

YOU DON'T BELONG HERE

CURATED BY SAFIA MAHMOOD

Alina Mehta
Areeb Tariq
Aswad Anees
Haris Hidayat Ullah
Inshal Tahir
Mohsin Shafi
Samya Arif
Umaina Khan

16th September, 2023 | 4-7 pm

Continues until 27th September, 2023





SAFIA MAHMOOD

CURATOR

Safia Mahmood is a journalist and a lecturer, currently teaching literature in English at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA). She is a graduate of LUMS and Columbia University, and through her platform called 'Third Place' (Instagram handle @anodetolahore), she hopes to create accessible third spaces in Karachi to curate cultural events & bridge the consumers and producers of art and media. Her events are centered around social causes, especially the issues surrounding the minority bodies in Pakistan.

"The exhibition You Don't Belong Here is an active commentary on how different bodies and communities are sidelined from the mainstream and forced into the margins on a daily basis, creating a sense of unbelonging.

Using the genres of film, conventional, unconventional and contemporary mediums of art, we hope to create an experience to mimic moments of unbelonging. The idea is to make you – a spectator hailing from different spaces in society – viscerally feel a 'pinch', a sense of unbelonging; a sense of being gazed at from a collective other who holds more power than you in this instance.

In some ways, this exhibition is an empathy exercise, but it is also more. It is an experience: at least one form of experience felt by someone who is actively or passively treated as the other. This could be in one moment in their life or every day.

As able humans, we are designed to use our senses to create 'familiar' and concurrently, an 'unfamiliar', by using primarily our sense of sight. We perceive things and people: we use our gaze to determine who belongs with us and who does not. In a country like Pakistan that was created in the name of Islam, there exists a privileged group of people who believe they belong more than others based on different elements of their identity. At times, they think it is only them who belong.

It is in the face of this belonging that one can construct a list of people who allegedly don't: anyone who deviates from the heteronormative values of an Islamic society which is deeply patriarchal, becomes the other. What is interesting is the ambiguous category of the other in Pakistan can mean anything. No one can ever truly belong at all times, unless they neatly fall into the intersecting sex, sexuality, class, caste, ethnic and linguistic category of what apparently comprises a 'majority.'

In this vein, we hope to invite you to pause: to allow the experience today, which invokes not just the visual but also the oral and the touch, to construct in some ways an experience of someone who walks this land without holding the security of a 'majority' citizen.

A series of guiding questions we wish for you to hold close during today's experience are: What do you feel? What irks you? What becomes a point of departure for you in today's curated experience? Is there something new this exhibition offers to you?

How does it feel like you are a part of something that doesn't quite accept you, yet also expects your presence? How does it feel to be invited into a room that declares, quite literally, that you – whoever you are – don't belong here. You are not an outsider in what is happening today, here or outside these walls. We hope this experience helps bring awareness to its spectators, which is always a first step to something larger than oneself. Leave us with your thoughts."



ALINA MEHTA

Alina Mehta is a Karachi based architect and painter. After receiving a Bachelors in Architecture from National College of Arts, Lahore in 2018 in Architecture, she started to paint as a form of therapy during lockdown in 2020. She started to incorporate her art in architectural spaces by painting murals in 2021. Most of her paintings are inspired by the people in her life and represent their inner struggles. Although most of her art work is in watercolour, she has explored different mediums such as oil and acrylic on canvas. Her work translates emotions into her emotions into art.

“I’ve always thought of the world as my canvas where art and creativity have always been a part of my life. I started painting at a young age but I decided to study architecture. I started my career as an architect in 2018, after graduating from National College of Arts. I soon realized that everything I designed was heavily dictated by the client or a senior architect. I missed creating for myself, and as a fresh graduate I didn’t have the time or energy to do so.

In March 2020 when COVID hit and the world went into lockdown, I started using my sketch books for more than just architectural drawings. I bought a fresh set of watercolor paints and started painting portraits of my friends. Bringing them to life on paper as a way of coping with the isolation of lockdown. I then began to paint on different surfaces, with different mediums. I then began to use my art in architectural spaces by painting murals.

Over the past few years I have focused more on watercolor portraits when making smaller pieces. On canvas I’ve experimented with texture, acrylic paints and oils. I paint for myself and often pick the people in my life as muses. I prefer draw inspiration from my environment, every piece I have made is inspired by the struggles of subject, it is a reflection of personal experiences.”



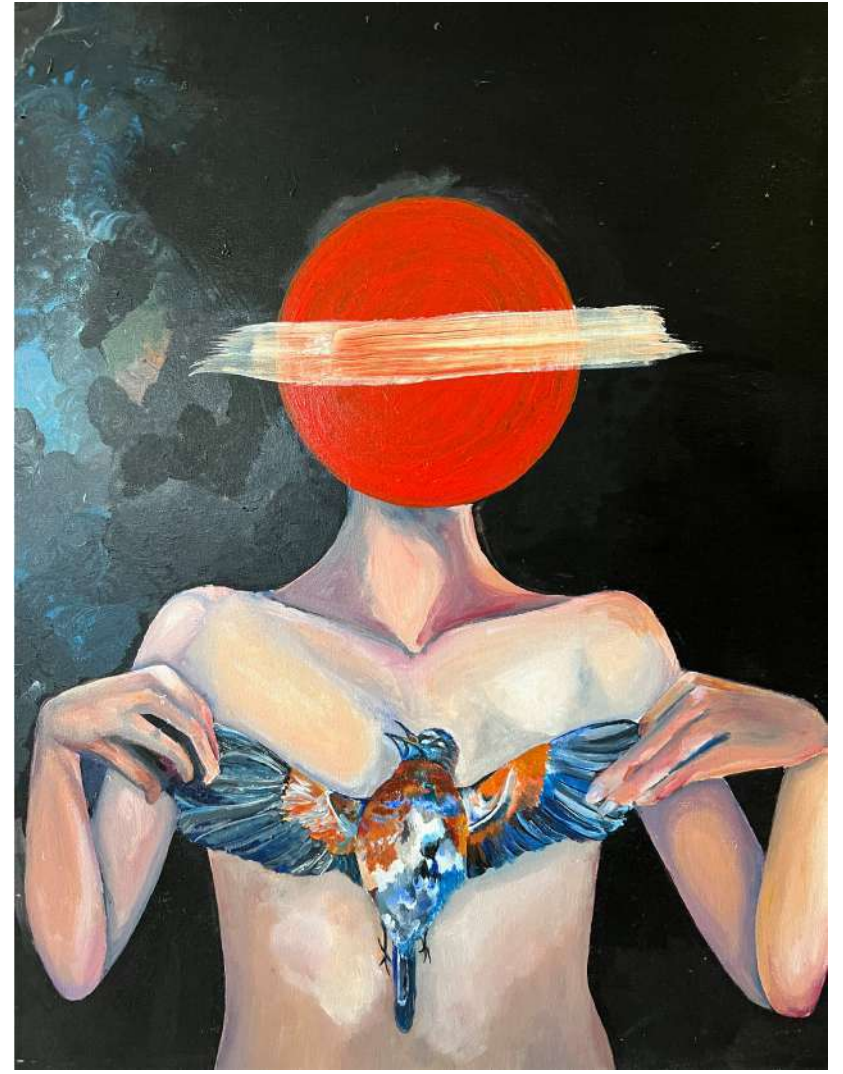
Eviction (Work in progress)
Watercolour on Paper
18" x 12"



Compromises
Acrylic on textured canvas
12" x 12"



Daddy Issues
Watercolour on paper
21" x 28 "



Free as a Bird
Acrylic on canvas
28" x 36"



AREEB TARIQ

Areeb Tariq, a dynamic creative force hailing from Karachi, Pakistan, seamlessly inhabits the roles of an experimental designer, artist, and educator. With a strong foundation in Visual Arts acquired at EMU in North Cyprus, he has embarked on a remarkable four-year journey marked by a consistent presence in national and international exhibitions.

Areeb's artistic canvas is a diverse one, spanning the realms of digital art, fashion, and immersive installations. His work serves as a conduit for his explorations into profound themes, including love, identity, and the intricate interplay between humanity

and the natural world. What sets Areeb apart is his innate ability to infuse his creations with textured playfulness, epitomizing a spirit of ceaseless experimentation, a quality distinctly evident in his renowned projects, such as "RadicalX" and "Ajeeb Collective."

In the realm of contemporary art, Areeb Tariq is a true visionary. His work transcends the mundane, beckoning the audience into a realm where curiosity is not only encouraged but richly rewarded. His designs are evocative, instilling a profound emotional connection, while his installations have the power to evoke a sense of childlike wonder. Through his artistry, Areeb Tariq underscores the unbreakable bond between innovation and introspection, inspiring all to embrace the boundless beauty of the unknown.

“In my creative journey, I strive to transcend the boundaries of conventional expression. My work is an exploration, an invitation to embark on a journey where the known dissolves into the unknown, where curiosity reigns supreme, and where the imagination knows no bounds.

I draw inspiration from the profound aspects of the human experience: love, identity, and our intricate relationship with the natural world. Through digital art, fashion, and immersive installations, I endeavor to encapsulate these themes in a way that resonates deeply with each observer.

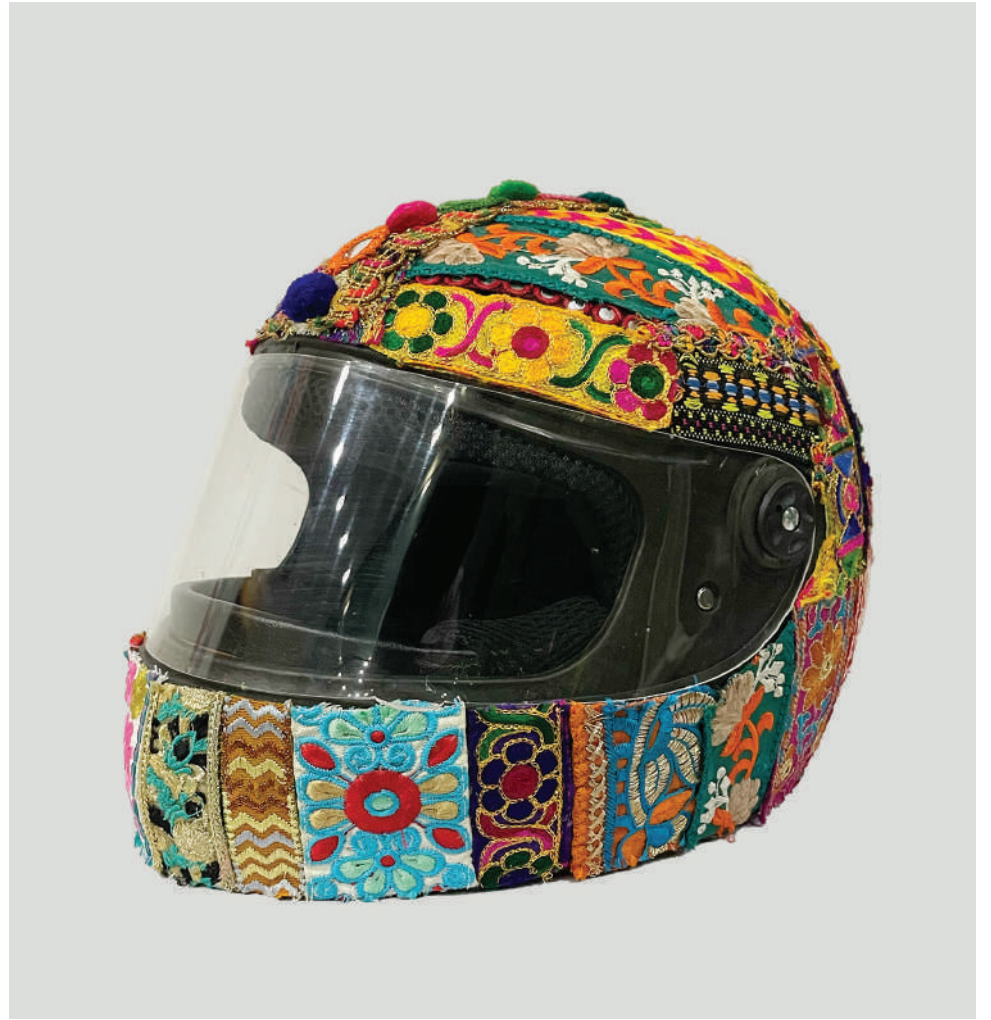
My art is a testament to the power of experimentation, to the textured playfulness that emerges when we dare to step outside the confines of tradition. Projects like "RadicalX" and "Ajeeb Collective" exemplify this spirit, where I challenge the status quo and push the boundaries of what art can be.

As an artist, I invite discourse, encouraging viewers to engage with my creations on a personal and emotional level. My designs aim to elicit profound emotions, while my installations transport audiences to a realm of wonder, where the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

In my work, I hope to inspire a connection between innovation and introspection, inviting all to embrace the awe-inspiring beauty of the uncharted territory. Through art, I seek to awaken the innate curiosity within us all, guiding us to discover the limitless potential of the unknown.”



Captain Bail
Textile, New Media
55-61 M/L Helmet
2023



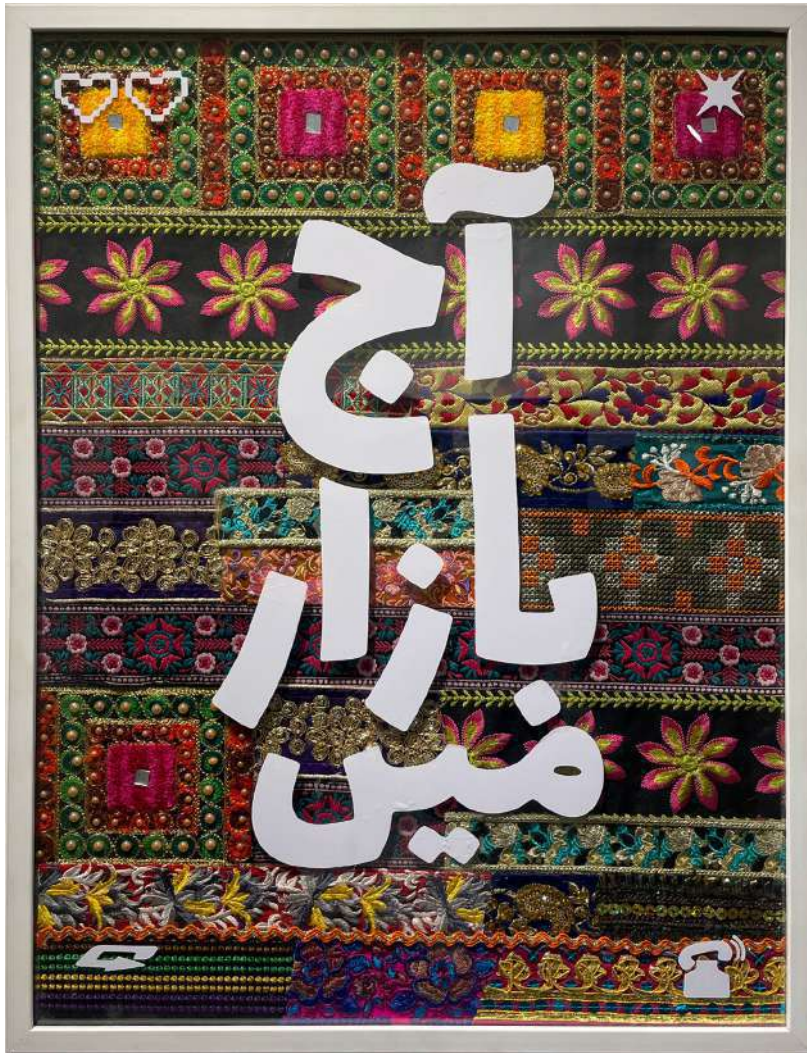
Captainess Bail
Textile, New Media
55-61 M/L Helmet
2023



Vision Qayamat
Acrylic, Textile
17.5 x 24.4 Inches
2023



Qafas Udaas
Digital Print, Textile
17.5 x 24.4 Inches
2023



Bazaar
Digital Print, Textile
17.5 x 24.4 Inches
2022



Aks
Mirror, Textile, Acrylic
15 x 21.5 Inches
2023



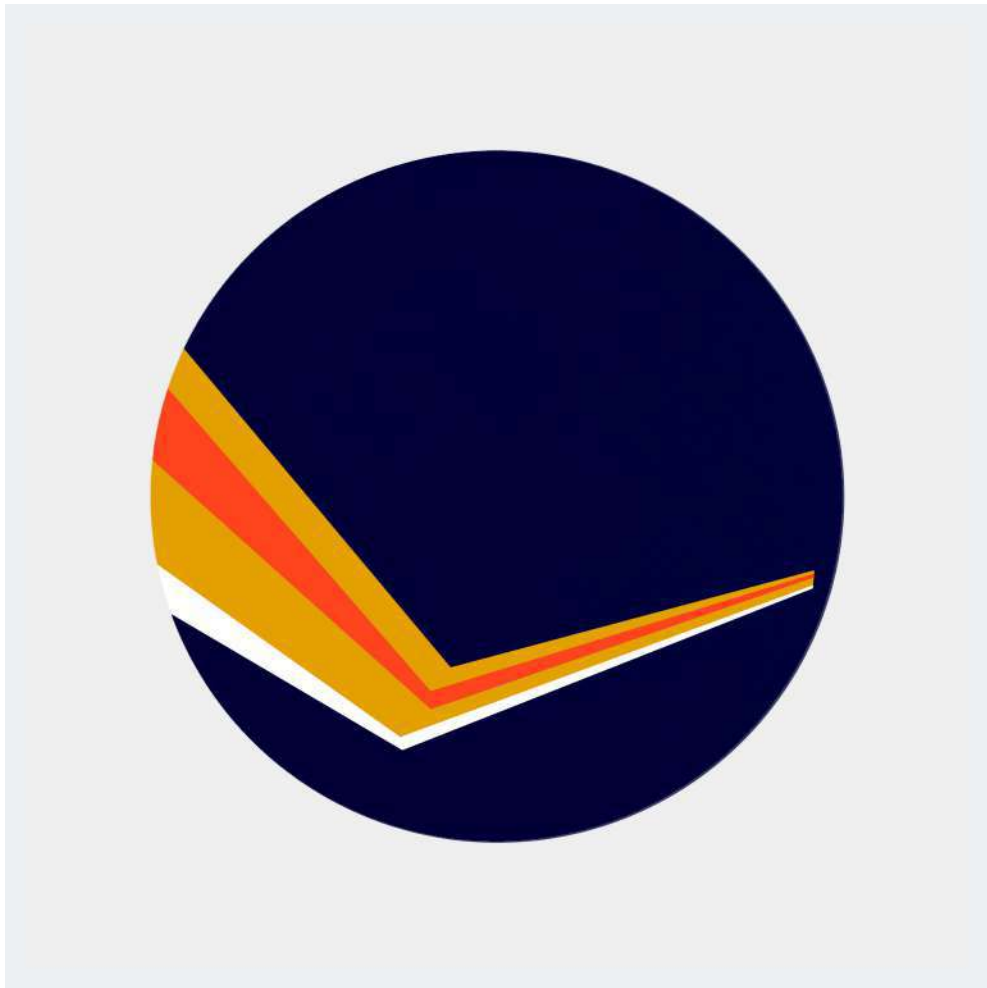
ASWAD ANEES

I am a multidisciplinary artist hailing from Larkana and currently based in Karachi, Pakistan. In 2021, I graduated from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture with a degree in Fine Arts, specialising in both painting and photography. My creative journey is fuelled by the contrasts and confluences of urban and rural life, as well as the interplay between various artistic mediums. My art serves as a visual narrative, weaving together the threads of the ever-evolving dynamics of the cities that shape me.

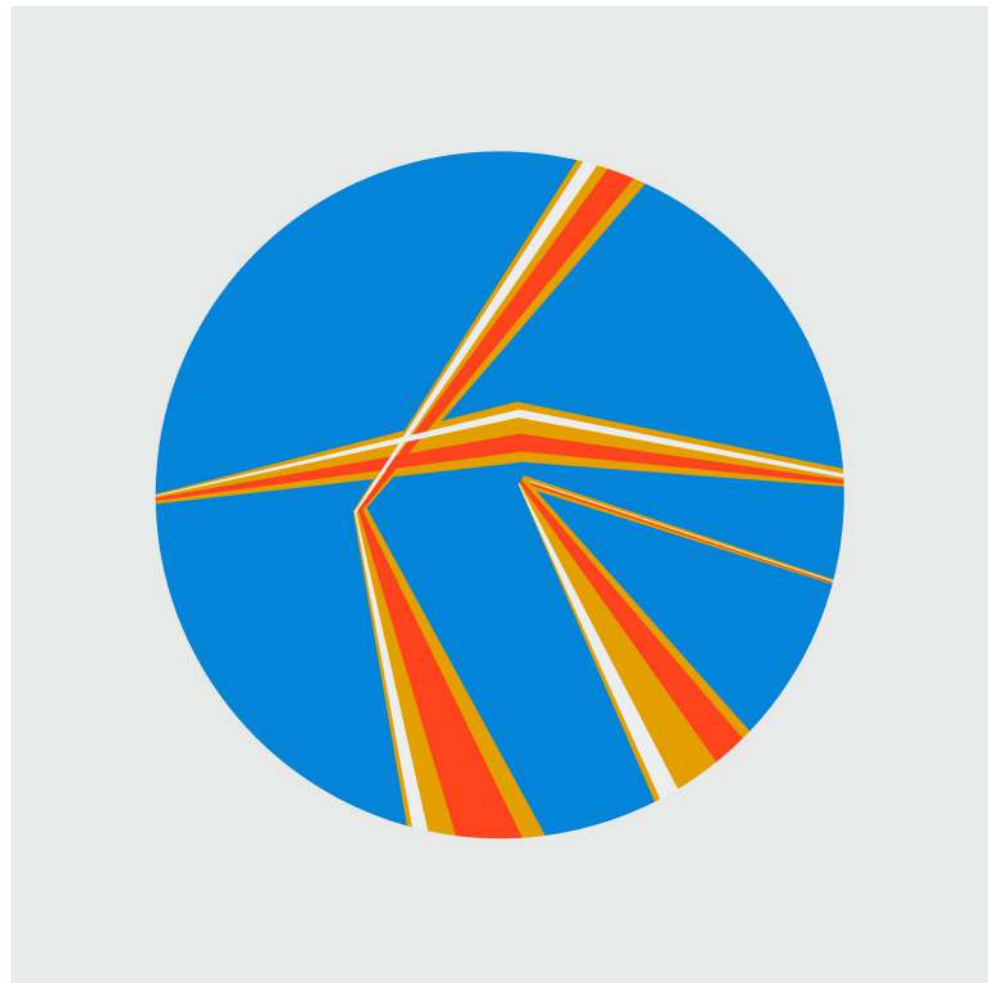
“Within the vibrant tapestry of urban existence, I draw my inspiration - the ceaseless pulse and electrifying spirit of the metropolis. My creative expression delves into the intricate choreography of my city life, capturing the dynamic interplay of pace and energy that defines our modern experience. With each piece, I aim to distill the essence of urbanity, bridging the gap between the palpable and the intangible.

The metropolis serves as both my canvas and subject: a living organism where movement, color, and sound converge in a symphony of life. My art seeks to encapsulate the frenetic rhythm of commuters hurrying through bustling streets, the kaleidoscope of neon lights that adorn the urban landscape, and the symphony of honks and footsteps resonating through concrete corridors. Through my creations, I invite viewers to immerse themselves in this whirlwind of emotions and experiences, urging them to find beauty in the midst of chaos and to ponder the narratives unfolding within the city's heartbeat.

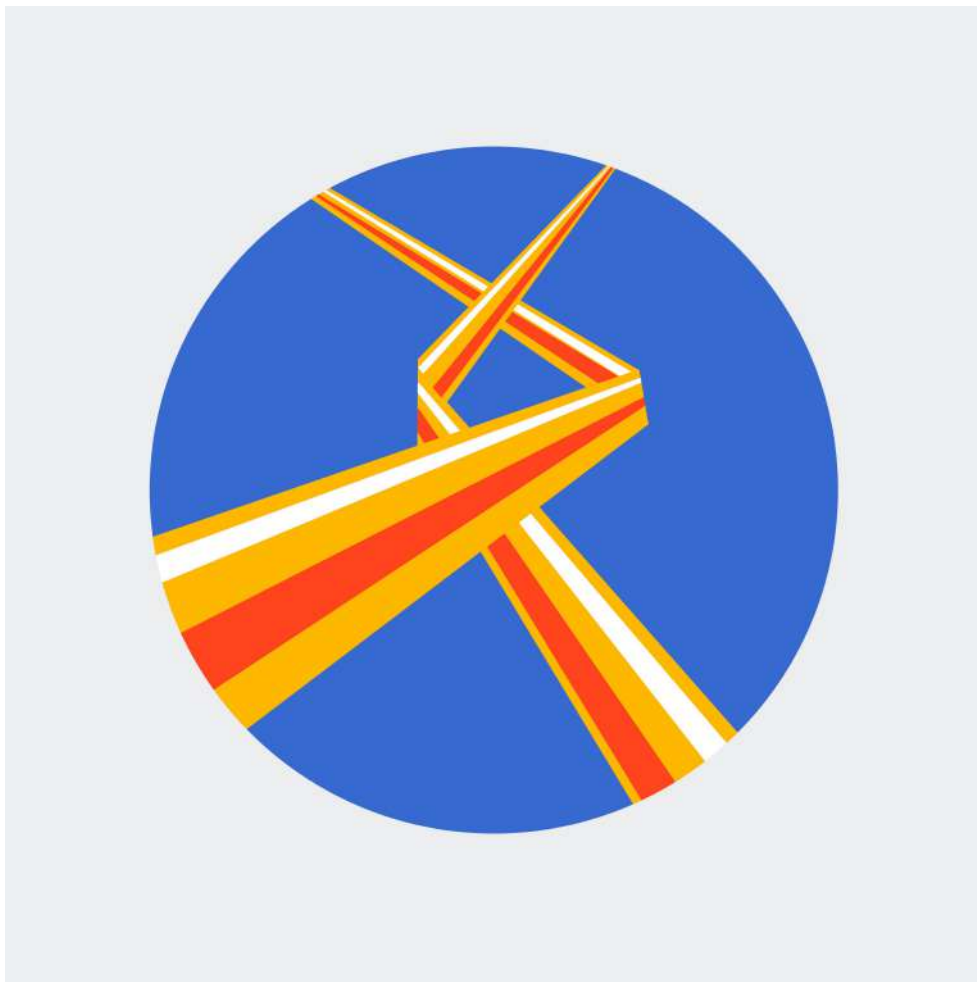
Influenced by the visual language of urban photographers, street artists, and avant-garde filmmakers, my artistic process involves a fusion of techniques that echoes the urgency of city life and the fluidity of motion. Ultimately, my art serves as a celebration of the metropolis – a reflection of its vitality, an homage to its inhabitants, and a testament to the unceasing energy propelling it forward.”



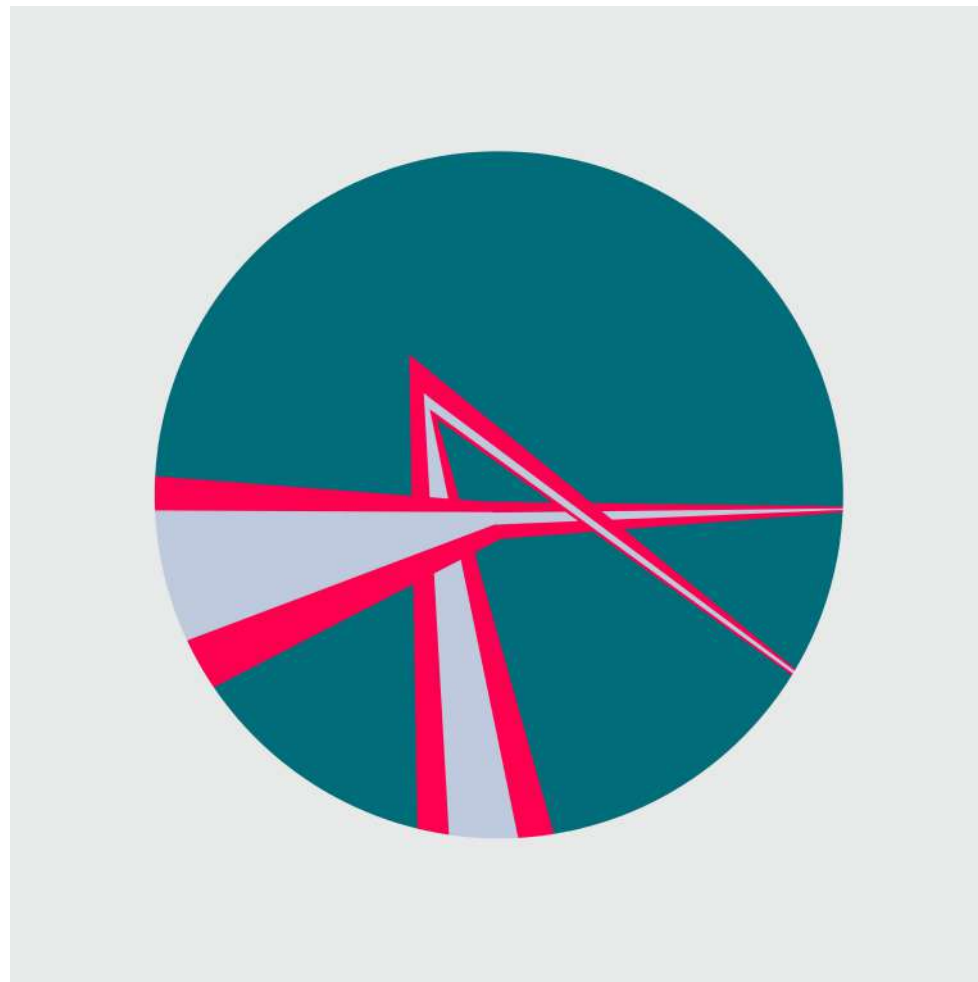
Untitled I
Mix medium
16" Diameter
2023



Untitled II
Mix medium
16" Diameter
2023



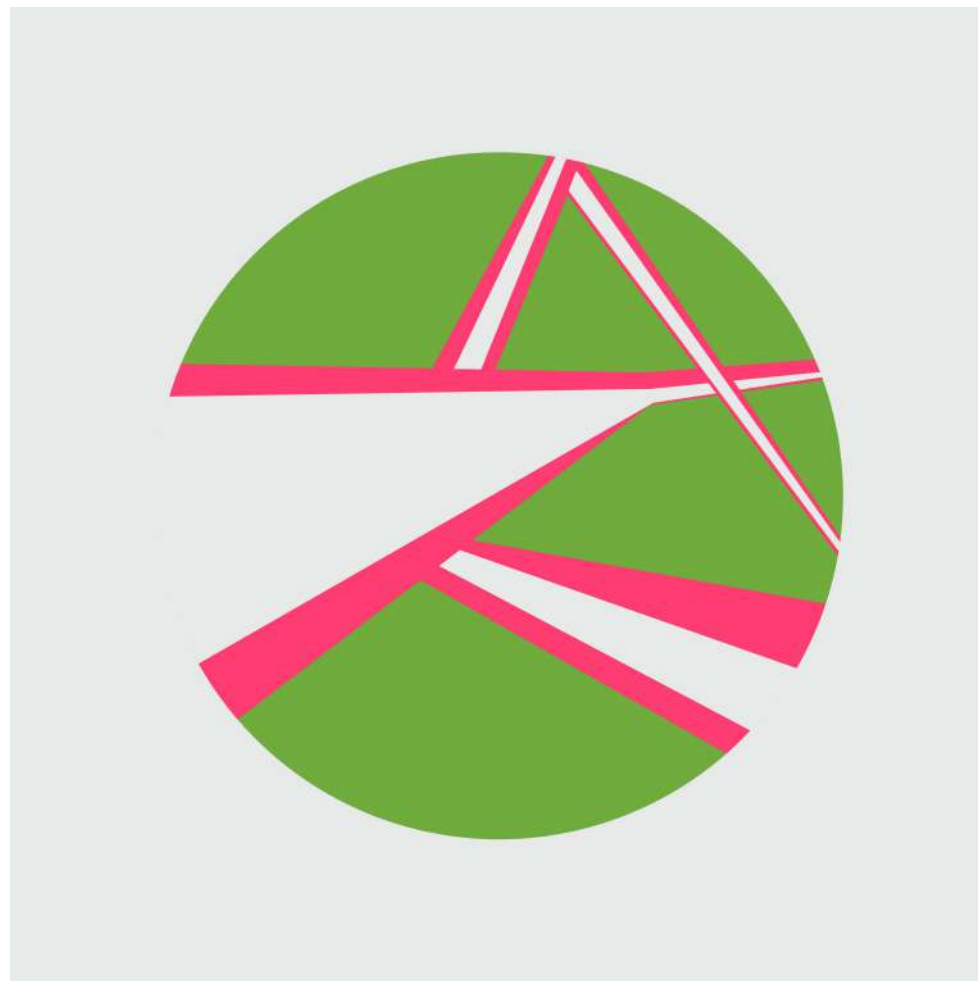
Untitled III
Mix medium
16" Diameter
2023



Untitled IV
Mix medium
16" Diameter
2023



Untitled V
Mix medium
16" Diameter
2023



Untitled VI
Mix medium
16" Diameter
2023



HARIS HIDAYAT ULLAH

Haris Hidayat Ullah is an illustrator and a visual artist with works rooted in critical thinking, cultural phenomena and the absurd. He's been involved with projects like Red Bull Radio, The Fearless Collective and has headed illustration workshops at the British Council Library, conducted art history workshops and an exhibit at Rabtt. His collaborative initiative RTF Studio is shaping a diverse musical landscape. Additionally he has also been a speaker at TEDxGCU, where he gave his talk Navigating Through Self. Currently, he runs his artistic project called Lewanay delving into his surroundings, experiences and identity. Haris is also an Art Director in the fashion industry leading various editorial campaigns and visual storytelling.

"You don't know a good thing till you're about to lose it. 'Gaajar ka Hal' is a new take on the methodical collapse of material culture. What happens in a downward spiral? This painting is an ode to the millions of individuals on the shores of a turbulent global economic collapse. The artwork serves as a reflection on the devastating impact of such crises on the lives of ordinary people.

It is debatable how soon once seemingly insignificant items will become precious commodities, only accessible to the privileged few. The image depicts the slow stockpiling of essential supplies, once readily available, now guarded and rationed for the fortunate elite. In this aesthetic fusion of cyberpunk and digital-age futurism, there are reflections on economical dynamics already at play. As the demand for food resources skyrockets, ordinary citizens are left in dire straits, desperately queuing up to obtain even the most basic necessities.

Wars are fought, policies are drafted, and the fabric of society is frayed as people vie for their share in a world of dwindling resources. The disparity between the haves and have-nots intensifies, resulting in subsequent conflicts and upheaval.

In "Gajar ka Hal," the carrot evolves into an opulent jewel box in the sky, unattainable and callous like time spent. Its taste remains a mystery, lost to generations who have never had the opportunity to savour its richness. The artist highlights the stark contrast between those who enjoy luxurious privileges and those who have never even had a glimpse of such luxury."



گاجر کا حال / Gaajar ka Hal
Tempera Paint, Acrylic on paper
3.5x4 ft
2023



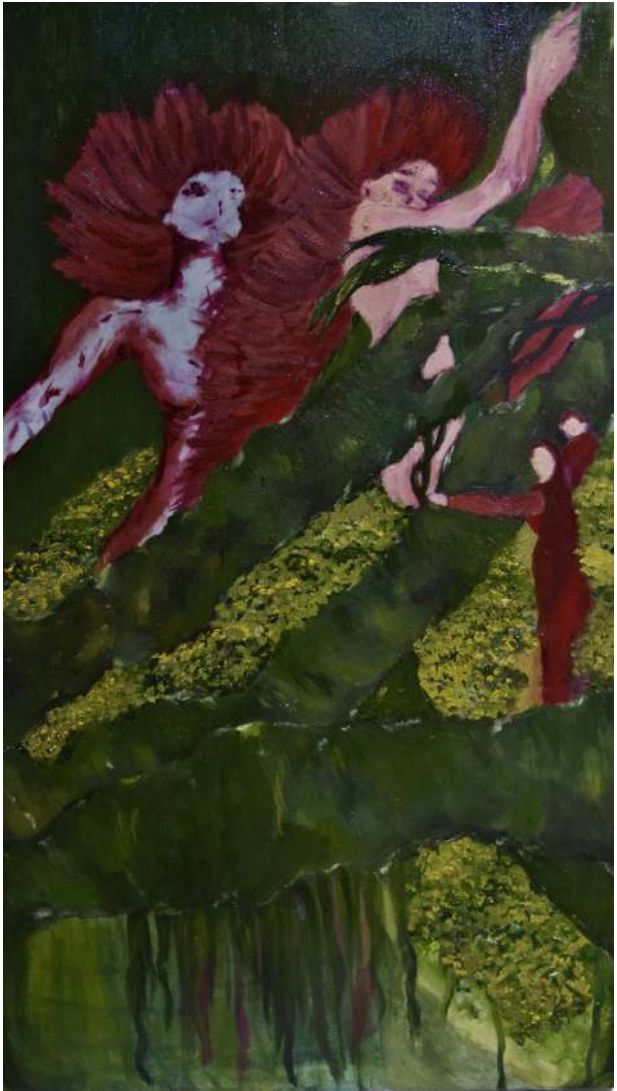
گاجر کا حال / Gaajar ka Hal
Detail



INSHAL TAHIR

I am a painter and a new media artist based in Karachi, Pakistan. I have done my Bachelors in Fine Arts from Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in 2021 with a double major in painting and new media art. Initially I have been researching about the Banyan Trees that have strong roots in history, culture and myths existing in our society. After which, I have explored the relationship of humans with nature and vice versa. I have exhibited in several reputed galleries over Pakistan , and in residences and conferences. My work has progressed beyond the Banyan Trees and largely aimed at how nature and humans have interacted , how nature has served as a tool to establish power dynamics and how our relationship with nature speaks so much of the past , present and the future.

“Taking forward the research about a historic and ecological movement , ‘The Chipko movement’ of 1973, I have explored the relationship of people with their environment especially in the context of protest and power. This movement is a graphic and powerful representation of two bodies becoming one such that their power and their protest becomes one. Although the Chipku movement primarily was concerned with the preservation of forests and an ecological balance in the sub-Himalayan region, the bare sight of women hugging the trees , their bodies interposing between the trees and the loggers stretches far from being just an attempt to prevent them from being cut down to becoming a strong symbol of women having a stance in government matters or matters at large whereas previously they were deprived of it. My work explores this notion of protest and power that dates back to an historic movement but is very well a present day idea of peaceful protest where power peaks when it's one and it celebrates women owning up their position or their stance as an equal member of the society without any mention of violence from their side”.



Bodies of Protest and Power
Oil on canvas
24" x 42" Inches
2023



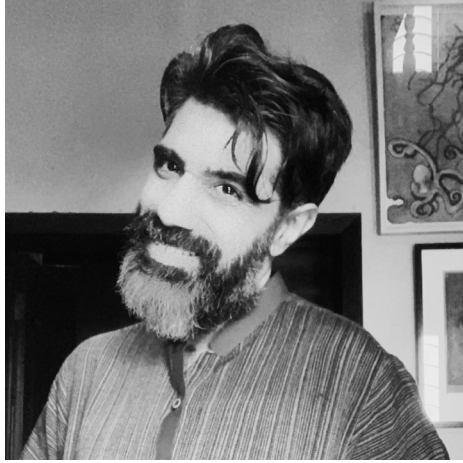
Rise as one
Oil on canvas
24"x42" Inches
2023



Shared Torment and power
Oil on canvas
24"x42" Inches
2023



We are one
Animation
Duration: 50 seconds
1920 x 1080 pixels
2023



MOHSIN SHAFI

Mohsin Shafi is an interdisciplinary visual story teller, living and working in Lahore - Pakistan. In last one decade, He has showcased his work at all prominent galleries in Pakistan, as well has exhibited at various art fairs, traveling shows at museums, galleries and at alternative spaces around the globe. Shafi's awards and residencies include the Salzburg Summer Academy scholarship award 2022, Residency at 1646 in Hague - Netherlands in 2021, residency at The Grwolely in Sanfrancisco – United States in 2019, Atelier Mondial residency in Basel, Switzerland awarded by Pro Helvetia in 2019, Rondo Studios residency award in Graz, Austria in 2012, and Vasl Artist residency in 2010 in Karachi - Pakistan.

Shafi holds a Master's Degree in visual arts and Bachelor's Degree in visual communication both from The National College of Arts, Lahore - Pakistan. He served his alma mater from 2012-2017. Currently he's focusing on his studio practice and squiggling thoughts for his first short flick.

"I exploit my unadulterated access to the deepest emotions embedded beneath the surface, only to explore the whispered secrets of dreams and desires by attempting to capture what I see and record their frail existence, only to return and relive. Hoping to make the viewer see reality through the fiction of my eyes. Where nothing is as it is and everything is as it isn't.

The visual metaphors combine realistic portrayals of ordinary manifestations with elements of myth, to allow myself the luxury of a disconnection from the fallacies of authenticity. Yearning to record the naked and defenseless ideas of the subconscious mind, somewhere between dreams and their documentation. This I assume to be an effort to recreate my world of fiction. In my works, I construct the spaces between translation and interpretation where confusion happens and things are forgotten and remembered as stories change."

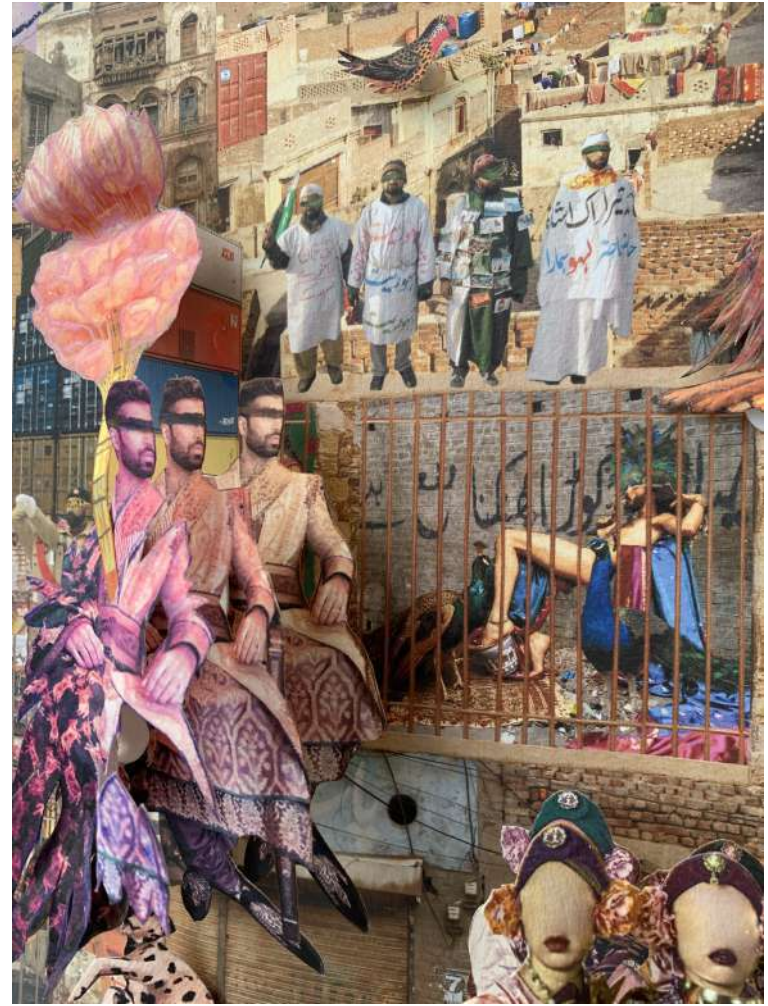


Somewhere We Belong Together

Handcut paper collage with acid photo transfers, water colors, pencil colors and inkjet print in wood and acrylic shadow
57cm x 43 cm x 9cm



Somewhere We Belong Together
Detail



Somewhere We Belong Together
Detail

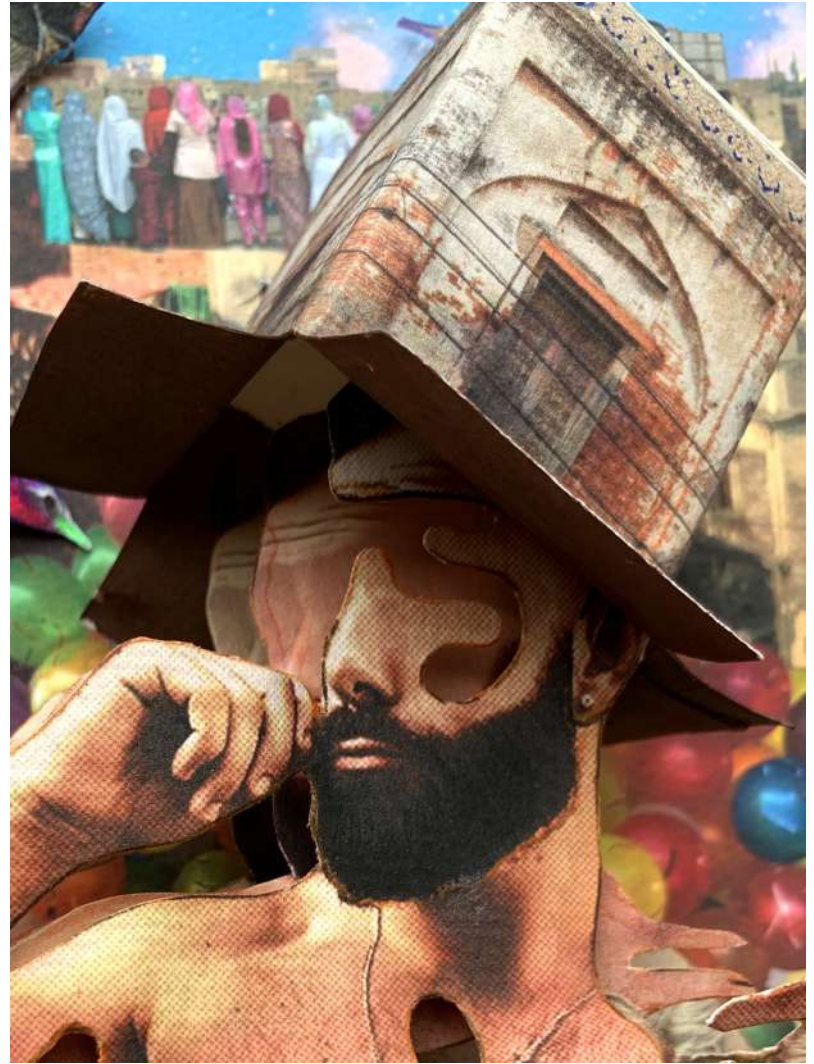


You Belong in My Arms

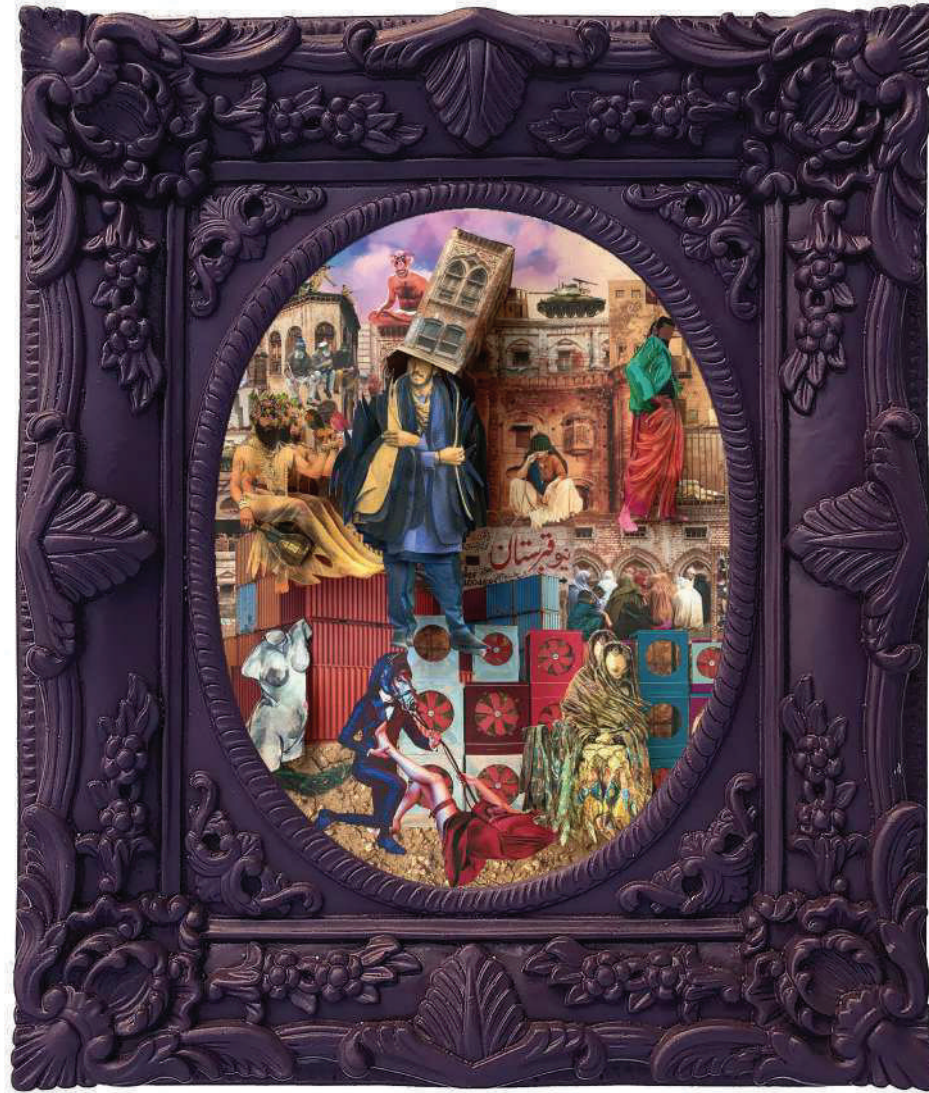
Handcut paper collage with acid photo transfers, water colors, pencil colors and inkjet print in fiber and acrylic shadow
36cm x 30cm x 9cm



You Belong in My Arms
Detail

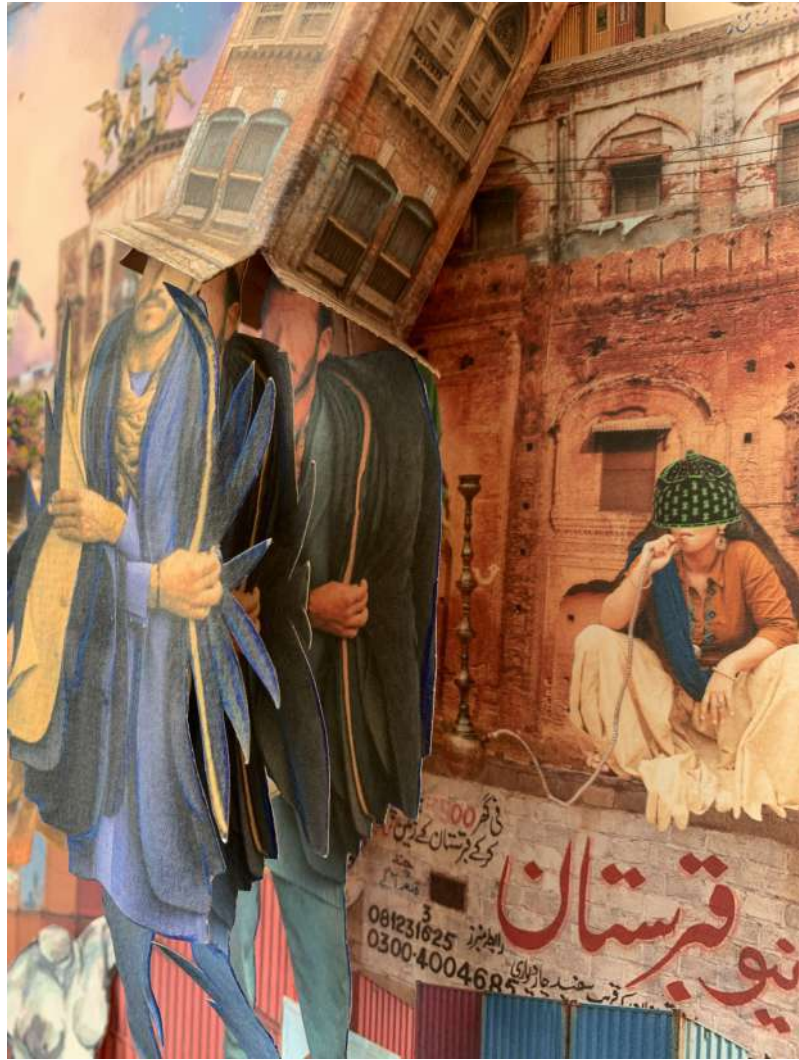


You Belong in My Arms
Detail

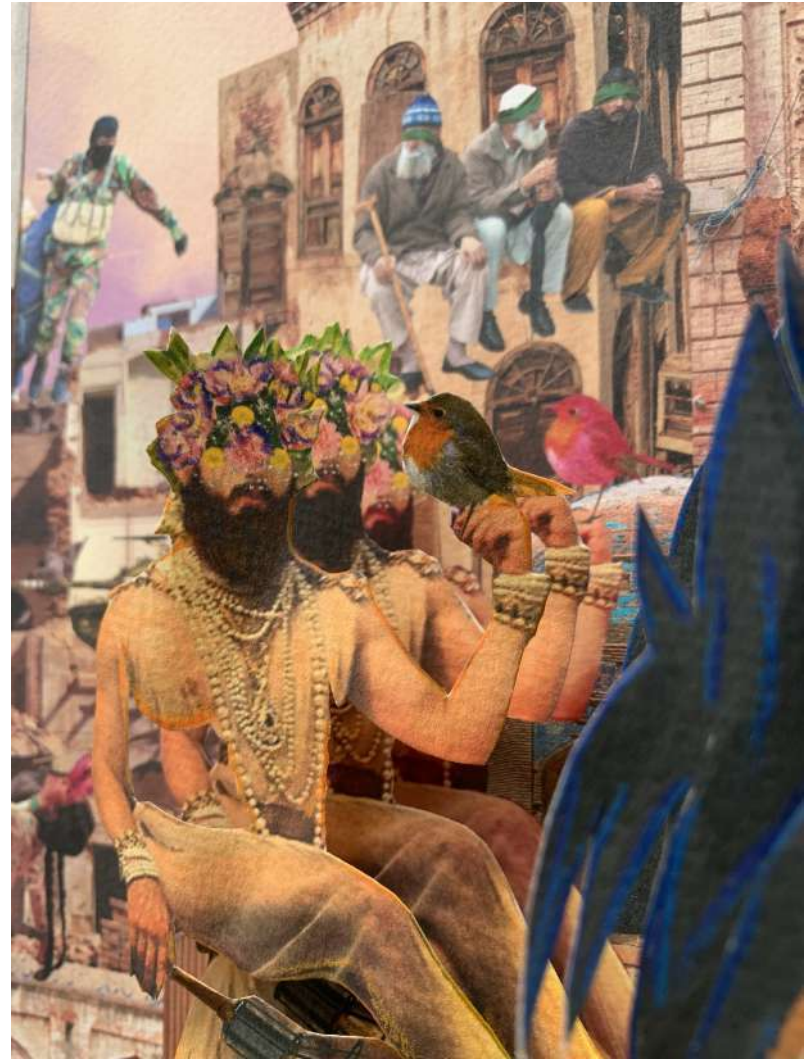


We all go back to where we belong

Handcut paper collage with acid photo transfers, water colors, pencil colors and inkjet print in plaster and acrylic shadow
58cm x 49cm x 9cm



We all go back to where we belong
Detail



We all go back to where we belong
Detail



SAMYA ARIF

Samya Arif is a Pakistani illustrator, visual artist and graphic designer whose work has been featured internationally. Her artistry is focused on female perspectives and observations of social and cultural paradigms, often exploring the themes of women and the spaces they inhabit.

After earning her degree in Communication Design from the Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture, Samya has built a diverse portfolio that includes creating visuals for publications, editorials, book covers, and film posters.

She has been featured in several prestigious publications such as The New York Times, BBC, Vice, CBC, The Fader, and Pitchfork. Samya has also collaborated on a variety of international projects, such as the Mumbai-based Taxi Fabric, for which her designs were featured in the music video of the British band Coldplay. Her client list includes Penguin Books, HarperCollins, Al Jazeera, the US Embassy in Nepal, British Council, NPR, and Google. Her illustrations were regularly published in Pakistan's renowned, now defunct Herald magazine.

Samya's work has been exhibited in numerous countries, including Pakistan, India, UAE, England, US, Belgium, and Spain. She currently resides and works in Karachi, Pakistan and serves as a part-time professor at her alma mater.

“As an artist, my creative endeavors revolve around the profound exploration of social and cultural paradigms through the medium of visual representation. Drawing upon a distinctly feminine perspective, my work reverberates with an embodiment of women and the intricate tapestries of their inhabited spaces. Driven by an irrepressible yearning to transcend societal norms and conventions, I channel my artistic energies into crafting ethereal landscapes that serve as a sanctuary of escape.”



Ghoorti Nazar I - Print
Digital Archival Printing
15 x 22 inches
2020



Ghoorti Nazar II - Print
Digital Archival Printing
15 x 22 inches
2020





Meena Bazaar: A Woman's World
Digital Archival UV Printing
11 x 16 inches
2023



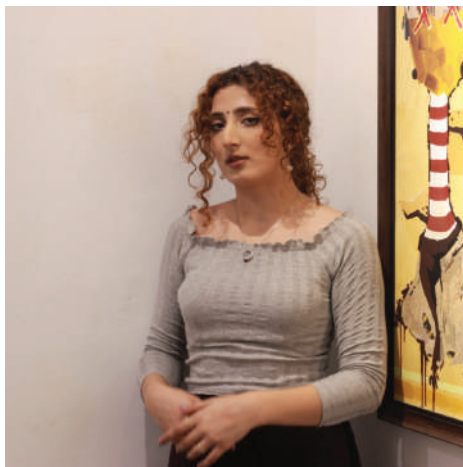
Ghoorti Nazar - Animation

2D Animation Video

Duration : 3min 18secs

Screen Format

2020



UMAINA KHAN

Umaina Khan is a Karachi based contemporary painter, graduated from Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in 2021, holding a Fine Arts degree. Primarily working with acrylics and found objects, clay and fabric to create bodily structures. She is known for her vibrant palette, distortion and exploration of the female form to comment on “gaze” “glorification” and “objectification” around women.

Besides her art practice, she mentors art students at Asian Institute of Fashion Design.

“My work discusses the idea of romanticised dehumanisation of female bodies which diminishes the identity, sexuality and individuality of women. Myself and the body of work I create critiques the concept of solely focusing on the appearance and treating women as mere objects or commodities.

Candies, Desserts and hand painted (manipulated) dolls work as a symbolic representation of the idea of the so-called eye candy referring to a woman.

I am breaking away from the unrealistic ideals of beauty and the generic representation of the feminine form in terms of skin color, hair, body type and stylization.

The women in my work are a translation of females in their highly vulnerable state, focusing the individuality and self-discovery. The comfort in the exaggerated human postures and bends convey the idea of empowerment and self acceptance and rejecting the desire to be seen as a conventional figure. The paintings and sculptures challenge the notions of idealized beauty by creating more self reflective forms.”



The aqua ladies {diptych}
Acrylic on canvas
3x4feet each
2023



The aqua ladies {diptych}
Detail

Upside down
Acrylic on canvas
6x2feet
2023





Barbie enough?

Hand painted barbies and objects with
clay and fabric manipulation
2023



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