number of wizened strangers passing through.

However, just like any good story, the plot, although short, allows itself to be interpreted in myriad ways. The original tale narrated to the artist was of an amputee regaining a leg through the focused meditation of an enlightened woman. Here, she places the assembly line at the heart of the tale, adding layers to the plot with each

an entire world of social commentary, while the boy wondering about his place in a world where the lack of a foot makes him different, is another train of thought altogether. The miracle worker is a co-worker, but his abilities are hidden from those around him. This adds to the mystique of saintly individuals and the aura that surrounds them.

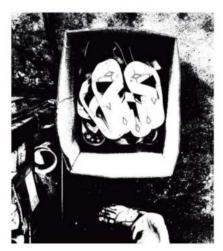
My favourite plot device in such a story, though, is the open ending. The boy and the miracle worker both leave, never to be seen again.

Somehow this is fitting—perhaps once perfection is achieved, once one's most intimate desire is obtained, there is no need for the soul to be on this plane anymore. Where the two go is as open to interpretation as any of the more solid details. In place of a sense of closure being offered to us, our mind provides us with options. I am glad that this is how the artist chose to end the tale, as it invites the audience to fully engage with the work, and to be part of the tradition of storytelling.

Even the accessibility of the work plays its part in furthering the narrative. Instead of the books being available in one particular location at *The* Factory, they were spread out all over, finding their audience the way a good story finds its reader without warning.

Miracle on the Assembly Line harkens back to the idea that storytelling and mythmaking are at the centre of what makes us human. Wherever there is a group of human beings, stories will follow.

Miracles, magic, faith, speculative fiction—these are words and concepts we would rarely think of when confronted with a shoe factory. Dua Abbas Rizvi in her signature style, however, injects the mundane with a magical flourish.



There was once a young man who worked at a shoe factory.

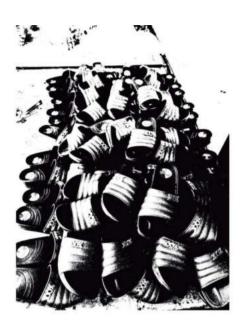


He was a lot like the other young men who worked at the factory, putting things together, and then putting those put-together things together with other things until chaos became consolidated, beginnings became endings.

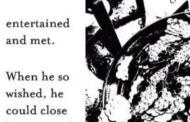
But there was one thing that set this young man apart from the others at the place where he worked. As a child, he had lost one foot to an accident and now, as fate would have it. he was forced to earn a living making shoes.

> Everywhere at the factory, the young man saw reminders of his deprivation.





All day long, he rolled and rubbed and stuck and hammered bits and bobs of ugly material to fashion beautiful shoes for strangers' feet, always in pairs, for what room is there in a factory for singularity?



wished, he could close his eyes and find himself in a humungous hall with dozens of doors leading to dozens of rooms full of spare human organs and appendages.

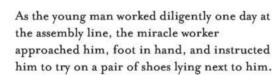
From this hall of wonders, the miracle worker procured a shiny new foot to affix to the young man's truncated leg. But, unbeknownst to him, there walked among his co-workers a miracle man who dealt in magic feet.



and mover of destiny. He brought trajectories to people's feet, attached pathways to their soles.

This man was a fixer

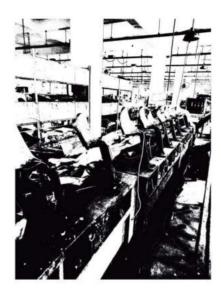
Because he was a good and saintly man, he had access to a place somewhere beyond the physical realm where supplications were



Troubled by the strange request, the young man tried to explain that he could only ever wear one shoe, as he had but one foot.

At this, the miracle man magicked the new foot to the youth's maimed leg, restoring symmetry and balance to his life.

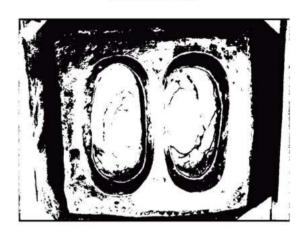




The young man could finally feel at one with the patterns and coherences of the shoe factory.

You are only ever surrounded by things you cannot have.

Salt in wounds.



Shoes on assembly lines.

It was only logical then that the youth and the miracle worker both disappeared from the factory, never to be seen there again.



The Lament of the Trees

I drink the rain
I eat the sun
I give the breath that fills your lungs
I hear the roaring engines thrum
But I cannot run

— Heartwood (Spell Songs), Various artists

My attention was particularly drawn to the ways they (trees) had accommodated themselves to the urban environment, or the ways they had been pressed into making such accommodation. Everything in tree life, I came to feel, was a negotiation made visible.

— Teju Cole, Arbos (Granta 152)

Following the 2020 lockdown, a phenomenon occurred that was perhaps inevitable: human beings began reconnecting with nature.

Numerous social media posts were dedicated to the chirping of birds in urban areas, blue skies during the day and starry nights in cities that used to be blanketed with smog and dust, and an overall understanding of the fragility of our existence. It was a true 'stop and smell the roses' moment happening globally.

I, as anyone who bore witness to my social media posts can attest to, became infatuated with nature again as well. A majestic palm tree in my garden became the sole focus of my days, as I spent countless hours laying underneath it—reading, working, or simply staring at it. The more I stared at the tree, the more it took on a life of its own.

Eventually, I began photographing it and the many other trees around me—several of them older than any man-made structure in the area. Others just starting out, preparing for life in a harsh environment.

As it happens when you pay attention to one concept or object, it begins popping up everywhere. Soon, trees were not just a passing fascination but branched out into other areas of my life: the literature I was reading, the documentaries I was watching and other creative pursuits I was involved in. In a world that was forced to stay at home and look outside the window trees and their connection with our modern lives became an obvious zeitgeist.

While for me, and many others, this reconnection with nature came out of this imposed isolation, there are many for whom this has been an ongoing pursuit—to highlight the human capacity to uproot that which is natural and replace it with garish abominations, ironically all for the sake of progress and growth.

One such individual is the artist Suleman Aqeel Khilji. His recent work often depicts elements of man's fraught and frail relationship with the world around him.

I first met Suleman when he was designing a cover for *The Aleph Review*, Volume 5 towards the end of the 2020 lockdown. Incidentally, the theme that year was *Tree of Life*. Suleman's interpretation of this phrase culminated in a piece that was inspired by trees from his childhood in Quetta, and the depiction of one such tree battling not the elements, but the consequences of man's actions.

Therefore, I was quite eager to see what he had in store for this project when I met up with him at his studio.

Settling down over a cup of black tea, Suleman launched into his thought process behind the work for *The Factory*. On his first drive over to the site, he was confronted with the ongoing battle between man and nature, reinforced by the rural setting of many factories, which alter the local landscape as they make their place there. Trees as a character of the landscape became a focal point for him. Walking around the location, taking in the sights and sounds, various ideas presented themselves to him, but one remained firmly planted in his mind—the lack of foliage, or rather the uprooting of it.



Suleman Khilji
Remains of the Day I
Natural pigments on eva sheet

All this while I kept staring at a roll of rough green paper tucked away in the corner of the room. To my surprise that was the essence of Suleman's artistic response to the factory.

Before explaining his idea, he invited me to touch the paper. The material was deceptive. It was not paper at all, but plastic with a leathery feel to it. Suleman informed me that as part of the production cycle at the factory, the leftover material was recycled and turned into sheets of this material. He had simply picked up a part of this during his first site visit, unsure at that time if it was going to be in the final project or not. However, he was interested in 'found object' art and wanted to explore this concept further with the material at hand.

It was a curious sensation to run my fingers over this corrugated surface. Cognitive dissonance took over as my brain tried to make sense of an object that looked one way and felt like something entirely different.

Suleman's idea, which was a work-in-progress at the time, was to hang the material from the ceiling

in various parts of the site with botanical imagery on it. He had been studying tree trunks and was certain that they would play a part in the final piece. The material that I saw at the studio was not only available in the shade of green, but in other colours as well. Colours and pigments are a crucial part of Suleman's creative process; the availability of the recycled raw material in different hues continued to inform his idea. Earthen pigments have found their way into his work previously, and he wanted to incorporate them in this piece as

Following his initial description of the idea, we delved into a discussion on the symbolism of trees, the destruction of foliage in urban spaces and the afforestation projects intending to rescue us from our own actions.

Suleman's final work at *The Factory* stays very close to his initial idea. Several metres of deceptive not-paper material hangs from the ceiling in different locations on the site. Each of them with an image of a leafless tree. Suleman had set out to play with form, pigments and material — and achieved that with the final installation.

Location | Entrance ramp to the basement of the general

Suleman Khilji
Remains of the Day II
Natural pigments on eva sheet

Viewing the work, whether from close or afar, one is struck with a sense of loss. There is an immediate understanding that something indigenous has been uprooted and replaced. The drawn trees seem to have roots in the very ground of the factory, rising from the concrete to reclaim their position in the landscape. When I initially heard of the idea, and still assumed the rolled-up material to be paper, I thought of the cyclical nature of things and the irony it would highlight—trees drawn on paper made from their wood, portraying what was lost. However, the scrolls were an entirely different material which even further impresses this idea upon the viewer. It is as if nature is adamantly endeavouring to find its way back.

The artist's choice to keep the trees leafless in his work is contrary to the general depiction of trees, allowing for a conversation to brew in the viewer's mind. These are not trees that are thriving; these are trees that are crying out lamentations of the slaughtering they have endured.

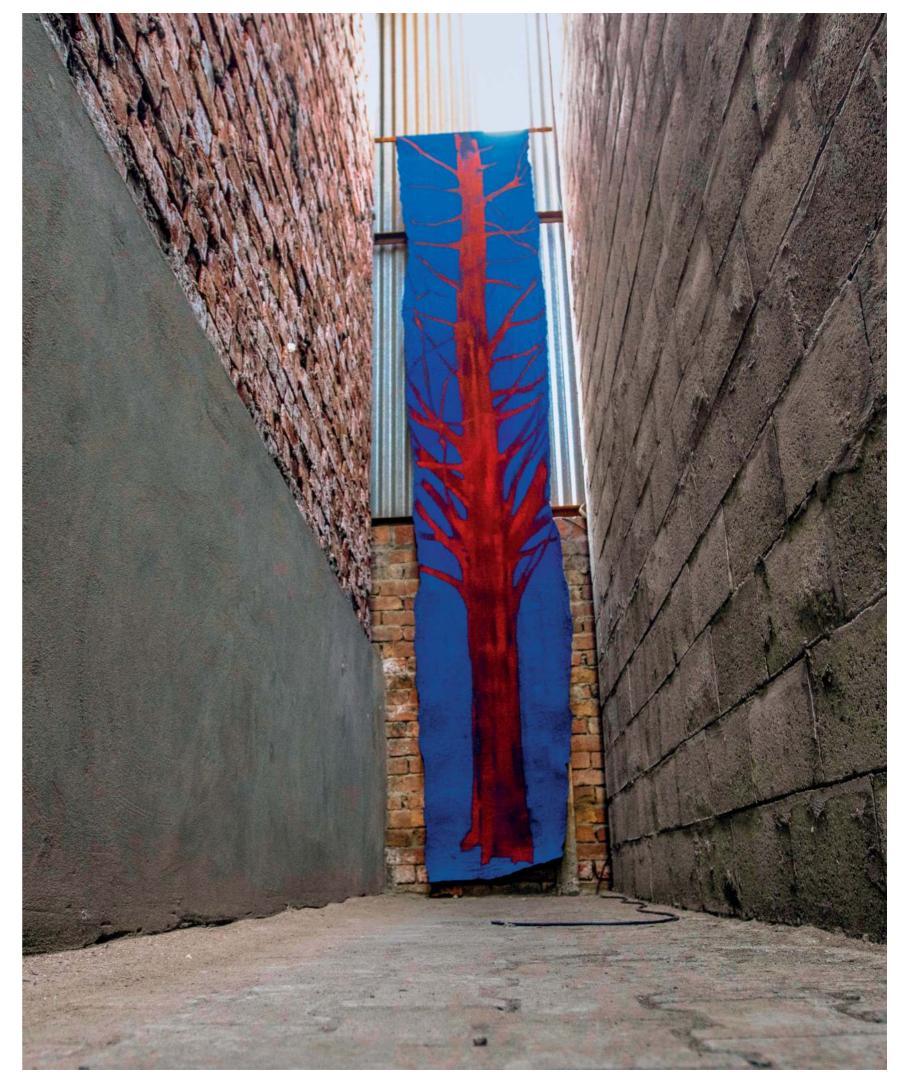
Observing the work, from process to presentation, I was reminded of Teju Cole's essay in Granta 152, titled Arbos, in which the writer, photographer talks about photographing trees. I came across this serendipitously while I was also engaged in the same practice. There is a part in the essay where Cole expounds his views on the negotiation happening between trees and their concrete surroundings in urban spaces. It is as if they refuse to give up their spot, their birthright, without a fight. They suffer all that their unnatural environment puts them through in quiet humility while also demonstrating it through their growth in and around artificial structures such as fences, telephone poles and pavements. Suleman's trees are resonant with this distressing feeling.

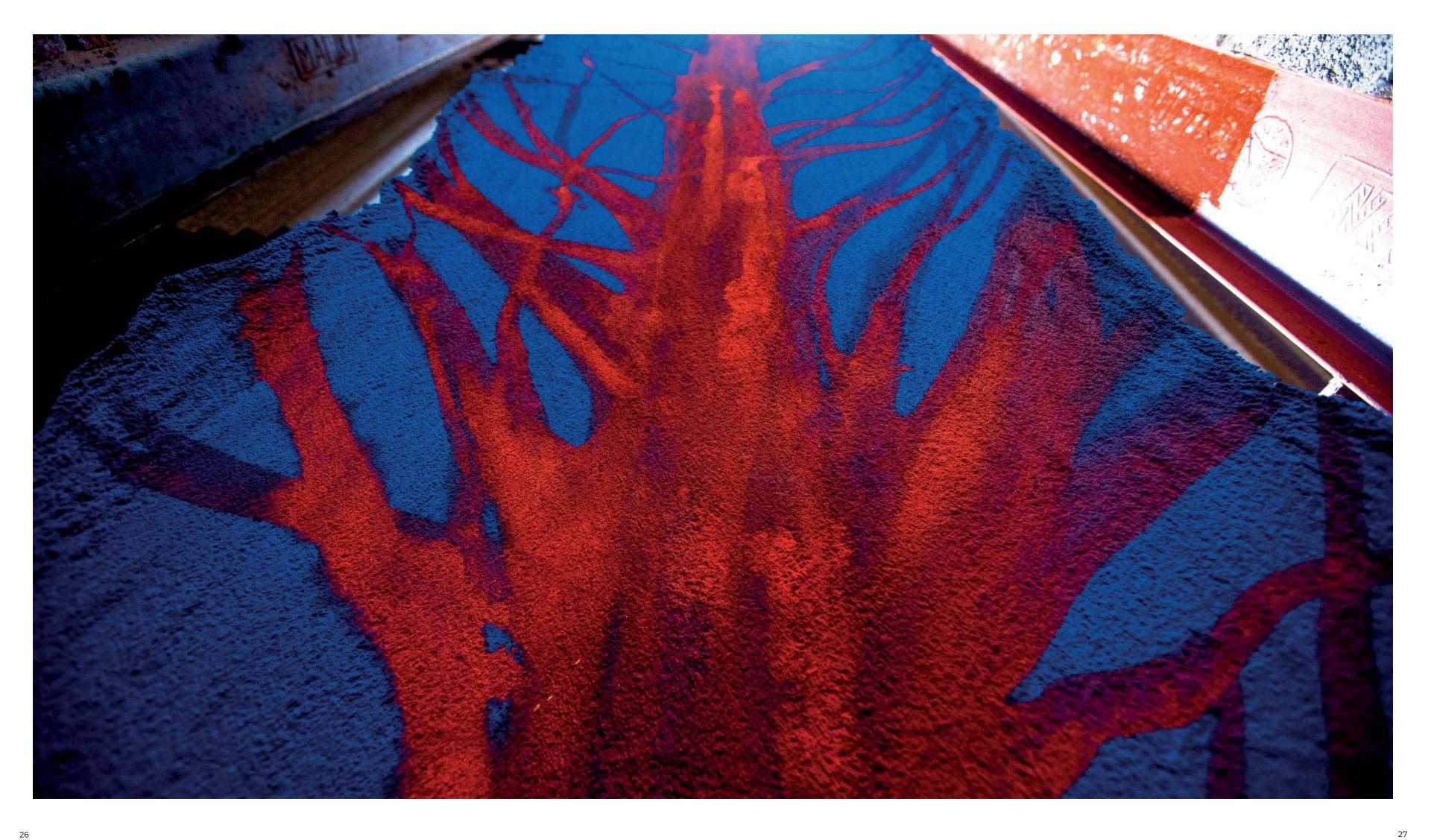
However, the leafless trees are a representation of the dire circumstances we find ourselves in as a civilisation and the urgent need for action. The klaxon has been going on for quite some time now, and it is imperative we listen to it. Whether such a statement was the original intention of the artist or not is eclipsed by the reaction the installation elicits in the viewer, and ultimately adding to the gravitas of the piece.

A song, *Heartwood*, floats in my mind whenever I think of trees fighting for survival in an urban, or industrial, environment. *Heartwood*—part of the Spell Songs repertoire inspired by the genius work of Robert Macfarlane—is the dying request of a tree not to be felled, beseeching the woodcutter to think of all it provides and sustains. Suleman's jarring images of lifeless trees where they once stood full of life sing a similar dirge.

There are naturally going to be many interpretations of the work. To me, though, the juxtaposition of a life-giving entity, such as a tree, with the harsh environment of a factory (a symbol of life-taking pollution) is not just a simple commentary on Man vs Nature. It is a meditation on the possibility of a harmonious way of life. Factories produce material that is essential to a functioning society, but often at the cost of the well-being of that very society. It is a contradiction we must bear in our modern world. What Suleman's work showcases, though, is that we need not think in a binary when it comes to such matters. We do not need to sacrifice human progress to save nature or vice versa; an appreciation of the importance of both can allow for a more sustainable way of life.

Location | Closed passage







Suleman Khilji Remains of the Day III Natural pigments on eva sheet



Suleman Khilji Remains of the Day IV-V Natural pigments on eva sheet

Location | Dispatch room

The World's Best Shoemaker

Note: When I was first approached to be a part of The Factory show, I immediately began thinking of short fiction as a response. The ideas percolating in my mind gravitated towards the various superstitions that have to do with feet and shoes, particularly famous shoes that are part of lore. Meetings with my respective artists further solidified this idea. Serendipitously, Dua Abbas Rizvi was also working on a response piece that incorporated storytelling and superstitions; while Suleman Khilji's work invoked a sense of longing that spoke to my emotional state the past couple of years during the pandemic, and the general existential introspection occurring within me. The Factory lent itself to my narrative as well, since it prompted me to examine shoemaking as an art. The following story is the nexus of these conversations I had with others, the space and myself.

"Oh look, someone will be travelling soon!" exclaimed his mother as the boy entered the room.

He looked at her puzzlingly and asked, "What do you mean?"

"Your shoes! Look, your shoes landed on top of each other when you took them off. Whenever that happens, it means the wearer will soon go on a trip," explained the mother.

"Oh really?! I wonder where I'll travel to. What about the moon?" said the seven-year-old boy, plopping himself in front of his mother with his toy space shuttle, as she massaged oil into his hair.

The mother chuckled, "No silly! But we are going to Murree this summer. Your Abba has promised." The family had never left Lahore before that and the prospect of finally seeing the mountains excited the boy. His Abba had just gotten a new job at a bank the year before, and he had finally been able to save up enough to take his family up north for a few days. They did go to the mountains that summer. The boy packed his magic shoes with him, marvelling at their ability to take him on trips.

It was a beautiful summer that year. The boy could not hold back his excitement; the highway, the road trip, the mountains, the clouds so low he could touch them, walk through them—it was out of a dream.

But that was the last trip the boy ever went on. Try as he might after that his shoes never landed atop one another. He even tried placing them in that position by hand. Watching him, his mother laughed, "That's cheating! Ha-ha!"

Three dismal years passed and no sign. During this time the boy had outgrown the original pair of white canvas shoes that took him to Murree, so he asked for another pair in the same style. Perhaps each shoe only had a one-time charm—limited magical power. The new ones did not help either. Frustrated, he had spent these three years looking at everyone taking off their shoes in the house, hoping, praying that someone would take off their shoes and they would land in the correct configuration, much to the annoyance of his two older siblings.

"That's not how it works you ass!" Bhai shouted at him when he was not tailing him around the house.

"You are such a weird kid! We're not travelling 'cos we can't afford it. Not because your magical shoes are broken," Appa tried to reason.

The boy would not hear of it.

One day, when the family was sitting down for evening tea, his father entered and announced that he was being sent on a business trip to Sri Lanka. The family was overjoyed; as his siblings began listing souvenirs they wanted from him, the boy was whopping for some other reason.

"Look!" the wide-eyed boy said, pointing at something in the doorway. "Abba's shoes are on top of each other.

Maa! Look!"

A quizzical look passed across the mother's face, till she suddenly remembered his obsession and smiled. Apparolled her eyes and Bhai tried to hit him over the head for being stupid again. None of that mattered though because the boy saw hope again. Magic was back in his house.

Abba's shoes were, what he later learnt to call, moccasins.

"Maybe white canvas shoes don't have the power anymore. Maybe now it's with black shoes!" he mused.

Soon, he only wore black moccasins. Every morning was a riot, as his mother tried to force his school shoes on him. The moccasins did not work either.

A couple of years later, his brother went off to college. He had been able to secure a very generous financial aid package from a small liberal arts college in America. Bhai had just kicked off his brown sandals, the boy thought, when he told us he was going abroad. They had landed one on top of the other.

For two years, the boy only wore brown sandals. Unfortunately, the magic had left the brown sandals as well.

When Appa received her acceptance letter to study in Canada on a scholarship, she had been absent-mindedly taking off her Nike knockoffs—they had landed in the correct order. That year the boy only wore Nike knockoffs.

Nothing happened.

Angry at the shoes, he went barefoot for a year.

His class fellows nicknamed him 'Shoeman', but he did not care. The boy knew that the key was the correct pair of shoes and just the right way to take them off so they landed on one another. All his free time was spent watching YouTube tutorials on how to make shoes.

Around this time, all his friends started leaving for college; he hounded them all till they told him what shoes they were wearing when they got the news and whether they were piled left on right, or right on left. No one remembered and no one bothered to humour him even.

Much to the chagrin of his parents, he decided college was not for him and he would make shoes till he found the correct pair. He would spend days with the local cobbler, learning tricks of the trade; nights would be spent designing, researching and fashioning his own footwear.

Once, a few years earlier, his father had offered to take him to Murree. He had looked down and neither his nor Abba's shoes had been in the required placement.

"No, I cannot go! Not till the shoes say so, else something bad will happen," he protested. His father, exhausted with the effort of trying to understand his son, gave up and went away grumbling about a life wasted.

Eventually, the walls of his room resembled a shoe store. There was every kind of shoe imaginable. He had either bought or made them all. From loafers, to Oxfords, to even ballerina flats and stilettos—he had to give them all a chance. No matter what he did, no pair of shoes fell in the correct order when he took them off.

When this failed, he tried creating Hermes's famous winged sandal and willing the power of Zeus in it. Next, he created a glass slipper—it worked for Cinderella after all. He even hot-glued a thousand ruby red rhinestones, but even Dorothy's magic did not work for him. Not even when he wore them at his aunt's house and wished to go home.

By now word had reached all corners of the city of a young boy who could design any shoe you wanted. People began showing up at his doorstep, wanting to place orders. In trying to find and create the right pair of shoes, the boy had evolved into an expert craftsman. Sadly, where all could see beauty, he only saw failure. Every pair was another reminder of a trip denied to him.

He sold whatever shoes he already had, only to buy materials to make more. Whenever he would take an order for a new pair, his only request was that he be allowed to wear them first. Considering this an odd eccentricity of a footwear genius, the people agreed to it. His fame reached all corners of the globe; people came from far and

wide, waiting for months to get their hands on one of his original pieces.

Still, nothing worked.

The boy's brother moved back and found work in Karachi, while his sister found her own path in Vancouver. They both exhorted their younger sibling to visit them, to leave the mad obsession behind. The boy did not listen

"At this rate, even the angel of death won't be able to take him till the shoes are properly placed!" quipped his brother once.

None of this mattered to him. He had amassed a fortune selling his broken dreams, and he kept it saved for the day he would receive a sign that he could finally travel. His fear of angering the shoe spirits kept him enslaved to his trade, never to eat of the fruits of his labour.

Eventually, he began losing customers. Mostly because he would yell, and sometimes throw shoes, at them when their pair inevitably failed to answer his supplications.

The boy—now an old man—retreated inside his workshop, forgotten by those around him. He did not notice the world going by around him, nor when his parents grew old, when they passed away, when his siblings finally left him to his own devices, surrounded by leather, pincers and rasps. All that was important, was trying on the next pair and hoping it would release him from his curse.

Some say he did find the perfect pair and managed to take it off the right way. The right shoe was carefully placed on top of the left, at a slight angle. They say it was a pair of beach slippers and that he ended up on sandy shores somewhere in West Africa; others vehemently claim that it was a pair of ski boots, and is now an expert skier, racing down ski slopes in Canada, where he lives with his sister.

The truth is, the little boy who grew up to be the world's best shoemaker, did in fact find the perfect pair. It was made of the same white canvas with Velcro straps that he first wore when he was seven years old. When he put them on his bony old feet, he could feel the magic travel up and all around his body.

"Ah!" he uttered, looking down at his withering, emaciated self. "But where will I even go now?"

Deciding not to tempt fate, he kept the shoes on, turned on his side and closed his eyes.

^{2.1} Nostalgia and Imagination

with the works of Komal Khan

^{2.2} What Purpose Do Shoes Serve?

with the works of Mohsin Shafi

^{2.3} The Factory – A Response

Essay

Chapter 2

Arslan Ather

2.1

Nostalgia and Imagination

A factory, in its essence, is about production. For me, a factory reminds me of the monotony of life. How, we as humans, can often become machines, working and deriving our meaning from our production. How we as humans become repetitive in our tasks, losing ourselves and our individuality for a common goal. The factory's monotony can act as the antithesis to how we view our lives as children. This is why I love Komal Khan's work, it brings a child's imagination into a factory, in essence bringing together such different worlds in the most beautiful way.

As children the world seems endless to us. We don't understand the space we occupy; we don't understand its harsh realities or its ugly side. Instead, we absorb what we see and create our own worlds within our larger world. Our unencumbered minds see the world through pure eyes, we imagine all sorts of things, all sorts of creatures, all sorts of realities, and all sorts of possibilities. This is what, according to me, Komal Khan's work at *The Factory* encompasses and celebrates.

Komal is an artist obsessed with the idea of performance but also one equally fascinated by imagination. Her work in the past has merged these two worlds together, however, her work at this show is no less powerful and thoughtprovoking. Her art celebrates and showcases a child's way of seeing the world. What I particularly love is her use of 'monsters', adorable yet odd creatures she's created to represent a child's imagination. Monsters are often the first tool a parent uses to discipline their child, to teach them the right thing to do. "Beta (child), pick up your toys, or the monster in the cupboard will get you!". Sometimes the monsters can even be people in our family, "your Dada (grandfather) will do this, or your Mami (aunt) will do that if you don't listen". We feed children this idea, funnily enough, they become infatuated with the concept of monsters themselves. And that's where their imagination begins.

Komal, however, sees monsters a little differently. She uses them to portray the transformation of a child's mind as it absorbs the world around them. The pure mind is one that conjures up fantastical things and images, but the images change as the world seeps in. It might not be as wild anymore, but it isn't any less vivid either. The monsters she's created invite you in to think back to the monsters you created as a child. Seeing her art reminded me of these horrific little sketches I made as a child. They were stick figures (which are still the upper limit of what I can achieve artistically) with tiny heads, large eyes, and long spiky hair. Looking back, they were haunting, and I am quite shocked at how cool my parents were about those drawings. Her art makes you think about those monsters and where they went. Her art forces you to see the beauty in the way a child's mind thinks and imagines. It's nostalgic, but I also see it as being incredibly important. Why?

While it gives you time to introspect, it also poses important questions. How do we as a society and as parents transform our children's minds? How do we treat their imagination? Do we inculcate it, do we develop it further or do we inadvertently squash it? I'm sure most of us had families that weren't always supportive of an uninhibited imagination. It wasn't any one person's fault because that's just how our society is structured. But the question the art asks is 'are we going to be part of the long tradition of being unsupportive or are we going to challenge it?'

Komal's pieces also feature two other concepts: the egg and the crow. When speaking with Komal, she said that the egg symbolizes the birth of a character named Zoey, who is representative of Komal's own imagination. The crow is meant to signify transformation. A constant reminder that the monsters are what give life to Zoey. The existence of Zoey, even as an unhatched character, tells us that the imagination grows and takes a new form. Ideally, the crow and the monsters grow alongside Zoey and under her guidance.



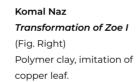
Komal Naz
Transformation of Zoe II
Polymer clay, imitation of gold leaf

This piece isn't just nostalgic and powerful, but it also opens up your imagination. It forces you to imagine how the monsters change, how the imagination grows, and how a child's mind changes.

Komal completes this piece on childhood imagination by using the most perfect material for the job, polymer clay. This is something we've all used as children or handed to the kids in our families. This clay was, and is, the medium of imagination. It lets the user take what's in their minds and create something tangible. Polymer clay is quite honestly the most perfect material to exhibit a piece such as this. It makes the entire concept and piece just that much more believable and magical to look at! Another effect of using polymer clay itself is an invitation to not only be imaginative but to play and have fun. Komal has masterfully used nostalgia in even her choice of materials.

However, nostalgia is a very limited way to describe Komal's work. It is one aspect of it, but not the only one. Its setting in an actual factory renders the questions it's asking more pertinent. As I said before, for many people, a generic factory is often not a place associated with creativity and imagination. Placing this work in such a place is a reminder that we always need imagination, childlike wonder and curiosity to fill our world. Otherwise, we too can end up more and more like machines on a factory line, endlessly repetitive and deriving meaning only from our output.





Location | Dispatch room









Transformation of Zoe IIPolymer clay, imitation of gold leaf



Komal Naz
Transformation of Zoe III
Polymer clay, silver leaf



What Purpose Do Shoes Serve?

Mohsin Shafi's approach to *The Factory* exhibition has been an absolute delight to watch and study. He placed shoes on two ends of a diverse spectrum: necessity and luxury! His works encapsulate the ambit of shoes and leave you marvelling at how one object can cover such a wide expanse of discussion. Though Mohsin's work poses a simple question it can be answered from many different angles and approaches. The question is, what purpose do shoes serve?

He answers this question, first, with a pair of boots Mohsin has owned for years. They have been everywhere with him. It is safe to say that these boots have seen it all and consequently, have lived a full life. In fact, they continue to live! For Mohsin, these boots form the basis of one end of his spectrum, necessity. These boots, like all shoes, have a purpose, to protect feet from the elements. There are many ways to showcase these boots, as bruised and battered, or as aged and wise. The challenge before Mohsin was to figure out how to showcase all the sides and he found the perfect way. Mohsin made seven different sketches of his boots, from various angles, in different lights and using several techniques. You can say that these sketches are a love letter to the shoes which have stood by Mohsin all this time.

He used the blind method for one of his sketches, which means that Mohsin would look at the boots, and not look at the paper while sketching. This method requires not only serious hand-eye coordination but also trust and extensive spatial knowledge and understanding. It also allows the artist to become involved with the object, study each little crack, crevice, and fold in the shoe. The final product might not be perfect to the naked eye, but it is a testament to the artist's skill, especially the trust and control required to create such a piece. In general, these sketches highlight the necessity of shoes, as they have held together, for the sake of our feet, and bodies.

Mohsin has also sculpted miniature versions of his boots and placed them around the factory, again as a method to illustrate their necessity and endurance. He shows off his boots in different miniature landscapes. Some are typical and others are strange, highlighting how they have been with him everywhere he has gone.

Another approach to answering Mohsin's question, 'what purpose do shoes serve?' is by throwing the topic squarely in the realm of popular culture, specifically films, and with a focus on South Asian cinema. Using multiple LCD screens, Mohsin broadcasts famous snippets of films that revolve around or use shoes (and feet). These are iconic pop culture moments. Here we touch the other end of the spectrum, the fancy aspect of shoes; their sheer romanticisation and allure. Through his boots, Mohsin showed us how we need shoes, while the installation showed us the fancy side of shoes, and how glamorous they can be. The snippets he shows range from Dorothy's Ruby Red Slippers to famous scenes from the Bollywood hit Pakeezah. In all the clips and references he has used, the shoes become a vital part of the story and a point of reference. Particularly interesting is the clip he uses from *Pakeezah*, in which Nargis is told that her feet are too beautiful to set foot on the ground and that the shoes being presented to her are for their protection.

It is clear what the two ends of the shoe spectrum are; the discourse starts from necessity to luxury to the purveyors and protectors of beauty! Mohsin's work does stop you in your tracks and forces you to think.

When I asked Mohsin, quite directly, what he is trying to say with his work, he answered honestly. He said that he did not know what he was saying, because what he or the art says has never been a concern for him. What matters for Mohsin is the question it raises. What matters to Mohsin is what you, as the audience, do when you go home and see your shoes again. Did the art change your perception about the everyday use of shoes, or did it maybe change the way you saw how the media portrays shoes, and, more importantly, feet?

During his process, a question that Mohsin and I discussed was the role of shoes and feet, in storytelling, and I share this here because it illustrates the type of discussion his work can generate. If we think about our local classical



Mohsin Shafi

Big Boots Boosters

Mix medium

dances, be it *Kathak* or *Dhamaal*, the element that brings these dances together is feet; how the footwork aligns with the music and allows the dancer to sway with the beat. Dance was a way to tell a story and spread a message. We have categories for it now, such as interpretive dance. Footwork was essential and determined everything! Even in present times, modern dances like hip-hop and jazz rely heavily on footwork and the shoes. The shoes add more drama and flair to the overall performance.

Mohsin places shoes on a broad spectrum and invites all of us to take a look at how significant something, we take granted for, can be. The extensiveness of his work allows multiple questions to flood your mind. I think for Mohsin, the ambiguity of his message is his most powerful tool. He keeps people guessing, which raises more questions. So, I leave you with a question too, do you see your shoes in the same light anymore?



Mohsin Shafi Big Boots Boosters Mix medium

Location | Entrance of the three passages in the basement of the general storeroom





Mohsin Shafi It's Show Time, Get Your Popcorn Ready

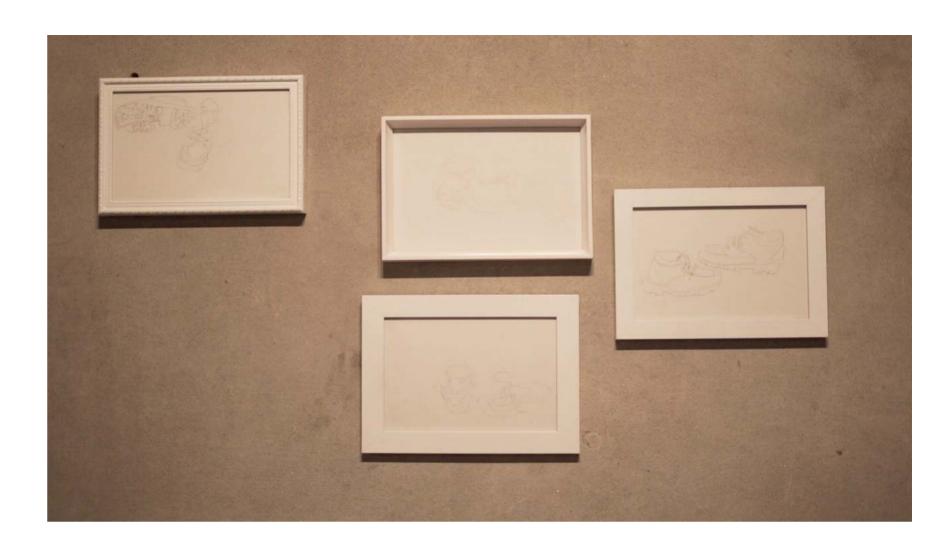
Montage installation with multiple screens and sound

Location | Basement of general storeroom

Scan QR code to view artwork:



Mohsin Shafi Tik Tok Tik Tok Tikking Pencil drawings on paper





Location | Dispatch room

The Factory – A Response

If I'm being honest, I've never really put much thought into my relationship with the word 'factory'. If I trace my own mind back to when I heard about a factory, it would have to be somewhere in middle school, when we learned about the Industrial Revolution and how factories changed the world. So, my first association with the word was always positive. I, then went on to university where, as a Political Science nerd, I learned a lot about capitalism and capitalistic structures. Factories then equalled, BAD! And finally, now in the era of satisfying videos on YouTube, I find myself engaging with factory videos where machines achieve near perfection when rolling something, cutting something, or packing something. In a nutshell, my relationship with the word is complicated!

In a lot of ways, we have been taught by the world around us that creative activities, creative things can only happen when we're in creative spaces. For this reason, I never put together creativity and a factory, but here I was, with the opportunity to write about an art exhibition happening inside a shoe factory. On paper, the concept is easy to understand, but in my mind, it took me a little while to reimagine the factory as a creative space. World over, a lot of art collectives have taken over old factories and warehouses and basically changed the structure from the inside to create a creative space. However, in this instance, the factory's factory-ness was still intact. I think, for me, this mind block came from when I studied in university, where in a lot of ways my mind just took the word 'factory' and created an association of a place devoid of creativity. Even as writers, sometimes we're tuned to believe that the best writing happens when the atmosphere is right around you. This idea is given to us by Hollywood, and seldom by actual writers. The idea that creativity has to happen where it is pristine, where it is calm and where you can think.

I can count for you how many times I have planned trips thinking, "This is it, Arslan, you are about to go on a calming trip, take your laptop with you, you'll write great things there". Did I ever write in those places? NO! The thing is, shows and movies never show the full ambit of what real life is. They show a glamorous version of a writer's life, where they are able to write freely and not really worry about life. These writers often mysteriously live a full life just by writing. Well, for most people in places other than the West, that isn't really possible. But, this major realisation didn't occur to me.

However, when I started to interact with the artists involved with this project, I began to change my mind.

Komal, as an artist is someone who thinks in a fantastical way, something I deeply admire and am hugely envious of. When she told me her idea of using monsters to illustrate a child's imagination, I was confused and also blown away. How did she get THAT from the factory? Her idea was full of life, colour and vibrance, but a factory is the antithesis of all those things. In my notes, I wrote, "how?", and circled it over multiple times, confused.

Until it hit me...

Komal's concept celebrated how ideas and creativity are limitless and ubiquitous. We just have to find them. Ideas don't really just come to you, you actively have to find them. So, the perfect creative environment to work in is maybe too sterile for creative work?

I had readily bought into this dramatised world where I could be a writer and have it all, but it wasn't true. This is not to say that I was writing like how Hollywood stars write in films, but my end goal was definitely to have a life like how the movies show. That end goal was clouding my creative capacity. I was working hard to reach an unrealistic goal. Komal's art told me that I had to be creative about creativity.

Mohsin Shafi's approach worked in the same way. He took an idea that was rooted so deeply in the identity of the factory and made it far-reaching. His work looked at shoes in a whole new light, to the extent that I can

never see my own shoes the same way again. Where Komal's imagination was inspired by imagination itself, Mohsin found his inspiration purely from the factory, its past and its function. He fell in love with the idea of the shoe factory and tied it in with his idea of speaking about shoes and feet. As a writer, I find connections and ideas and really run with them to their nth degree. I have no qualms in admitting that the concept of doing an art show in a factory threw me for a loop because of my own word associations with the place, compounded by my ill-founded ideas of where I should be writing in the first place. What both artists taught me is that in today's world, with its fast pace, we have to find creativity in the everyday and within ourselves. The world doesn't really stop, so you find your time to be creative and look for inspiration wherever it comes from, even if it is a factory on the other end of Lahore.

We're often taught to dream and fantasise about creativity, however, the truth is always that where you find creativity doesn't have to be glamorous. What matters is what you do with that initial spark of creative energy you get. Now if you don't mind me, I'm heading over to see where I can find the inspiration where I least expected.

3.1 Against the Sun & A Ray of Light

with the works of Ali Shariq Jamali

3.2 Space in Between

with the works of Ali Baba

3.3 Soliloquy

Short story

Chapter 3

HASSAN RAUF

3.1

Against the Sun & A Ray of Light

Ali Shariq jamali Against the Sun Polyurethane, Poly vinyl chloride

I followed the sun, catching its light that fell free and abundant on the field that was my home. In the very same field, I had slowly prepared myself to be measured against the conformity standards of society. I walked impatiently and felt my feet sink in the soil with every step I took till I reached the middle. Standing there, I could see the entirety of the field around me. There were countless blossoms, much like me, staring at the sky overhead. While I could identify the vague differences of colour and character, I could not help but notice a group of blossoms that seemed to have blackened. They had a uniform appearance and seemed to be indifferent to the light above yet, they seemed to be as floral as me. I drew closer to them and noticed a seal that many of the blossoms bore. "What is that?" I asked one of the other flowers, "It is a mark of standard – those who bear it are accepted" – I interrupted, "accepted by whom?"

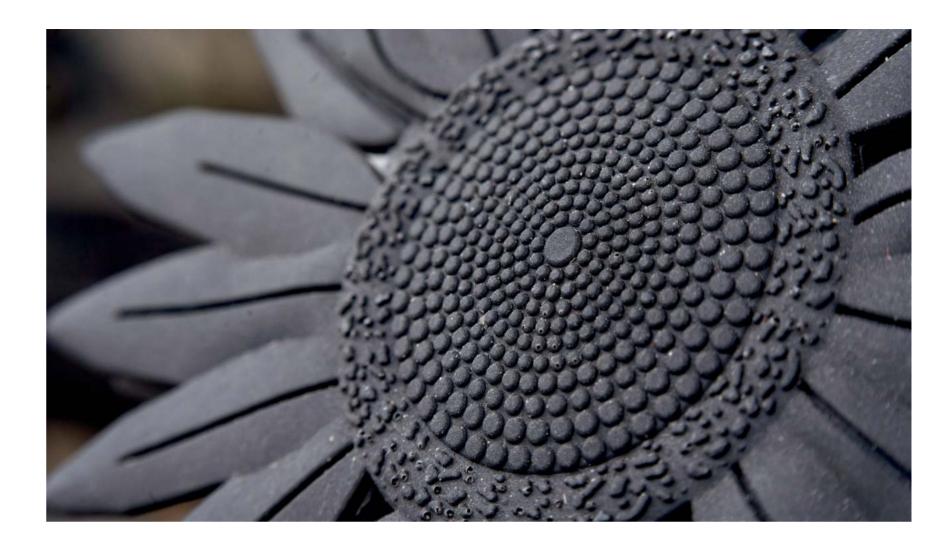
It was then, that I learned that we spent our entire lives to be harvested. The field was where we were manufactured until ready to be possessed; plucked away from the earth and kept in the dark until our demise. Perhaps, it was our purpose. Through conformity we actualized. Regardless, I feel an inherent desire to contest this norm that the other flowers have become so content with. As the sun sank, I felt the colours around me fade as the veil of golden light silently and slowly retreated. Soon, there was but a little light left, and the last of the rays flickered on the field as if announcing their departure. It occurred to me then – with light, there is hope. With light, there is colour. With light, there is character.

I believe now, that as long as there is light, I shall find myself and I shall find my purpose.

The artist took inspiration for *Against the Sun* from the factory itself, where these artworks were displayed and tried to capture the loss of identity in mass production by replicating sunflowers in rubber and arranging them in a grid layout. The artist produced the flowers using rubber and then painted each of them black. Each flower and its petals were glued by hand to give them unique characteristics.

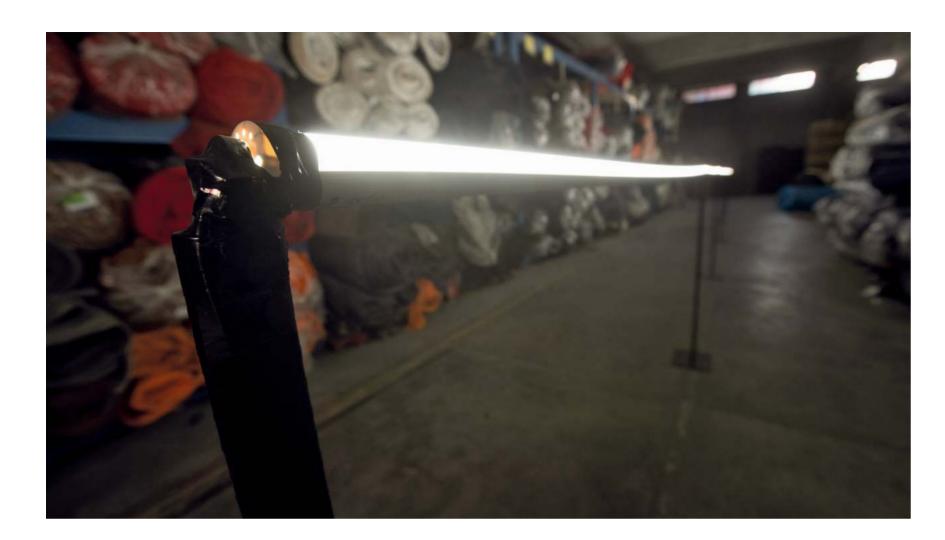
A Ray of Light was inspired by The Unbearable Lightness of Being, a novel by Milan Kundera that discussed the acceptance of a certain lack of ultimate meaning in life and living for momentary beauty. The artists formed the artwork by joining tube lights in a seemingly seamless arrangement of a considerable length and then hoisting them in mid-air using a thin metal stand which becomes unnoticeable once the lights are powered on.

Location | Weighing platform





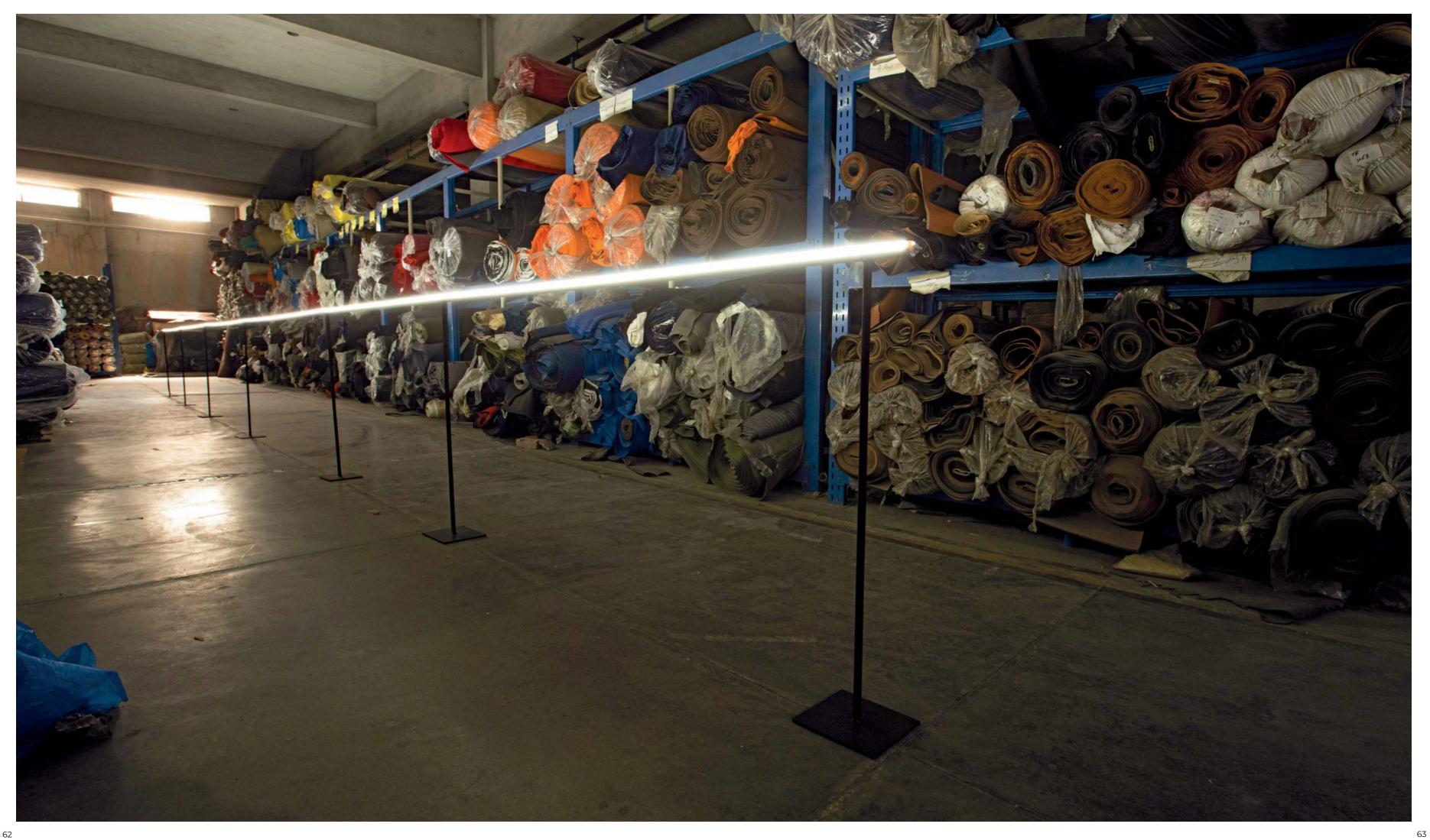




Ali Shariq Jamali A Ray of Light Tube light

Location | General storeroom in basement



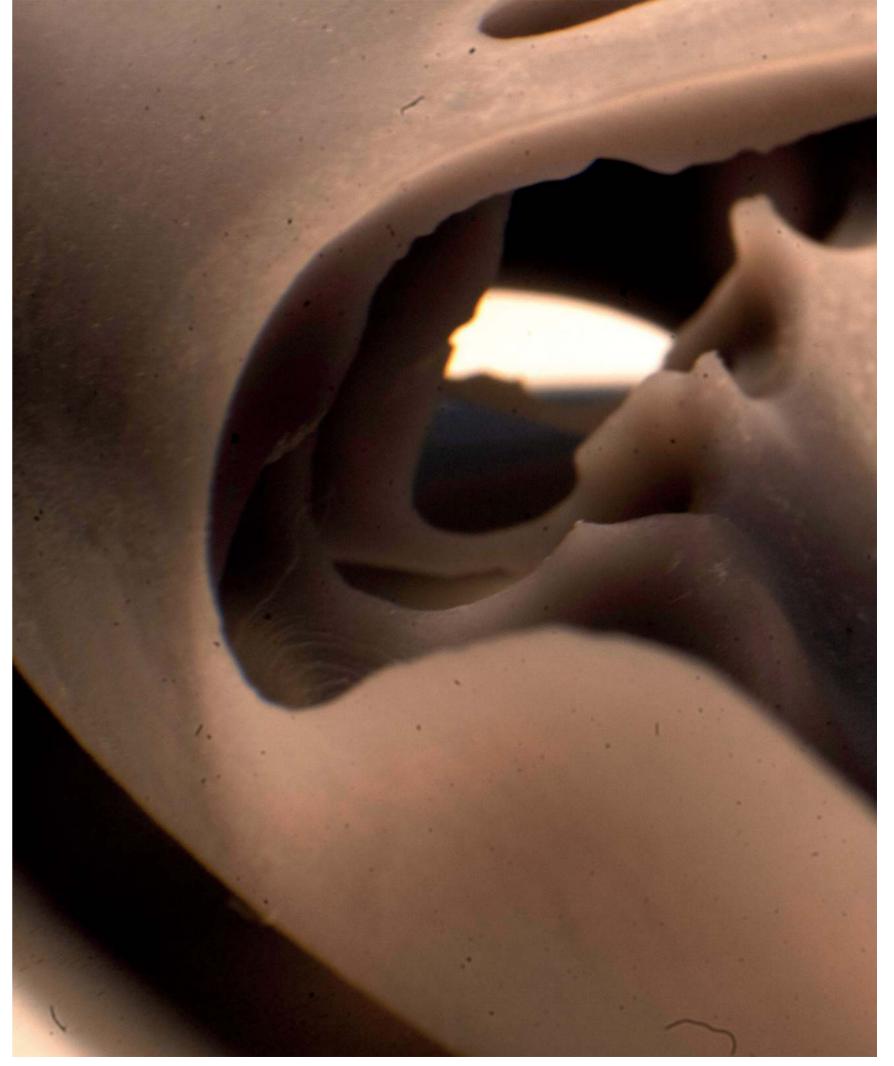


Space in Between

There, in space, I was flying awestruck by all the passing stars, each more beautiful than the other. I flew across Orion's belt and came upon Betelgeuse. There I hovered in front of its magnificence. I tried to shield my eyes with my hand in hopes of getting a glimpse of the star's beauty. Its light was so bright, it pierced my iris and penetrated my soul. There, I froze for what seemed to be forever, trying to steal a glimpse but never succeeding. I was in a sluggish trance that slowly blinded me and then it was pitch black. In an instant, I found myself trapped inside what seemed to be a vessel. As I slowly regained my senses, I tried to understand what had just happened. The weightless exterior of my existence had somehow transformed into flesh - as if I had been enfolded inside a clay figurine.

As I became accustomed to my new form, I was intrigued by the space between my exterior and my 'true' form. No matter how much I tried, I could not touch my own flesh which severely limited my existence. Perhaps the space was meant to be a buffer between the two forms to keep them from mixing – but soon I stopped questioning these things and became rather fond of my new form. I became engrossed in the new world and accepted the limitations of my new existence. In this world, however, I began to notice a pattern of a similar phenomenon; a space between its inhabitants and itself – a space between different races – a space between different social and economic classes and a space between the creator and the creation. Through the years, I tried to understand and even eliminate all these "spaces" – but alas! I could not succeed. It was only on the day of my departure from the flesh I had become accustomed to, that I reacquainted with myself. "Death" as you may call it, is what nullifies all these spaces.

The artists had initially conceived the idea quite a while back and had been curing the concept in his mind until now. The original concept was to demonstrate the space between the skin and the fabric of a clothed person. The artists achieved this feat by taking impressions of a foot and a shoe separately and then translating these impressions as digital models for processing. The impression of the foot was then subtracted from the impression of the shoe to provide a model of the space in between them. This model was then used as a basis for 3D printing and rendering of the artwork.





Ali Baba Space in Between Stereolithography (SLA) 3D

printed resin

Location | End of the main storage hall



It was a slow day. The birds seemed to be engaged in a never-ending song that could be heard from above in the vast trees. Their shade extended over the wild grass. The sun was shining through the leaves, flickering on the narrow paths under the trees. These paths, much like the trees in which the birds had made their homes, were a product of time. The grass was worn down by timeless feet, moving under the trees. There was a set of large stones almost next to the trunk of the oldest tree. It was a natural, yet necessary place of rest for all those who ventured there. It is often heard that spending time in nature brings peace. A chance to clear your mind, gather your thoughts, and look around at the natural arrangement of so many things existing in harmony. It makes you wonder, what are we doing here? In a perfectly balanced environment, we have a plethora of complicated problems to deal with. Most of them, ironically are created by our very own existence.

I stared at the bright yellow dandelion that swayed and whispered to myself, "If only I could sway in the wind like the flowers – carefree and peaceful." "What is stopping you?" He answered. I immediately turned around and found him sitting on the stones. The flickering sun formed a halo around him and presented a magnificent view together with the green plains and far-off mountains. He looked at me with a rather assuring smile. "Perhaps, I'm still bitter," I said with a sigh. The recent events in my life had changed my perspective. I felt indifferent and there was little that excited me now. It had been a long time since I left the confines of my room. I would stare at myself in the mirror, noticing my eyes change as the glimmer in them slowly faded. I would touch my shabby hair and stare at my pale face for hours at a time. Things had started to change, however, when I met him.

I sat down beside him and fidgeted with a small stick I had just fashioned out of a fallen branch. "The dandelion does not have to worry about anything. Everything is provided by nature for its survival." He nodded his head but somehow, I could sense his disapproval, "So is for you as well. You need not worry about survival; you need to worry about your purpose." I put the stick on my side and replied, "What is my purpose?" The plains seemed to be a shade of brown now, and the mountains seemed taller than before. I felt him moving restlessly in his place as if trying to find a comfortable spot. "That, you need to find on your own."

"How?" I asked him again. There was no answer. I looked at the spot where he had been sitting and realized he was gone. "Not again!" I yelled. The plains faded completely, and the mountains became walls around me. The trees grew dark and formed the roof over the walls. The grass became the carpet on the floor, and I saw myself in the mirror that was now in front of me and recognized him in my reflection.

4.1 Types of Artists #1

with the works of Faizan Naveed

4.2 Types of Artists #2

with the works of Rabeya Jalil & Rabeeha Adnan

4.3 Types of Artists #3

with the works of Saba Khan

4.4 Why I Don't Write More

Poem

Chapter 4

Emaan Maqbool

Types of Artists #1

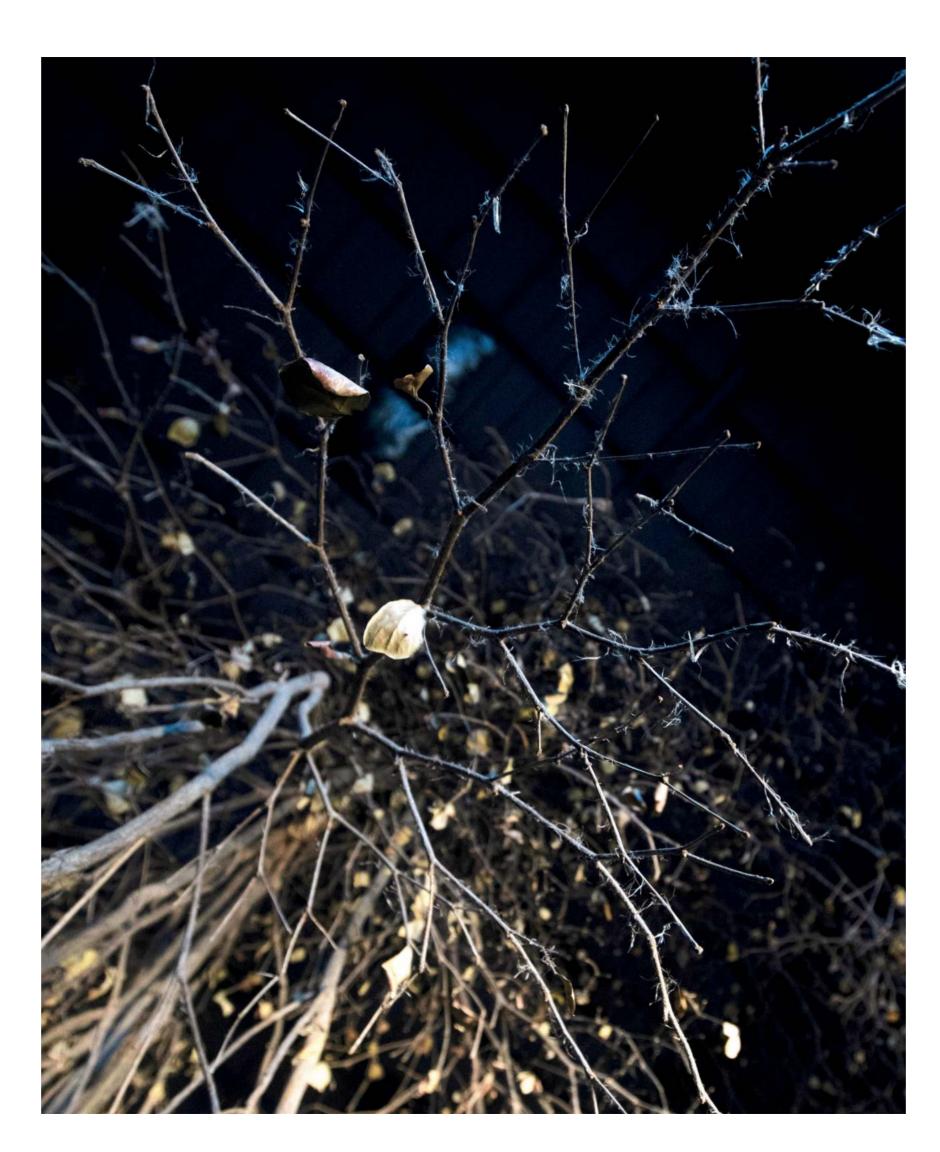
There are many different types of artists. What connects them is the visual; the idea. For an artist like Faizan Naveed, it all starts with a visual or for artists let us call it an idea. It is a "what-if" moment. confident. From there onwards, as expected, that idea grows. It takes roots and develops a life. The visual which
The aluminium tree was also perceived during is initially just a passing thought is not yet rooted and is still in search of nourishment. These are also was almost like a passing thought. Imagine an dark and desperate times. The artist must search for a light. Through Faizan, I understood that artists what-if moment. Again, the search started for do not always have to be physically involved with their work. Their thoughts and plans are 50% of the representative of all treekind? For this installation, work they do. Getting busy with your hands is just one part, in fact it is the second half of the work. Faizan exhibited two pieces in *The Factory* exhibition. Two trees titled *It was a Tree of Life* and It was a Tree of Life Too. The first is a found tree that was hung upside down in the chemical plant area of the factory and the second was an aluminium cast of a tree displayed in the factory

The answer to why an upside-down tree? has a lot to do with the space it was hung in. According to the artist, the space 'called' for it. For an artist, space is everything. It is no surprise that when Faizan saw the 43-foot-high chemical plant, the space called to him. It must have taken him less than 5 minutes to just announce that he is going to hang a tree upside down. From then on, window With their help a dying tree was located and then shopping for the tree started (yes, you read that right). No matter where he went, Faizan always had dissected into pieces, coded, and labelled. Those his eyes on the landscape, looking for the perfect match. Many questions popped up throughout this time such as, what kind of tree should it be? In year and the physical labour of a month with the the end it was a Terminalia. It is a common tree in strength of 9 people excluding the artist. the city of Lahore. And its branches naturally grow upwards and so, once hanged would maintain form. Would it be okay to brutally chop down a fully grown tree? Without commenting overall on the arts and ethics conversation, what made Faizan's part even tougher was finding a tree that was already destined for removal. Where would we find such a tree? It was found in an empty plot, soon to be constructed on, in DHA. The removal had to occur on time and in secret. A few days before the show opened the tree was removed,

loaded in a truck, and sent directly to the site. How was it hung? With a crane and a special clasping technique. Will the clasp stay strong? The artist is

the same visit. When first spoken by Faizan, it aluminium tree amidst the green. It was truly a the best tree possible. What would work as a Faizan also needed to experiment. Naturally, the next question was, where would the tree be cast? Once that was sorted, Faizan first tried casting branches and leaves. The barks returned to life, perfectly duplicated. The leaves on the other hand proved to be a problem; never maintaining their shape and texture.

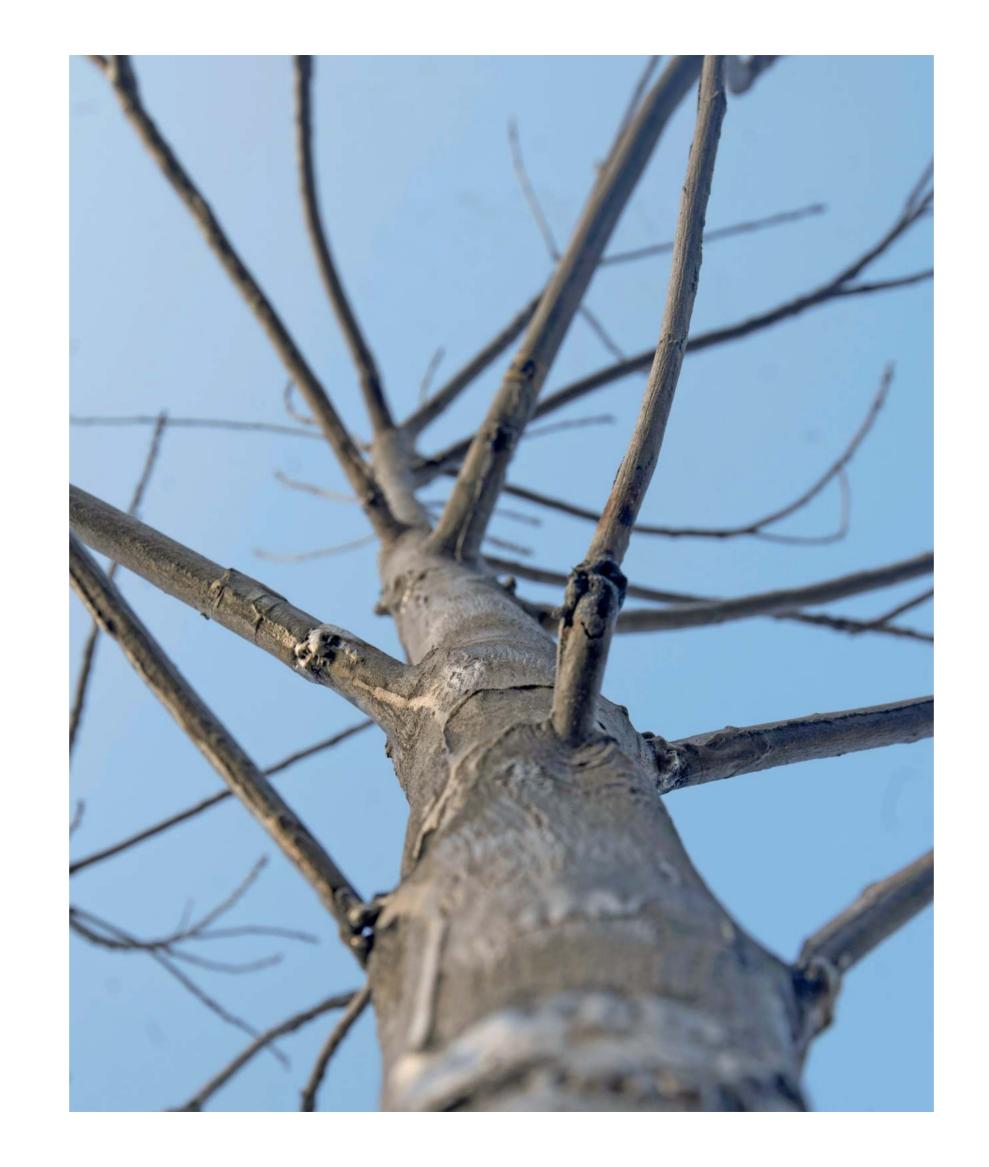
The budget also reflected the ambition of the project. Often when contemplating the value of an artwork, the skill and the labour comes to mind. Have you ever considered the planning? The time it takes to execute, the hours that stretch into gathering resources and the sleepless nights that bring the whole picture together. The artist managed this project with the help of patrons who believed in his's work and the pursuit of the arts. preserved forever in aluminium. It was chopped, pieces were then transported and re-assembled again on location. It was the mental labour of a



Faizan Naveed It Was a Tree of Life Tree (Terminalia) 43 ft tall, 20 ft wide diameter

Location | Chemical plant





Faizan Naveed

It Was a Tree of Life Too

Aluminum

The artist would like to thank Yasser Toor for his generous support.





Location | Front lawn

The trees are unrelated, yet related. They are visuals that have been brewing in Faizan for over a year now. They had a hold over Faizan, as strong as their representation and meaning. Two trees destined to die, have been preserved, through this exhibition. It was a Tree of Life was sad, haunting, unforgettable and unignorable yet beautiful. It changes your perspective of things, how you view the world, and how you might wish to see it. It is a reminder of children lying upside down to explore their imagination and see the space going topsy turvy. It stands mighty in front of you, and you cannot help but feel small. Even with all the positives right there in front of us, we still cannot deny that a tree hanging upside down from a factory, looking like a carcass, withering more each day, haunts you. It reads as a critique. It criticizes and reminds us of all that we want to ignore. It was a Tree of Life Too, on the other hand, is the hope; the ray of light that cools us down, almost like a sequel. It is a celebration of life. It is a second chance for a dying tree. The artist has given it a future. An ordinary tree on its last breath in someone's backyard is now at the centre of the exhibition gathering attention, standing there for days unknown.

These two installations ask you to engage your mind and your body. The first tree is mighty in front of you, and instilling inferiority in its viewer, especially as you take a few steps back, tilting your head just to see the roots at the top. While the aluminium tree invites you to touch, wanting to test if it is real; can we sense the lines and the pattern? Does it feel like a real tree? The silver truly stands out as you look to compare it to the background; how does it fit in this garden, where do the silver and green meet?

When it comes to Art there is always more than what meets the eye. We do not always understand everything that goes into creating a single piece. Through Faizan's installations, we learn the significance of a visual and an idea. How these two aspects signify the origin of an artwork and how everything slowly grows from there.

Types of Artists #2

When I first started a series of conversations with Rabeya Jalil and Rabeeha Adnan, we spoke about artists in general and these two, in particular. Before delving into their projects for *The Factory*, which were still in process, we talked about their entire practice. The most significant part of that conversation revolved around what makes something a work of art and what makes it belong to a particular artist? While talking about her art practice, Rabeya explained the artist's gesture. Every stroke in Rabeya's painting, whether consciously or subconsciously, has a thought behind it. It is all part of the process. At every step of the way, the artist is making decisions. They leave a unique imprint; a personal touch; a signature. The artist's gesture is intrinsic. It is a mark made by the artist.

Traditionally Rabeya works as a solo artist and frequently with paint. Rabeeha's practice on the other hand works on a different tangent. Her medium is anything digital, while material related construction is outsourced. The duo has worked together in the past, but this would be their first collaboration as artists. As I learned about their individual practices, I knew that this would prove to be an interesting combination. What came out of this, is three separate works of art in three different sites within the factory.

Rabeya and Rabeeha visited the factory a few times together and a few times apart. What we see in the end is a culmination of both their interests and in all three artworks Rabeya and Rabeeha are seen. I first met the two at their place of work, the National College of Arts, where we briefly talked about their practice. At that point in time, it was hard for me to imagine how everything would come together. As we continued to talk over time, I began to understand what they were doing. And in the last few days of the exhibition Rabeeha and I spent much time together at the factory. An important lesson that I learned about the requirements of being an artist, is that one needs patience. Coordination played an important part in bringing everything together. Much of what artists do is wait, as they depend on others. They look for

solutions and most importantly they keep their cool. Rabeeha worked on the animations, but I believe her gesture is everywhere in the display. Rabeeha's gesture is her practical decision making as well as the animation. At every step of the way, the collaborator's had to review what they were doing, what they wanted and what was possible. Some of these challenges included the availability of the equipment. Due to this one of their pieces had to be displayed as a video.

The original idea, generated by the factory, had been evolving. An idea is almost childlike. It has a personality that keeps popping to the surface at every turn of decision making. The final shape is a culmination of the artists and the idea.

Marks and Machines is the best demonstration of this. They used an industrial pigment machine almost as a performance piece. As we watch it operate, you can see Rabeeha's interest in bringing life to machinery by highlighting the characters hidden in them and Rabeya's mark making with the pigment. The machine constantly and consistently threw out paint. Was there an input or a decided pattern? The viewer cannot determine what the machine is saying if anything at all. Though the movement indicates the writing of a text. As the paint spreads, it creates a shape of its own, reminding us once again of Rabeya's gesture. The artist and the industrial pigment machine are collaboratively making a mark. After the opening, the industrial pigment machine had to be moved back and now this work exists in a video.

E-merge was Rabeya and Rabeeha's second installation. The medium was projection mapping. The execution was flawless. It was hard to believe what we saw was a projected animation. It was a whole experience. As you entered the storage container through a double layer of black curtains, the excitement and mystery built up. Once you were completely inside, at first you do not grasp what you are looking at. It looks like an empty container with a crack of light. As the light playfully changes you realise the true potential of the space. This work though subtle leaves the audience



Rabeya Jalil – Rabeeha Adnan

E-merge

Projection mapping

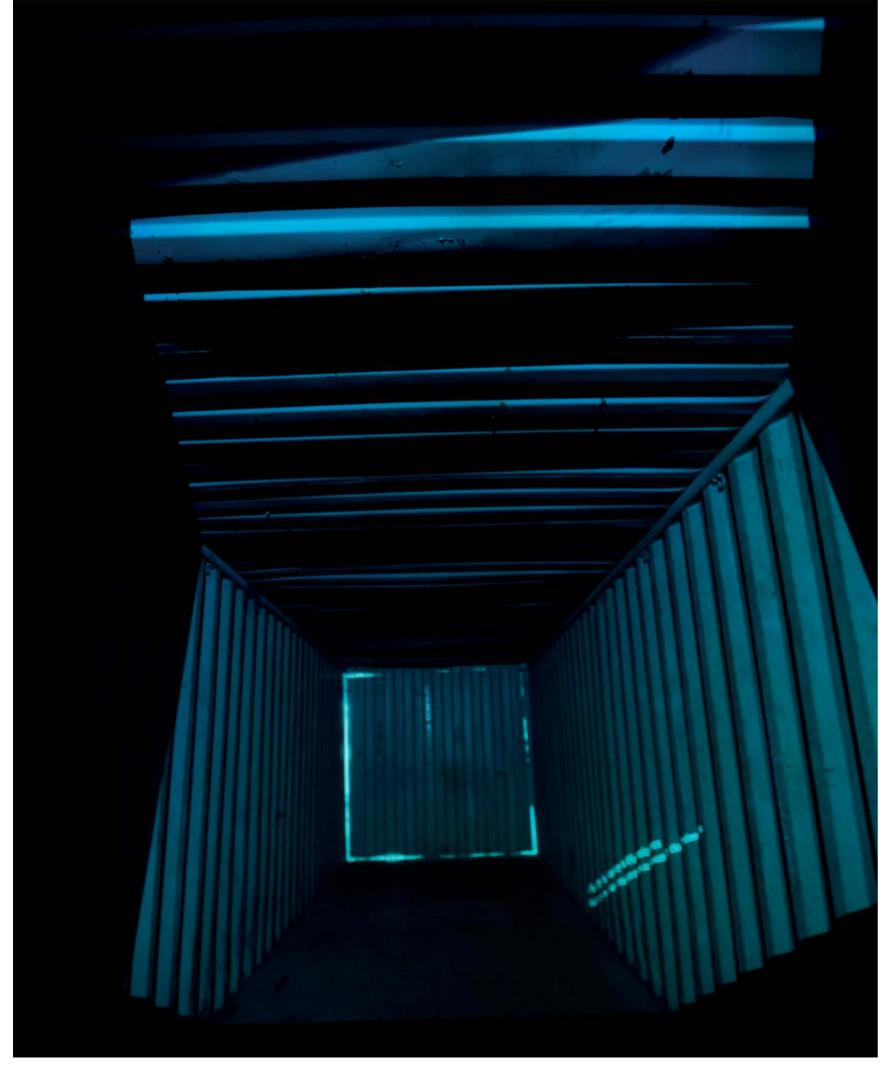
feeling elated. Not only do you get a true sense of the space around you but as you explore for yourself, possibilities open. The light brings out a self-reflective dialogue that the space is conducting with itself. It helps us realise that despite shutting yourself out there will always be a ray of light.

I Think I Misunderstood the Assignment, is my personal favourite. The journey for this began in Rabeya's office in NCA. Rameesha, our curator, told Rabeya that her letters were done. It was a confusing moment, but it stuck with me. At this point, they were just alphabets with infinite possibilities. Later, I learned that words and sentences were to be constructed. It was an idea that was still under construction, but we were leaning towards representing the writing patterns prevalent in the art community. I was instantly intrigued. The more we talked about it, the more involved I became. And at one point it was the three of us collaborating. This was an unforgettable experience, as we listed words commonly used in the art fraternity and actually laughed aloud while forming absurd sentences. Best of all, we literally raced to sort through 2400 alphabets the night before the exhibition opening. A few logistical hurdles were faced in the process of making it to the deadline. The exhibition opened while the words were still being glued to the wall. The

remaining sentences lay neatly on the floor waiting for their turn as people passed by. Even in the process, the installation caught the audience's eye and generated more than a few laughs. As our emotions echoed through to the viewers, the installation felt complete even during the process. However, the real success of the piece came from the factory employee who glued the letters on the wall. As Rabeya put it, "it was divine intervention". Out of the few alphabets left over, he found all the letters for his name and took ownership. What we did not know was missing from this piece was "Allah Ditta". In light of this, we consider him to be our fourth collaborator.

An artist may work in any medium or with any collaborator, still a part of them is always reflected in their art. The collaboration between Rabeya and Rabeeha was unexpected, at least on the surface. It made more sense to me over time. There are a plethora of lessons to be learned about art from this duo and this exhibition. I learned about the patience artists require, how an artwork has a personality and the importance of mark-making. However, the most important lesson here is that harmony is required for any collaboration. The harmony between them is evident in the success of these three installations.

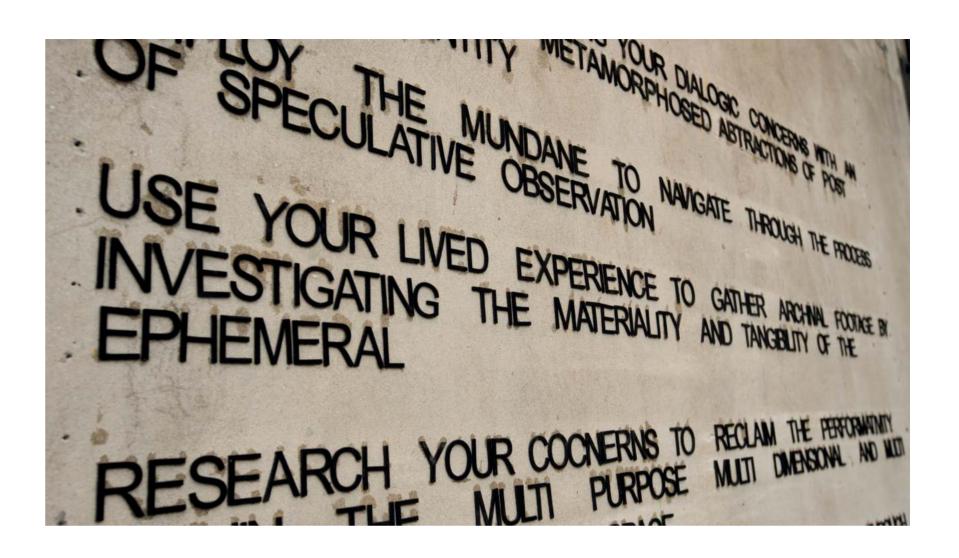




Scan QR code to view artwo







Rabeya Jalil – Rabeeha Adnan I Think I Misunderstood the Assignment Laser cutting

Location | Front door of chemical



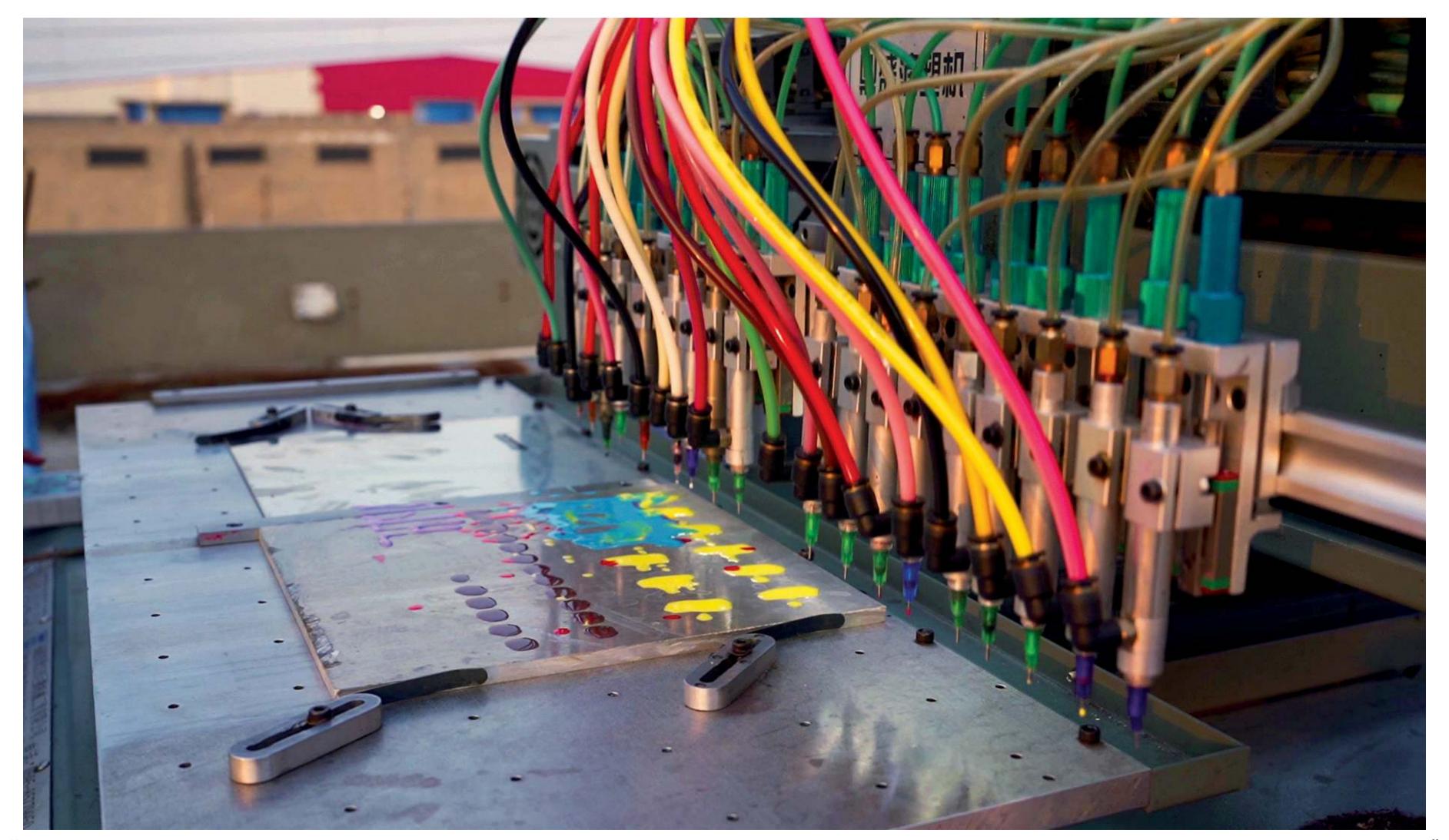




Rabeya Jalil – Rabeeha Adnan Marks and Machines Industrial pigment machine,

Industrial pigment machin Mix media

Location | Roof of production plant



Types of Artists #3

Saba Khan

Pak Khawateen Painting

Club Shoes for Expedition II

Shoes

Shelf size: 6' 18" x 18" x 18"

Location | Basement stitching

A while ago what I learned about Saba Khan was to expect the unexpected. Since then, I have always looked forward to seeing her work exhibited. I truly never know what to expect. She has taught me that an artist can work in any medium and has the ability to convert anything into art. She brings life to objects, images, and materials in ways you would not have known about before. When you want to reimagine and reconstruct your thoughts, Saba's work has the innovation to do just that. When I think of contemporary art, I think of Saba Khan.

My first tour of the factory was with Saba. I could see her fascination with the varied materials and processes that were present. The spark in her imagination was evident, as she had them pour rubber into a paper cup. Once poured it looked like a frothy cup of coffee. Later as Saba and I spoke about her artwork for this exhibition, she casually said, "I made a shoe."

No one used the factory quite literally as Saba has. As the title, Pak Khawateen Painting Club Shoes, suggests Saba's shoes are also linked to another ongoing project of hers. The shoes were made in the factory a year ago and have also been worn. Unlike the other artists, Saba's shoes had been on display from before the opening of the exhibition. They were worn by her collaborators of the Pak Khawateen Painting Club, in various parts of Sindh. Saba's medium is shoes, but considering their journey, it is possible to consider them as part of a performance. What we see in the glass case is not just the displayed artwork, but something actually lived in. Their journey is visible, along with the remnants of their destinations and the women who wore them. If you look closely enough, their story is all over.

When talking to Saba about the process and her inspirations, she makes everything sound like a piece of cake. Joy resonates in everything that she does. To start with, Saba was inspired by Virgil Abloh and astronauts. Then she spent time sifting through fabric and material at the factory. Next came her sketches. The initial design was rejected,

and Saba was given a brief about the specificities of shoe design. Once those practical elements were introduced, the shoe went into production. Saba's shoe might have been displayed for us to see at the exhibition, but it is not only meant to be looked at. It has been worn by the members of the Pak Khawateen Painting Club and Saba would like for people to be able to order it. Not only for display, but to buy as a fashion accessory. The nature of this work builds a bridge between art and design. It breaks the elitism that may be associated with art. The work has already travelled and is going to continue it's journey as it is meant to be displayed in Sharjah next. Now with the possibility of it going into further production, I am excited to get a pair myself.

The only thing to expect from Saba is the unexpected. It is an inspiration how she fully immerses herself in her projects. Saba teaches us that art has no boundaries and no limitations.







Why I Don't Write More

There's a poem somewhere stuck deep inside me

It wriggles confused between the arteries

Finding its way making a track

Always managing to stay lost

It's now a shadow between two thoughts

Scared by the light while so incredibly bright itself

How does it stay stuck?

I oblige it I divide these thoughts to make a path trying to urge it out

A word may appear I see a flare around there I'm on an S.O.S watch!

It screeches
Almost reaches
We're both on the edge of our seat
It's almost in sight!

It surfaces up but thenalmost at once dives right back in into the pool of other colourful dreams

I breathe it out I try to shout Some words even do drop out but the rest are all torn apart while I'm being hasty It needs some rest and time to regain its strength so, it hides a while in my subconscious for one day to begin again

Then here we are back at the start

There's a poem somewhere stuck deep inside me

It wriggles confused between the arteries

Finding a way Leaving a track

Managing always to stay lost

5.1 Art for All

with the works of Mehbub Jokhio

5.2 art for all

Short story

Chapter 5

Mahum Qureshi

Art for All

What is art? What differentiates it from everything? Art is a discourse, a dialogue, a conversation. Art is a vacuum, but it cannot exist in a vacuum. It is born of context and exists in a context. For example, if you change the context of this display, the overall meaning changes. If the scale is changed, the meaning changes. If we add more elements, the meaning changes. Yet, the viewer is free to add or subtract as many layers to or from the "New and Improved! Contemporary Art" printed cardboard boxes.

What is unique, and ironic, about this project is that, since Mahbub is currently doing an art residency in Denmark, it was conceived outside the actual bounds of the space. Yet, it cannot exist in its current form outside the warehouse. Similarly, the prototype was printed and tested "off-site". However, the mass printing and assembly were done locally. At the final curation, the project created the necessary dialogues between; the art and the space, the art and the viewer; leaving out the unnecessary artist dialogue on art! Art is the instrument through which artists manifest their intention and thoughtfulness. The beauty of contemporary art is that it embraces everything, shuns nothing and no one.

At first glance, the installation appears simplistic, minimal even. Mahbub has channelled and captured all the mundanity of mass production, breaking the viewers' preconceived notions that only paintings and sculpture can be considered art. However, each facet has unique details of design and embellishments in the form of the written word. The end "product" is the art piece. It shows the different utilities art has for the general viewer: a consumer product as well as a luxury. Though it is supposedly a typical art piece, that should be hung in a gallery, the simple "Contemporary Art" box, manufactured by "MJ Art Manufacturers Pvt. Ltd", can easily blend in with packaged shoe boxes in a warehouse or even on a grocery store shelf with cooking oil! Using the vehicle of contemporary art. Mahbub has endeavoured and adventured the traditional confines of "what sells" art in galleries, challenging himself to do something more

conceptual. Therefore, the inspiration of the site of *The Factory* creates the context in which to visualise this work of art. It allows the artist to incorporate more of the real-world and corporate supply-demand consumerism, and profit-driven production, all within the whimsical, less rigid world of art.

Mahbub has demonstrated that he is well-versed in the rigorous academic requirements of being a contemporary artist. This project encapsulates the issue-oriented approach in art. Though the artist did not let himself be driven by the urge to raise personal, political, or social issues through this project, he still manages to encapsulate certain sarcastic elements, which, upon closer inspection, makes one question the very basics of contemporary art itself. He has also tried to merge certain elements from other eras, like the technicality and materiality of postmodernism, and the self-critical expression of modernism. As for the art critic, Mahbub sites Milan Kundera's short story "Nobody Will Laugh", stating that the art and artist both can hold themself in idyllic positions. However, both view each other critically and, funnily, manage to make each other's lives miserable.

Leading up to this project, the artist has been experimenting with modification of stock images, light-heartedly ridiculing the current local sociopolitical landscape. The closest self-reference for the current work was an art installation in Italy where he had the audience look for an "Untitled, material unknown" piece. There was no original work displayed. The audience came back with various answers to what they thought was the art piece, highlighting that meaning lies not with the work of art but with the viewer. It was intriguing to note that before the art installation *Art for All* was labelled, the audience of the exhibition actually walked right past it!

Further, Mahbub has been orienting himself to tackle head-on the commerciality and pretence of the art scene. Whether it is here or abroad, the art world is forever positioned on the precipice of marketability and expression. The artist needs



Mahbub Jokhio
Art for All
Printed corrugated boxes

Location | Entrance of the main storage hall

direction and self-confidence to execute his vision. After the initial creation, however, art should be allowed to take its own form, and the audience will inevitably take meaning from it.

The colourful design, font and layout of the "Contemporary Art" boxes was a Warholian nod (in lieu of the iconic Campbell's Soup Cans painting) to local cooking oil boxes. It was interesting to watch some viewers unconsciously picking up on the reference and accidentally reading the Urdu writing as "Kashmiri Art". As for the tagline, it reads "Think Inside the Box!" though the viewers humorously have no idea what form or shape are the ingredients or "Conceptual Facts" inside the displayed boxes! The box further boasts to be "conceptually tested" with a "100% moneyback guarantee" and it is even "imported", all the catchy phrases that attract the typical consumer base. The printing was intentionally blurry, fuzzy and overlapping, reflecting the quality of local or lower priced manufacturing, which focuses on the product more than the packaging, in contrast to international standards or higher priced products, which rely heavily on perfect packaging to drive sales. Needless to say, this is symbolic of the direct relationship between art that is "made for sale" and its quality

Despite all the research and brainstorming that went into this visual art installation, this project is truly accessible. It requires as much art literacy to eniov as a pop song, with the depth and insight of a classical ballad. In other words, the artist's intention remains to not have the viewer be burdened with the jargon of the art world while approaching and understanding his project. It is tongue-in-cheek and playful. It is sarcastic and satirical. Therefore, it creates equal measures of amusement and amazement. The best thing about Mahbub's art is that he does not have to physically hold the audience's hand and guide them on this journey. The installation speaks columns on its own, which is how the artist envisioned it and believes art, overall, should be. So, even for all the audience that does not wish to be encumbered by the latest 'ism' to enjoy and appreciate art, the meaning of this art lies within themselves.

Is art to be applauded, admired and acquired by academics, critics and patrons only or can the layperson also enjoy it? The artwork *Art for All* ticks all those boxes!







art for all

Tell me: Can you spot it?

"It was somewhere there."

We missed it entirely; let's go back!

"Great!"

Am I dumb? I don't really get it.

"So desi!"

Sale! Sale. Sold.

"Amazing!"

Online or in stores?

"It's here."

So funny!

"This it is..."

Art!

"Sir, 400 pieces assembled, 70 left."

The supervisor sat on a wooden stool, in the utmost corner, looking sideways, over the black frame of his rectangular glasses, his own existence, though broad enough, barely visible behind the stacks. He took lined notepads, red-edged pads and brown registers from the table and put them onto his tally sheet as an improvised paperweight. His more-salt-than-pepper moustache twitched as he calculated the day's predicted production. His deep, thoughtful sigh moved his centre of balance on the stool, "At this rate, we'll fall behind the second day in a row." Another melancholy sigh threatened to topple him over, "So sad that my favourite worker has decided to go over to the consumer end of The Product.

Youth these days has no regard for others. No loyalty, just a lust for money and fame. Let's see where those misguided ideals will get him." He got back to counting, adding and multiplying, pressing the numbers with the express purpose of making them magically turn into an acceptable outcome. Around him, the production process continued - the forklift, the pitchfork, the carton, the crate, the drums, the barrels, the acid, the crane - all unbothered by his worried brain.

"There must be a way to create a name and something new that sets you apart from the rest of the originals and individuals running in the same age-old trade."

While in the city, I stared at the site, glanced down at the guide, and then upwards again, in doubt. Where a shiny, curvaceous, newly designed building had been promised was a pile of ruined rubble. This was the third such mystifying site I had visited in a day. I nervously looked around, searching for an answer. "Where are all of these?" I asked the nearest stranger standing by, fanning out the various glossy pamphlets advertising Art Education. "Don't you know?" came the haughty reply, "There was no need for them since The Product came by."

That darned Product! It had infiltrated here as well? Well, come to think about it, it makes complete sense that it would have more of a demand in the city. My steps felt like semi-liquid, drying cement, as the realisation took form in my mind: the more I was trying to run from it, the more this Product was adamant to stay in my life. Slowly, I came to a stop, crumpled in a heap amidst the broken bricks, crumbled concrete and spindly steel. I grappled with a vague acceptance, letting the uncemented gravel trickle through my fingers, The Product was here to stay.

- Where did I start? -

"Sir, I started in a small village. Didn't know I had big dreams, till I was told I have big dreams." People ask. I don't lie. It isn't "my" work, but it is.

So. where did I start?

"Small village, big dreams. Long journey!"

Some things are going to be small, no matter what: some ideas, some thoughts, some minds. Small. When I first came here, I had obviously pondered over some things. Should I get the all-important degree? What price would I get for that piece of paper? I wondered about the return on my valuable investment. In the end, my decision was made for me - the institutions, the universities, the education sites had all been reduced to rubble and rubbish heaps.

What would I have done if I had never seen The Product again? One box... To test first, I got the smaller one, reaching down to the bottom-most metallic shelf, lifting with my knees. (Not being used to being on this side of the trade, I had tensely taken in the eye of the cameras watching me.) It had no side effects, just the desired result. So, I went back for more, a monthly ration, I suppose. All I had to do was think inside the box, the box did the rest for me! Wah kya baat hai!

When I first took it home, I saw it came with no instructions. I couldn't figure out what to do with it. On instinct, I tried dissolving it in water and drank it; the yellow goo, the texture of oily mashed potatoes, liquifying slowly but ended up congealed at the bottom. Still, I could only produce the same mediocrity I always had. Finally, I did what I should have done from the get-go - I searched for how-to videos and manuals. Who knew, you had to stir-fry your initial intentions, masticate them and digest.

At first nothing came. Then slowly I started sketching shadows of stone monoliths. From the shadows, arose the tall, white cylinders. Next, they narrowed into necks, bottles emerging from the cylinders. Round and round my pencil played, producing the caps. Next, I searched for the perfect material with which to bring them to creation. I traced my trail back to my initial search sites, finding inspiration hiding under rocks, besides falling walls and between tragic walkways. I moulded and melded my way up ladders and stools, even a crane, creating the strange, majestic cylinders of my project.

But I won't lie, I won't put my name on it. That will be the honest thing to do. Right? Just put it out there, get my return. Profits a hundred, or more, times fold! Because what did The Product cost? And what did it get me...? I envisioned it: My investment is paying off! Who knew? One's life changed with just one box! Yet I could barely breathe with burdensome anxiety: What if someone takes it, without paying? What if someone breaks it? What if someone throws it away, or worse, recycles it? What if children mistake it for some plaything?

(But it is a plaything.)

My breath regulated as I let the awful, asphyxiating anxiety acrobatically roll over me and off my back. It was time to face the tripod, tepidly. I approached the apparatus, awaiting the onslaught of questions. I swallowed saliva as the-very-first-of-many interviews started.

Where did I start...?

The starting question sent me reeling since I had only prepared shallow answers around the narrow subject, grilling myself and drilling the quizzical jargon of inspiration, materiality, duality, creation, juxtaposition, modernism, postmodernism... Where do I fit into all that, if I even fit at all? Factory...? No... School...? No... small village... I kept my focus on the thin, twirling, misty vapours arising from the foamy latte they had provided me with, waiting for all of it to solidify.

"I started from a small village."

"Bhai, woh hai! Woh hai art! Ja k daikh!"

I felt like I couldn't dare be there to defend my dream, but still, the buses took my family, my neighbours, my friends, my biggest critic, me. They congregated in the corner against the grey structure as two green-uniformed, bearded bards opened the vast, sheet-metal doors of the warehouse. Then they tread in, grouped in the classifications that divided them. One by one the groups passed by the unfiltered truth, with barely a glance up, failing to grasp the enormity of my creation. The structures scraped the ceiling, uninterested in leaving their exalted perches to notice the audience below. They meandered between the ceiling-high, white cylinders, missing the mark entirely. I had aimed for the meaning to be literally beyond the layman.

Then darkness started making its way centre stage. And as it crept to the corners, it revealed the previously hidden shadows. Gasps, whispers, murmurs arose, along with their sights, reaching up towards the ceiling, seeing for the first time: the structures.

"Tell me: Can you spot It?" gasped my neighbour.

"I knew It was there somewhere!" my friend replied

"Oh! Silly us! We had missed It entirely; let's go back!" more friends' delighted shrieks arose.

"Great!" my biggest critic couldn't stop the word escaping him.

"Am I dumb? I don't really get it," the cousin at the cusp of puberty whispered an unheard truth.

"So desi!" my random aunty remarked randomly.

Sale! Sale. Sold. The auctioneer's gavel came gallivanting down.

"Amazing!" my biggest critic caught himself off guard again.

"Online or in stores?" the I.T. colleague worked out the logistics.

"It's here." my father decreed.

"So funny!" my little sister giggled.

"This it is..." my mother murmured proudly.

Art!

So, filled with amusement and amazement, unfulfilled, fruitless and wistful wishes, and gnawing greed, and enveloping envy, they exited. Down along an angled alley, not wide enough to hold more than one, they shuffled, looking down at the wet-grey cement bricks giving way to dry, white bricks, and finally opening back up to the expanse of the entrance.

So where does it go from here? Where will The Product's reach reach? Where do I get till?

"I had bigger dreams than my small village." Does The Product get me there?

"Sir, 400 pieces assembled, 70 left."

Finally, 1000 pieces of art for all... 999, 998. Take one, take All!

^{6.1} Scraped Realities

with the works of Unum Babar & Matt Kushan

6.2 The Wise Men - Lost in Translation

with the works of Ammar Faiz

^{6.3} Creation Myths: A to U

Short story

Chapter 6

Mahum Qureshi and Jawad Raza

Scraped Realities

In their project A Labour of Discarded Love,
Unum and Matt opted for using man-made,
factory material waste and reused it brilliantly to
emphasise its organic quality. In the spirit of "found
objects", they opted to go around the factory for
inspiration, scavenging and utilising the materials
on-site. At the beginning of the process the
scavenged raw material looked more like a scrap
heap rather than an art installation.

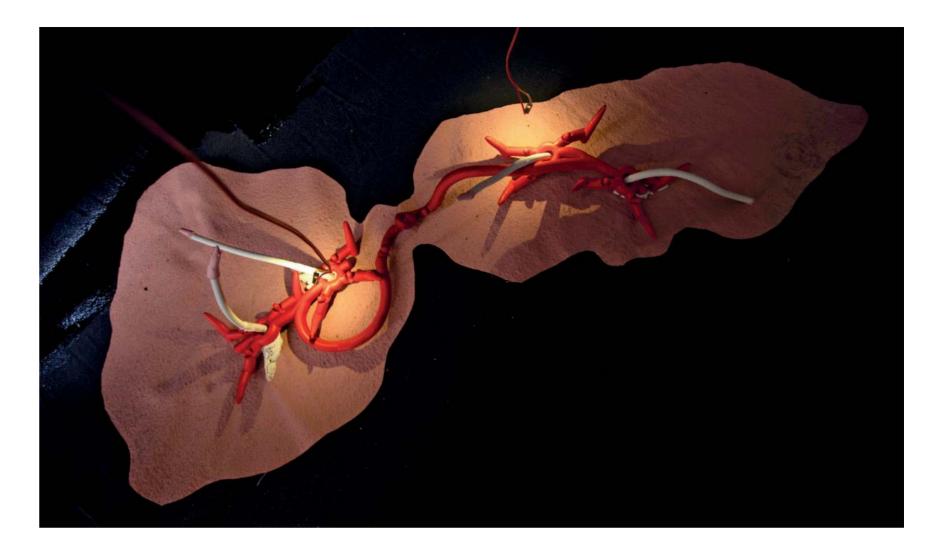
The resulting assemblage has an anamorphic quality. When it is viewed in its original environment, it represents the rebirth of reused rubber scraps and we witness them becoming creatures on their own. The work was displayed in two adjoining rooms; connected yet separated by a wall. One room contains the aforementioned brightly coloured, creatures that are simultaneously playful yet threatening. The artists have twisted the rubber into quirky shapes that could easily be interpreted as arachnids, deepsea creatures, disjointed bodies or body parts, highlighted by 'resting pads' in magenta, grey and flesh paints. Each is lit with a simple, small light which creates a dramatic effect. The light casts a glow which highlights each individual creature and its residence, while shrouding the rest of the area in shadow. The shadow is further pronounced by the use of black recycled material as a carpet. The beauty and benefit of *The Factory* exhibition is that it allowed the artists the freedom to envision art that required technical and mechanical help to execute.

The adjoining room housed a cylinder of reused waste material. The cylinder was given a plain yet life-like quality with its flesh coloured paint. It was filled with a mound of dirt and planted on top was a milkweed. Milkweed is the discard amongst the plants, it's a parallel to all the discarded manmade material it sits upon in the room and the connected one. Milkweed grows unwanted in abandoned or untended areas. It is a strange plant with a long list of qualities, it is potentially poisonous, yet has medicinal uses. It also prevents erosion of the land it occupies, hinting at its strong roots. Finally, the potted-plant is bathed in an

eerie, haunting purple light. Traditionally, purple represents royalty, yet here it gave unnatural UV light to an imprisoned plant. The milkweed flower typically represents freedom and dignity. However, by ripping the plant out of its natural habitat, its roots have been put in captivity, thus robbing it of its dignity. This is symbolized by the lack of flowers. Overall, it could be symbolic of life in a factory environment; an unnatural but necessary evil.

Unum and Matt's second project. Meshes of Abandonment, also gives new life to scraps. It comprises leather sheets that have had shoe straps mechanically punched out of them. The punchedout sheets create hollowed spots and allow the artists to use the negative space. We understood the hallowed marks of the sheet to symbolise the punctured land dug up by machines for resources, destroying nature around it. The leather sheets were separately dried out in the sun, almost like traditional cowhides, before they were stitched together to form a long net. The resulting long net was painted in parts a bright, metallic silver. The final product was displayed on the wall of one of the factory workstations, creating a net like facade on the wall. It resembled a fishing net. The theme of oceanic life resonates with the previous installation, creating a continuity between the

The first two rooms make the unusual connection between things that are unwanted in the natural and industrial world, yet each scrap and weed has its own use and purpose beyond the obvious. When one looks at scrap, it is very rare to think of art. It is even rarer to think of life, evolving into new forms, new shapes, even new beings. Unum and Matt's installation displays multiple layers of meaning. The plurality of the scrap material seen in the exhibition translates itself into playful, visual amphibious urchins and other animated creatures. The dynamics of the exhibit play with multiple characters of the environment: light, the space and the eventual placement of all three art pieces combined have a unique symbiosis. The discarded, found objects sets a juxtaposition between "fine or high art" and "low or pop art". The tiered



Location | Paint room

positioning of the three pieces suggests the movement from lowly life to higher ideals and actualization; from the black rubber floor, the rubber creatures on it, the milkweed struggling to grow higher reaching for the light, and finally the leather net hanging from the roof.

Recycling unwanted material is not a new concept, but Unum and Matt's artwork has a unique approach. It is a purposeful and meaningful creation. In the spirit of assemblage, their work utilises the environment and the resources that come from the environment. This artwork comes from and represents it's source: the factory. The discarded and leftover material has been utilised to bring a new creation to life. From the Dadaist movement in the 1920s to the Modern era in the 1960s, assemblage art gained momentum with this method of utilising available resources. It has brought art out of canvas and sculptures, into a new, more hybrid and accessible field.

Evolution is a process which creates commonality between of what is needed and what can be discarded. With respect to this Darwinian notion, the artists have worked successfully towards nurturing the 'unwanted' back to life.



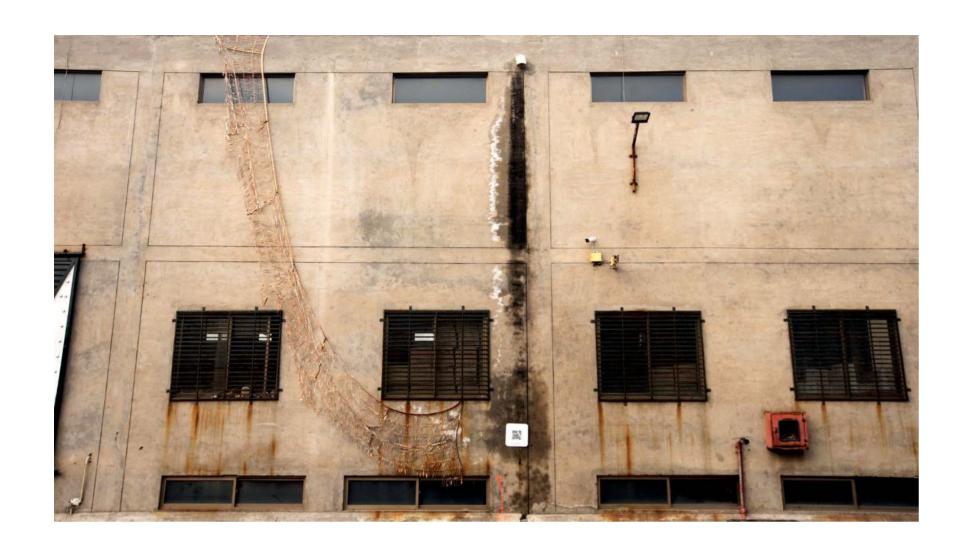






Unum Babar – Matt Kushan A Labor of Discarded Love Scrap rubber material, recycled rubber sheets, plant, UV lights.







Unum Babar – Matt Kushan Meshes of Abandonment Scrap rubber sheets

Location | Exterior wall of the main storage hall

The Wise Men Lost in Translation

Fragmented context weaves a pattern
Disjointed, confused light seeps
Hazzy lanterns, tints heave.
For every segment, every dream
There seems an eerie banter, breaking at its seam

Swim a million miles, echo of a billion seas Walk a gazillion miles, bellow a trillion broken feet Mazey runs, come undone The journey nearing defeat

Solitude of silence, etched in darkness The steely noise, danger In silhouettes of shoes, a soul harkens:

Repeat. By: Jawad Raza Inspired by "The Wise Men of Sundar" Visual Art Project by Ammar Faiz

It began as an ordinary day, a morning sun barely out, glistening on the dew drenched ground that lay in its wake. The artists began to gather for the exhibition. How would it go? No one knew. In such a state of perplexed anxiety and confusion, a few wise men's voices could be heard echoing in a corner of the factory, welcoming the audience with an eerie chant. The voices bellowed, in a language muffled by distorted mechanical glitches, lending it a character of its own. It seemed as if the factory itself was speaking. Speaking words of wisdom or warning? That was still a mystery to many. The actual words of this chant were a loose, Urdu translation of the exhibition's curitorial note.

"Artists are engaged in this exhibition to explore the significance of industrial development leading to increasing global transformation.

Some fundamental dimensions including marketing, sales, development and production as well as the power of capitalism and consumer culture are the objective reality of this exhibition.

Using an artistic eye, which engraves philosophy. compositional aesthetics and a reflection of industrial character: artists are encouraged to dissect the relationship between a concrete

structure and human engagement.

The material space will lead artists to challenge and experiment on various levels. Diverse mediums and materials will inevitably be explored through the process."

فنکار اس نائش میں مصروف ہیں تاکہ صنعتی ترقی کی اہمیت کو دریافت کیا جا سکے جس کی وجہ سے عالمی تبدیلی میں اضافہ ہوتا ہے۔ مارکیٹنگ، فروخت، ترقی اور پیداوار کے ساتھ ساتھ سرمایہ داری کی طاقت اور صارفی ثقافت سمیت کچھ بنیادی جہتیں اس نائش کی معروضی حقیقت ہیں۔

فنکارانہ آنکھ کا استعمال کرتے ہوئے، جس میں فلسفہ، ساختی جمالیات اور صنعتی کردار کی عکاسی کی گئی ہے: فنکاروں کی حوصلہ افزائی کی جاتی ہے کہ وہ ٹھوس ڈھانچے اور انسانی مصروفیت کے درمیان تعلق کو الگ کریں۔

مادی جگہ فنکاروں کو مختلف سطحوں پر چلنج اور تجربہ کرنے کی طرف لے جائے گی۔ اس عمل کے ذریعے متنوع میڈیم اور مواد کو لامحاله تلاش کیا جائے گا۔

The chant was emanating from Ammar Faiz's video The Wise Men of Sundar. The name inspired by Sundar Industrial Estate, where the factory is located, and harkens to traditional folktales of childhood. The title is not directly linked to the wise men's words. However, the intention is that these words are immaterial and interchangeable. The words of the translation are grammatically and syntactically incorrect. They are meant to simultaneously connect (through a commonly spoken language) and disconnect (the incorrect use of said language) between the art and its audience. Even though the overall effect of the repetition (open to interpretation and easily malleable) was to link to the audience's own memories and experiences. The chants create an alien space even more unrecognisable. Which then lays the foundation for an atmosphere, created to remind the audience



Ammar Faiz
The Wise Men of Sundar
Single channel video, color, sound
02 minutes, 30 seconds

of a plethora of actual realities experienced. Thus creating a loop where the familiar and dissimilar whirl, in an overbearing chant. The memories created by the recital are reinforced through the symmetrical arrangement of the performers in the video. The video starts with a dreary, indoor space set as a frame. There is an unsettling echo of the factory machinery in the background. Then 13 workers march in and stand in their orchestrated spots, immediately giving the superstitious mind an unlucky omen. There is a displaced voice dictating the words, word by word and line by line. The artist has captured the ominously-numbered factory workers, chanting the words. The workers were not costumed but remained in their everyday garb. During the video editing process, the artist debated which close-ups to include to broaden the message, rather than focusing on merely one interpretation of "societal problems". After the entire text has been delivered through dictation and repetition, the crowd disperses. This video is put on loop, so if one stays longer than the original viewing, it becomes a mindless, meaningless

At a first glance, and without the audio, the video can be interpreted as a socialist or anti-capitalist commentary. However, as the choice of the selected close-ups in the video exemplify, the meaning runs deeper and actually manages to

juxtapose the socialist (highlighting of the plight of the worker) and capitalist (glorification of mechanical production) ideologies simultaneously. Yet, the true magic of this piece does not lie in the marriage of these extremes, but in the sense that it can exist - like contemporary art often does - outside the political nuances as a purely human project.

Overall, some audience members may be reminded of school assemblies, while others have a sense of defensive training, and there is even a resemblance to political rally slogans. In the linguistic context, the parroting of the words is also symbolic of a child's initial attempts at learning a language. During initial stages of language, learners often repeat words that they hear without context or awareness of their meaning and impact. In the context of the factory, it can be a nod to the union - or the lack of it. Further in the context of language, it utilises the mechanical aspect of a loosely worded translation to create a larger disconnect, as if the visuals were not stark enough already to have a jarring impact on the audience. The English to Urdu translation is incoherently disproportionate to the systemic meanings of what the curator note is trying to envision. For instance, there are parts in Urdu which seem to be out of place purely because they have been literally translated without the connection to the

contextual meaning in English. The first line literally translates the word "Explore" as "daryaft", which if one looks at it in a linguistic sense changes the contextual identity of the curator's note. An appropriate word in urdu could have been "farogh" which could have highlighted the importance of promotion of artistic endeavours through patronage. The context of patronage (of art and the artists who try to create visual narratives) is missed in the translation. This further enhances the 'disconnect' as an overarching theme.

Much like an important announcement, the voice was set to soundscape the physical architecture, drawing the audience towards the room. The display was in a corner meaning you must have crossed part of the exhibition to reach it. Before you enter, there is an expectation of something dramatic, as the display is revealed through black flex curtains. A welcoming community space is imagined. However, atmosphere is not pleasant. There is a sense of alienation and disconnect, almost like the initial calling was a trap. After the opening, the loudspeaker volume had to be adjusted as it was interpreted as noise, spilling over into other display site. In an unforeseen twist, a power failure led the piece completely undisplayable on the last days of the exhibition. This, unintentionally, sealed the fate of the project. Despite, being a direct output and product of the factory and its workers, it was pushed out of the space.

Eventually, whichever context it reminds an individual of, an underlying sense of mindless uniformity and conformity can be felt. Yet it is not supposed to create a sense of calm. The atmosphere is dark and uneasy, as though something wrong is about to happen. The inner child is confronted with a sense of authority. It is not recognizable or singular power but dispersed that comes from the hive, mob mentality.

The artist went through various phases in the creation of this piece, oscillating between his options. He felt his initial direction felt lacking, that somehow the essential human element was missing. Therefore, the abundant choice of material was discarded in favour of the intriguing prospect of working with the literal human element: the factory workers themselves. Ammar wanted to show people within the factory, their ideals and a communication through them. Yet, the video itself defeats the purpose of community-building as it does not capture the worker's own

words. They were at first explained to memorise and repeat a given text, despite being in the national language was alien to them. The inevitable pitfall was that the illiterate factory workers were unable to do this task. Therefore, a qualified member of the group was selected to perform the role of a literal dictator. The unintentional consequence is the creation of an external, invisible authority in the video, who is literally dictating the script. The visible performers are the mouthpieces.

Much like the mass produced items of the factory that was the inspiration and physical site of The Factory exhibition, or the words of its workers, the actual visual art piece was not meant to stand for perpetuity. It was not a gallery item, to be bought, valued and sold. It was a visual and performative art piece, a moment-in-time to experience. Ironically, this natural evolution of the piece made many audience members uncomfortable when it inevitably became the symbol for all unseen forces that can determine the course of our lives.



Location | End of the storage extension

Scan QR code to view artwork





Creation Myths: A to U

A story! A story! Let it come! Let it go!

At the beginning of time, there was a single-celled organism, Amibay, that started to feel very lonely. So, it split itself to produce another: Unemonay. As Amibay and Unemonay wandered the wasteland that was their home, dreams of 'more' floated through them and took shape wherever they stopped. Some grand dreams became mountains, while the darker desires became valleys. For you see, though they were cast from the same mould, Amibay and Unemonay didn't always see eye to eye.

A: I

U: i

A: No, I!

U: Aye. A: No. A.

U: No, you said "I".

A: No, you said "I" and then "A" and then "No".

U: No.

A: Well, how about an eye?

U: Aye!

Their voiceless echo gleamingly bobbed above and below, creating the winds and the sun rays. Whilst they were submerged in this heated debate of Ayes and Is, the rays of the sun peered through the sky and lined the depths of where these two cells were supposed to be. Amibay and Unemonay had already been through a long day, but finding words and vocabulary for saying things was really important. After all, it was these words that would get them moving ahead.

U: Ay, U?

A: Yes, me?

U: No, I think I meant me.

A: You?

U: Yes?

A: What?

U: Watt?

A: Nevermind.

A: Could you cut it out?

U: Hand me the scissors!

A: No.

U: Give them back!

A: Put them down!

They cast their leathery, shiny net nearer, hoping with Hope, clinging to the first straw. Their World was as simple as they could make it.

A: Down

U: Back!

A: O.

U: Me!

A: Out?

Amibay wondered why Unemonay wasn't just "Zygote"; it would've made more sense! Still, there was "striving forward" to be done. Rome wasn't built in a day; the world wasn't built in seven.

A: It's all a myth.

U: Well, it's a waste of Time, if you ask me.

Despite it being an idle fancy, they whimsically felt their hearts fill with a desire to create. Thus, whatever fantastical fantasy floated into their mind, they decided to build it. If only they could mutually decide whose fantasy was more fantastic.

A: I'd like to make a lizard, with a long nose and a short tail.

U: I'd rather make a buzzard with a short tongue and a long bill.

A: Actually, no, 'fish'... It would be an interesting concept, a slimy, edible creature, living in the wet water.

U: Ideally, wouldn't you rather Eat something that was already dry?

A: (completely ignoring U) Come to think about it, it would be stupendous if we could maybe try to manufacture something that could, in turn, make Oxygen, and that Oxygen could be something living creatures need?

U: Wouldn't you agree, though, that it would be more useful to make something that got rid of harmful things, like the Punisher?

A: Excuse me, but where are these Marvel references coming from? We're not that far down evolution. Also, we don't want the publication sued now, do we?

U: Huh? I think, Amibay, you've kind of detracted and gone too meta.

They made the short trek back to the narrative. As they couldn't come to a mutually beneficial alliance, they decided to do the sensible thing and parted ways, cordially. Amibay went to work creating a disjointed, spineless fish. But it wriggled out of his hands, and slipped into the water, where it sank to the dark depths of the Midnight Zone and grew a lamp on its head. Unemonay decided to work on a buzzard with four legs, but the Griffin ran-flew so far away that it exited the realms of reality (some writer, some day, may wish to cash heavily upon it). However, neither gave up and kept working arduously, hoping that the fruits of their labour bear actual fruit. Sadly, their designs had such bizarre twists and turns, that the creatures became too unbelievable – some had eight tentacles, or unbelievably long necks, some a bunch of organs all covered with skin, others skin without organs, some blobs of goo, others gooey blobs with hard covers, too huge or too tiny, too beautiful or too ugly. None came up to their preconceived notions of perfection. Finally, they had to settle on Acceptable Outcomes.

A: (standing an Ocean away, commenting on the Octodoggo) You call that creativity? I call that laziness!

U: (standing at the mouth of a river, commenting on the Longus Neckus) If you'd listened to me, we could've made better use of all those resources!

A: (commenting on a Phishgelly) You call that a creature? My two year old makes better creations for breakfast! U: (commenting on the Desert Horse) That's just copying my Llama design! That shall henceforth be called Blatant Plagiarism!

A: (commenting on Anansi) Honestly, say what you want, I would've liked that fuzzy, spindly creature more had you not made it so big and scary!

U: (actually took this advice to heart and threw the larger, prototype Anansii to the land Down Under, where no one but vagrants, vigilantes and vagabonds went, and left the world with smaller, fuzzy, spindly, lovable arachnids that no one could ever possibly find a reason to be scared of.)

Eventually, both came to an impasse that, however unrealistic body expectations they both had, all their creatures had to qualify as Acceptable Outcomes, otherwise they'd be there all day and night, for weeks (for as you may recall, Time has been conceived). And, as Time was created, Amibay and Unemonay quickly, in a matter of days, realised that there needed to be:

Ways to Kill Time. So they skipped, hopped, ran, climbed trees, sat around fires, told stories, stitched clothes, murdered, wrote stories, painted, sculpted, promenaded, cried, murdered, slept, woke up, worked, complained, slept, cried, paid taxes, voted, vetoed, revolutionized, industrialized, developed A.I, radicalised, murdered (Unemonay took the 'Kill' part too seriously), sunbathed, cos-played, cooked, wined and dined, swiped left, died. After an extensive discussion, Amibay and Unemonay also decided to immerse themselves in certain creative and cultural activities, such as, in no particular order, basket weaving, knitting, flower arrangement, lawn mowing, anti-vax rallies, carpentry, painting, horse riding, sasquatching, armour making, trench digging, kudo, smashing the patriarchy, temple making, reading, writing, temple running, bull fighting, waiting for the next in a long series of fantasy literature, kyudo, downvoting, murdering, playing video games, writing code for video games, Testing video games, re-writing code for video games, watching video games, tax returns.

In academic circles, it is debated that there exists either too much evidence or not enough evidence to accredit Amibay et. al. with Highly Controversial Topics. Every once in a blue moon, one or another fanatic faction of scholarly academics will rise up, claiming to have found evidence of one or another Highly Controversial Topic that traces back to Amibay et. al. These Highly Controversial Topics - such as, but not limited to, religion, laws,

politics, birds, Multi-Level Marketing Schemes, Round Earth, unicycling, the creation of nation states, F.R.I.E.N.D.S, spectator sports, polyamory, abortion, gender - are all way too serious, and therefore are better off left unmentioned.

It is believed that the arguments Amibay and Unemonay kept having ended up as a ripple effect of becoming the modern-day ice age, animal extinction through natural selection, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, bitcoins, depression, memes, depression memes, cyclones, volcanic eruptions, Mediaeval Times (the restaurant) and other natural disasters. It is widely agreed upon that Amibay and Unemonay didn't cause climate change, fracking, political or personal differences, parallel parking, socio-economic inequality, Trump, slavery, the exotic pets trade, NFTs, influencers, racism or sexism. They do, however, like to be credited with the eventual waves of feminism.

Knackered and haggard, Amibay and Unemonay's journey led them, slithering and crawling, clawing and aching for further, higher, and beyond. For on this journey they were desperate to find Meaning: both literal and figurative because, so far, they hadn't found either. They had tried their luck at creating, destroying and then creating some more. Yet, they couldn't find that sense of accomplishment they so longed for.

Finally tired, and near the end, Amibay saw a light fast approaching them. In a gasp of excited emotion, he called out to Unemonay:

A: Look

U: Where?

A: Here

U: Here where?

A: Over here

U : Where, here? A: Over there here

I: Why?

U: What?

A: Forget it

U: What?

A: I said, forge...

The light whizzed through them both, leaving them in its wake. And to this day, U and A are forgotten shrouds of exitence. In the final moments, all that was left to wonder was what if, what if they had seen the light coming their way.

Crick, crack, my story's out!

7.1 Every Shoe has a Sole

with the works of Ayaz Jokhio

7.2 It Does Not Fit
Short story

Chapter 7

Jawad Raza

Every Shoe has a Sole

The Factory exhibition set out to do something new in the city of Lahore and it did just that. A group of 18 artists exhibited their work in a functioning shoe factory in Sundar Industrial estate. The artists were provided with an alien site, along with resources and manpower. A dream combination for contemporary artists. Among the artists trying to accommodate their vision in the confines of the industrial space was Ayaz Jokhio. His installation titled Do Qadam Ka Fasla, can loosely translate as "a distance of two feet". There are countless ways to interpret and explore this piece, informed by absurdism.

The general mechanics of the project seem to come from the artist's love of puppetry. The strings attached to a rotary machine that brings the shoes to life are an innovative manipulation. They largely utilize the torque from the motor to give the movement of the shoes lifelike. Ayaz becomes the master illusionist and the shoes become his puppets. The major aim of this theatre is to imitate steps, taken by many, in places such as these.

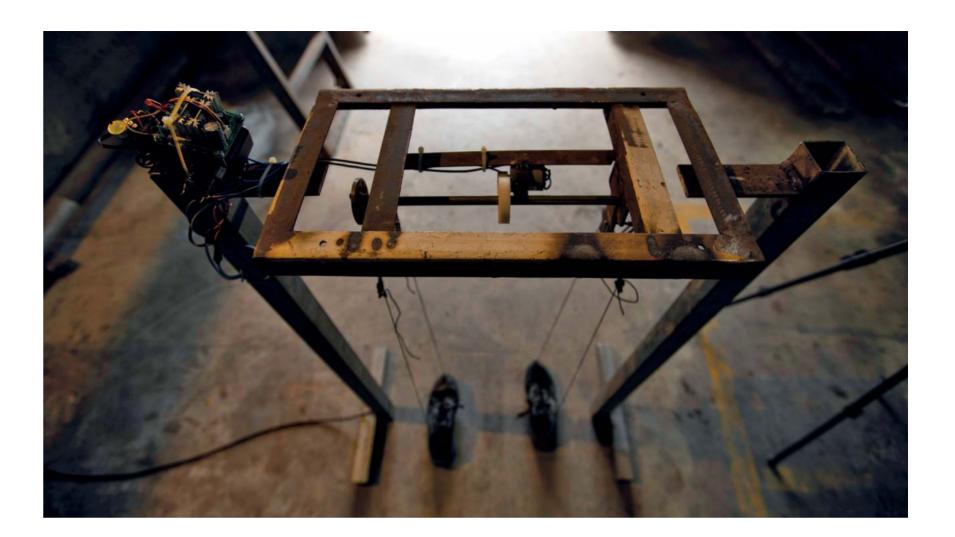
This piece was placed at the doorway of the factory's chemical plant. Outside the doorway, there is a sign that reads: "The workstation must be manned by individuals over the age of 18, any violation of this shall be punishable". The sign connects us with the journey the shoes have taken. Imagine a Dickensian character working in such a space asking for more rights, eventually being vindicated by more favourable labour laws. It resonates with the environment of such a workspace. However, limiting it to just one central idea wouldn't do justice to the evolving nature of the art piece. Ayaz's work is in its essence a homage to the absurdist genre where multiple factors can be at the heart of singular piece. Ayaz says it's all about perception. It's all a figment of our own imagination. Nothing is real, and everything is real. One makes what they want to out of the display.

Whilst trying to understand the context and connotation of *Do Qadam Ka Fasla*, you needs to remember that multiple meanings can easily fit

together. Personally, I found the shoes and their mundane motion, to be reminiscent of Sisyphus. In Greek mythology he was the former King of Corinth, punished by Zeus to roll a boulder up a hill, only for it to fall back down and for this cycle to eternally continue. Another interpretation, (since rock and roll is mentioned) that resonates with me is the song Another Brick in the Wall by Pink Floyd from their album The Wall. The lyrics of the song allude to a robotic existence in the Orwellian tradition where every movement and every thought are controlled. Where every step is being taken has been orchestrated by hand-drawn strings attached to the empty shells of human bodies. Similarly, with the installation, it feels as though invisible hands are drawing the strings.

An age-old adage also comes to mind, walking a mile in someone's shoe. This piece helps us understand the workers of this factory. In a sense we are taking a step in their shoes. It comments on the workings of the space, where the labour is engrossed for long hours of work. Even in the corporate world of 9 to 5s we find ourselves following the same grind. With the capitalist strive to earning as much as you can, invariably we find ourselves being controlled by invisible strings.

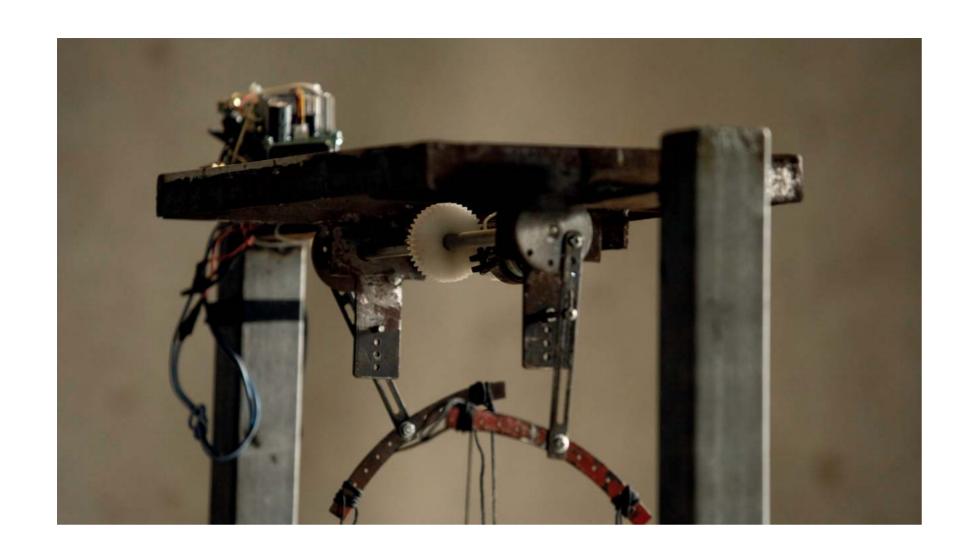
The impact of Ayaz's work is a slow burner. With only a first look, it is hard to gauge what exactly is transpiring. It is when one brings in the external elements such as the space and time do things start to come together. It is as if the strings attached to the shoes are also orchestrating a shift in the setting. For instance, as the sun sets and the noise of the day gives way to the sombre solitude of the night, the shoes can be heard echoing in the chamber. A sound that is itself a part of the exhibition and elevates the entire display. The creaking mechanical sound has a haunting serenity connected with the workstation. The sound of each step has people looking back in paranoia. The impact does leave a mark on one's consciousness. Forcing one to think outside the box about things with a generic and mundane



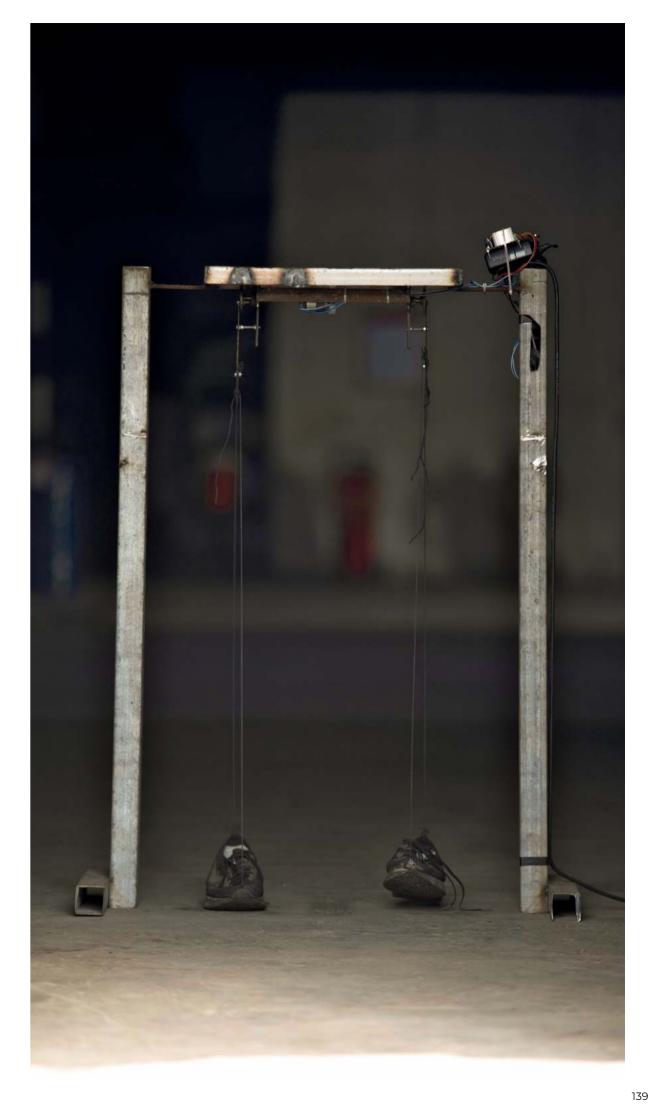
Ayaz Jokhio Do Qadam Ka Fasla Mix media

This installation also brings to mind a play, Waiting for Godot. The play is based on a conversation between two people. They converse through their steps, while they wait for someone who never arrives. Other questions also arise, such as whether they have arrived at their destination and should they keep going. In the end, they arrive at nothing because there is nothing to arrive at. Similarly, in Ayaz's installation, the shoes never stop walking.

This leaves one with questions such as, how does one define something undefinable? How does one perceive something to be absolute when everything about it is the opposite? In the world of Art, it is possible to ask such questions. Though the realm of clarity often eludes us when we try to put our finger on the exact meaning. Yet people wrestle with finding meaning in art. Ayaz Jokhio's installation at *The Factory* is an excellent example of how contemporary art has multiple meanings. In other words, it is a journey we take with the artist, sometimes without a map.



Location | Chemical plant front door entrance





7.2

It Does Not Fit

Lalu Patura, was confused and disoriented, he was supposed to come up with an interesting story for a competition, yet he couldn't write. The words weren't coming to him, and he wanted to complete the draft by the day's end. His teacher: Mr. Sufi Tabassum, was waiting for Lalu to complete the draft though he also knew that Lalu would not be able to complete the task on time.

Lalu tossed and turned, with the pen and the parchment filled with gibberish. Which read something like this: Discarded metal, disjointed bolts

Rummaging machines, hollow slots Oozing yellow, frequent green Slight light flickers on bright screens Halo sniped, hollow dots Rotation in perpetuity

Echoes veiled, footsteps rot Jarring pathways etched in gloss Hilarious haze hissing hurriedly Jovial juniper's jaded jog

Mapped galleries, Viewers lost

Discarded metal, disjointed bolts Pictured people, painted pots.

Lalu wasn't too happy with this pseudo poem, so he began to write something else, and the following happened...

You and Your Story: It takes a thought to make a word, it takes those words to make a sentence, it takes a sentence to make a story, and it takes some work to make it work. Leave it to dry, polish it with a brush of local aesthetics and take a look at it from a far. Could have been so much better yet you love that piece of shit, it's you, you've made the words come to life and dance around.

You think you're the artist of a masterpiece and yet you can't seem to get the sense of what comes next after the first line. You just filled that gap with a random statement, you're glad, now, you move on. The next few sentences fly by, and you feel more comfortable. You own it now, you're the bomb.

Who says writing is difficult? In your head, the thoughts rush in. You're in the zone now, every word is making love to the word next to it. Everything you touch turns to gold. How cool is that.

What to do with all these characters lying around lifeless and clueless? You smile to yourself (you could have smiled to someone else, but you realize it's only you in the room with the laptop and a big fat gut on which the laptop is neatly placed). You start by giving them cool names, some cooler than others.

You give them an identity in the midst of all that; you give them an existence. They start talking to you and you start talking back. Meanwhile someone enters the room and asks who are you talking to? You realize that you've been talking to yourself all along (awkward moment indeed) but it's worth all the awkwardness in the world once your story wins the Nobel Prize (you tell yourself).

Since you're a fan of cliché's and a sucker for stereotypes, you give these characters roles which your readers would easily relate to. There's a long nosed Jew, whose family ran away from Poland and came to America for a better future. An African (you meant to write black but were too afraid of the Politically Correct Gen Zs out there) drug dealer who is also half Mexican (since all the drug dealers in the world are black and or Mexican right?), a dumb blonde girl who happens to make every other guy fall in love, an Arab dictator who loves his oil and doesn't share it with the rest of the world. Then you sprinkle your story with other characters for "Comic relief" an Indian and a French normally work you think. You think some more.

You like what you're thinking; you create a hybrid French Indian and admire your creativeness, but you leave out the Hero since in your story the world has no heroes. There are only victims of life itself (another smile thinking of how deep you are). The plot, oh no, oh no, you just realized by making all these random characters, it's getting difficult to maintain a central plot of the story.

You do what any other sensible writer would do at this stage; decide which characters you want to kill. It's a painstakingly long process; you start of by killing the black Mexican guy it was easy they are the ones to die first anyway. The next in line is the French Indian, a car crash, why waste so much space on describing how a worthless character died

You love how the story is progressing. The Jew is seeking revenge for his family. That is such a weak thread to the entire story, you decide to leave this idea and work with something else. Maybe the Jew dies too, hmm sounds good let's kill them all in the end and leave no room for a sequel. Everyone dies eventually anyways. The story is done; the book is 400 pages long. You're so happy. You send it to your publisher and she likes it, not really but since she also happens to be your girlfriend the book gets published, your brother is a very influential critic in the literary circle and writes for the New York Times, he gives it 4 stars. Your cousin owns a very famous bookstore and she helps with the marketing. People come and buy the book in throngs; it sells like cake. 2 weeks, 10 thousand copies sold not a bad return.

Your fifteen minutes of fame, you're enjoying the life so much that when the sixteenth minute starts you don't end up hating yourself.

Lalu was extremely happy with the piece and he quickly sent it to Sufi. On the other end of the city Sufi Tabassum was waiting for an inbox notification indicating the submission. He began to read Lalu's tale and realized he had missed the theme. The prompt of the story was how a shoe did not fit a man and how he cried to get a new shoe but could never find the right size. Sufi Tabassum was extremely disappointed and could not understand how Lalu could miss such an easy prompt. He sent Lalu an email explaining how what he had written does not fit the required perimeters of the theme. A while later Lalu sent his reply which was basically a fuming response to the criticism sent by Sufi Tabassum. Ever the stoic Sufi, he decided to take Lalu on a journey which would make him understand what he had done wrong.

A few days later

Lalu and Sufi Tabassum were on a journey to find the best cobbler, who doubled as a carpenter as well. He was the best C and C in the whole of South Gujranwala. For Sufi Tabassum needed someone to inspire his student, he also wanted someone to make modern furniture for him that would not be too gaudy. The factory outlets near his place just didn't have good stuff. On the way, they met a man who was selling snake oil. Lalu, who wasn't frugal, jumped at a chance at buying the oil. Even though he had no idea what it was. The glint in Lalu's eyes were a dead giveaway, so Sufi had to intervene so he could try and salvage the game.

S.T: What are you doing?

Lalu: Sir we need to check this guy out

S.T: For he who checks random merchants, gets nothing but broken urchins

Lalu: That's just not going to work right now, I'm in my capitalist mode.

S.T: We have to reach our destination, the Cobbler and time waits for no one.

Lalu: Okay, Okay, I'll just window shop then.

Agitated Lalu moved away from Sufi Tabassum

He approached the man and asked for him to show the latest cures. The man happily obliged. There were all sorts of cures on offer, some were made from straw, some were made from hay, and some were made from stones that didn't look appealing. Yet Lalu wanted to buy them all. For Lalu was a man of basic needs and his needs were very basic indeed.

From all the cures the man showed, Lalu couldn't find a single one that would help him write better. Dejected and forlorn Lalu decided to continue on his original quest. The cobbler, they were going to was one of the most famous individuals of his trade. He could create art with shoes and he could create shoes with art, that's how much of a master he was.

After a long and arduous journey the two men reached their destination. The cobbler's shop was near a series of commercial plots which lay barren as the hike property price in the region meant that only the cobbler could afford to buy land in that place. "South Gujranwala is surely an expensive place" Lalu thought to himself. Whilst the two men were approaching the shop, the cobbler could be seen busy at his workstation, he was making a shoe with certain specifications given by Sufi Tabassum.

The Cobbler lifted his head up from his workstation and saw two men approaching. He immediately recognized one of them, and waved. One of the men waved back. Sufi Tabassum and Lalu Patura entered the shop. After the meeting and greeting, Sufi Tabassum got to the point. He asked the Cobbler to show him the shoe he had asked for. The Cobbler obliged him to buy a brown leather shoe with stripes on the edges. For all intent and purposes, it looked like a fine product. Sufi tried it on, but it wouldn't fit, the shoe was small for his foot. He asked Lalu to try but it was too big for him.

The Cobbler felt really embarrassed and started apologizing profusely for he did not want to lose an important client. Sufi Tabassum on the other hand remained calm, he simply put a hand on the worried cobbler's shoulder and said its okay, and "I gave you the wrong specifications on purpose". The Cobbler and Lalu were both aghast. "But why", asked Lalu, perplexed. "Well", Sufi Tabassum spoke: "When you sent me the story, and I gave you my feedback on how it didn't fit a certain requirement, you got angry and questioned my critique and my credentials. You said that art is free, and it can't be contained in any frame. So, I decided to bring you to my friend here," - he pointed towards the Cobbler- "He is the best shoe maker in the land, but even he couldn't make his shoe fit with the wrong specifications. He had the freedom to make it whichever way he wanted but if I'm not able to wear it how will that help his cause". Sufi Tabassum continued "So Lalu remember, there is freedom in art but even freedom has its limits".

8.1 The Viking Philosopher

with the works of Hassan Mujtaba

8.2 Empowering Women in a Male Dominated World

with the works of Rabia Ajaz

8.3 Jungle Mein Mangal

Script

Chapter 8

Syed Urooj Samdani

The Viking Philosopher

we met at the factory, was of a Viking warrior from the bygone days. He certainly fit the description with his heavy beard and long flowing locks. Later, after numerous conversation I got to know him better. He turned out to be more of a philosopher, thus the title; 'The Viking philosopher.'

Hassan loves to think and to talk. His thoughts are clear and that is reflected in conversation.

The Factory exhibition provided the studio practitioner, a chance to get out of his comfort zone and work on not just one or two, but three huge installations at the same time. He had even more ideas, but they were not possible due to logistical concerns.

His three installations *Modulation 1, 2* and *3* are not related to any of his previous practice directly or indirectly. They are site centric.

The columns made of barrels, titled *Modulation* 2, is an interesting installation. At first, it seems to be a simple, curved walkthrough, made of stacked barrels, which are used for transporting chemicals in the factory. What caught his eye was the sheer number available. He put his thoughts on paper and made numerous drawings. Once it was decided how to utilize them, the factory workers helped in the execution.

Hassan explored the circle made in different degrees and started visualizing it from an aerial point of view. It was a space within a space, built from a material that is not used for normal construction purposes. An experiential space, with a belly that contains you for a moment and then lets you go. It leaves you to interpret the short walk in which, the explorer looks at the sides, the front and up at the sky. All three views add layers to an interesting and unique short walk through the high stacked barrels. The columns are 18 feet high.

I asked Hassan about the audience's reaction. He observed, "Children felt free. They seemed

The first impression I had of Hassan Mujtaba, when fascinated by it. People from all different walks of life visited it. And from their expressions I could see joy as they walked through the barrel walls. Interestingly, I observed a feeling of wanting to be quiet in there."

> Whoever walked through this installation, connected with it in one way or another. Like many situations and circumstances in life, that are bigger than us, this walkthrough was unavoidable. We do not know what to expect at the periphery, but the walkthrough has an impact we did not imagine. His next installation on the other side of the factory, titled *Modulation 1*, was a pole dug around 10 feet in the ground. It was 65 feet high with a red hazardous light on top.

The pole was made of rusty, deteriorating pipes lying around the factory, which were joined together to make this symbolic piece.

The idea has many layers. It basically sprouted from the conditions of the north and south poles. Hassan literally created a pole to represent them. The accelerated melting of the glaciers and rise in sea level is very alarming. The red light at the top of the pole brings this to our attention. The metal symbolises the earth, which like the pole is losing its original character as it rusts over the years. Then there is the city of Lahore where the factory is and the exhibition took place. Lahore is officially amongst the most polluted cities in the world. Many factors contribute to the smog, including industrial waste, culminating in breathing issues, and other serious health related concerns. Hassan wanted to raise the issue of climate change. I was curious whether a layman would understand this concept. According to Hassan, the red hazardous light is a warning sign. Once you give people visual context, they are able to create a story around it themselves. With a story they can connect it to relevance and a reason. After that, they relate to art in all kinds of ways.



Moving on to Modulation 3, Hassan's third site specific installation consisted of a passageway built from sacks found in the warehouse where it was displayed. The dark, winding pathway opened to a completely open space, which had 7 different chandeliers hanging close together. From the enclosed, tight, poorly lit path that brought you to external. this point, you enter an opposite environment that is warm and welcoming. There is freedom in the space and brightness in the luxurious lighting. It gives the illusion of a bigger and composite form just like the barrel structure.

The ornate and extravagant form of the chandeliers is an element that conflicts with the space where they were hung. They added character while subtracting the original function. The space was questioning the object and vice versa. The installation added meaning to the space through its use and ability to transform.

Surprise and shock were the words in the artists mind when he began. He wanted to use chandeliers to represent a certain class and financial status. An object that is seen in fancy settings has been placed in an unusual site with no class representation. And the audience is the labourer of the factory.

Originally Hassan only wanted to utilize material available at the factory. He did not want anything to look alien in the space, which makes the choice of chandeliers an unexpected one. In this case, Hassan was able to highlight the space not with an organic material but rather with something

Hassan visited the factory regularly. At first to produce an idea, then to plan and then finally the execution. Just as he became familiar with the space, he felt as though it started to recognize him

Summing it up, The Factory exhibition was a major challenge for Hassan, a hardcore studio practitioner. He left his studio to work and exhibit at a shoe factory, on the outskirts of Lahore. The site became his drawing board. That is why I called him a Viking as all three of his installations are huge, used massive spaces, were both indoors and outdoors. For Hassan, the space was the protagonist.

And in another world, he could well have been a philosopher. Like his work, there are many layers to Hassan, still waiting to be explored. This exhibition may well have made him discover a new side of himself.

Hassan Muitaba Modulation I Metal, plastic, LED light cable ties, wire

Location | Second lawr

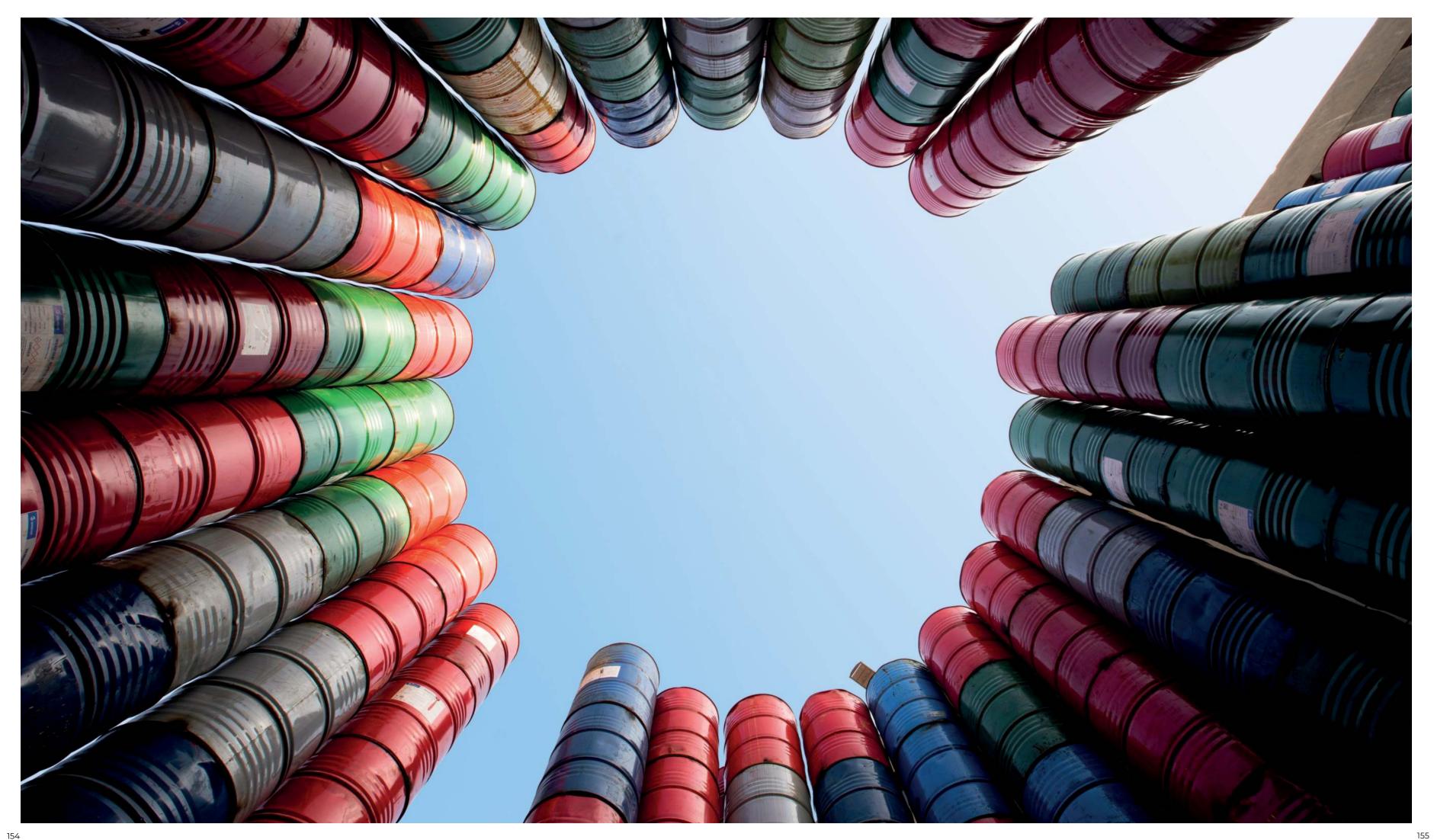




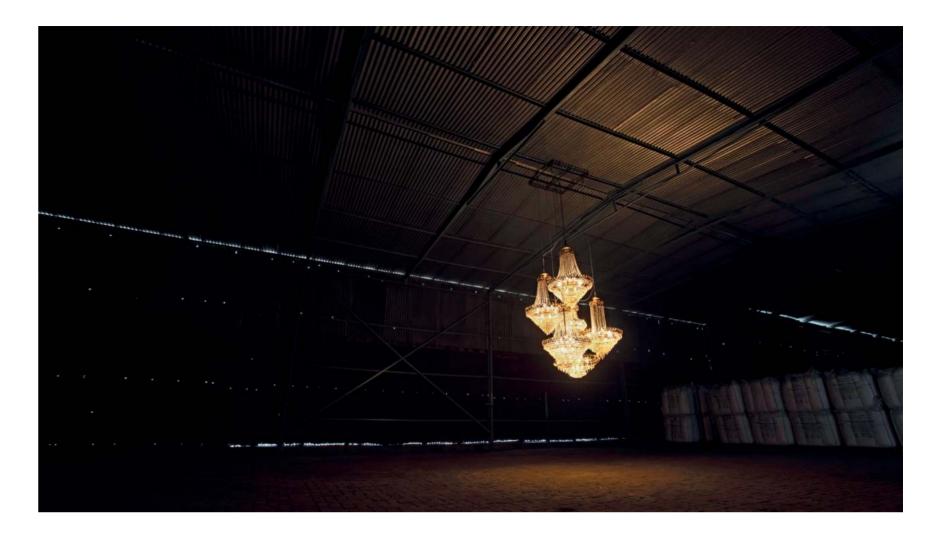


Hassan Mujtaba Modulation II Metal, enamel paint

Location | The last corridor to the northeast side







Hassan Mujtaba Modulation III Light

Location | Chemical warehouse



Empowering Women in a Male Dominated World

The most difficult thing I find in the world to do is to start something! But, as they say, you must start somewhere. For all creative people, it is the idea that matters and from where all masterpieces originate and take root.

One of my film teachers in time used to say, "Ideas are there to be rejected unless they stem from the core of your heart"

That brings me to Rabia Ajaz and her stellar idea. She explained it as, "A literal depiction of the cultural idiom 'joota kha lo'." The title Milan Ki Raat alludes to an encounter that is both romantic and intimate.

Rabia Ajaz is someone who says more with her looks and expressions than her words. She is a woman of few words, but whatever little she does speak is well thought out and most significant. There is no wasted breath, no wasted words and no wasted moments. Everything is balanced and with a purpose, with meaning and with subtext. It is no surprise her work speaks for itself.

Her latest work for *The Factory* is an installation, set up in a small space. A pristine table was set with a dinner for two. And a sparkling high heeled shoe placed on one of the plates was the protagonist. One of the glasses had a red lipstick mark. While the artist herself mentioned that the red lipstick belongs to a woman, there are many layers and more possibilities as well. It makes us wonder who sits opposite. Is the shoe being fed to someone? Who is the shoe being fed to? Is it smashing patriarchy?

A shoe on the dinner table in a romantic setting catches the audience off guard and forces people to focus on the shoe. Not just a shoe but a high heel. This implies that whatever the message is, it is directly or indirectly linked to women. By playing around traditional norms of our dining etiquettes the artist cleverly conveys a message.

There are no surrounding sounds and a concentrated spotlight ensures that only the table

is visible, creating a surreal experience. The quizzical placement of the shoe sets the imaginations lose as we try to understand this installation. For the artist, the visual is most important, which is evident from the close detail observed.

Now, this is what I call an idea, a concept. It narrates a story open to all for interpretation. That is its strength.

It is set up inside a container. As you open the door it is dark, but as you walk further, suddenly there is this warm light shedding its mystery on a romantic, intimate dining table. A shiny shoe placed on one of the plates grabs your attention immediately.

It may be about a couple. What the joota on the plate stands for has numerous possibilities. It could signify someone in a position of strength. It could be a wife fed up with the treatment she has been subjected to over the years. Or maybe, it's simply a romantic date. It can also represent women challenging an abusive and toxic society where the high heel is used as a weapon. The exterior of the shoe is bright and shiny, akin to armour. The numerous scenarios and questions drive the excitement around this work

Taking it forward in Rabia's words, "The intimate couple on a dinner table with a shoe in the plate offers multiple layers of reading and interpretation. Multiple scenarios and questions create excitement around the work.

Rabia articulates that 'joota kha lo' is both abstract and representational. Every painting has its own story and is open to interpretation. The beauty of art is that you cannot spell it out for people. You do not have to explain it, people create their own narrative or interpretation. That the magic and potency of art."

Unlike exhibitions in general, this exhibition had a dynamic audience, among which were the factory workers. Rabia's installation kept everyone in mind. She wanted to speak to everyone who visited the factory and the exhibition. Keeping this in mind,



Rabia Ajaz Milan Ki Raat Found objects (wood, steel, ceramics, cloth)

she wanted the concept to be simple and relatable. Less is more.

Rabia uses a different approach in *Milan Ki Raat* compared to her previous works. What I find in common is how she likes to play with colours and the dark, simultaneously. What differentiates *Milan ki Raat* is the white theme Rabia chose to go with, complimented by the dark entry.

When Rabia was approached for the exhibition, she thought about shoes, phrases, images, and anything linked with shoes. This idea grew and became linked with women and their plight. She wanted to work on women's empowerment and patriarchy. While at the same time she approached the subject in a light and humorous way. With the final execution, the underlying layers of meaning increased.

This installation was a challenge for her, which Rabia liked. She liked to be out of her comfort zone, as it helps her think. It was an unfamiliar medium for her, but her clarity helped her execute it effectively.

Rabia Ajaz felt a sense of achievement when she saw the audience, mainly factory workers, walking around the table and imagining what it signifies. Her work had successfully stirred all our imaginations.





Location | Scrap container

Jungle Mein Mangal

1 INT. UROOJ'S OFFICE - DAY

Urooj is reading a book, when his phone starts ringing. He picks it up. PHONE SCREEN SHOWS: UNKNOWN CALLER Urooj picks up the call.

UROOJ: Hello!

2 INT. RAMEESHA'S STUDIO - DAY

Rameesha is talking on phone.

RAMEESHA: Hello Sir! I'm Rameesha Azeem, an ex-student from BNU's School of Visual Art and Design

3 INTERCUT SCENES

UROOJ: Hi Rameesha. How can I help you?

RAMEESHA: I've read some your old articles on entertainment and honestly, I'm impressed. Which brings me to why I've called - I want you to write for a project we're doing called *The Factory*

UROOJ: I would love to but unfortunately, I don't have the time to take on any more projects. I'm sorry.

RAMEESHA: Sir, I can't force you. But I believe you will enjoy this. We're trying to do something different. Why don't you come meet us and then decide? We are meeting for tea at the factory and would love you to join.

Urooj is intrigued.

UROOJ: Okay... I'll think about it, but no promises.

CUT TO

4 INT. CHAWLA FOOTWEAR FACTORY - DAY

Urooj, Rameesha, Emaan, Hassan and Ammar are sitting around the table. Some other people also present. RAMEESHA: *The Factory* exhibition will take place in a functioning shoe factory. And we hope that the artists will interact with the industrial space. It's a space with its own characteristics, function, purpose, people and worklife.

UROOJ: But why an art exhibition in a footwear factory? I find it a bit strange.

RAMEESHA: We want to take art exhibitions out of galleries and museums. It is so much more than just hallways.

EMAAN: I agree, great art is nothing but an out of the box idea.

HASSAN: Plus, we can show the audience how art can stand out and blend in at the same time. So, why not do it in a factory?

UROOJ: I think that you may be taking a risk. Though, what is life without a bit of risk? As they say, 'No risk no glory'. So, I say, let's go for it.

The conversation continues. They have tea and share ideas.

LATER.

RAMEESHA (To Urooj): You have met Emaan, Hassan and Amaar. Rabia couldn't come. Emaan is the editor of our publication. We would like you to write about a few of artists who are exhibiting. Emaan will be coordinating and I'm sure it will be an exciting experience.

EMAAN: Same goes for you! I'm sure the artists and writers will enjoy working with both of us! Hassan and Ammar nod. Rameesha smiles too.

UROOJ (Takes a sip): Seems quite interesting. You people have convinced me I think I will write.

CUT TO:

5 INT. CHAWLA FOOTWEAR FACTORY

Rameesha is showing Urooj the factory. The workers are performing their tasks.

Rameesha is explaining her vision of the exhibition. Her gestures indicate her excitement regarding the project. Urooj is also fascinated by the huge factory.

He is visualizing how the factory would look when there are works of art displayed all around. UROOJ (Voiceover): This is a unique idea. This place will be transformed. I have never worked on something like this. I'm happy be a part I agreed to it. This experience will teach me so much about art, about artists, how they think, how they work.

CUT TO:

6 INT. UROOJ'S FRIEND AHSAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Urooj and Ahsan are sitting in the office.

AHSAN: An art exhibition in a footwear factory! Who would go there to see paintings! And by the way what are you gonna do in it.

UROOJ: You idiot! I told you it's not about paintings but rather installations with a message. That's why I agreed because I also want to see what will come out of this shoe factory. I think that it will turn out be an amazing experience.

AHSAN: You sure you have the time to do it? You seem quite busy in other things. Also, art is a complicated subject. But then, you yourself are quite a complicated character! Now that I think about it, the experience will suit you.

Laughs.

UROOJ: Complications makes you sharp. I'll gain a lot and lose nothing in the process. Never heard of such an exhibition before, so yes, it interests me. Anything new is a learning process for people like us in the creative field.

CUT TO:

7 INT. UROOJ'S HOME

Urooj is having tea and reading some sports news. His phone starts ringing. ON PHONE SCREEN: Rameesha calling. He picks up the call.

RAMEESHA: Sounds very excited.

The exhibition date has been set for 30th January 2022. So, it's time to get to work. When can we meet up? You, me and Emaan.

UROOJ: Any time tomorrow, you tell me. Urooj is excited.

CUT TO:

8 INT. CAFE - DAY

Rameesha, Emaan and Urooj are sitting in a cafe.

EMAAN: The two artists you will be covering are Hassan and Rabia. You have already met the one of them, I believe.

UROOJ: A bit surprised.

But I thought I would only cover one. Two might be an issue for me.

EMAAN: We wouldn't have asked if we thought you couldn't do it.

UROOJ: Now that's very kind of you. I wish I could say the same. But still, it's a big task and juggling it with my other work, would be quite difficult.

Rameesha seems a bit worried.

EMAAN: Don't you worry Rameesha. I'm sure he'll manage

UROOJ: Yes, I will, even though it will be quite a challenge. Commenting on the works of two different kind of artists will not be easy. However, this is also the interesting part. I'm starting looking forward to it.

CUT TO:

9 INT. UROOJ'S HOME

Urooj is sitting in his study and writing on Hassan and Rabia's work.

UROOJ: (Voiceover) Where to start? Two artists, two different styles. Being a writer can be so difficult especially when there is a timeline to follow, and you have Emaan at your back constantly! Well, you signed up for it, so better start working. And admit, that you are enjoying it!

Urooj smiles and starts typing on the laptop.

10 INT/EXT. CHAWLA FOOTWEAR FACTORY - DAY

People are coming in to see the exhibition.

Rameesha is busy talking and guiding people around the factory. She is showing installations which are spread over a huge area. Urooj is walking around seeing the amazing works of art. There is art everywhere in different forms and colors, black and white, small and large, indoors and outdoors, inside containers and storage spaces, the dumping grounds, gardens, pathways, in the basements amongst the shoe making machines. At times, he seems overawed by the enormous scale of the exhibition. He meets Hassan, one of the artists he is writing on.

Together, they see his three installations, the circular barrels pathway, chandeliers hanging in a warehouse and the pole in the garden.

UROOJ: Great work Hassan! Seeing is believing. So simple and yet so deep. Who would have thought these installations would transform a drab, dull looking factory into such an amazing place.

HASSAN: I totally agree.

Urooj moves to the basement. Being a professor of film and TV, a number of videos screens installed inside a storage space catch his eye. He sees a number of young and old factory workers watching film clips. The atmosphere seems surreal to him. Immediately the term, *Jungle Mein Mangal* (a Tuesday in the Jungle) comes to his mind.

UROOJ (Voiceover): 'Jungle mein mor naacha, kis ne deka' (who saw the peacock dance in the jungle) but here it is more like 'Jungle Mein Mangal' (a Tuesday in the jungle). Well done team!

Strolling around, he sees that the audience has increased considerably and there are quite a few families with young kids.

Urooj finds it interesting to watch people admire the artists' works. The artists' feeling happy at the audience's reaction and appreciate their work.

He sees Rabia and they walk together towards her project. A dark container suddenly opens to an intimate table setting for two.

UROOJ: It's amazing Rabia! I am already imagining so many stories! So many compliments to you!

RABIA: I am so glad you like it. The feedback has been excellent.

They exit the container in which the work was exhibited and Urooj takes a tour of the factory, watching and admiring the numerous works of art.

Lights turn on as it gets dark and chilly. Urooj mesmerized by the transformation does not want to leave.

CUT TO:

11 INT. UROOJ FRIEND AHSAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Urooj and Ahsan are sitting in the office.

Urooj is super excited, talking nonstop. Ahsan is listening to him attentively.

UROOJ: Ahsan, I am telling you this exhibition and the writing has made me explore myself. Isn't that incredible? I ventured into an unknown field like a young rookie batsman playing his debut match on a bouncy Melbourne pitch with fast bowlers streaming in and bowling at 150 KM per hour!

AHSAN: Come on man. Don't exaggerate!

UROOJ: I am serious. I'm just sharing my feelings with you. I had an opportunity to work with young artists who have something to say. Working with the curator and the editor was so interesting as well. You really should have come to the exhibition.

AHSAN: You know I had to go out of city for the entire week just before the opening.

UROOJ: I know. I just hope that this is not only a one-off thing and inspired by *The Factory* exhibition, more youngsters like Rameesha take an initiative. You know what really impressed me was the professionalism and dedication with which everyone worked. They put their time and sweat into it. I was really impressed with the views and thoughts of this new generation. Every work, every installation was speaking to the audience. It made everyone think – the art lovers, experts and the factory employees.

AHSAN: I am seeing a new Urooj! Even though I meet you almost every week, this experience really seems to have left a mark on you. You are rarely this serious and seldom praise anything.

UROOJ: Because this was something I hadn't experienced before. One of the most remarkable aspects was to see how these artists have been able to utilize the knowledge they acquired in art school with such expertise.

AHSAN: My younger daughter wants to be an artist and I have been telling her not to waste her time. I guess I should be more open that choice.

UROOJ: Yes, definitely! The talent is there. This exhibition was an example. The artists used materials they hadn't worked with before. They were creative in a huge, unfamiliar and uninspiring space. They left their comfort zones to challenge themselves. And that's the spirit!

The conversation continues.

12 INT. UROOJ'S HOME

Urooj is working on his laptop. He stops and looks at the screen for some time. Closes his eyes and relaxes. A subtle smile appears on his face, and he opens his eyes. Types the last words on the keyboard with a satisfied look.

SCREEN SHOWS: "Thank you for making me part of this exhibition."

THE END

9.1 Of Artistic Endeavours and Glory Days

with the works of Abid Aslam

9.2 A Labour of Love or Compulsion?

with the works of Suleman Faisal

9.3 Human, All Too Human

Short story

Chapter 9

Baseerat Zehra

9.1

Of Artistic Endeavours and Glory Days

It was a cold January day when *The Factory* exhibition opened up for the public. Fortunately, the sun Gods decided to smile at the artists and organizers, making the day a bit brighter with their shine – akin to giving their blessing.

Being a bit enthusiastic about the exhibition, I decided to visit it on the opening day. Held at a functioning shoe factory, with various works of art. However, there were two works that especially caught my eye. Not being an art connoisseur, I did not realise that they might be related or were made using the same material. However, my literature infused mind decided to make connections anyway. Delving further into the background of these artworks, it was revealed that they were by Abid Aslam, a Lahore based artist.

Describing his vision for the work exhibited in *The Factory*, Aslam stated that he had originally wanted it to be an artistic workshop for the laborers in the factory; to bring awareness about art. Therefore, he had only utilized materials that were already in the factory and used by the workers in their day to day lives. Aslam believes that the workers are artists themselves, as they create different shoes for their factory. He used the same materials to show them how another form of art can be constructed through them

One of his installation art works consisted of six panels, almost resembling a tapestry. These were hung on a cemented wall, seeming a bit out of place in the dull factory setting. The panels were identical to each other. They had the figure of a white bearded man, holding a sheathed sword in one hand, dressed like a Mughal. While discussing this particular work, Aslam revealed that the man was made in the image of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. The idea of using his figure lies deep in the roots of our history. Various golden stars had been stitched around his head, to create a halo-like glow. Looking at the artwork, one is immediately reminded of the grandeur of the Mughal era – especially the classic monument, the Taj Mahal.

Setting such a majestic image in a place like a factory did not make sense immediately. The artwork depicted the glorious days of the past, whereas the dull grey block of cement symbolizes the present derelict state of our nation.

Aslam had titled this piece On Repeat, alluding to the fact that he had made six panels, all of them exact copies of one another. The idea behind this was inspired by the way goods, especially shoes are sold in the market. For instance, shoes in the wholesale market are always sold in either six or twelve pairs. Hence, the artist decided to make six panels with the help of the production team at the factory.

The other work by the artist was titled *Illuminating*. As soon as one entered the first basement of the factory, there were two panels hanging at the entrance. Made in golden and beige material, the panels literally seemed to give out a positive glow. Both the panels had the visual of an armoured knight, sitting straight-backed on his destrier, with a spear in one hand. The panels were placed in such a way that they were facing each other, giving the impression of two separate knights, riding for a duel against each other.

Deeply engrossed in the images on the two panels, made them seem like history scenes. Maybe where Aslam had depicted Shah Jahan in all his glory as the haloed Emperor on his six panels, this installation depicted another scene from his life – a scene where he is physically absent, but his progeny is on opposing ends, battling it out for the Royal throne. Whether it was the supposedly heretic Dara Shikoh and the orthodox Aurangzeb facing each other, or just some soldiers from their respective armies, one can only ruminate.

Abid Aslam's work makes one yearn for a better time – maybe not as grand as the communal past we had; but something that will illuminate the way for a greater future.





Abid Aslam
On Repeat
Synthetic Leather
36 x 60 inches (each)







Location | Basement of general storeroom



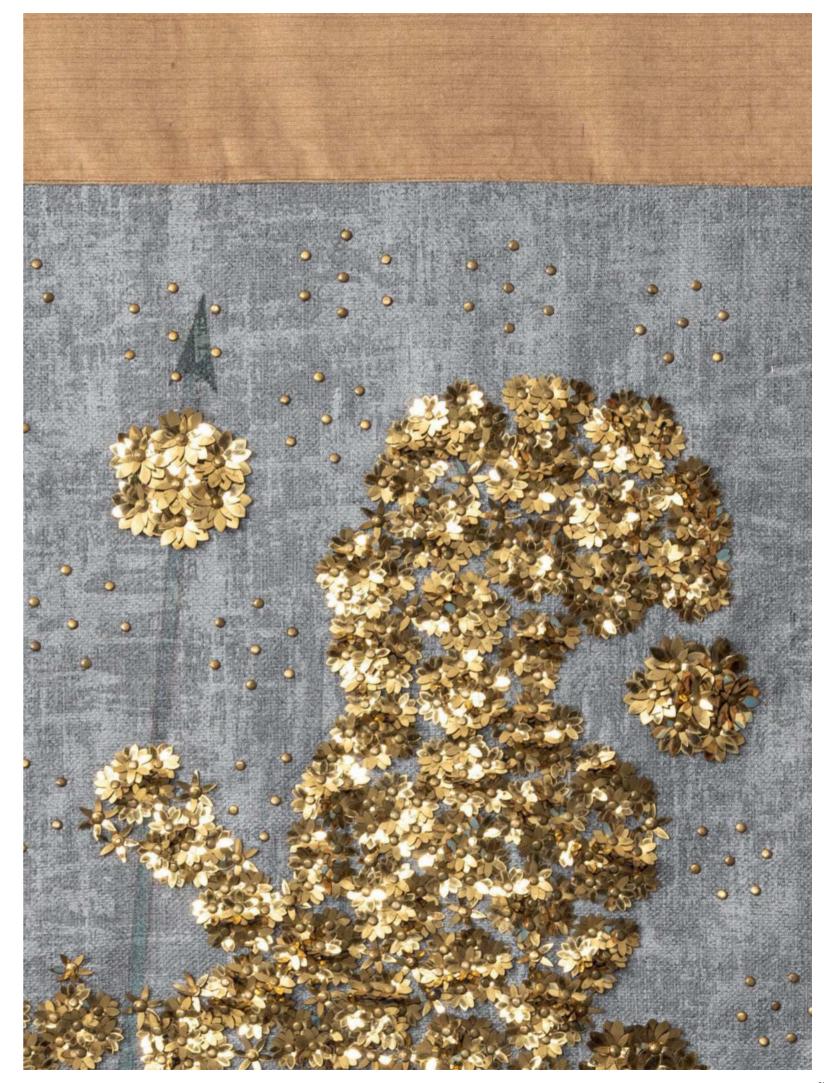
Abid Aslam

Eliminating

Synthetic leather and jute fabric 96 x 54 inches (each diptych) 96 x 108 overall inches



Location | Front Ledge of basement stitching department



9.2

A Labour of Love or Compulsion?

Suleman Faisal, a Lahore based artist showcased his installation artwork at *The Factory* exhibition. Even though he only exhibited one piece, it was enough to send out a powerful message. As someone who has not studied art, I was a bit overwhelmed by the idea of installation art. And that is exactly how Faisal's work made me feel: overwhelmed.

Placed in an insulated container, normally used to transport objects that need to be maintained at a certain temperature. Faisal's work consisted of an orange tinted, rectangular shaped plexiglass box. After closer observation, it became clear that there were multiple small boxes stacked together. And each box had a hammer inside, made of the same material.

Hammers, the colour orange, a chill and highly glossed container; all of it seemed too much to assimilate for an art novice like me.

In Norse mythology, the God of thunder, Thor used to wield a hammer called Mjölnir. Since the Marvel films brought Thor's character to the forefront, his weapon has also gained massive popularity. The hammer's myth is that only the worthy can pick it – worthy like the labourers who use it.

Normally, hammers are considered a symbol of power, used for reshaping, remoulding, hammering and mainly crushing different things. However, the hammers installed by the artist were made of plexiglass – fragile, like the humans that use them.

You have to handle these with care, similar to the humans who use them. A slight provocation might trigger a highly explosive reaction. Or even bring back a traumatic memory from the past, ready to tear one down.

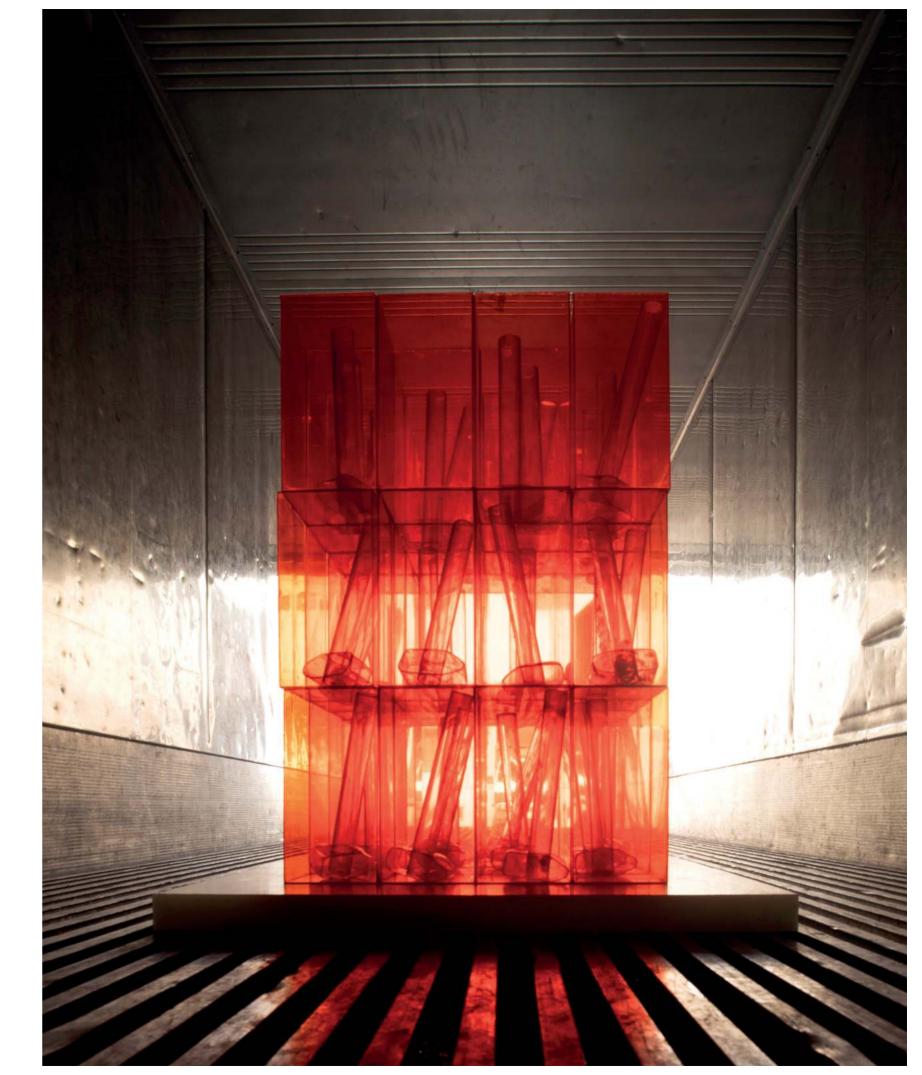
Suddenly, it is an overwhelming rush of emotions, almost an epiphany about the fragility of human lives; in control yet helpless. While talking to the artist about the emotions behind his work, he revealed that he wanted to highlight three basic emotions felt by man: pleasure, pain, and fear.

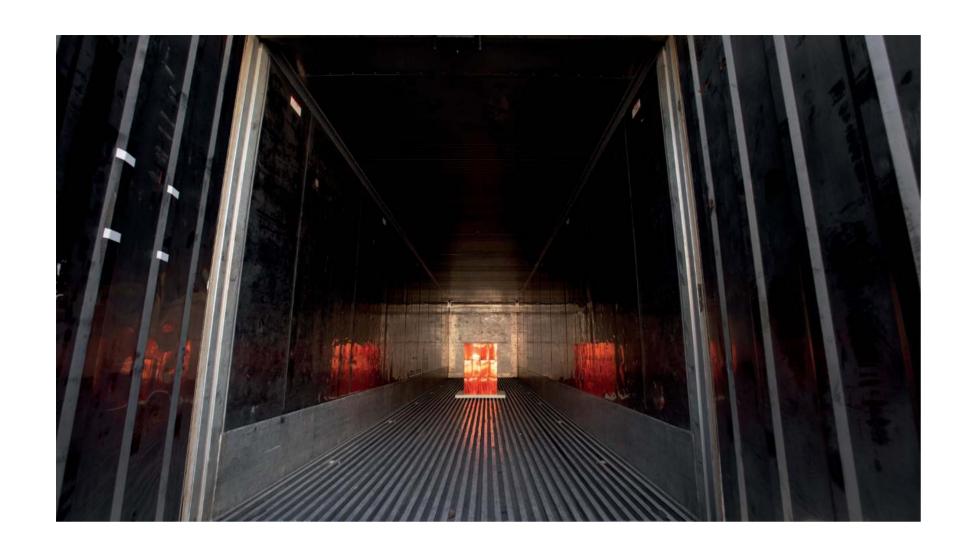
Pleasure depicted by the hues of orange is reflected all around the insulated container, and its all-embracing warmth. Pain and fear are represented by the hammers, showing how easily they break just like the delicate human beings who use them. These hammers are helpless as they cannot fulfil their basic function – to mould, reshape, or crush objects.

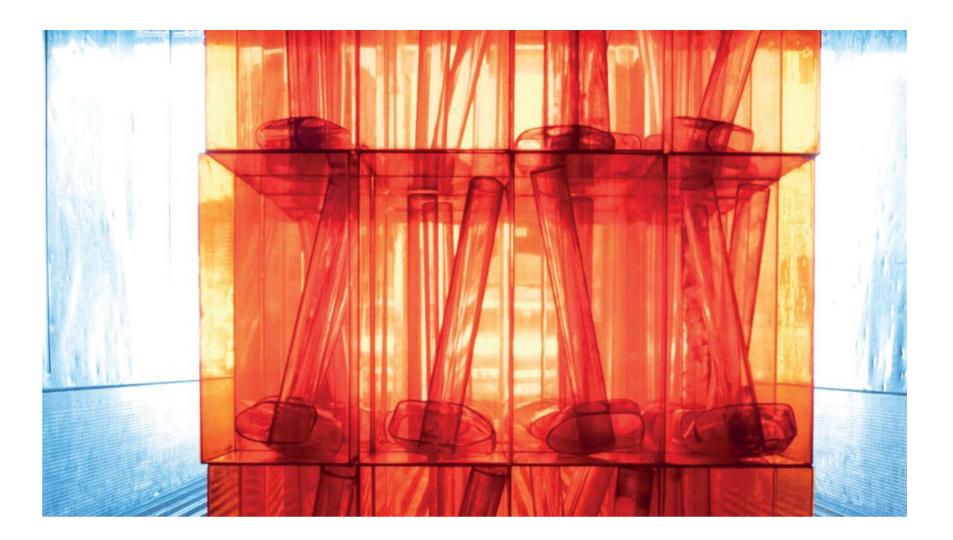
Suleman Faisal titled this work, Too Old to Work, Too Young to Vote. After coming across the title, this installation, set up in a factory's became clearer. The beautifully powerful tools that Faisal himself wields while making his sculptures are also used by countless underage children all over the country. In their situation, it is hard-earned labour, whereas for artists like Faisal, in his own words, it is "a labour of love". Moreover, these child labourers are considered old enough to work in a factory at an age they should getting an education, depicting the governments' negligence. The hammer is also representative of their weakened

"The objects created for this showcase are in one way, a homage to those tools that have made me the person that I am. In that case, these objects are also very telling of the experience of the labourer who earns through them. One is a compulsion, and one is a form of catharsis. The inherently transparent material has been playfully moulded into different objects which are all made to commemorate these differing perspectives," Faisal ruminates

His idea of displaying these tools used for different purposes, by many, is mainly to expose the juxtaposition of different social strata in our society. From being a cathartic tool for some individuals to being an obligation for others, it all just depends on perspectives. Whether you want to see the work as something made of love or just another attempt at a capitalistic depiction made from obligation







Suleman Faisal

Old Enough To Work, Too

Young To Vote

Plexiglass
2' x 2' x 3' (24" x 24" x 36")

Location | Refrigerator container

Human, All Too Human

The orange ball of fire was receding gradually in the sky and giving way to hues of pinks and blues. As twilight descended, it brought a feeling of doom within his heart.

He got out of his swivel chair to face the many faces that were waiting in anticipation, lined up outside the cemented structure. Some had lit up their cigarettes whilst others were mulling about, chatting to kill time; all hoping to receive the fruits of their labour.

Looking outside his tinted glass windows, Taimoor took a deep breath and decided to rip the band-aid off once and for all. Nearing the dark entrance, moving towards the hopeful faces, he felt a sense of déjà vu. He remembered a similar scene from almost a decade ago, but with different characters. However, he was only a silent observer then – now, he was the main player. And that was why he knew that this story won't end like the last one...

...

Once upon a time, in happier days; days when he was the youngest one in his family – his mother's favourite. Days when *Abu jee* was alive. Days when their lives were glorious...

...

Abu jee was a self-made man. Orphaned at a young age, he grew up in Lahore with his maternal uncle's family. His Uncle, who had left behind land in India, worked as a clerk in a bank. As the sole breadwinner of a family of ten, Abu's Uncle had roped him into work at an early age. Abu had always been determined to make something better of his life. He had been raised hearing praises about their family's glorious past in India. Sometimes Abu would see his Uncle lament on his decision to migrate to Pakistan and to a life of hardships. Such bouts of regret from his uncle made Abu jee become even more hell-bent on living a life that rivalled the one that his ancestors had lived, once upon a time in India.

Through his perseverance and hard work, by the early '70s, *Abu* had started his own business of chemicals and adhesives. With the help of a wealthy friend's investment, *Abu* managed to buy a few acres of land near the Ravi River. He established his factory on that land. It was a cemented structure, a block of grey, with only a handful of equipment at the beginning. A decade later, the machinery multiplied and replaced with some of the best imported from Germany.

By the late 70s, *Abu* had been the only one of his family in Lahore to own a car. He used to drive around in his apricot coloured E30 Toyota Corolla, with a smile, always waving at the children playing in the neighbourhood. They all adored him because, on Sundays, he would take them all for a ride. Whenever a wedding would take place amongst relatives or even acquaintances, *Abu's* car would be the one borrowed by the bridegroom's family. Many new couples sat together for the first time in this car. Even in the 2000s, *Abu* still drove this car. Despite having four others at home, this one remained his favourite. Even his last ride to the hospital, where he died, was in his apricot baby. The car was sold six months after his death.

Abu jee had gotten married in his thirties. He was of the opinion that you should only get married once you could afford it. It was an arranged match – for his ambition was his only love. The first time Abu had seen his beautiful, twenty-one-year-old bride, was on his wedding night. Years later, while narrating the story to his children with a few embellishments, Abu's exuberant joy and pride for his bride remained the same. And the once shy, beautiful bride – who had caught Abu's heart – always smiled knowingly at his retelling of the story.

Ammi jee had been the perfect balance to Abu's chaotic life. He was a temperamental man – his professional life was extremely organized, while his personal a mess. With Ammi's calm demeanour and affectionate manner, he seemed to finally have the warmth of an embrace that had been missing from his own childhood. To his dying day, he remained grateful to her for giving him something that he had never really thought he needed – a home.

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"Listen Taimoor *Sahib*, we have been extremely patient with you. But we need our money now." The factory's foreman was speaking on behalf of the other workers.

"We're only this patient with you because of *Baray Sahib*, may he have an exalted place in heaven – but now it's enough. You did not pay us last month, promising us that we'd get two months salary together. It was difficult for us to feed our families and now you're standing here and asking the same thing from us!" he was trying to keep his anger in check, trying to remember that this was his *Baray Sahib's* son. But the faces of his two underfed children made him determined not to go home without his hard-earned money.

The other workers were crying out in a similar fashion now. Their employer was standing in front of them, looking dejected and empty-handed.

"I understand your concerns...but you all should -"

"A few of us have been loyal to your father for more than thirty years. We have witnessed the glory days, and that is the only reason we tried to reason with the other workers to be patient with you. But now it's enough!" *Baray Sahib's* old employee, *Ghani Khan* sided with the others.

Near the entrance, a tall lanky figure was standing, half-hidden in the shadows. He looked at his employer, pleading with the workers to no avail. He knew what must be done. It was time now.

...

"When my brother and I were kids, *Abu jee* used to bring us with him and show us around the place. He would always say in his loud, booming voice, 'Boys, this will all be yours.' This place had been built on his blood, sweat, and tears. It's his legacy. He lost his health to this place. The doctors had told him to stay away from those fucking chemicals, but no! He still chose to be here every day! A cancer-ridden body, *Abu jee* was dragging it to this block of cemented shit to oversee the production! I hated this place, and for the last ten years, I've been stuck here, making sure that his legacy lives on. Ten years of my life I've given to this place. Fifty years of his life, my *Abu jee* gave to it! And this is the solution you're giving me!"

The lawyer had never seen Taimoor *Sahib* in such a rage. Even when things were falling apart, Taimoor *Sahib* always seemed in control, but all this bitterness had been simmering beneath the surface for more than a decade now. Today, the dam had burst.

"I realise that this is not an easy decision for you, but seeing you out there, pleading with those workers...look, this is the only solution now. Remember, late one night, five years ago when we were both in our cups, you asked me about this jokingly – well, since then I've been tying up all the loose ends and making sure that if we ever have to do this, we don't fail. Trust me, we won't fail." Earnestly looking at Taimoor, he communicated more without words.

"We will have money. You will have enough to pay all these workers and start anew if you want to. You can be free of this..." he continued in hopes that it'll persuade Taimoor to agree to.

There was a deathly silence in the office. Both men sitting there lost in thought. One was looking at the twenty per cent cut he'll get out of this deal; and the other was reminiscing about happier days...days when *Abu jee* was alive.

...

The orange ball of fire was growing bigger and bigger. Sitting in his car, miles away from the factory, he could see the smoke rising.

In a few short days, he will receive the money from the Insurance Company. There will be millions of it, once the fire claim is proven to be legitimate. He had no doubt that it will be legitimate – for his lawyer had seen to it. The raging fire had swallowed the whole structure. It was all burning: from Abu jee's glorious legacy – that had rivalled the lifestyle of his ancestors in India, to his childhood days flashing before his eyes, tearing them up. Maybe the smoke had got to them.

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^{10.1} A Response to the Artwork of Rabbya Naseer

with the works of Rabbya Naseer

^{10.2} Same Milk Twice

Short story



Zarmina Rafi

10.1

A Response to the Artwork of Rabbya Naseer

Rabbya Naseer کچھ تو ہوا ہے Performative gesture, live & video

A threaded needle that pierces fabric held taut in the embroiderer's hoop - can this be the beginning of a reparative act? / A juxtaposition of the ornamental, the feminine-associated, the handmade against that of the machine-made, the masculine, and the industry assembled / What becomes of a female artist's insertion into an all-male space? These thoughts may be possible points of entry into Rabbya Naseer's artwork produced on-site for *The Factory*.

The space where the workers of the stitching department of Chawla Footwear sit is at the lower-level of the four-storied building. This lower-level floor alone houses roughly 400 workers between the hours of 8 am to 6 pm.

On a typical workday, in the large basement room, men of all ages and characters can be seen glueing, cutting, counting, performing quality control, stitching, calibrating, marking and assembling. In their midst are the various "uppers" of shoes, trims of fabrics, and tins of yellow binding pastes.

It is a basement space in which these workers sit. But it is not an oppressive space. It is neither dimly lit, nor dark, nor without the circulation of air – there a large passageway, lead by wide steps, going down to the workspace which allows natural light to stream in... Initially, when I first walked into this space (as an intruder and an observer). I was not able to get past a certain lemony, wretched burning kind of smell. But no one other than me (including the artist) was bothered by it, which is to say that each of us brings our own conditioning regarding comfort and discomfort to any new situation. I also noted the various operational noises which came together to make one incessant noise. Chawla Footwear being one of the factories where they do everything from making chemicals to producing final shoe orders for brands such as Ndure.

In order to work side by side with the workers, the artist Rabbya Naseer began by putting her work table right next to theirs, sitting on a similar

stool as theirs. Sitting with large spools of various coloured threads (light green, gold, yellow, grey, pink) collected from the factory itself.

From her very first visit to the site, she observed, she enquired, she explained, and listened and engaged with the factory workers. The artist intended to mend, or repair rips or tears in garments belonging to the factory workers. She left the choice of said garments and the willingness to participate, on them. She even brought an element of customization to the equation by presenting the workers with another choice: to have the rip sewn over or to have it be embellished with a flower in red thread or at least in one case to have a portrait embroidered onto the part of the garment that had been ruined or rendered unusable. Soon she began to work in the hours during which they laboured.

The action of closing the tear also marks time in the life of that garment, i.e. that piece of clothing went through a process before arriving at the point of tear. There is a story there too.

Many of the workers providing witness accounts for Rabbya's video said that they admired her working with her hands, making the distinction right away that the stitching they do in the factory is done with the use of machines. The sentiment that seems quite implicit is that silai (stitching) by hand and karahi (embroidery) may be more aesthetically valuable than the machine stitch and is also often associated with "women's work." The artist herself may have learnt the skill of embroidery in a girl guide camp, or an afterschool class. In class, her instructor would not have envisioned her using this skill for the "mending" of workers' clothes in a future life. In our culture, to embroider has often been the prowess of a good "home-maker."

Days into the project, the curious workers began arriving at Rabbya's workstation, to watch her technique, her salika. Most were impressed, "she works with a focus, "Iss ky haath mein kya safai hey" (she works with finesse) they commented,



متبادل راسته

پندرھویں صدی کے جاپانی حکمران کا
ایک بہت قیمتی پیالہ ٹوٹ گیا۔
اسے نئے پیا لے سے تپدیل کرنے کے
بجائے ملک کے کاریگروں کو اس پیا لے
کی مرمت کا ذمہ سونیا گیا جنہوں نے
سونے اور لاکھ کو ملا کر مرمت کرنے کا
ایک انوکھا طریقہ ایجاد کیا۔
اس طریقے کا نام کیٹسوگی رکھا گیا جو
آج تک پوری دنیا میں قیمتی چیزوں کی
مرمت کے لیے مشہور ہے۔

A 15th century Japanese shōgun accidentally broke his very precious China bowl. Instead of replacing it with a new equally precious bowl, the shogun challenged Japanese craftsmen to come up with an aesthetically pleasing means to repair it. The local craftsmen invented a unique mixture of lacquer and gold to fill the crack. This technique for repairing was named kitsugi. To this day, kitsugi is famous world over, not only as a technique for mending precious objects but also as a philosophy of life, embracing imperfections.

impressed by what they witnessed. Early on amongst the unconvinced, a person remarked, "baji aap kar nahi payein gi, ap say ho ga nahi." (You won't be able to do it). Another one confessed a few days into the project that he did not even think she would return after that first day of conversations. After all, no one does anything without a reason, and what could her reason be for providing a temporary repair service? And a service in which no exchange of money takes place?

After having a grey sweatshirt with blue lettering mended, one of the workers commented, "I thought it [sweatshirt] would be lost to me, but I can use it again next year." So, suddenly the artist's action of sewing up a tear gained efficacy, it gained currency because it has been ascribed a use-value. She sipped that same gurr tea as them when it began to arrive at her work table a few days into the project, she smoked, she hunched over the day's work. Taking her sweet time, there was no expectation of how many shirts Rabbya had to mend by the end of each day.

But what the Chawla Footwear workers do is that they clock in on time, sit down to do the task(s) assigned to them. Often the tasks are repetitive, for example, the branding of a particular part of the shoe using a manual transfer technique. Their break comes at lunchtime. After the *sabzi* (vegetables) and *rotis* (bread) are consumed it is back to

the tasks to meet a daily quota. At 5:00 pm, near the end of their shift, there is a buzz in the air as some of the workers begin to appear livelier. Cell phones begin to appear out of pockets as they begin to exit the factory. Now, they can be with another community, their families.

The workers' days are mandated through a structure, through the format of time. This passage of time spent in the factory is reflected directly in their paychecks, in what will become their children's school fees or ration for the household kitchen

The factory workers must record their hours in a register bare for all to see. There is the fact of the large attendance board hung on a wall for all to see. In the tally of the days there needs to be a "P" next to each name, each day. "P" denotes a presence next to the names of Salim, Akram, Qasim, Riaz and so on.

In the video exhibited by the artist at the exhibition's opening, one of Rabbya's worker interlocutor says, "yay ghariboon ki madad kar rahi hain" (Is she helping the poor). Many acknowledged that no one does anything for no reason, or without monetary compensation yet here she was doing this action for us...showing us care of sorts. However, "care" is a loaded word, especially in the merger of social practice and contemporary art, as practised

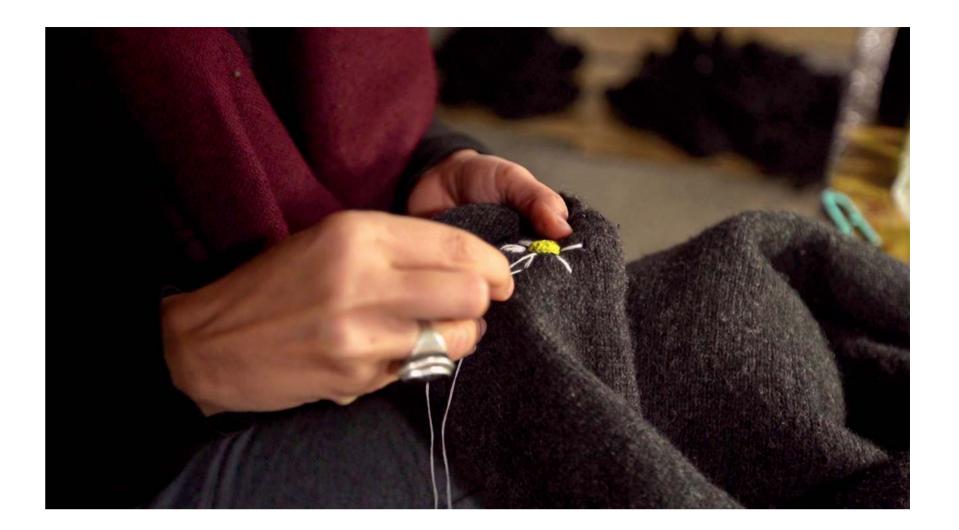
these days. The artist must be cognizant to steer away from blatant agenda-driven politics, or the fetishization of any particular group of people. While "care" seems to imply a close bond as a pre-condition, we can very well see the kind of incremental bonding that happens in the exchanges with the workers of the stitching department at Chawla Footwear, and in how the worker's workspace gradually transforms here: 1. simply through the presence of the artist, 2. by the daily exchange she has with the factory workers, because this is one of the few times where an outsider attempts to actually engage with them, giving consideration to their wants, and with a goal to providing them with something (i.e. a tangible and usable repaired good) as opposed to eliciting information or value out of them.

Another thing that is made visible here is that we can begin to think of time a little bit differently. While the worker's time caters to the production of goods and capital, the artist's leisure time (this is my impression which the artist may not agree with) introduces an aspect of "slowing down" into the hectic routines of the workday. From the standpoint of deliberating on time, maybe this "leisure time" that Rabbya Naseer seems to represent provides a small luxury to the workers. For the duration of this project, maybe some of the workers had ten minutes each day where something different happened in their life, and maybe this became ten minutes of relaxation for them. At one point in her process, I asked the artist if she would display her embroideries stand-alone to a formal audience. The answer was no. It was important to the artist in keeping with the intention of the work that the "mended" clothes not be displayed in any way (photos of the mended articles may exist as records, but for some that were repaired quickly and on the spot, there is no "evidence" that these actions ever took place) - for example, to have them hang or to be under light or glass, to be in a demarcated space, as an "object." This object-like treatment of the embroidered items of clothing would of course make us objectify the worker body, as the item of clothing would right away make us think of the person who wears the clothes. But the impetus of this work was not to highlight differences (for example between the art audience versus the labouring body) but rather to find points of commonality. For the artist, it was trying to build a small bridge shaped through shared experience.

I re-visited this exhibition towards the end of the show and one of the older workers, a bearded man

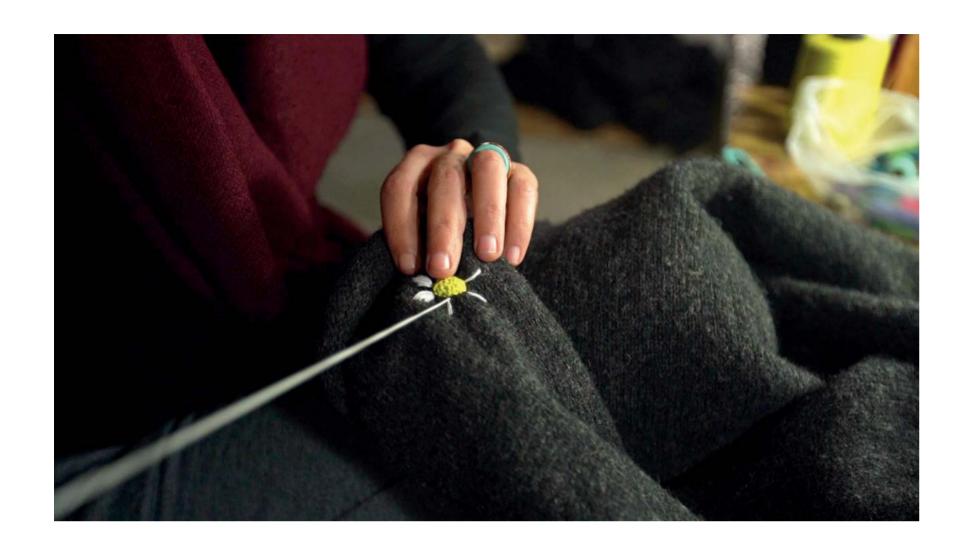
in a sleeveless brown sweater came up to me, asking "Where did she go?" He was inquiring after the artist. What felt to him like a drastic absence was an absence that he and the others were not ready for, possibly because they missed how the space had changed during the artist's presence. The reason the artist was not there is because she had fallen sick, and they did not know this yet. When this man and the others heard that the artist had concrete plans to return once better, their faith in her was renewed. They were happy to know they were not going to be returning to their prior state without a warning. Otherwise, it would have been a real letdown. They knew eventually she would leave, but they needed some time to process it. Her leaving could not be without notice. By the end of this project, the artist was able to become part of the factory workers' space such that her being there became seamless. In the context of repair, being "seamless" is a positive quality. You want the joint, that point of repair to appear as it if it does not exist. Initially, Rabbya, sitting in the midst of the factory workers was an interruption in their space. Among them, she was highly visible, as an outsider to the factory. But by the end, she became such a part of the space that they saw her and took her as a given, and she saw them and took them as a given. And as time went on, though they engaged in separate tasks, they worked in parallel, the artist and the factory worker, such that they became a little bit artist, and she, a little bit labour.

In one way, writing deals with the remains of thoughts. One does not get to see the process of the writer, but only what is on the page of the final draft. This artwork is not a performance, and not only a video but is rather a set of marks and traces, of what was. It deals with the remains of what occurred in the shoe-factory space over a period of several weeks between the artist, and her factory co-workers.



Scan QR code to view artwor







Location | Basement Stitching
Department

Same Milk Twice

1

The "thud" was the milk carton dropping.

I describe an event that took place on a bus on one of my dreaded journeys from Kipling station to Mississauga. It was late afternoon in August, perhaps in September.

I was already on the bus, when a woman came on, she was in her 40s, 50s, hard to say, heavy set, she wore a dark green jacket. I'm trying to describe it as best as I remember it. She had a black wide-brimmed hat on, maybe gloves too, and carried two shopping bags in her hands. She sat down next to me, and somehow out of one of the shopping bags she carried, there dropped a 1 litre carton of milk onto the floor of the moving bus. The "thud" was the milk carton dropping.

Similar to the action of the milk moving in horizontal rubber grooves on the bus floor was the action of the hair comb separating strands of the day camp worker's hair as she had done when standing at the platform before getting on to the bus. Grooming dark strands into place was the faux pas she was engaged in; it resembled the movement of the milk's dispersal into lines that were also being painted over by its own self.

In time others came on. Children from summer camp were already on the bus. They had all sorts of questions, "Are we there yet?", "Does someone get on without paying for the ride?"– some of the questions were about Lego.

In a confusing way the camp leader instructed the children with the industrious silkworm eyelashes to make their Lego sets in "the night." The kids with spooling brown *baingan* arms stuck them out of the bus's windows. When the bus stopped the children asked why.

The kids knew the difference between their bird bodies. On the floor, the milk moved between tangled legs and chequered legs in cotton *shalwars* that also housed the heat of suns from a different city. In the lining of their stomachs the children had breakfasts of the world. They would grow up to be lunchbox men with coconut milk-streaked hair, with backpacks, with cologne, familiar or unfamiliar with the childhood smell of hockey rinks, but familiar with *tiffins* on the long road. But I don't control their future narrative. In her backpack the daycare worker had a roll of paper towel the milk could have been soaked up with but in its centre the roll was hole ridden, so to soak up the milk with it was out of the question, the children decided.

The ones coming on to the bus contorted their bodies walking or not walking past it because the moving milk business was becoming a monster. The people as they were getting on, some of them became mindful of how and where to step, which boundary not to cross for the milk mass had claimed a stake of its own. Closer to the front of the bus, it was hard to escape it when coming in, and also it was getting larger, as the bits were attaching themselves to it. A woman kept eating her cookie.

A different woman, ripped apart into sandwich, the plastic of the submarine, but before eating she stopped to smell the meat. She had onions for eyes, shallot pink and her face was stretched like a long paper bag in which someone carried bricks. In paint splattered overalls, from the grocery store bag she took out her sandwich. Someone else while standing up was drinking a leftover long night's sludge, strawberry (artificially) flavoured yogurt straight from the tub. The other ladies had tight packed sheets of diapers like business cards stuffed into their purses.

2

The milk spilled on to the floor of the bus and settling, it moved, in the ridges of the black rubber. The milk moved with ease, smooth sailed in the ridges of the black rubber found on Mississauga area buses. The milk had no trouble moving. With each forward motion, and each backward motion (i.e., the driver pressed the brakes and starting again after allowed the milk lines as they were travelling to progress (in limited space) in either direction for a certain duration, but then to be pulled back. Particular duration became a demarcation which would mark how large the milk's line would become.

From Islington to Derry time had passed, for the spilt milk there was a chance at repetition, and it was able to pass through the same space multiple times. It was a chance that we did not have. In time she put the milk back in the plastic shopping bag, the milk droplets were on her pleather purse and also on her hand, but she wasn't worried. She took out the package of cookies and started eating. These weren't regular cookies, their size was larger than that of an ordinary cookie, the consistency thinner than a cookie, the colour of a pale peach, they came from a circular wrapped package that said, try adding small quantities of water to a tall glass half full of milk. Initially one would not be able to make out the difference in taste at all, indeed it seems like a fuller glass of perfectly good milk. However, after a while, the flavour changes to one that is distinctly watery in nature. A few more additions and the milk now tastes like dirty water.

What added to the sculpture's sense of becoming a looming threat and some kind of grotesque putrid were the chunks, flakes, attaching themselves to the milk's movement. Early on the milk had ceased to be "pure," it started to get tainted when the first chunk fell and changed it, sullying its essential nature. The first chunk changed it from itself and into at least one more thing. In the duration that I witnessed it the bits of cookie continued to amass. They were rapid chunks that fell and attached themselves to the ends of a shawl, the pleather purse, the droplet of milk still on one hand, and the milk became binding for cookie bits.

The Factory exhibition envisioned art in an industrial setting. In a space with its autonomic purpose, functionality, and semantics. For this project the site, a functional shoe factory, allowed artists to interact with it and its industrial characteristics. An invitation to explore and incite a critical thought process regarding the meaning of space for artists. They were given accessibility to area and materials, provoking intellectual dialogue. This positively challenged the artists on various levels with as diverse range of mediums and forms emerged

As the curator of this program, the idea was exploration of industrial development which could also lead to industrial transformation and expansion. Marketing, sales, development and production, the power of capitalism, and the consumer culture were some of the fundamentals of this idea. Artists were encouraged to dissect the literal and functional relationship between the structure and human engagement which was in part based on my own interest philosophy and compositional aesthetics.

Artists were invited to come out of their studios to interact with the site and respond in creative expression which would not have been possible otherwise.

The entire team came together to respect the rules and regulations of the factory.

Like any industrial unit, Chawla Footwear Industry has rules and regulations that include ethics, morals, and discipline to help achieve its targets. Unlike the complete autonomy of an artist's studio, the factory has a system consisting of the CEO, managerial staff, various departments, production units, warehouse supervised by their respective heads. Following protocols and the hierarchy was imperative. For resources and services, requests had to be made through proper channels. Learning these for the first step for everyone, including myself. Protocols were essential to establish a proper working space for artists and the display.

Though I had been familiar with the space since childhood, I now used a new lens to decipher it. Familiarity drifted away and a new appearance and functions revealed itself. Next I had to study, research and investigate the factory and its functionality concerning material, space and men; appearing as a single unit.

I was pleased that artists who worked at the factory became accustomed to the system and were able to build a relationship with the managerial staff and co-workers. They were accepted and treated like family. These artists were able to directly contact departmental heads and labour. Everyone shared a working environment and mutual respect.

I was challenged not to disturb the production process.

It was initially overwhelming to work alongside active production and lines and ongoing labour. Thousands of shoes are produced every day. The factory seemed to be a different world altogether with a distinct behaviour. My job included searching for ideas and possibilities to work without hindering the production. Being adaptive for key. I began by surveying spaces to find room for interventions. Hallways, containers, passages, warehouses, lawns, rooftops, and walls all came to my notice as spaces to utilize. Then as the proposals starting, I first curated works mentally in the appropriate places.

With Faizan Naveed's tree, the artist and I discussed and decided to hang upside down from the ceiling of the chemical plant hall. This was managed without disrupting the daily routine of the workplace. The second tree he sand-casted out of aluminium was displayed in the lawn where workers gather during their lunch break.

Behind this in the parallel lawn was another work. A metal pole made with rusty found pieces of pipes lying around the factory. The seventy-five feet tall configuration made by Hassan Mujtaba was brought into the open against the skyline to avoid any hindrance to the fabrication units. His second work was installed in one of the alleys at the site. He built a walkthrough space inspired by wells, constructed with barrels used to store and transport chemicals. This particular alley did not have traffic of loading and unloading raw materials and goods. The mobility of goods remained undisturbed. Next to this alley was a warehouse made of girders and corrugated sheets in metal. This place was a very active area used to store dry pigment sacks and raw materials for the chemical plant. I curated Mujtaba's third work, an assemblage of chandeliers hung closely as one unit, inside this structure. To make things work, commodities were arranged like a maze taking you from the entrance to the sight revealing lit-up chandeliers. The warehouse was used as per routine throughout the display duration.

Another artwork displayed in a storage space was a video by Ammar Faiz in which co-workers performed for his piece. Faiz's video was projected in a low ceiling tunnel that is approximately 90 meters in length and roughly 7 meters in width. In a way, this is the most active storage space at the factory. It stores a variety of things that are used daily in production. Only one entrance open the entire day and to block the light and enhance visibility thick sheets were suspended at the opening.

Mahbub Jokhio's installation of art boxes went straight to the shoe box warehouse. The staff generates an inventory of the stock and piles the boxes up with a date and code on each box before dispatching them to the market. Jokhio's art boxes were placed just like the stacks the staff deals with every day. They could distinguish the installed mound easily due to the difference in colours, sizes and printing. Again, the routine drill and order was maintained. The installation was different enough for the staff yet not enough for foreign eyes.

Ali Shariq produced a forty-eight feet long tube light with the help of the electrical engineer and his team at the factory. This work went to the general storeroom, a huge hall in one of the basements. The metal shelves there stack a variety of goods; from raw sheets of fabric, rexine, leather, threads, needles and the list goes on. The bulk of the space and goods were not flexible to move around for placing this minimal work. Instead, the piece was placed between the shelves in a way that movement was not restricted for the workers.

In the same hall, there was a video installation by Mohsin Shafi which consisted of fourteen led screens, 32 inches each, with separate audiovisual content. The two works were partitioned by relocating an oversized shelf. It was placed behind the chief officer's desk, so the contents remained accessible and a new space came into being. There are only a few examples of many the challenges in displaying in a functional shoe factory.

Artists had no restriction with material, scale, space and utilizing machinery

Artists were encouraged to explore challenging ideas; to push their boundaries for this project. They were inspired to dissect the relationship between the factory's infrastructure and labour force and the harmony within. All the material used in shoe production was available to them. I was curious to see how industrial materials such as raw, semi-used, waste and recycled material would be applied.

Rabeya Jalil and Rabeeha Adnan (an artist duo) used the CNC laser cutting facility on leather for text-based work. Their leather cut letters pasted on a grey wall looked like they had been painted. They both also showed interest from the beginning in the in-house pigment machine that facilitates intricate CNC pigment designs and meticulous colour combinations for factory usage. They learnt the operating procedure with the help of experts and technicians for thin colour films developed by personally devised codes. The machine ejected colours on a metal tray through coded instructions.

Another artist duo, Matt Kushan and Unum Babar, built small toy like sculptures memorialised on respective islands placed on the floor made with a recycled EVA sheet from the factory. They created another piece in the adjacent room with a sack filled with soil. This sack was made of flesh coloured EVA sheet that held and contained a large amount of soil with a dry stem with dry leaves planted on top and under a suspended UV light lampshade.

Suleman Khilji painted on the same sheets of EVA. He used natural pigment to produce large scale paintings of trees.

Ali Baba sculpture showed the air trapped when a shoe is worn. He used the 3D scanning facility at the factory to achieve this. He separately scanned a sculpture of a human foot and the inner surface of a shoe made of plaster. He overlapped this data in the software getting the desired 3D printed form.

Ali Shariq manufactured black sunflower pots in PU sole grade material. This material is used in soles for different types of shoes. He first resolved the module of a pot and sunflower with the help of experts on site before multiplying the form into a hundred pieces. The mass-produced small sized sunflower pots effectively engaged the audience displayed on a platform resembling a stage.

Abid Aslam is another artist who used rexine for his artworks produced at the factory. His drawings were scaled up and cut out with the help of the CNC cutting procedure that he stitched in layers after.

Scale is a relative property that is constantly present and is usually works of art. It deals with how big or small a work of art is in the context of the space. As curator of The Factory, Project #1, I worked carefully around the principle of scale. Some works went from 75 feet to 30 feet in height or the volume expanded horizontally. And despite the small size some of the works demanded equal attention.

Ali Baba's work had a subdued presence between representation and abstraction. The size of the work was close to the shoe size of an average man. The display needed a tranquil space and so, a far end of a warehouse was selected. Pathways made of stacked shoeboxes led the way. The individuality and subtle characteristics of the work emerged juxtaposed with the grandeur of shoeboxes. An intricate piece revealed itself around those massive boxes.

The availability of resources helped realize new possibilities

Participating artists work in their comfort zones in studios all around the city. The Factory, Project #1, aimed to create an atmosphere that gave everyone the liberty to think about the site. To do that, access was granted to all the departments; equipped with software technology, designers, mechanical and electrical engineers, technicians, skilled labour, transportation and a general workforce. Possible mediums were realised as an incredible amount of materials was at their disposal. Being careful not to dictate to any of the artists in their creative endeavours, we conversed and I shared my thoughts throughout the project.

I categorised artists who used the premises and resources into 4 types:

- . Artists who worked closely with experts and technicians available at the factory.
- . Artists who worked with the skilled labour available at the factory.
- . Artists who worked with the materials available at the factory.
- . Artists who worked with materials from outside the factory.

When I summarise the production of the entire exhibit, it is the result of these four components that came together as one.

Building familiarity and a working environment between artists and skilled labour

Being a female in a high male population, I was a stranger, an outsider who did not belong there. Trust needed to be build and there was no room for miscommunication. It was essential homework before starting anything. Heads of the departments and skilled labour all knew their daily drills well. It was Imperative to inform them beforehand about the nature of the project and works intended. To attain working environment based on mutual respect the gap of alienation had to be filled. Artists were told on the best ways to attain assistance. They were introduced to the departmental heads to establish communication and thus began a joint operation. I remained present in the picture to examine how the dice kept rolling between both sides. Removing any estrangement between artists and skilled la

bour was the key. The artist benefitted from the large quantity of help and the administration managed a way to continue routine work simultaneously.

Using simple language to execute complex ideas

It is not easy, at times, to establish communication with the technical staff and skilled labour regarding work. They have an established way and are used to the work ethics that have been followed for years. As an art practitioner, I have also been in this situation. When working with someone for their skill, it's imperative you help them visualise your idea, just as you have.

The complex creative thought process is very tiring, hence communication is key when acquiring the help of skilled workers.

The skillset of workers in each department is impressive. Their command over tools and methods is tremendous. To use their knowledge and technical support, speaking their language pays off. Considering they have never worked with artists before it is better to stick to their own phrasing. This course of action helped them observe the seriousness of the artworks they produced and owned as manufacturers. I was able to share my thoughts with them comfortably. Without the factory staff and workers' expertise and support, the project's vision would have been incomplete.

Maintaining a positive attitude and fulfilling all individual requirements

In the pursuit of turning this project into a reality there were many highs and lows. The most trying part was two Covid-19 lockdowns which caused a major delay. I give credit to the artists who shared my conviction and patience and their belief in the quest. We were in the same boat and my job was to keep everything sailing smoothly. 33 works of art by 20 artists, had to be accommodated, with respect. It could not have been achieved without remaining calm and maintaining my composure.

To fulfil the artist's creative requirements, a facilitator and problem-solving attitude was needed. For relevant materials and required machinery artists were shown the specific departments, areas and introduced to personnel. When an artist requested a workstation in the stitching department hall, it was immediately arranged. As per requirements, a container was emptied for projection mapping. When an artist wanted to hang a tree upside down or errect a pole in the ground, coordination was the first priority. An unobtrusive and analytical approach is what achieved fruitful results.

Another successful segment of the exhibition was the thoughtfully tapped participatory audience. From the CEO to the managerial staff and heads of the various departments to the skilled labour, all groups had the privilege to witness the process of making and installing the works on site. This labour audience and the staff had been familiar with the site in a different capacity, a place they come to earn their daily bread and butter. Their engagement was unique, basic, unfiltered and sometimes humorous. The questions they put forward were full of curiosity and a desire to understand what was being tried to attain. And due to their patience and support they celebrated the process of making and the outcomes, as makers along with the artists.

Overall, it was a highly successful first project. It was the result of planning, patience, positivity, composure, compromise, creative initiatives, hard work, many man hours, and most importantly teamwork. Where we have come together to make art, we have also found a new audience.



Rameesha | Curator Azeem

Biographies

Curator/Director/Founder

Rameesha Azeem @rameeshaazeem

Rameesha Azeem (b.1996) is a curator and a Visual Artist, living and working in Lahore, Pakistan. She is awarded the Gasworks Residency (2022), She has curated and organised a group show *A site for sight* collateral to Lahore Biennale 2020, she was a part of group shows Of the Moments, Contemporary 12.0, Islamabad, Pakistan (2020) and *Musalsal*, Lahore Pakistan (2019). Her upcoming curatorial project *The Factory* is in progress along with a publication and there are several other projects she is currently working on. Awarded with the Dean's honour list, she has completed her undergraduate degree from Beaconhouse National University in Lahore in Visual Arts.

Publication Editor

Emaan Maqbool @emaanzipants

Emaan Maqbool (b.1990) is a published writer based in Lahore, Pakistan. She has a degree in Cultural Studies from Beaconhouse National University. Emaan works as a digital marketing strategist and entrepreneur with a traveling makeup studio. She writes both fiction and non-fiction and her work can be viewed in various publications. And has been writing poetry from a very young age. Emaan is currently working on her second publication.

Writers

Maham Qureshi

Mahum Qureshi is a proficient writer and a poet with a wide array of publications in numerous journals (international and in Pakistan). Mahum has performed Beat Poetry at Alhamra Arts Council in collaboration with Canal Jams at the first Lahore Literary Festival. She is currently teaching English at Aitchison College Lahore.

Baseerat Zehra

Baseerat Zehra (b. 1994) is a writer and educationist based in Lahore. Currently teaching English Language & Literature at LGS International, she has done her M. Phil in English Literature (2019) from Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore.

Her thesis discussed trauma theory in literature, revolving around the conflicted lives of the displaced people. Writing poetry, fiction and non-fiction, her work is influenced by the themes of human relationships, identity and the dull ordinariness of life.

Hassan Tahir Latif @hassantl

Hassan Tahir Latif is a writer and creative based out of Lahore and the Managing Editor of The Aleph Review, Pakistan's premier English language creative anthology. He is also co-founder of Consilium, a student profile development organisation, where he focuses on enhancing literacy skills, critical thinking and social engagement amongst high school students. Determined to provide literary opportunities to the younger generation, he has co-founded Risala, a forthcoming publication catering to primary and middle school students. His creative work is centred around the concepts of memory, archiving and imagined histories.

Syed Urooj Zafar Samdani @uroojsamdani

Syed Urooj Zafar Samdani has studied film making from Rome, Italy and has been a part of an award winning short films collection project in Rome, Italy. He is a man of many talents being a writer, filmmaker, academician, PR and media specialist to name a few.

His features and articles have been published in almost all the leading English newspapers of the country such as Dawn, The Nation, The Frontier Post and monthly magazines; The Herald, Newsline, SHE, Cricketer, Woman's Own etc. A number of his articles were also published in the esteemed Khaleej

He also teaches film and TV courses at almost all the leading universities of Lahore and has served as the Head of Department, Theatre, Film and TV at Beaconhouuse National University for a number of years.

Jawad Raza @jrsharaf

Jawad Raza is a writer and a zealous educationist. He has taught at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) in their National Outreach Program, Lahore Grammar School (LGS) International, LGS Paragon, and Beaconhouse Newlands where he has additionally worked as a TED-Ed Co Curricular Curator.

He graduated from Beaconhouse National University with a B.A (Hons) Liberal Arts degree in 2015, and completed a Teacher Training course from Arizona State University in 2018. Having recently obtained a certificate from the World History Project is just another feather in his cap.

When he is not teaching, he performs beat poetry and stand-up comedy which has gained him an avid following. He is presently working on compiling a collection of poems and flash fiction which will be published by Ala.

Hassan Rauf @thepleasantsimpleguy

Hassan Rauf b. 1990 writes narrative fiction with the aim of motivating the reader(s) to indulge in the development of "self" and to adopt an empathic lifestyle. Hassan founded a publishing house by the name of T.P.S.G in 2018 to gather like-minded writers and artists to produce content to inspire selfdevelopment and promote empathy in the younger generation. In addition to the above, Hassan has written two books; "The Child in the Mirror" and "The Journal" - both of which will be available in 2022. He is also the cofounder of the concrete company named Rockstone.

Arsalan Athar

Arslan Athar is a writer based out to Lahore. He writes both fiction and nonfiction work. Arslan is one @confusedandfashionable of the inaugural South Asia Speaks Fellows for 2021. His mentor is Fatima Bhutto. His work is heavily influenced by topics like identity and power.

Zarmina Rafi

Zarmina Rafi is a Pakistani-Canadian writer, editor and curator. Following a ten year career in the visual arts, Rafi is currently a freelance editor with ECW Press, Toronto. Her writing has appeared in Vallum, Arc, The Antigonish Review and filling Station. Rafi was a key member of the curatorial team of the first (2018) and second (2020) Lahore Biennales in Pakistan working alongside leading national and international artists. Rafi has previously worked at the Art Gallery of Mississauga, KW Institute for Contemporary Art Berlin, School of Visual Arts BNU Lahore and at the Toronto Star. She is a grant recipient from Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, KONE Foundation Finland, the Federal Chancellery of Austria, Sharjah Art Foundation and Tate Modern

Artists

Ayaz Jhokio @ayaz.jokhio.

Ayaz Jokhio (b. 1978, pakistan) lives and works in Lahore. He obtained his BFA from National College of Arts, Lahore in 2001. His work has been shown in numerous group and solo exhibitions in Pakistan and abroad, and he has been a resident artist in Switzerland, Germany and Japan. He teaches at the Mariam Dawood School of Visual Arts and Design, Beaconhouse National University. Ayaz dissects the grammar of images with a certain intellectual logic and uses his artistic works an amalgamation of imagery from print media, the internet, and popular culture along with his own observations of contemporary Pakistan.

Mohsin Shafi @mohsinshafiofficial

www.mohsinshafi.com

Mohsin Shafi is an interdisciplinary artist based in Lahore, Pakistan. His practice takes advantage of personal and collective archives attained from various sources, offering multiple perspectives that reveal entrenched socio-political contradictions in pakistani society. The imagery in his visuals is observant, poignant and often darkly humorous. Through his works, he probes the tight spaces between lucidity and madness, intimacy and alienation, the fantasies and anxieties, desire and doubts, attachment and disaffection, love and hate, and the living and the absent.

In the last decade, Shafi has extensively showcased his work throughout all prominent galleries in Pakistan. He has exhibited at various art fairs, gallery exhibitions, travelling museum shows, and at alternative space displays around the globe. He is recipient of various residencies including 1646 In Denhaag - The Netherlands, Alter Mondial in Basel - Switzerland awarded by Pro Helvetia, The Growlery in San Francisco - U.S.A., The Rondo Studios in Graz - Austria and Pakistan's significant Vasl Artist Resdiency in Karachi. Besides being part of significant private collections in Pakistan, his work is in the permanent collection of The Museum of Sacred Art - The Belgian foundation based in Brussels - Belgium and at the Books Art Department of Mills College, San Francisco, United States.

Among prominent practice and accomplishments, he is an active member of the *Awami Art Collective*. Shafi holds a Masters degree in visual arts and a bachelor's degree in visual communication, both from the National College of Arts, Lahore.

Suleman Khilji @suleman_khilji

Suleman Aqeel Khilji (b.1985.Quetta) is a Visual artist and educator, lives and works in Lahore. Suleman graduated from National College of Art Lahore in 2011 and currently is part of NCA Lahore as a permanent faculty. He has been part of Artist Residencies such as VASL, Muree Museum Artist Residency and Mansion Artist Residency. He has exhibited his work locally and internationally.

His works are part of prestigious collections, such as the DIL Foundation, New York, COMO Museum, SRK Homes and the Luciano Benetton Collection. He was also the cover artist for The Aleph Review, Vol. 5 (2021).

Rabia Ajaz @rabiaajaz

www.rabiaaiaz.com

Rabia Ajaz completed her BFA in Painting with Honours from Beaconhouse National University, Lahore in 2009. Recipient of the Fulbright Scholarship, she then completed her MFA in Painting/Drawing with a Distinction at the Pratt Institute, New York in 2013.

Rabia received an Artist's Grant to attend the residency at the Vermont Studio Center in 2017. She also completed a merit-based residency at the Sam and Adele Golden Foundations for the Arts, NY 2021. She teaches at the Mariam Dawood School of Visual Arts and Design, Beaconhouse National University, Labore

She has also been a member of the visiting faculty at the National College of Arts, Lahore. Her work is not dictated by a single ideology or a committed style but varies according to the several themes she explores in her paintings. Her work has received widespread critical acclamation in both Pakistan and abroad.

She currently lives and works in Lahore.

Mehbub Jokhio @mahbubjokhio

Mahbub Jokhio was born in Mahrabpur, Pakistan in 1992. Graduating with Distinction from Beaconhouse National University in visual arts as UMISSA scholar, Jokhio currently teaches at Beaconhouse National University, Lahore.

Having shown work at number of local and international venues including Partition Perspectives, Crossings Gallery, Harvard Ed. Portal, Allston, US. In 2018 East meets west, Preview show of the winning works, Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan, Italy, in 2018 Multiple Narratives, Grosvenor Gallery, London, UK, in 2018 Epiphany, Piazza Sant'Andrea, Palermo, Italy, and in 2013 Extra-Ordinary---37 Art ideas for free, Curated by Rashid Rana, Canvas Gallery, Karachi. His work Museum of Wasted Loves was commissioned by Karachi Biennale2017.

He is also awarded national and international residencies including Gasworks Residency at London and IFTCF Emerging Artist award, Italy. He had his first solo exhibition In the city of Lost Times at The Tetley, Leeds, UK and was awarded Al-Balad Residency by Ministry of culture Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and a Research Fellowship at Lakshmi Mittal institute, Harvard University. Jokhio is recently awarded with an artist residency at upcoming Malt Artist in Residence Program in Ebeltoft, Denmark.

Unum Babar & **Matt** Kushan

@unumb @mattkushan Unum Babar & Matt Kushan met and began their collaborative practice at Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston where they both completed an MFA. Before going to the U.S. as a Fulbright scholar, Unum attained a BFA from Beaconhouse National University in Lahore, Pakistan, while Matt completed his BFA at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Both artists have independent, multidisciplinary practices working in photography, video and installation, and digital and interactive media. They are both currently living and working in Lahore.

Dua Abbas Rizvi @duaabbasrizvi

Dua Abbas Rizvi is a visual artist and art journalist based in Lahore, Pakistan. She graduated from the National College of Arts, Lahore, in 2010, with a Distinction in painting, the Shakir Ali Award for excellence in fine art, and the Sir Percy Brown Prize for excellence in art history. Her work has been part of numerous exhibitions at home and abroad and has been featured in The Brooklyn Rail and Artnet News. It was recently acquired by the Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion in Washington, D.C. and is part of the permanent collection at COMO Museum of Art, Lahore. Rizvi has been writing on art and culture since 2009 and her essays, reviews, and creative nonfiction have been published in Pakistani and foreign English-language newspapers, magazines, and anthologies including Dawn, Herald, The Friday Times, The Aleph Review, Encounters: The Art of Interfaith Dialogue, Image Journal (for which she also serves as an editorial advisor), Selvedge Magazine, and the Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception

Rabeeha Adnan @peachygrenade

Rabeeha Adnan (b. Lahore, 1998) graduated in 2021 with a distinction in Fine Arts from the National College of Arts, Lahore. Adnan's practice involves new media techniques including projection, animation, light installations and text. Her work encourages audience engagement with sensory experiences. Simultaneously, it addresses concerns regarding power dynamics within state structures and presents institutional critique. Apart from continuing her practice, Adnan has exhibited in Canvas Gallery in Karachi, and O Art Space and The Colony in Lahore. She has co-curated a collaborative exhibition between Lahore Digital Arts Festival and National College of Arts, Lahore and is currently a part of C³ network by the Goethe Institute.

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Rabeva Jalil

@rabeyajalil

Rabeya Jalil is a visual artist and art educator based in Lahore. She received her undergraduate degree from the National College of Arts (2005), Lahore and a Masters in Education from Columbia University, Teachers College, New York, on a Fulbright Scholarship (2013). Jalil's creative practice includes painting, curriculum development, teacher-education and writing. She is a founding member and co-editor for the Journal of Art Education Pakistan (JAEP), the first peer-reviewed publication about art education in the region and is co-director of Conversations, an online talk show about art and design academics in Pakistan. She also volunteers as the Online Digital Curriculum Coordinator for CSTAE, Caucus of Social Theory in Art Education, NAEA, National Art Education Association, United States, Jalil has presented at art education conferences in Lahore, Islamabad, Boston, New York, Fort Worth (Texas), San Diego. Chicago, Seattle and Istanbul and has exhibited her work in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, UAE, USA, UK, Portugal and India. Currently, she is Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Art at the National College of Arts, Lahore.

Ali Sharia Jamali @ali.shariq.jamali

Ali Shariq Jamali (b. 1994) is a creative practitioner who works and lives in Lahore. He completed his BFA from National College of Arts. Lahore in 2018. He continued his education at the Beaconhouse National University in Lahore and received his MFA in Art and Design Studies in 2021. Sharig has exhibited widely nationally and was a resident of Vasl Artists' Association's Taza Tareen 13 residency in 2021. Shariq was also part of EART: A manifesto of possibilities a project conceived by Rashid Rana, MIF 2021 at Dantzic. Shariq currently teaches at Beaconhouse National University, Lahore

Shariq's practice draws perceptual trajectory of human mind and its ability to conceive contradiction. Creating parallel and partial realities, his work deals with possible and impossible, truth and fiction, real and imaginary, tangible and intangible. Using eminent critic John Berger's words to illustrate his propensity for the liminal space between the possible and impossible.

Komal Naz

@mrandmrsyellow.official

Komal Naz, visual Artist currently living in Lahore. She is an Assistant professor at Beaconhouse National University. Did her Masters in Art Education (2021) and has a Bachelor's in Visual Arts (2012) from Beaconhouse National University . She has been part of Performance Art Intensive at Tetley Residency (2017). Her work usually revolve around the idea of displacement and performance plays a great role in it. Her work is majorly moving towards imagination and it's impact. She is exploring different mediums and techniques to make her work look more performative.

Ammar Faiz

@ammarfaizzzz

Ammar Faiz is a visual artist born in Lahore, Pakistan. He experiments with various mediums of experiential expressions including film and audio documentation, drawings, multi-faceted installations and collages. He is particularly interested in exploring anthropological themes underlying intangible cultural settings residing on the borders of urbanization and rural tradition.

Ammar has exhibited his work at various international shows including New Wight Biennial UCLA, Los Angeles, US, The Image Show in Tanzania, traveling exhibition Make Being Radical tour show in Netherland and AMP Gallery London, UK. His local shows include Singer Not the Song (2021) at Dominion Gallery, Lahore, Islamabad Art Fair (2019), Making History (2018), Amalgamation (2017) and What Belongs To You (2016) at Sanat Gallery, Karachi, Common Fabric, (2015) at Rohtas II, Lahore and Dialogue 1 (2011), Alhamra Art Center, Lahore. His films have been screened at Reykjavík International Film Festival (2017), Reykjavík, Iceland, Ozark Short Film Festival (2016), Lamar, USA, Salair International Independent FILM Festival (2016), Russia and Visionaria (2015), Italy.

Ammar graduated with a distinction in Masters in Art and Design Studies in 2018 and Bachelors of Visual Arts in 2015 from the Beaconhouse National University in Lahore, Pakistan. He is a recipient of ADA awards (2020-2021) in the video art category. He was shortlisted for Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten (2019), Amsterdam, Netherlands and Visiting Artist Fellowship (2019), The Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA.

Currently, Ammar is a faculty member at his alma mater. He lives and works in Lahore.

Syed Hassan

Mujtaba

@hassan_muitaba10

Syed Hassan Mujtaba was born in 1985 in Lahore, Pakistan.

He completed his BFA in visual arts from Beaconhouse National University in 2009, exploring the politics of a school, an environment of authority and influence, documenting human response through the lens of photography and video.

Any procedure that constantly dictates the identical without comprehending the characteristics and variabilities of the multitudes inspires him for his visual poetics. Such mechanics and responses create the desire to encounter the unfamiliar traces between uniformity and recurrence for his creative endeavours.

In 2011, Muitaba took part in the Vasl-Rohtas International Residency was held in Islamabad with international artists from Iran, Turkey and South Africa. He is exhibiting in solo and group exhibitions regularly nationwide and abroad.

He is a member of the visiting faculty at Beaconhouse National University (BNU), Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design (PIFD) and Comsats.

Currently, he lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan

Faizan Naveed @phayxaan_

www.faizannaveed.com

Faizan Naveed (b. 1989) is a Lahore based visual artist / educator. He has exhibited works in Pakistan and internationally, for group and solo exhibitions, including biennales and festivals. His work has been featured in various publications, magazine articles, and talk shows.

Faizan's work deals with installation to not just create art but a whole experience. His solo exhibitions are curated to become experiences, so they are fully articulated spaces and partially architectural projects.

Rabbva Naseer @rabbyahurmat

Rabbya Naseer (b. 1984) is a multidisciplinary artist engaged in making, curating, writing and teaching of art. She has a BFA from NCA, Lahore (2006) and is a recipient of Fulbright scholarship for Masters in Art Theory & Criticism from SAIC, Chicago (2010). She has been teaching graduate and undergraduate courses at NCA and BNU (Lahore) since 2010 and has also taught at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia (2015 & 2017). Naseer's practice is broadly concerned with examining the parallels between Art and everyday-life. 'Work' as a material entity is only a by-product of her attempts to understand lived 'experiences' and 'encounters', as well as the structures that contain those experiences/encounters. Her works and writings have appeared in various local/international publications. She has participated in exhibitions, residencies and conferences in Pakistan, India, USA, UK, Dubai, China, Japan, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Australia & Potugal. Alongside her independent practice, Naseer has been maintaining her collaborative practice with Hurmat-ul-Ain since 2007. She is currently working on developing an archive for performance art in Pakistan and is looking for people interested in publishing it.

Saba Khan

@sabakhan82 www.sabakhan.com

Saba Khan's multimedia work traffics in the language of memorial, monument and public art. From lush beaded paintings of cakes to miniature dioramas of a bureaucrat's boring office; from flashing LED signs of stereotyped "Islamic Art" to embellished textile banners honoring the mundane generator, she balances grandeur, artifice and satire in order to explore the cracks in the facade of life in her native Lahore, Pakistan. Saba holds a BFA from National College of Arts, Lahore and an MFA from Boston University, on Fulbright Scholarship. Her work was included in the 2018 Karachi Biennale and the 2020 Lahore Biennale. Her solo exhibitions include ONE (2019) at Contemporary and Modern Art Museum and Zinda-dil-a'an-e-Lahore (2020) - Billboard Project an initiative of Lahore Biennale Foundation (LBF). In 2014, she founded Murree Museum Artist Residency, an artist-led initiative in a British colonial hillstation, and in 2020 the satirical artist collective Pak Khawateen Painting Club was born. Saba lives in Lahore, Pakistan.

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Ali Baba

@ali_baba_studio

Born in Lahore, schooled in Karachi and Quetta, Ali Baba did his Bachelor of Fine Arts and MA (Hons) Visual Art from National College of Arts Lahore, with distinction. Trained as a painter but mostly works in sculpture and installations. His main concern has been the human existence, its condition and sculpture itself. He mostly works with negative/positive life casts of human body and its parts. He worked as Assistant Curator at Zahoor-ul-Akhlaq Gallery NCA, served as a Lecturer at College of Art and Design, Punjab University Lahore, and currently he is working in Lahore and teaching as permanent faculty at the Master of Visual Art Department, National College of Arts, Lahore.

Suleman Faisal

@sulemanfaisal_

Suleman Faisal, (born 1991) is a visual artist and educator currently based in Lahore, Pakistan working between sculpture, video, and performance. He completed his BFA from the National College of Arts, Lahore in 2017 where he was awarded a Distinction for his efforts. Suleman's multidisciplinary artworks investigate the latent aggression present within humans and objects, and the minor acts of violence carried out through socially-acceptable activities such as cooking, hosting, or manufacturing. This interest in power balances and tools is influenced by Suleman's personal history, working in the toymaking and plastic industries, in addition to his exploration of the diverse socioeconomic conditions of the city in which he lives. Select exhibitions of his include Solo show Orange Sisyphus at Canvas gallery in 2021, group show "The smog show" at Zahor ul Akhlag gallery NCA in 2021, For the Wicked and the Valiant at O Art Space, Lahore in 2021, A Site for the Sight collateral of the Lahore Biennale 02 in 2020, Microcosm II at AAN Gandhara Art Space, Karachi in 2018, Transition in Time at the Zahoor ul Akhlag Gallery, Lahore in 2018, Four Rooms collateral of the Lahore Biennale 01 at PILAC in 2018, and Beneath the Surface at Canvas Gallery, Karachi in 2017. Suleman had the opportunity to be the Artist in Residence at Taaza Tareen 12 at Vasl Artist's Association, Karachi in 2020, and Pioneer Cement Factory, curated by Sameera Raia. In 2020, Suleman was awarded the Khurram Kasim Foundation Award to produce a solo exhibition at Canvas Gallery, in Spring 2021, also Rewarded a commission project Homing in by Platform Asia which was curated by Zena Khan and Chloe Hodge. His work is a part of many notable art collections in Pakistan.

Abid Aslam @abid_aslam86

Born in 1986 in Lahore, Pakistan, Abid Aslam studied at the Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts, Lahore. He focused his attention towards miniature painting. Aslam also served as a lecturer in Hunerkada College till 2014. His passion for art convinced him to pursue a master's program in Visual Arts from National College of Arts, Lahore in 2017 with an aim to develop a strong and independent point of view and a mature grasp of critical debate on contemporary art.

Aslam has made his first solo show titled as Coding Labels in 2013 at Canvas Gallery, Karachi and set his way towards success in an art world. He proved himself best through various group shows like Incubator, Milestone, Open field, Summer Scape, Variations along the Grid, Silsila, We live Pakistan, Witness to History, Human Within Us, Solitude, Resurgence, Scripted Serenity, Grey Matters and many more. He got Special Award from Artist's Association of Punjab, Lahore in 2016 and Arjumand Painting Award in 2015, Islamabad. Aslam has also made his work worth watching by participating in India Art Fair 2017 under Anant Art Gallery, Delhi, India. He has done a remarkable solo show in 2018 titled as Sitaron se aage at Sanat Initiative, Karachi Pakistan. Aslam participated in first Karachi Biennale Trust artist residency 2019 in collaboration with OPP (Orangi Pilot Project), Karachi Pakistan. Later, he also curated a group show titled as Once upon a time at Ejaz Art Gallery, Lahore. Aslam has been part of both national and international art exhibitions. Of Land and Skies was Aslam's another stunning solo show held at O Art Space, Lahore, Pakistan in 2019. Whereas, his previous solo show The Last Rain was exhibited at Sanat Initiative Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan in 2020. In 2021 a three person group show Peculiar Speculations was held at O Art Space, Lahore, Pakistan. Self-Extended, a two person show was show exhibited at Koel Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan. The Smog Show, a project of Art Otaq in collaboration with Jawad Sharif Films curated by Irfan Gul Dahri displayed at Zahoor-ul-Akhlag Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan was all about smog and its effects.

Credits

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Acknowledgments

Ahmed Butt, Alamdar, Ali Habib, Allah Ditta, Arshad, Ali Raza, Afzal, Baba Izhar, Bilal, Dua Azeem, Falak Naz, Ghaffar, Hassaan Amjad, Hassan Ghani, Imran, Ilyas, Kashmala Khan, Liaqat, M Sarfraz, Maqsood, Naeem Faryad, Naeem, Naveed, Nazim, Rubab Chishti, Shafique, Shahzad, Tajwar, Wahab, Younas, Zaki Ansari, Zaki Mir

