

beyond the waters



Rosher Raven
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Previous: Rasheed Araeen, *Waves at Sandspit*,
1956, watercolour, 27 x 38 cm (approx)
Photograph, courtesy Grosvenor Gallery

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the exhibition Beyond the Waters.

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beyond the waters

October 22 — November 21, 2019

Farrukh Adnan • Noor Ali Chagani • Noorjehan Bilgrami • Rasheed Araeen
Sohail Zuberi • Usman Saeed • Zeerak Ahmed

Curated By Amra Ali

water. notes

By Amra Ali

water. notes by amra ali

We live so close by it, and yet it seems distant. We are literally living on what was once the sea, and have seen it recede into the distance

The subject of water came about organically to hold the diversity in the narratives of the seven invited artists in *Beyond the Waters*. This title came as conversations progressed between the artists and me, in some cases, much before this exhibition was visualized, revealing possibilities into multiple readings of water as a physical point of reference, and also as metaphor that was embedded in some way in each of the artists' narrative. I was imagining this interface of the physical presence of water and its influence on approach, pulling strands from individual directions, to connect a layered experience in the gallery.

I was consciously seeking conversations away from nostalgic depictions of water or of land. Acknowledging the impossibility of reading or viewing one's surroundings (the land, the sea) without an inherent voyeurism in it, I wanted to see if it was even possible to stay clear of stereotypes of representation and possible appropriation; of making and viewing. The work of Rasheed Araeen, Noorjehan Bilgrami, Usman Saeed, Sohail Zuberi, Farrukh Adnan, Noor Ali Chagani and Zeerak Ahmed provided connections to ideology, approach and material. How these were going to hold together, I had no idea, except that there were conversations, with their distinct work and the context of the show, waiting to happen. There was more than a lot dependent on the unexpected in this interaction and the unknowing of the final outcome, when one was waiting for moments of connection to happen. Drawing into and from them.

The form that emerged was minimal. From the beginning of this process I was inclined that the gallery space be sparse. A window facing a water body in the front and one at the back of the gallery, looking into a plantation of bamboos provided appropriate links to my reading of these works. The sunlight reflecting off the water in the front was enough of a suggestion to the presence of the sea nearby, and opened the artist and viewer to the oceans, the seas and the rivers from which each took and gave. Koel provided the permeability that I was seeking in an exhibition. The space as an idiosyncratic form whose structure contributed and facilitated this re-reading. Nothing is read for the first time. The curatorial approach was also to investigate into the form, beyond its physical manifestation, for it to be an antithesis to the spectacle around us. →

beyond the waters

water. notes by amra ali

Could one meander into 'form' to find it. This transportation was integral to this curatorial process, which however remained transient, as the works belonged to complex histories of their own.

One of my reasons for choosing to curate was to study the gallery as a site and explore its relationship to the outside, and how it held what it held inside. Rasheed Araeen's complex narrative provided inspiration as well as relevance to our theme. Araeen was a 'non-artist' (trained at the NED University in Karachi as a civil engineer), whose art asserted its presence inside the gallery and the most prominent museums in Europe, only to take it outside, to free, what he called 'human imagination, from the bourgeois capitalist aspirations'.

Araeen's oeuvre, dating from 1952 to the present is an unstudied aspect of Pakistan's art history. His ideas have contested the very notion of art that seem to be emulated (and idealized) within artistic practices in Pakistan today. The watercolors of the 50s, in this exhibition become subversive simply because the medium is considered to be dated. There are important anchors in these works, which manifest in his later structural work. The masts on his boats painted on-site at Keamari and Sandspit portray the triangle that appears as a recurring form. It is an opportunity to view his work first-hand, and to read it in the context of the rest of the artists in this show. These are moments when one realizes that there are many facets to Araeen's vast narrative, and this is one possible meeting point.

This space intends to address the distances, and disparities inherent in this dynamics, without taking away or compromising the idealism and imagination within each narrative. For all purposes, this is a reflection of ideals through form and imagery. And those ideas reside, not in the gallery, but elsewhere in their own localities. This is also an understanding, in process.

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Right: Usman Saeed, *garden/finns 60*, 2019. Watercolour on paper, 52.8 x 68.5 cm.





Left: Rasheed Araeen, *Chakras* (discs) in Jheel Park, Karachi, 1974, Performance.

water. notes by amra ali

Araeen's work *Chakras* or disks, discussed in his book, *Art Beyond Art, Eco-Aesthetics: A Manifesto for the 21st Century* (Third Text Publications, 2010), reflects his insistence of resisting hierarchies of containment, and the journey of his work, which he refers to as 'a journey of the idea'. He released 16 painted circular disks (*Chakras*, 1969–70) into the waters at St. Katherine's Docks, London, in February 1970, which reappeared in a similar performance at the River Siene, Paris in October 1970; and again at Jheel Park, Karachi, in 1974. The disks represent an endless continuity, into the open horizon, beyond the scope of art within nationalistic boundaries, and into the limitlessness of nature. Much like his triangular structural work such as *Zero to Infinity* (1968–2007), the idea is the breaking off of 'the rigid symmetrical structure of minimalism, into fragments that are re-organized into a continuous process of unending movement by the collective intervention of the art's audience.'

In his chapter, '*Art Beyond Art, The Idea Moves on Without Any Complaint or Resentment*', Araeen writes that the idea actually 'finds its way, eventually into the everyday movement of the collective. The disks at St Katherine's (for example) floated on water around the docks of abandoned tea houses, transformed the site and its water into a Conceptual artwork. The disks encountered the floating garbage of the wasteful consumer society of a modern metropolis and became part of its movement, transforming the site into a continuously changing environment, the idea escapes from this controlled environment and continues its journey when some disks, along with other flotsam and jetsam, enter the River Thames. Moving down stream and leaving the river behind, they disperse themselves into the open seas and vast oceans.'

These issues are directly related to what has been happening in the waters by Karachi, where the city's untreated waste is dumped into every single day. Where land mafias, supported by subsequent governments, have built illegally on areas that were originally marked for the city's drainage system. Araeen's nine florescent red *Disks* made especially for this show, could be interpreted as works of resistance. They emerge from a specific space, but engage with the structures that are global.

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“in Karachi I spent a lot of time on the Natty Jetty bridge just looking at the water. On the visit of Artists Club’s members to Sandspit in 1956, I did a water colour of waves, instead of the beach as others were doing. In 1957, I met Zainul Abedin during his show at the Frere Hall, and it his watercolours of boats in the rivers that influenced and took me to Keamari to do my own watercolours of boats in 1958; which in the same year lead me to an abstraction of the boats. The helical spiral movement in my Hula-Hoop paintings also depict water (as well as fire).”

Rasheed Araeen

water. notes by amra ali

Although the discs at St Katherine's Docks disappear from human sight, they reappeared at Jheel Park in 1974. Many of the older artists in Karachi have recalled the performance by Araeen, but it has remained an unstudied form, perhaps was also much ahead of its time. Or because it was never a 'product' for the galleries or collectors to acquire, or simply an 'obstacle'.

The most recent disks were set afloat at Mauripur Hawksbay Lake, Karachi, as a symbolic gesture by Araeen's brother Majeed. The site of the original performance of disk throwing by Araeen, was at Jheel Park that was once a sanctuary for migratory birds has disappeared. Much like the rest of haphazard development and construction in Karachi, the parks, the natural mangrove plantations too have been the victims of landfill. The water near the Netty Jetty bridge, where Araeen spent many hours watching the movement of the water in the 50s. is now dark and foul smelling due to the untreated waste being dumped in it. This was once a place to release Quranic text. It is believed that text containing Quranic verses such as in amulets must not be thrown in the garbage, but sent into the sea, where it is washed away safely.

Even earlier references to water and also the circle come from Araeen's recall of his living in Sonmiani, a sea-side town in Balochistan, about 70 kilometers away from Karachi. As I have quoted in my book *Homecoming*, he recalls it as a beautiful town where he lived from his birth in 1935 till 1944:

'My father sent us (my mother, a brother and sisters) to our parental villages regularly every 2 years, and in 1941-42, we lived in these villages in East Punjab. Just around my grandmother's haveli, was a rahat or Persian wheel to draw water from the well. The wheel, which was connected to the mechanism comprising a number of buckets which went down the well and came up full of water, was moved by two bullocks who went around a circle. I was fascinated, particularly by the up and down movement, particularly by the water they brought up and released in the turf. One day when there was nobody to sit on the seat behind the bullocks, they put me on the seat, and I had to run the whole thing. There are many other similar things from my childhood which have played a role in my aesthetic sensibility'.

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Right: Rashheed Araeen, *Hamm Rags* (Dancing Series 1959-1961), 1959, Oil on canvas, 25 x 16 inches. Courtesy Grosvenor Gallery.





Left: Rasheed Araeen, (Boats at Keamari Series 1958-59), 1958, ink and watercolour, 27 x 38 cm (approx) Photograph. Courtesy Grosvenor Gallery.

water. notes by amra ali

Araeen's earliest works, in watercolor and ink, titled *Fishermen Resting 1, 2 & 3* are from the *Boats at Keamari*, done between 1955-58, when he joined the Sketch Club at the USIS Library and the Artists Club. These and other renderings of boats stationed at the harbor done on site, document the period just before his departure into abstraction of boats. First, one can see a series of triangular shapes in the form of the masts of the boats, and strong diagonals in black that are painted with interrupted line that looks beyond the paper surface. One can see the restlessness to move beyond the depiction of boats as boats. They later appeared as if in flight, in the shape of triangles.

In the book, *Art Beyond Art*, he writes about two elements that had already emerged in his work before his departure to London in 1964: 'the first being the helical and vertical movement, similar to the movement of a double helix. The other was his study of boats as abstractions and the essential shape of the triangle that emerged as a result. They relate to each other through the development of the idea, not through the form. Form keeps changing, but the idea is the same and is always there. The result became a process that could be carried out by people viewing and engaging with the structures'. The circle, the triangle and the helix surface in many narrations since the 1950s. These connections also emerge in *Beyond the Waters*, and provide a significant interface with the work of the rest of the artists in the exhibition.

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beyond the waters



water. notes by amra ali

The debris washed on to the shore at Karachi's Sea View beach is retrieved by Sohail Zuberi. These 'objects' that have been discarded somewhere by someone are recycled and end up as specimens of study. Zuberi connects naturally to the metropolis and the sea, photographing and documenting environmental degradation at the seaside as an archivist. His aesthetics is informed by this interaction with the shore and the mangrove as he wanders, listens and observes the patterns of nature. What is retrieved into his aesthetics is both the physical object and an embrace with the stories of people and histories that reside within.

Zuberi's collection of broken triangles from discarded boats found at the beach find a new meaning as he assembles them into boat shapes in aqua and ultramarine, the colour used by the local boat makers around Karachi harbor and the fishing village of Rehri Goth. The irregularity of the placement of these triangles speaks to the simplicity and playfulness of a child's drawing/construction. In this context these converse with the triangles in Araeen's boats, and more so with his later abstraction of boats, as well as Araeen's *Hyderabad Wind Catchers* of the 1950s, all of which are an irregular assemblage of recurring geometric shapes. Zuberi's triangular boats 'fly' into the space and contain the circle in their collective movement, much like Araeen's swirling uneven linear marks in black ink.

To me, it appears as a brilliant and of course temporary connection, where we locate the earliest moments of Araeen's abstraction into geometric form, and which also relate to the structural line and form in the adjoining 12 books by Farrukh Adnan, Noor Ali Chagani's construction in metal, and Zeerak Ahmed's drawing in steel on wood and her round metal body with water. There are connections of form and to sea/land issues, which are addressed at length in Araeen's writing on eco-aesthetics, his ideas on 'disco-sailing', his ideas on the building of a dam and collective farming. There are connections to be drawn to Noorjehan Bilgrami's cultivation of the indigo plant in the Miani project referenced later in these notes. And the Ravi river is 'contained' within Usman Saeed's 92 page visual engagement with the social aspects around and within the Ravi and historical context of Lahore. The interface of the form with the social context is an important sub-text here.

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Previous: Sohail Zuberi, *Fishermen's boats, Rehri Goth, Karachi 2017*, Photograph.

Right: Sohail Zuberi, *Archaeologies of Tomorrow: Horri/Horro boats of Karachi 1-20, 2019*, Found shims 2011-2019, MDF board, Paint.



“Boats have played an important role in the cultural and commercial life of Sindh for thousands of years. The representation of boats on the seals found in Moenjodaro is an attestation of this fact. The geography of Sindh is physically distinct from any other region of the country since it has three water fronts — the mighty Indus River, numerous lakes, and a coastline including hundreds of square miles of saline back waters of creeks. Sea boats of all type are built on the Karachi coastline, mainly at Ibrahim Hyderi which along with Kaemari are also the main ports of call for these boats.

Rasheed Araeen’s on-site studies in ink of boats on the coast of Karachi (Boats: Towards Abstraction, 1958-62) became the point of departure for this body of work. The carpenter’s shim, a simple wooden wedge used as a tool in boat building – an object I’ve been collecting on my walks on the beach for almost a decade – has been used to create abstract representations of the fishing boat known locally as Horri.”





Previous: Noorjehan Bilgrami, still from *Tasawwur-e-Nir*, 2015, Duration, 3 minutes.
Left: Noorjehan Bilgrami, Process Image, Indigo dyed fabric drying at Koel.

water. notes by amra ali

The wooden triangular shems that Zuberi finds as he meanders by the shore, are tools used by the fishermen to adjust the planks of their boats. The fishermen at the largest fishing village, Ibrahim Hyderi, he tells me, take years to build their fishing launches by hand, that are released into the ocean. Zuberi's research into the other villages such as *Chashma Goth*, *Rehri Goth* (*goth* meaning village), and *Lat basti*. He photographed in these areas extensively, noting that the last village receives the accumulated debris of cow waste, that goes untreated into the waters at *Lat Basti*.

Zuberi's aesthetics emerges not only in the assemblage as 'gallery' objects and photographs, but their significance seems to be their ability to intervene and possibly disrupt the nature of viewing and making 'art'. There is a freedom in Zuberi's work, as well as an ability to re-arrange and re-invent itself in endless variations.

Zeeraq Ahmed's angular work, *Passage Calls II*, stands both as a totemic structure and as a drawing; bare and exposed much like Zuberi's recycled pieces of wood that temporarily translate into boats; or Chagani's construction like rods that protrude from a body of welded steel plates. Ahmed, a sound and multi media artist, would normally use her voice and body as her medium of expression. But in this work, she says that, 'unlike (her) recent work which are mapping the sonic spaces that reside within (her) own body, (she) was thinking of (her) sounding body confronting the uncontainable sounding body of water'. Sound recordings of water waves hitting plastics and other objects on the shore are 'stored' in a common round steel container or *tasla*, and resonate across the space, affecting and intervening, and bringing into conversation the surrounding works. The artist is concerned with the 'tones and textures of waves through and against various materials creating polyphonic melodies' as well as 'the resistance and non-resistance of water, and its relationship with perishable and non-perishable objects'.

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beyond the waters

*“Liquid waters – an endless stretch -
Circle of deep water,
...the blue foam
bubbles form, erupt and dissolve
– cycle of Life.*

*Yarn lowered to
depths of green blue liquid vat, the alchemy of life,
the dye saturates, the filaments absorb
the unification of the dye and the yarn.*

*The unbleached receives the colour...
the air magically changes the hue...
yellow to green ... green to deep blue.*

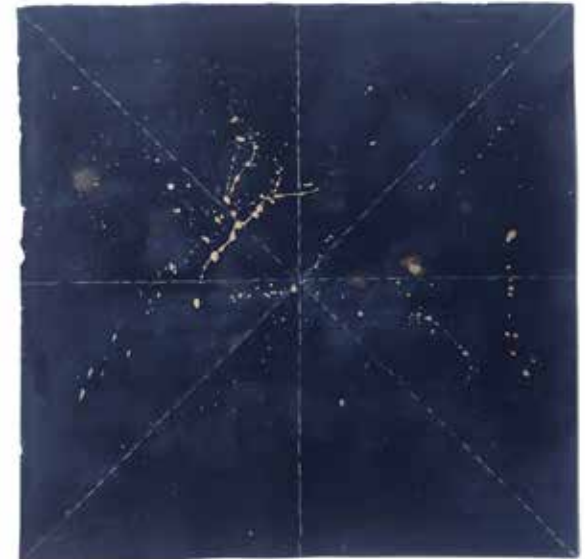
*Hand, cloth, green blue water...
the dance between the slippery dye and the unyielding fibre –
slowly mesh, gently... the woven cloth yields ...
allows the dye to saturate...
water drops become one with the deep liquid dye.*

*The waves continue to crash...recede...
wet granular sand, to return afresh...
thus continues the movement for eternity.
The rich blue black indigo from a dot to a circular cosmos,
the endless journey...
The tied bundles of life’s wishes and desires.
Indigo potlees hold sacredly – my compartmentalized life.*

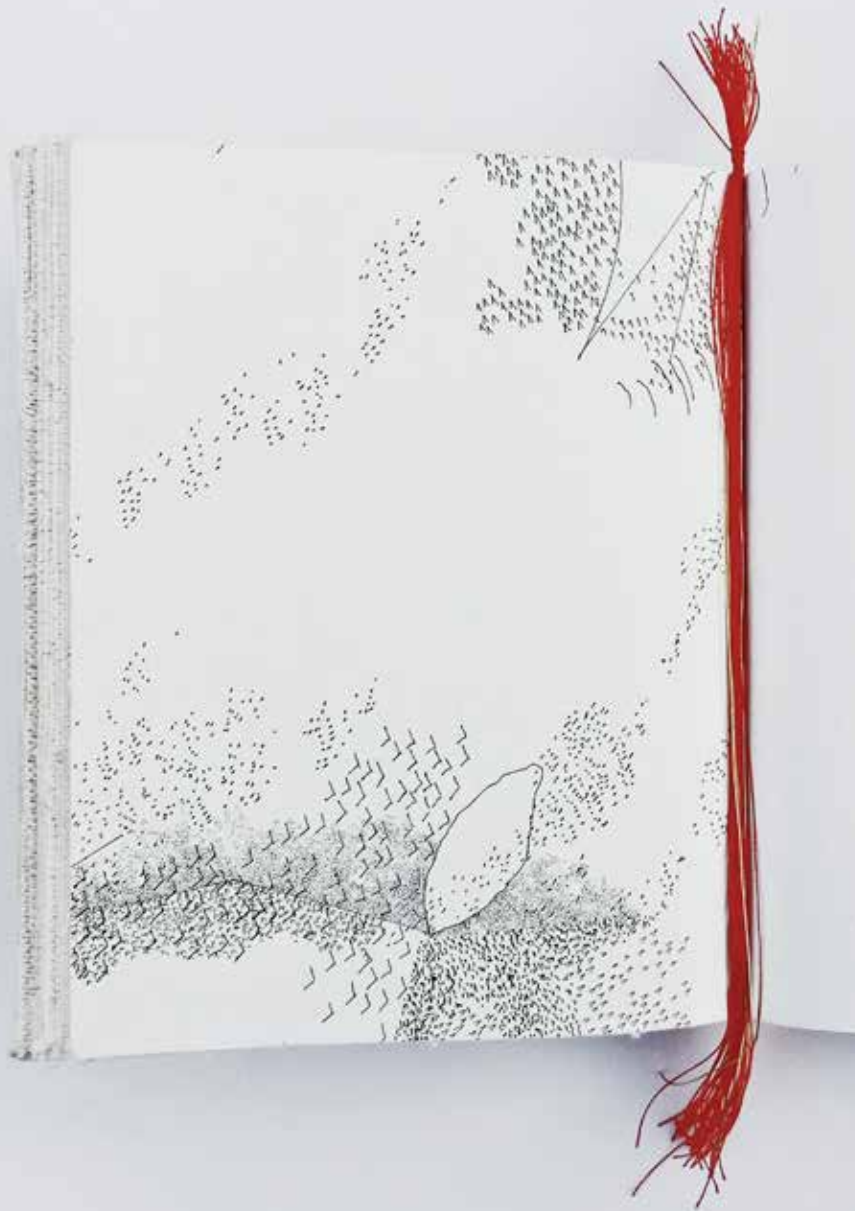
*Drops of dye saturate the paper...fragile...holds and absorbs,
When will my sun set...?”*

Noorjehan Bilgrami

Top: Noorjehan Bilgrami, *The Indigo Sea I*, 2015, Indigo dye, silver foil, acrylic paint and gold on arches paper, 10 x 10 inches.
Bottom: Noorjehan Bilgrami, *The Indigo Sea II*, 2015, Indigo dye, acrylic paint and gold on arches paper, 10 x 10 inches.







Previous: Usman Saeed, Page from *gardens/fields 59 volume 4*, 2019, Photobook
Left: Farrukh Adnan, *Folio - III*, 2019, Pen and Ink on Canvas, 5.25x8.5x0.75 inches

water. notes by amra ali

'In silence, I stand to receive a moment that rushes, towards me. Five encounters along the shore are collected in this work and these polyphonic calls mark the spaces of the deep waters'. These are unexpected connections where Ahmed's water body/sound converses with Araeen's disks. In both cases, the object and the sound is the manifestation of an idea or experience invested well outside the gallery or 'artistic' frame.

Noorjehan Bilgrami's video work, *Tasawur-e-Nir*, on her intensive processes of preparing the indigo dye engages with the source, it's farming and cultivation from seed into the rich indigo, the world's oldest textile dye. The transformation of the colourless liquid of the indigo leaf into a yellow green and then magically into the intense indigo blue, in a process when the liquid is oxygenated. Bilgrami travelled to many centres of indigo cultivation in the region in the early 1990s, and eventually started her own cultivation of the indigo at Miani. The Miani project addressed many of the age old ways of indigo preparation when it's farming was almost lost in Pakistan.

The processes of indigo dying recorded in this video show an incredible community which cultivates, prepares and nurtures dyes from a natural source. It brings the artist, artisan, the farmer, the laborer as a production team, that comes together due to a shared initiative within the community. Bilgrami's aesthetics draws from the physical processes of the pressing of the leaves, the moment of oxygenating when the vat is stirred manually to see the beautifully scented 'flower' emerge in the liquid, and see it turn into the deep indigo. The subtle square form floating in these works on handmade paper seems to draw into the deep indigo; an energy field that contains, that transforms, that connects to the metaphysical; the *Ki*, the *Qi* or Prana, the life-force.

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water. notes by amra ali

In Saeed's ongoing series titled *gardenfinds*, that precede this show, one sensed an experience beyond the making of a picture or image, of an intangible; the scent and forms in the *baagh* (garden), in the *baagh-e Sodia*, his mother's garden becomes a personal space of contemplation. In the current body of work, there are two strands. One his documentation of the banks of the river Ravi, around Shahdara in Lahore, and the other, a watercolour rendering that 'contains' the fauna, the rain, the stars, the wisdom of line. The book '*gardenfinds 59*', contains 96 pages of images of the Ravi taken on August 2nd and 3rd, 2019, at the peak of the monsoons. He tells me that this is the only time in the year that the water level becomes high enough with a strong current that the debris of toxins and fumes from the surrounding factories and all of the waste of Lahore seems to disappear into the river. Saeed connects to and observes the river with the same intimacy as he would a plant in his own garden.

'Ravi often calls me' (*aksar Ravi mujhey bulaata hai*), he reflects. To him it is like the mother, who has nurtured Lahore for ages past, with humans who have left their imprint of years and years of polluting it, without any accountability. The book begins with photos of the monsoon grey skies and color of the water, the banks that have been home to the people living in temporary structures, the mounds their home for ever. He studies the plastic embedded on the banks, the hopelessness and lack of respect for the river, for nature. The artist reveals his soul through this empathetic depiction of the animals, the dogs and the camels, and the children whose lives center around it. It is a reflective critique on the pollution and degradation of the water and banks at the Ravi; on the notion of beauty and disruption, apart from it carrying his ongoing observations of 'gardenfinds' that are about the universe and cannot be contained as mere depictions of what is seen. The Ravi connects to many geographic spaces and histories, also containing the *Kamran ki Baradari*, the first Mughal garden. Saeed's imagery and observation is also an archive, which critiques the social, the political and the artistic. Saeed's book, with multiple editions, takes away the exercise of exclusivity. An edition of 500 copies are to be sold and the funds to be returned into the community by the Ravi.

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Right: Farrukh Adnan, *Folio - V*, 2019, Pen and Ink on Canvas, 8.75 x 10 x 1.25 inches.



water. notes by amra ali

Rasheed Araeen's ideas on water and cultivation of land can be studied in his book on eco aesthetics, exhibited in the gallery, as a work. It is of interest to me how Saeed's book of images converses with Araeen's book, or with the very different books by Farrukh Adnan. This premise alone presents us with many questions of 'viewing' and 'reading', and more importantly on the role of artist, without him/her being voyeuristic.

Farrukh Adnan's narrative emerges from his engaged study of the site of Talamba in the district of Khanewal, in Southern Punjab. This was a childhood playground for him. Adnan recalls using these slopes as a slide in the dry months, and finding terracotta shreds in these ruins. As an adult, his drawings around Talamba, mostly in the shape of books, reflect a meditative manner of mark making, that identifies areas of design, depression within the structure, and the land as a form. In the gallery, they appear as a continuous form of water.

Working with building material, Noor Ali Chagani's structures critique the processes of land ownership and control, construction, deconstruction and decay. His form appears as if intending to disrupt established structures, and unravel them in endless formations. There is an insistence for these constructions to develop in any way, embracing the irregularities and imperfections of process. The construction is dispersed unevenly, with possibilities to alter and change. In this work, the metal plates refer to the steel packing around elevators, and their partly rusted appearance is formed by natural elements such as water, and disruptions from cemented areas that form ridges, crevices and patterns of earth. Chagani's object and drawing on paper connect effortlessly the structure as a site of study and continual state of being formed.

This uneven landscape of forms and spaces in *Beyond the Waters*, is an invitation to meander into these spaces without expectation.

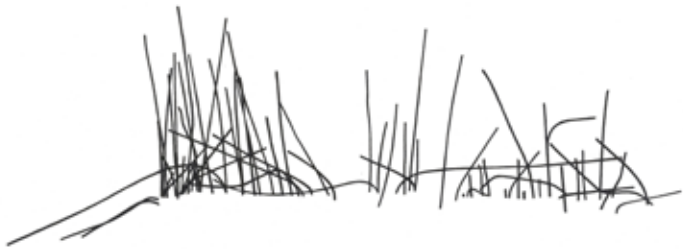
References:
Araeen, Rasheed, 'Art Beyond Art, EcoAesthetics: A Manifesto for the 21st Century', Third Text Publications, London, 2010.

Film, 'Indigo; A World of Blue', Directed by Charlotte Kwon. Produced by Maiwa Handprints Ltd., 2010. (The film features renowned indigo scholar Jenny Balfour Paul speaking about indigo's history, traditions, superstitions and lore).

beyond the waters

Right: Noor Ali Chagani, *Untitled*, 2019, 10 x 12 x 0.75 inches, Metal rusted plates, rods and concrete.





Left: Noor Ali Chagani, *Line Drawing II*, 2018, Graphite on Paper, 20 x 18 inches.

“My works have comprised of hand-made terracotta bricks and other materials to examine notions of walls and structures which are obstructive and stagnant objects. I increasingly examine these structures in various moments of construction and deconstruction as seen in our urban spaces - rods, columns, bricks, pylons showcase the transition. Capturing of these moments reveals our own desires and aspirations for evolution. This transitional, incomplete stage in my work depicts a comment on how aspirations may conceptually differ in practice, leading to it’s discontent.”

Noor Ali Chagani



Previous: Usman Saeed, Page from *gardenfinds 59 volume 4*, 2019, Photobook.

Right: Zeerak Ahmed, Passage Calls II, 2019, Sound installation with steel drawing on wood, 36 x 72 x 0.75 inches.



“I am interested in mapping out sonic spaces that reside within the body. My process involves recording and then transcribing the sounding body through a scoring method which leads to a visual representation of the unseen. This sound installation looks at the uncontainable sea as the sounding body, and the sea shore as a place that endlessly receives its many forms and languages. Five encounters along the shore are collected as one drawing; these polyphonic calls mark the spaces of the deep waters.”

Zeerak Ahmed

biographies

Noor Ali Chagani

Chagani (b.1982, Pakistan) received his BS Degree in Computer Science in Karachi and then later BFA in Miniature Painting from National College of Arts, Lahore. Chagani has since exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in notable institutions around the world, including Stanford University's Cantor Arts Center, California; Katonah Museum of Art, New York; Abrons Arts Center, New York; Palazzo Mora, Venice; Institut du Monde Arabe, France; Casa Arabe, Spain; Victoria and Albert museum, United Kingdom; Pacific Asia Museum, California; and the Devi Art Foundation, India among others. Chagani was nominated for the Victoria and Albert Museum's prestigious Jameel Art Prize in 2011. He was awarded with guest residency in Rijks Academy, Netherlands in 2012, Riwaq Art Space residency in Bahrain 2013, and the Jameel Prize residency in Victoria and Albert Museum in 2017. Chagani's artwork has been featured in numerous publications such as Los Angeles Times, Asia Pacific Arts, L'Opitimum n°23, Global Citizen 13 magazine, Nafas Art Magazine and several daily local newspapers. Recently he was featured in Blouin Modern Painters NY among other 'Top Emerging Artists to Watch in 2018'. The artist lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan.
chagani.artworks@gmail.com

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Farrukh Adnan

Farrukh Adnan received his Bachelor in Visual Communication Design from National College of Arts, Lahore (2009). He completed his master's in Art and Design Studies from Beaconhouse National University with the prestigious scholarship of South Asia Foundation (SAF) Madanjeet's Singh Institute for South Asian Studies (2014). He teaches Photography at National College of Arts, Lahore and Drawing and History of Art at National College of Business Administration and Economics, Lahore.
Select exhibitions include: Earth Cover at Koel Gallery, Karachi (2019), Excavations at Rohtas 2 Gallery, Lahore (2018), Enigmatic Spaces at Koel Gallery, Karachi (2017), Museum of Wasted Love, two-person exhibition with Mahboob Jokhio at Full Circle Gallery, Karachi (2016), Unfolding Matters at Sanat Initiative Gallery, Karachi (2015).
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biographies

Rasheed Araeen

Rasheed Araeen is a civil engineer, artist, writer and inventor (received from an international patent in 2003). As an artist, he began his journey in 1953 and continued to pursue art while studying civil engineering at NED Engineering College in Karachi. After doing some important works in Karachi, seminal to his later pursuits, he left for London in 1964 and has lived there since. In 1965, he pioneered minimalist sculpture—representing perhaps the only Minimalism in Britain. After having been active in various groups supporting liberation struggles, democracy and human rights, he began to write in 1975, and then started publishing his own journals: Black Phoenix (1978), Third Text (1987) and Third Text Asia (2008). He has also established online versions of Third Text in Cape Town, South Africa, entitled Third Text Africa, and Spanish language Tercer Texto in Lima, Peru, both free to their readers.
He has curated two important exhibitions: 'The Essential Black' (1987), 'The Other Story' (Hayward Gallery, 1989); and is a recipient of three honorary doctorates (PhDs) from universities of Southampton, the East London and Wolverhampton. He is now directing a project that will revise and produce the most comprehensive and inclusive history of art in post-war Britain.
He has published an autobiographical book, Making Myself Visible, comprising texts and visual images, Kala Press, 1984, and Art Beyond Art/ Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the 21st Century, ThirdText Publications, London, September 2010. His writing has mainly been published in Third Text, but also in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, and Spain in their own languages. He is currently involved in bringing different disciplines together by persuading artists, scientists, engineers, social scientists, philosophers, and so on, to work together in looking at and solving social and ecological problems resulting from climate change.
While still living in London, he also spends some time in Karachi where he has since 2010 re-established his studio and produced new work that was initially shown at his mini-retrospective 'Homecoming' (VM Gallery, 2014-15), curated by Amra Ali.
An extensive retrospective of Rasheed Araeen opened in 2018 at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and touring the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, George Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, and MAMCO, Musee d'art modern et contemporain, Geneva.

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biographies

Noorjehan Bilgrami

Noorjehan Bilgrami is a multi-disciplinary artist, curator and educationist. She is grounded in the traditional crafts of Pakistan and her atelier Koel spearheaded the revival of handloom weaving, handblock printing and the use of natural dyes. Gallery Koel has provided a vibrant platform for new and emerging artists, and Noorjehan has curated numerous exhibitions for the gallery.

Her own art practice is meditative, exploring issues of inner reflection through a vocabulary that is intensely personal, while it touches upon universal themes.

She has held numerous solo shows and participated in exhibitions in Pakistan, in the USA, Australia, Korea, Sri Lanka, South Africa and India. She was the artist in residence at the Cicada Press, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, 2015 and in 2017 at the Islamic Museum of Art, Design and Culture, Shangrila, Doris Duke Foundation, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA. At the culmination of the residency, her solo exhibition, 'Under the Molsri Tree,' was held at the Islamic Gallery, Honolulu Museum of Art.

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Sohail Zuberi

Zuberi's multidisciplinary practice is a commentary on Karachi's urban developments, dichotomies and disparities. His on-going research on the changing ecologies of a small stretch of beach in Karachi, manifested in a solo show – Archaeologies of Tomorrow – in 2018. He was featured in the inaugural edition of the Karachi Biennale 2017. Along with his professional practice, Zuberi has been associated with academia for the past eighteen years. He was the head of the Communication Design department at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture 2012-2015, and has taught at the University of Karachi and the Textile Institute of Pakistan. Zuberi is also a former trustee of Vasl Artists' Collective, serves on the board of Pakistan Chowk Cultural Centre, Karachi and works as a design consultant with Tali, a contemporary craft design brand.

Sohail Zuberi has recently been nominated as the curator for the International Public Art Festival 2020 (IPAF 2020)

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Usman Saeed

Titled 'gardenfinds', Usman Saeed's work focuses on subjects coming from nature. In response to writer Amra Ali's curatorial note for the show 'Beyond the Waters', two new works study notions of light and darkness, in relation to water. 'gardenfinds 59' is a photobook of a monsoon-clad river Ravi around Shahdara in Lahore. 'gardenfinds 60' is a watercolour on paper of water, trees and birds. For Usman (b. 1977, Lahore, Pakistan), his alma maters, National College of Arts, Lahore and Royal College of Art, London, continue to nourish his multi-disciplinary practice. His work is included in the collections of Cicada Press, UNSW Art & Design, Sydney and Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts.

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Zeerak Ahmed

Zeerak Ahmed, also Slowspin, is a sound artist and curator. Exploring expressions of the elusive medium of sound through voice, she produces sound sculptures, installations, and performances. In 2012 she received her B.A in Studio Art and Political Science from Hiram College, U.S.A and her MFA in Creative Practice with the Transart Institute (Plymouth University) in 2017. Since 2012, she has exhibited and performed at several local and international venues. Ahmed was Assistant Curator for the inaugural Karachi Biennale 2017, and now serves as Assistant Professor at the Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture.

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Amra Ali

Amra Ali is an independent art critic, researcher and curator based in Karachi, Pakistan. She holds a BFA from the Department of Visual Arts, University of Ottawa, Canada (1986). She was a Nieman Affiliate at Harvard University and studied drawing, art history and criticism (2002-3). She has been contributing reviews and issue-based writing for newspapers and publications in Pakistan and internationally since 1990. She was a co-founder and Senior Editor of NuktaArt, a first international bi-annual art publication from Karachi, Pakistan.

She has been Secretary of the Pakistan section of the International Art Critics Association (AICA, Paris) from 2000-2014. As Secretary AICA Pakistan, she was on the coordination team for the international seminar "Mapping the Change", and on the curatorial team for the Takhti exhibition, in 2001, she conducted workshops for young art critics, on a national level, in affiliation with the British Council of Pakistan. Conducted a series of film showings for a year, bringing film collectives together, in collaboration with the Goethe Institute, Karachi.

She has edited the publication Homecoming, Rasheed Araeen (2014, VM Gallery, Karachi), and curated a retrospective by the same name in 2014-15 at the VM Gallery. Her chapter titled, 'Ruptures of Rasheed Araeen in the Politics of Visual Arts: For a New Discourse in Pakistan' has been published, 'Intersections of Contemporary Art, Anthropology and Art History in South Asia: Decoding Visual Worlds', Edited by Dev Nath Pathak & Sasanka Parera (Pelgrave Macmillan, 2019).

Among her papers presented and published are: 'Multiple Cultures in a Globalized World', for the international conference, by invitation of the Mohile Parekh Centre, Mumbai, 2006. Published by the Mohile Parekh Centre, 2006, 'Multiple Identities: Sites of Subordination or Negotiation', paper for the seminar, 'The Anxious Century', Goethe Institute, Karachi, 2008, 'Art in the Time of Globalization', (published in Art India, vol. ix, issue iv, 2004, and publications by Mohile Parekh Centre, Mumbai, 2006), for the international conference, 'Multiple Cultures in a Globalizing World', delivered at the Mohile Parekh Centre, Mumbai, 2006, 'The Displaced and the In Between Narratives in Pakistani Art: the art of Riffat Alvi and Sabah Hussain', 4th ASNA Clay Triennial, Karachi, 2013.

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Her curatorial works include these among others: Beyond the Waters, Koel Gallery, October-November, 2019, Objects We Behold, Gandhara Art, 2018, Home Coming, Rasheed Araeen; A Retrospective, VM Art Gallery, 204-15, Sabza O Gul, Chawkandi Art, 2014, I Am Not Alice My Dear and This is Not Wonderland; Marium Agha, Chawkandi Art, 2015, Faiz Art Prize as Co-Editor of NuktaArt, 2011, One Mile Square: Study of environmental degradation at the Mai Kolachi Belt, a project with Visiting Arts UK and NuktaArt, Karachi 2009, Takhti, Gallery Sadequain, Frere Hall, Karachi, 2001. etc. Full details of curatorial work, work exhibited, workshops conducted and research text/publications is available on request. amra_a64@yahoo.com



