

A close-up photograph of a rough, textured rock surface. The rock has various shades of brown, tan, and grey, with visible mineral grains and some darker, possibly fossilized, areas. The text "SET IN STONE" is overlaid in a white, serif font, centered horizontally across the middle of the image. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a three-dimensional appearance as if they are carved into or resting on the rock surface.

SET IN STONE



# SET IN STONE

Curated by  
Sadiqa Tayebaly | Sohail Zuberi

February 25 - April 25  
2025

**Catalogue Design:** Sohail Zuberi

**Photography:** Haya Farooqui, Sohail Zuberi

**Editing:** Sohail Zuberi, Sadiqa Tayebaly, Ariba Asif

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Koel Gallery, Karachi







— it is a witness.

For thousands of years, it has borne the weight of empires, the chisels of devotees, and the imaginations of artists. In Pakistan, where ancient rock carvings and Buddhist stupas share land with modern sculptors, stone becomes a timeless storyteller.

Artists, archaeologists, architects, craftspersons, designers and filmmakers trace the unbroken thread of stone's cultural, spiritual, and historic significance in Pakistan

By juxtaposing archaeological artefacts with modern works, **Set in Stone** challenges the perception of stone as a relic of the past. Instead, it reveals how this elemental material continues to shape identity, memory, and innovation in Pakistan's artistic landscape.



# FEATURING

Mehrunissa Asad | Studio Lél

Faysal Khan Elahi

EssaNoor Associates + Partners

The Architects | Studio Tariq Hasan

Syed Noor Hussain

Dr. Asma Ibrahim

Muhammad Ilyas

Ramazan Kaka

Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro

Raza Muhammad

Muhammad Darab Muneer

Sherezad Rahimtoola

Muhammad Ammar Raza

Nabeel Majeed Shaikh

Mariya Suhail



# Meherunnisa Asad | Studio Lél



**Two Macaws, No. 4**  
Serpentine, Jasper, Amazonite, Onyx,  
Sandstone, Marble, Plaster and Metal  
54 x 36 x 1.5 inches (excluding background  
marble slab)  
2025

Opposite: detail



## The War Gardens Series

The War Gardens Series reflects on resilience, memory, and renewal, exploring lost landscapes through contemporary art and craft. In *Zer Yak Asmaan No. 5*, *Two Macaws No. 4*, and *Champa Flower and Leaf Cluster*, I imagine and reimagine gardens- spaces where beauty endures despite displacement and rupture.

As a Pashtun artist from Peshawar, my work is deeply tied to a history of movement, resilience, and the shifting landscapes of my community. I weave fractured slabs of discarded marble into the series, transforming broken remnants into symbols of renewal. These materials, once abandoned, become vessels of reclamation and continuity, carrying the weight of loss while offering the possibility of rebirth. In the face of erasure, I see craft as a form of resistance- an act of preserving identity, reclaiming stories, and forging new possibilities.

Blending Pietra Dura with techniques such as sculpture, cloisonné, scagliola, lapidary, and copperwork, I work closely with local artisans from Peshawar and displaced Afghan artisans, whose hands and histories breathe life into these pieces. Within this shared practice, tradition and innovation grow side by side, cultivating a space where loss is met with creation, and where art transforms not just material, but the narratives we carry forward.





*Zer Yak Asmaan, No. 5*  
 (Beneath The Same Sky No. 5)  
 Serpentine, Lapis Lazuli, Onyx, Marble,  
 Plaster and Metal  
 H 66 x W 50 x D 1.5 inches (excluding  
 background marble slab)  
 2025

Left: detail







**Champa and Leaf Cluster**  
Serpentine, Onyx, Calcite and Marble  
36 x 30 x 1 inches  
2025

Opposite: detail





# Faysal Khan Elahi



Moral Code: Ashoka's Edicts in Mansehra,  
Pakistan 1  
Inkjet Print  
2025

# Ashoka's Edicts, Mansehra

Ashoka's edicts in Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan are among the earliest written records in South Asia and reflect Emperor Ashoka's efforts to unify his empire through ethical principles. These edicts are part of a series of inscriptions carved into rocks and pillars across the Mauryan Empire by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE.

The edicts are inscribed on large boulders along the ancient trade route connecting Taxila to Central Asia, reflecting Ashoka's embrace of Buddhism and his commitment to moral governance – Dharma. The Mansehra edicts are written in Prakrit, a Middle Indo-Aryan language using the Kharosthi script, which was common in ancient Gandhara.

Key themes include promotion of non-violence and compassion; religious tolerance and respect for all sects; welfare measures (e.g., planting trees, digging wells); Ashoka's remorse after the Kalinga War and his dedication to Dharma; instructions to officials to govern justly.





Moral Code: Ashoka's Edicts in Mansehra,  
Pakistan 3  
Inkjet Print  
2025



Moral Code: Ashoka's Edicts in Mansehra,  
Pakistan 2  
Inkjet Print  
2025



# Essanoor Associates + Partners

Heritage Management Organisation  
ISMEO (Italian Archaeological Mission)  
Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, KPK  
Salman Khan



3D mapping of Shanglo Buddha

# Preservation of the Buddhist Rock Reliefs in Swat Valley

This initiative is dedicated to preserving Swat’s historic rock carvings, which holds immense cultural and religious value. Using advanced digitization techniques—such as 3D modeling and virtual experiences—along with first-aid conservation and climate adaptation strategies, we work to protect these heritage sites. Our team consists of international experts in archaeological science, conservation, digital documentation, and heritage management planning, collaborating closely with local and international partners to provide hands-on training for local communities and government organisations. Additionally, we aim to document and preserve the intangible cultural narratives that accompany these tangible artifacts.

The project involved a team of Italian experts and locally trained technicians who had participated in prior missions, resulting in the successful treatment of 38 artifacts, including 34 Buddhist rock reliefs, four inscriptions, and one protohistoric inscription cluster. Most conservation work was performed by skilled local workers trained over the last four years with international expert supervision.

Our mission is to conserve these invaluable artifacts. Through research and preservation, we aim to make this rich cultural heritage accessible to local communities, scholars, tourists, and future generations.

**This project is funded by The British Council CPF**



**The defaced Buddha of Jahanabad**  
Photo: ISMEO-Ca’Foscari  
University of Venice, Italy





# Shanglo Buddha

This rock carving depicts two pensive Padmapānis, in ardhaparyankāsana pose, each seated on a tall throne with cushion (the left-hand one has conserved traces of figuration on the body). They have thick curly hair and their heads are surrounded by flaming nimbi. They are wearing crowns, bracelets, short beaded necklaces and pendant earrings. They are dressed in paridhāna with the central hem falling over the throne. Bodhisattva on left with a uttārya (scarf), of which the end portion is conserved on the left, and crown with lateral knots.



# Nangrial Buddha

Pensive Padmapāni, in ardhaparyankāsana, with paridhana. With visible belt and circular central hem with inner vertical drapery, crown, likely tripartite, pendant earrings; on lotiform throne with base composed of row of petals and two superimposed listels.



# Jahanabad Buddha

The Jahanabad Buddha, located in Swat, Pakistan, is a magnificent 7th-century CE Buddhist statue that exemplifies the region's rich Gandharan heritage. Carved into the granite cliff face, the 7-meter-tall (23 ft) statue depicts the Buddha in the Abhayamudra pose, conveying fearlessness and protection. The statue is believed to have been constructed during the reign of the Buddhist king, Khingala, in the 7th century CE. After the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, the Jahanabad Buddha is now the largest and best-preserved Buddhist rock carving in the world, showcasing the artistic and cultural achievements of the Gandharan civilisation. Despite suffering damage during the Taliban's rule in Swat, the statue underwent restoration work by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan, and remains a significant cultural and historical landmark, attracting tourists and scholars alike. The Jahanabad Buddha stands as a testament to the region's rich Buddhist heritage and its importance in the cultural landscape of Pakistan.

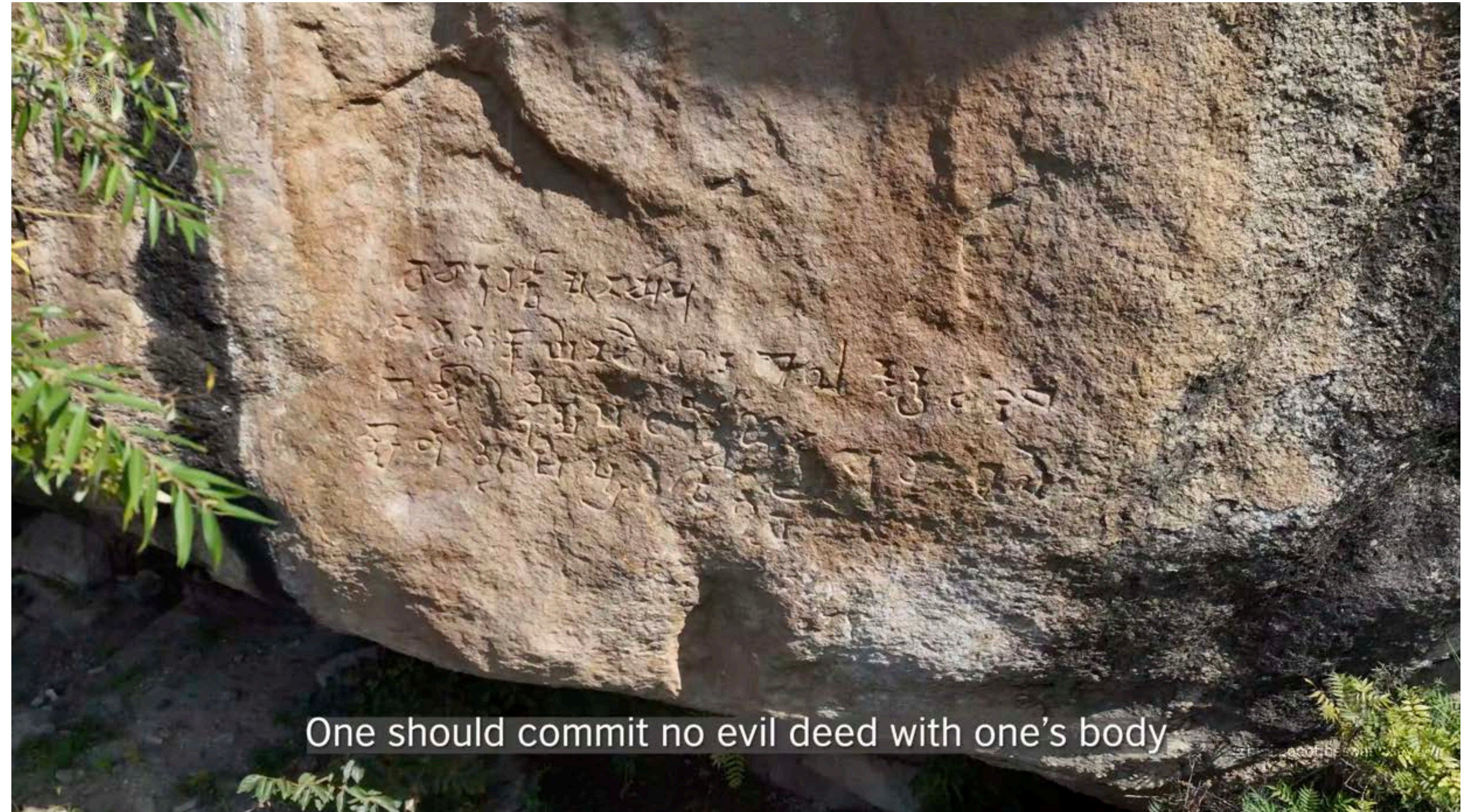




# Salman Khan



The Buddha's message, Jahanabad inscriptions  
Preservation of the Buddhist Rock Reliefs in Swat Valley  
4K video, 1.15 minutes







Craft of stone carving, Swat valley  
Preservation of the Buddhist Rock Reliefs in Swat Valley  
4K video, 4.38 minutes



Turning Stone: The most ancient way of milling grain into flour  
Preservation of the Buddhist Rock Reliefs in Swat Valley  
4K video, 2.51 minutes



# The Architects | Studio Tariq Hasan



## Ascension Installation

### Foreground

#### Onyx Cylinder I medium

Onyx + Afghani White 3.5 x 12 inches  
4 pieces

#### Onyx Cylinder II small

Onyx + Afghani White 3.5 x 8 inches  
11 pieces

#### Onyx Cylinder III large

Onyx + Afghani White 6.5 x 15 inches  
4 pieces

### Background

#### Roshandan (large)

Onyx  
9 x 36 inches



## Ascension

The way light passes through marble, revealing its translucency, evokes the interplay between matter and energy. 'Ascension' explores how the mountain's solid mass interacts with and contrasts against light, symbolizing transformation.

Our goal is to reimagine marble beyond its traditional weight and density, embracing its lightness, softness, and ethereal translucence.



Onyx Cylinder I, II, III  
Installation detail





From left to right

**Tessellation Light**  
Honey Onyx  
6 x 14 inches

**Sconces**  
Onyx + Afghani White 3.5 x 8 inches

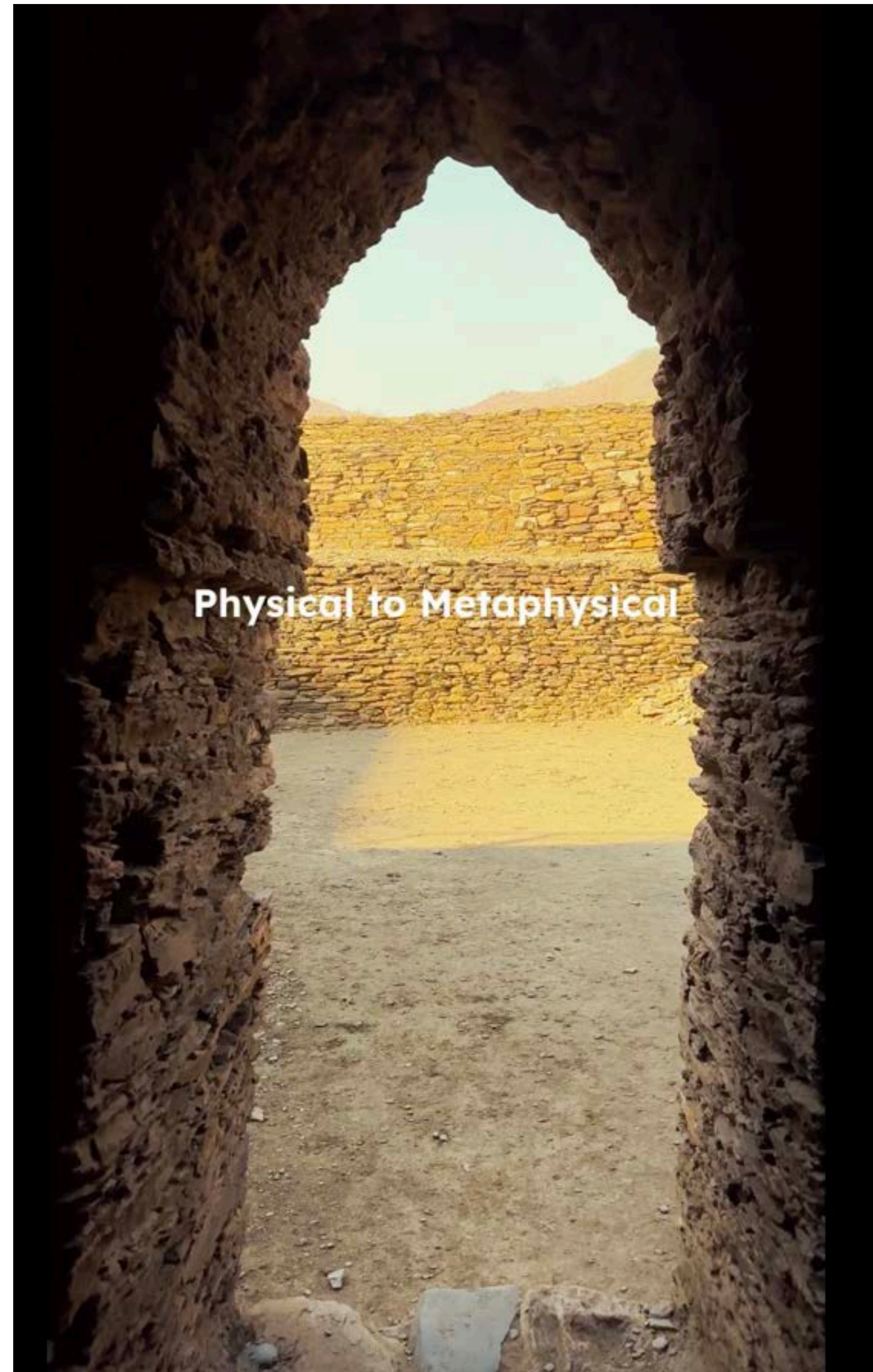
**Canyon I**  
Onyx

**Canyon II**  
Onyx





# Syed Noor Hussain



Physical to Metaphysical  
Video Still  
4k video, 3.38 minutes  
2025

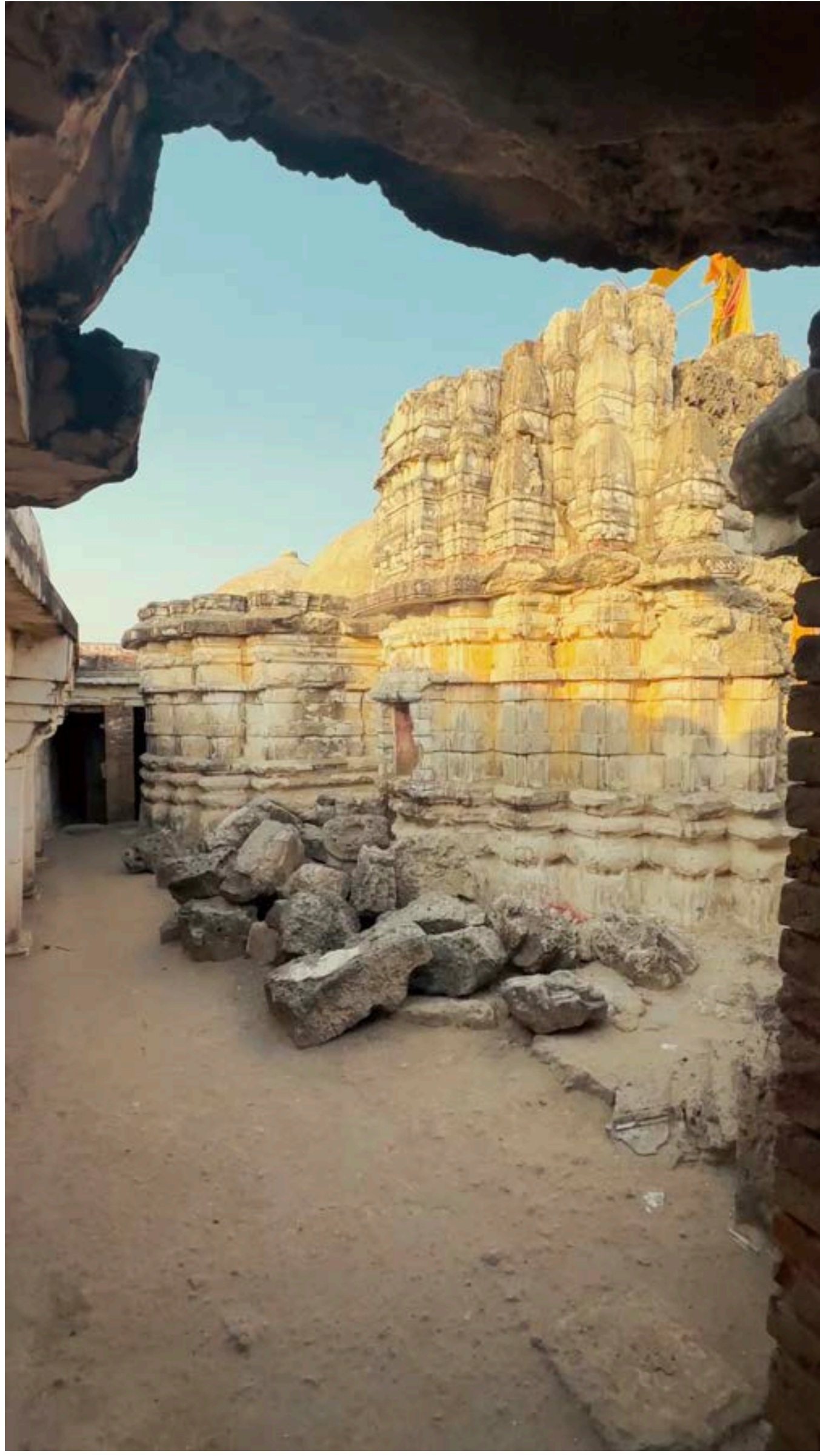
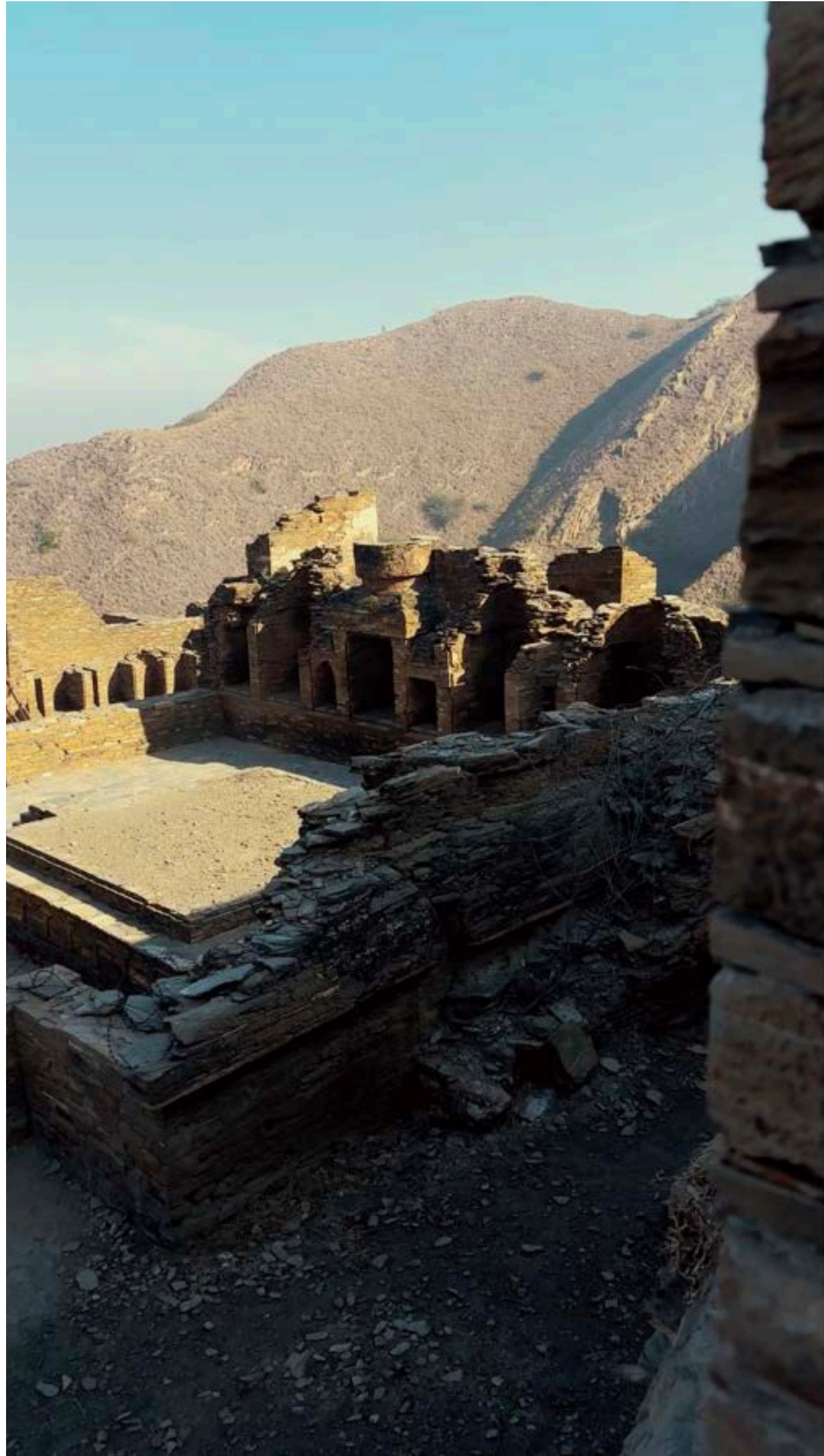
## Physical to Metaphysical

Architecture is an art form that harmonizes space, form, and function into a meaningful and purposeful expression. It is both a sculpting of space and an arrangement of physical materials that conveys meaning and significance. The form of the structure and its function are inseparable, intertwined like the body and the spirit.

The ancient man recognized stone for its properties of immovability, permanence, and durability. These attributes made it a well suited material for constructing religious and spiritual sites. The enduring nature of stone is one reason why we can still uncover remnants of many ancient civilizations. In Pakistan, Buddhist monasteries and stupas, Hindu temples, and Jain temples were predominantly built with stone, granting them a timeless quality and permanence.

Beyond their physical characteristics, many of these ancient stone sites were designed to transcend the material realm, seeking the divine—shaping the human spirit and elevating consciousness. The temples and stupas, through their intricate designs and symbolic forms, sought to transcend the physical and reach the metaphysical.





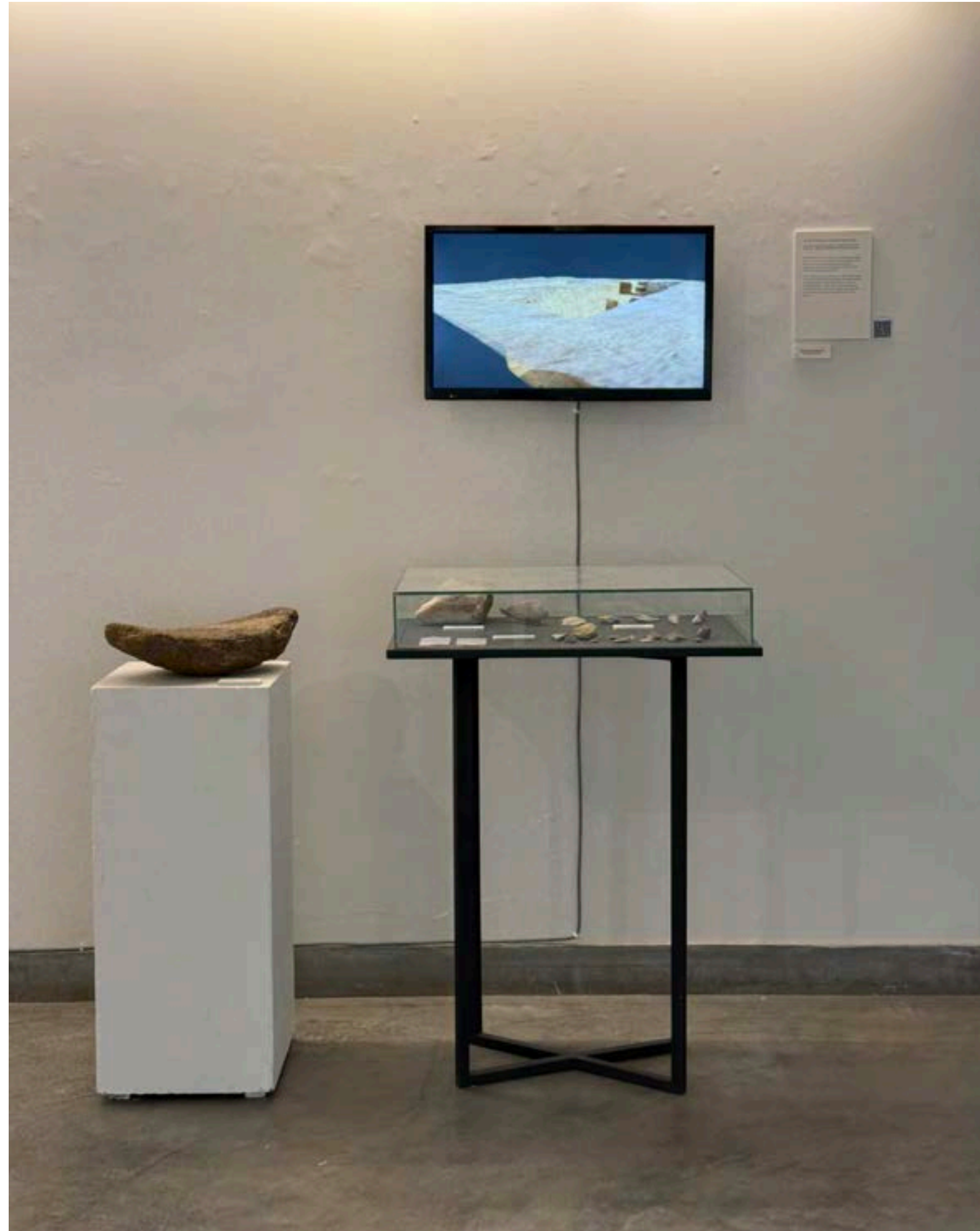
Physical to Metaphysical  
Video Stills  
4k video, 3.38 minutes  
2025



## Dr. Asma Ibrahim | Dr. Jonathan Mark Kenoyer



Allah Dino Excavations  
Installation Shot  
Koel Gallery, Karachi  
2025



## Uninterrupted human occupation in the region of Karachi from Stone Age

Allah Dino excavations,  
Malir Karachi 2022-2025

Allahdino site, located in the Malir district, east Karachi, provides a very unique rural settlement dating to mid third millennium BC or earlier. This site has pottery similar to Mohenjo daro & Chahunjodaro, & evidence for local ceramic tradition and even earlier dates back to Palaeolithic period.

This unfortified settlement served a community of people living in scattered households across the landscape. The upper level of the site was first excavated in the early 1970s by the American archaeologist Walter Fairervis. Excavations at Allahdino have uncovered significant artefacts, including tools made with chert stone, jewellery, pots, seals, grinding stones and inscribed materials.

**Allah Dino Chert (flint) Stone blades**  
Excavated artefacts 2500 - 1500 BCE

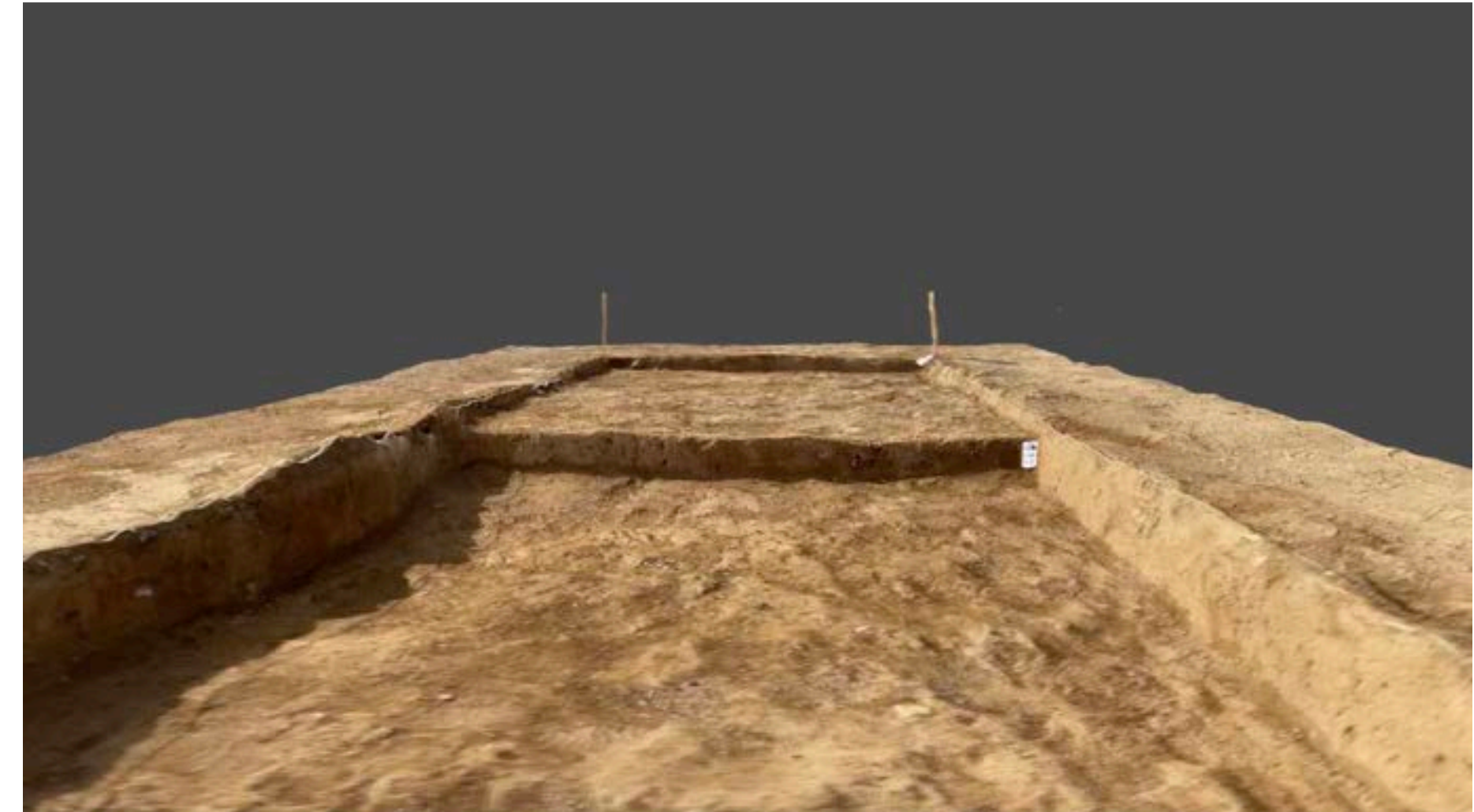
**Contemporary samples of chert (flint) stones**  
Courtesy of SEAS Pakistan (Sindh Exploration and Adventure Society)  
2022 - 2024







Allah Dino excavation site  
3D animations in 4K, loop  
Video Stills  
2022 - 2024





# Muhammad Ilyas



**Chitarkari Panel 1 (detail)**  
Schist stone from a closed quarry  
Hand carved on both sides with traditional motifs  
Metal frame 105 x 21 inches



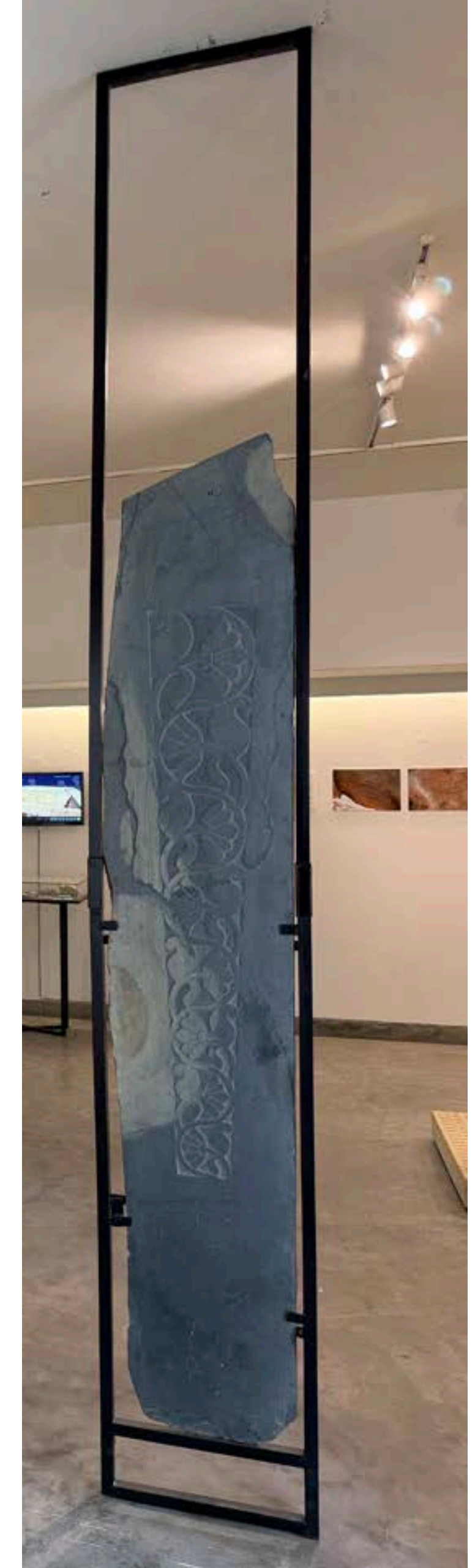
# Chitarkari Panels

My art is a continuation of my family's legacy, a tradition that has been passed down through generations. As a slate/ schist carver, I strive to breathe new life into this ancient craft, experimenting with innovative designs and techniques while remaining true to its roots. My work is not just about creating beautiful pieces, but also about preserving a part of our cultural heritage. Through my art, I aim to share the stories and traditions of my community, and to inspire a new appreciation for the beauty and significance of slate carving.

The pieces on display are works I did almost 15 years ago. They are inspired by the original grave stones in our village. These large pieces of schist are impossible to find now and are a piece of art on their own.

Designed by Noorjehan Bilgrami with Habib Fida Ali

**Chitarkari Panel 2**  
Schist stone from a closed quarry  
Hand carved on both sides with traditional motifs  
Metal frame 105 x 21 inches





# Gandhara Sculptures

The ancient Buddhist civilisation of Gandhara, which flourished in what is now northern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan (circa 1st century BCE to 5th century CE), is renowned for its unique hybrid Hellenistic-Indian style of art and architecture. This style emerged as a result of the cultural syncretism between the Greco-Roman world, brought by the conquests of Alexander the Great and the subsequent Indo-Greek kingdoms, and the indigenous Indian traditions of Buddhism.

The Gandharan style represents a remarkable synthesis of Hellenistic and Indian artistic traditions, reflecting the region's role as a cultural melting pot. Its realistic human figures, intricate narrative reliefs, and harmonious blend of architectural elements make it a unique and enduring legacy of the ancient Buddhist civilisation. This hybrid style not only enriched Buddhist art but also served as a bridge between the classical world of the Mediterranean and the spiritual traditions of South Asia.



From left to right

1. The Face of Feminine Beauty
2. Bodhisattva 1
3. Bodhisattva 2
4. Standing Buddha in *abhaya mudra*, the gesture of reassurance
5. Faces of Enlightenment 1
6. Faces of Enlightenment 2



Standing Buddha in *abhaya mudra*, the gesture of reassurance





### The Great Departure (replica)

The Great Departure of Buddha is a significant event in Buddhist art and history, often depicted in Gandhara reliefs. It marks the beginning of Siddhartha Gautama's (Buddha's) journey to enlightenment, where at the age of 29, he renounced his royal life, leaving behind his palace, family, and luxuries. This event symbolizes Siddhartha's transition from a life of luxury to one of spiritual seeking, representing his courage and determination to find truth and ultimately attain enlightenment.

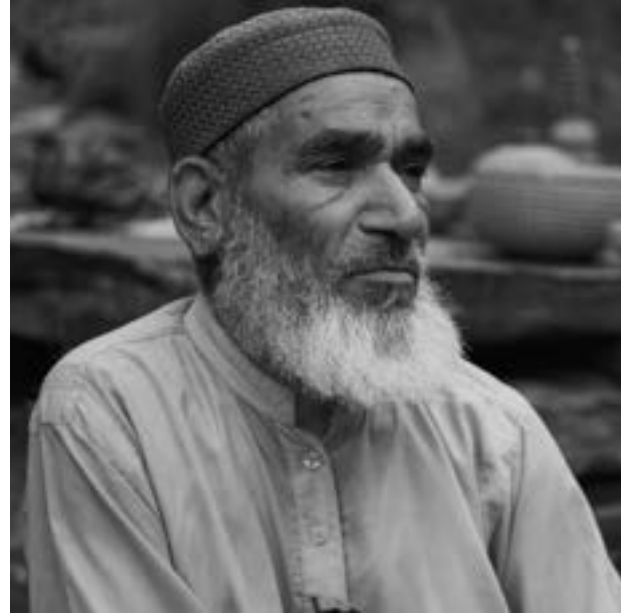
14 x 7 inches

Specially formulated material which ensures strength and faithfulness to the original.





# Ramzan Kaka



Soapstone pieces  
Various sizes  
2025



# Soapstone Craft Pieces

My first art piece was a carved picture of Quaid-e-Azam.

Then I carved out a picture of Fatima Jinnah.

After that I carved a picture of Allama Iqbal.

Soon after that I carved my own picture.

Then, I carved a picture of my son.

One day a local told me that it's prohibited in Islam to carve figures, and it's an art form that belongs to Buddhists and Hindus.

I stopped carving pictures and sculptures.

But later on, I realized that my art is not just limited to human figures or idols.

I started creating stupas and other artifacts.



Soapstone Stupa  
10 x 5 x 5 inches  
2025







# Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro



**1. Prehistoric Painting in Tharia rock shelter in Pallimas, Khuzdar depicting humped bulls.**  
Upper Palaeolithic Period  
(50,000 - 10,000 years BCE)

**2. Prehistoric ritual scene in Tharia rock shelter in Pallimas, Khuzdar.**  
Upper Palaeolithic Period  
(50,000 - 10,000 years BCE)

Photographic prints on inkjet paper



# Cave Art, Balochistan

The Paleolithic period in Balochistan, Pakistan, which spanned from approximately 2.5 million years ago to around 10,000 BCE, was marked by the creation of remarkable cave paintings and rock art. Notably, the Tharia Cave, situated in the Pallimas Valley, contains prehistoric paintings estimated to be between 10,000 to 15,000 years old. These ancient artworks, predominantly rendered in red and black, depict humans, animals, and geometric designs, including dancing men, humped bulls, and deer-like animals. The discovery of these paintings not only provides significant evidence of human habitation in caves during the Upper Paleolithic period (around 50,000 to 10,000 BCE) but also underscores the importance of this region in understanding human evolution and the development of early artistic expression.





# Raza Muhammad



# Chawkundi Art

My work replicates the designs, motifs and the craftsmanship of funerary art from Sindh and Balochistan, commonly referred to as Chawkundi art. I have been closely studying the ornate stone carvings on the centuries old graves in my village of Taung as well as other sites in Sindh.

These graves were built to honour the deceased, who were often Sufi saints, nobles, or other prominent figures. The intricate carvings and geometric patterns on the graves symbolise the connection between the material and spiritual worlds.

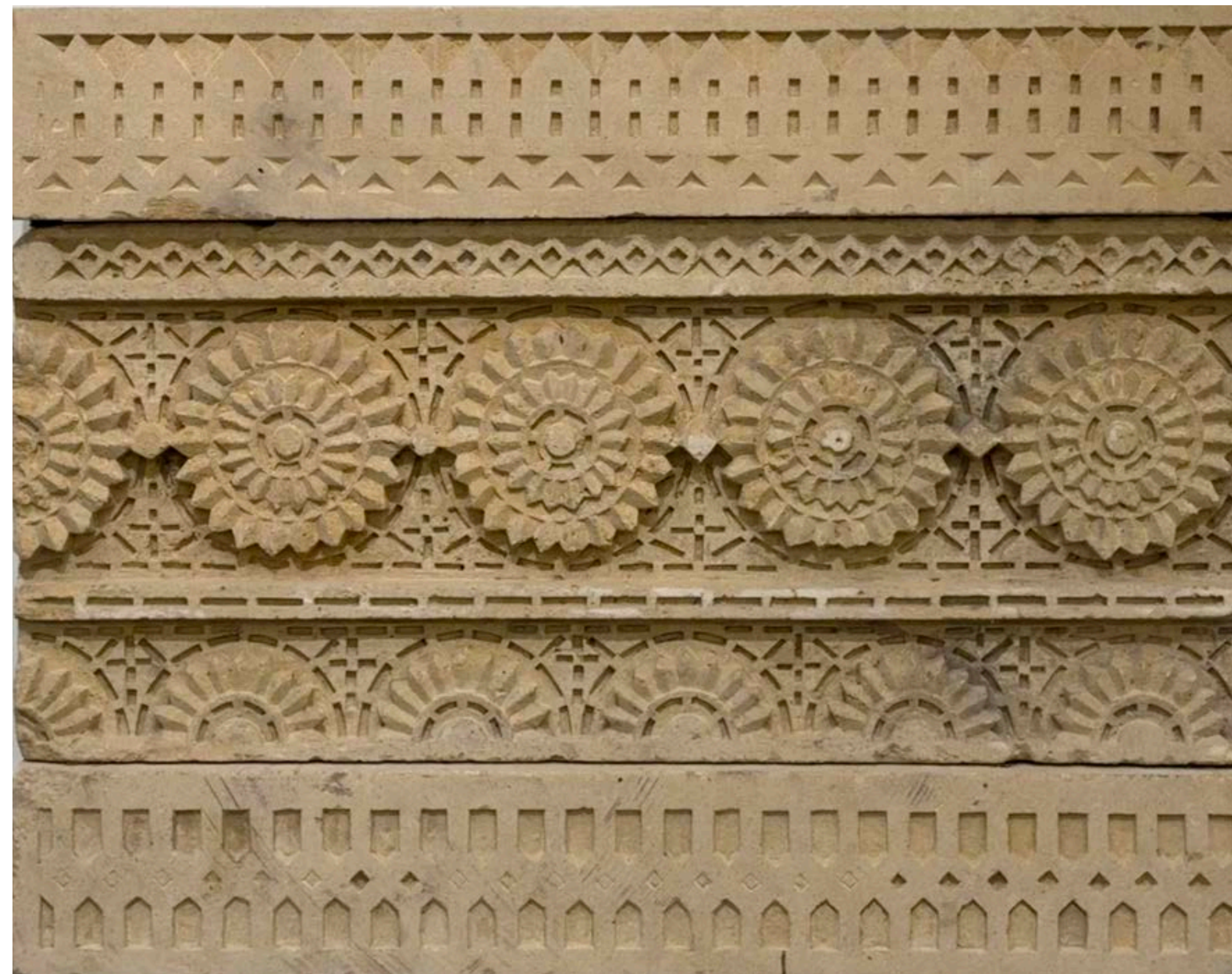
Following in the footsteps of my ancestors, I use the same material – sandstone – to create works to continue the tradition of exceptional stone-carving skills.





**Chawkundi Panel 1 (Left)**  
 Hand Carved sandstone  
 33 x 60 inches (in 4 panels)  
 2025

**Chawkundi Panel 2**  
 Hand Carved sandstone  
 36 x 28 x 6 inches (in 3 pieces)  
 2025





# Muhammad Darab Muneer



**Whisper from the Past**  
Afghan Mango White Marble  
16×15×13 inches  
2025



# Whisper from the Past

A hand of stone, so bold, so bright,

Carved in silence, bathed in light.

Still yet speaking, firm yet free,

A mark of time for all to see.

Reaching high, yet standing tall,

A touch of power, felt by all.

Though set in stone, it speaks so true,

A timeless echo, old yet new.





# Sherezad Rahimtoola



**Pink Cascade Emerald Necklace**  
Emerald weighing 49.05 cts  
Cut pink Kashmiri tourmalines 10.12 cts  
22 karat gold 26.7125 grams  
Round diamonds 3.27cts  
Marquis diamonds 2.42  
Pendant size: 6.9 x 4.5 cm  
2025



# Pink Cascade Emerald Necklace

This exquisite necklace embodies South Asian heritage and masterful craftsmanship, uniting the region’s finest gemstones. At its heart lies a hand-carved emerald from Chitral, crafted in Peshawar with intricate Mughal-inspired motifs, exuding timeless elegance.

Encircling the emerald is a halo of rare Kashmiri pink tourmalines, their soft glow contrasting beautifully with the deep green center. Set in 22-karat yellow gold with delicate filigree and engraving, the setting enhances its regal charm.

Strands of faceted pink tourmaline beads cascade gracefully, adding movement and depth. Every element of this necklace tells a rich story, making it a true wearable masterpiece of South Asian artistry.





# Muhammad Ammar Raza



# Sil Batta

This film is more than the making of pudine ki chutney — it’s an inheritance. The Sil Batta, worn down by generations, carries the imprints of countless hands. Each grind is a ritual, bridging past and present. As the stone erodes, so do the barriers of time. More than a condiment, this is legacy, labour, and love — etched into the very tools that shape us.



Sil Batta  
4K Video, 3.31 minutes  
Video Stills  
2025



# Nabeel Majeed Shaikh



**Illuminated Knowledge.**  
33 x 11.5 x 6 inch wooden box  
13 carved books in pink, honey,  
white and gray onyx marble  
Various sizes  
2024



# Marble Sculptures

Marble carving, rooted in the annals of artistic history, is a time-honored technique with origins dating back to ancient Mesopotamia. In its nascent stages, artisans utilized marble to craft rudimentary depictions of animals and figures, embracing both naturalistic and anthropomorphic forms. This venerable artistic tradition transcended geographical boundaries, leaving an indelible mark on civilizations such as Egypt, Greece, Rome, and, most notably, the Renaissance era. Within my artistic practice, I am dedicated to bridging the gap between classical marble carving techniques and modern mediums, such as laser scoring and digital UV printing.

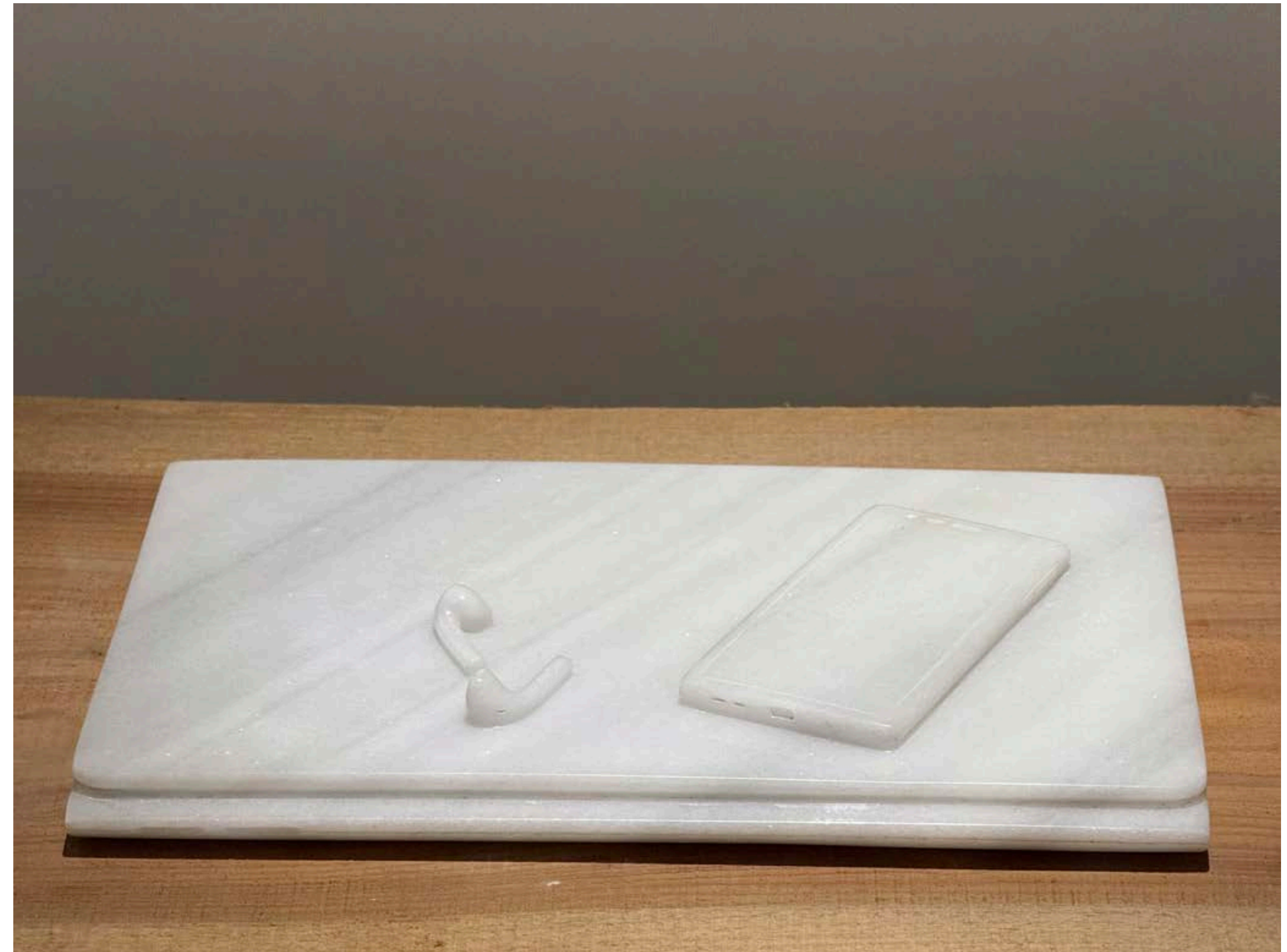
This fusion aims to contribute to the sculptural tradition by introducing innovative approaches that resonate with contemporary sensibilities. At the core of my artistic inquiry lies the meticulous sourcing of marble from diverse regions across the country. This carefully chosen material serves as the primary canvas for my exploration, where I intricately carved detailed books. Although these sculptures exude a striking realism, inviting viewers to engage with them on a tactile level, the inherent weight and unyielding nature of marble preclude any attempt to physically leaf through the pages. This intentional paradox serves as a profound commentary on the prevailing socio-political and economic complexities of our contemporary society.

Through this body of work, my aim is to provoke contemplation and foster discourse, utilizing the enduring medium of marble to illuminate the contemporary challenges that shape our world. Each sculpture, conceived through a delicate interplay of tradition and innovation, stands as a testament to the enduring power of art to encapsulate and convey the intricate narratives of our time.





**The Secret.**  
2.6 x 7 x 10 inches  
Carved Ziarat White Marble  
2025



**E Book.**  
1.8 x 13.5 x 9.5 inches  
Carved Ziarat White Marble  
2021

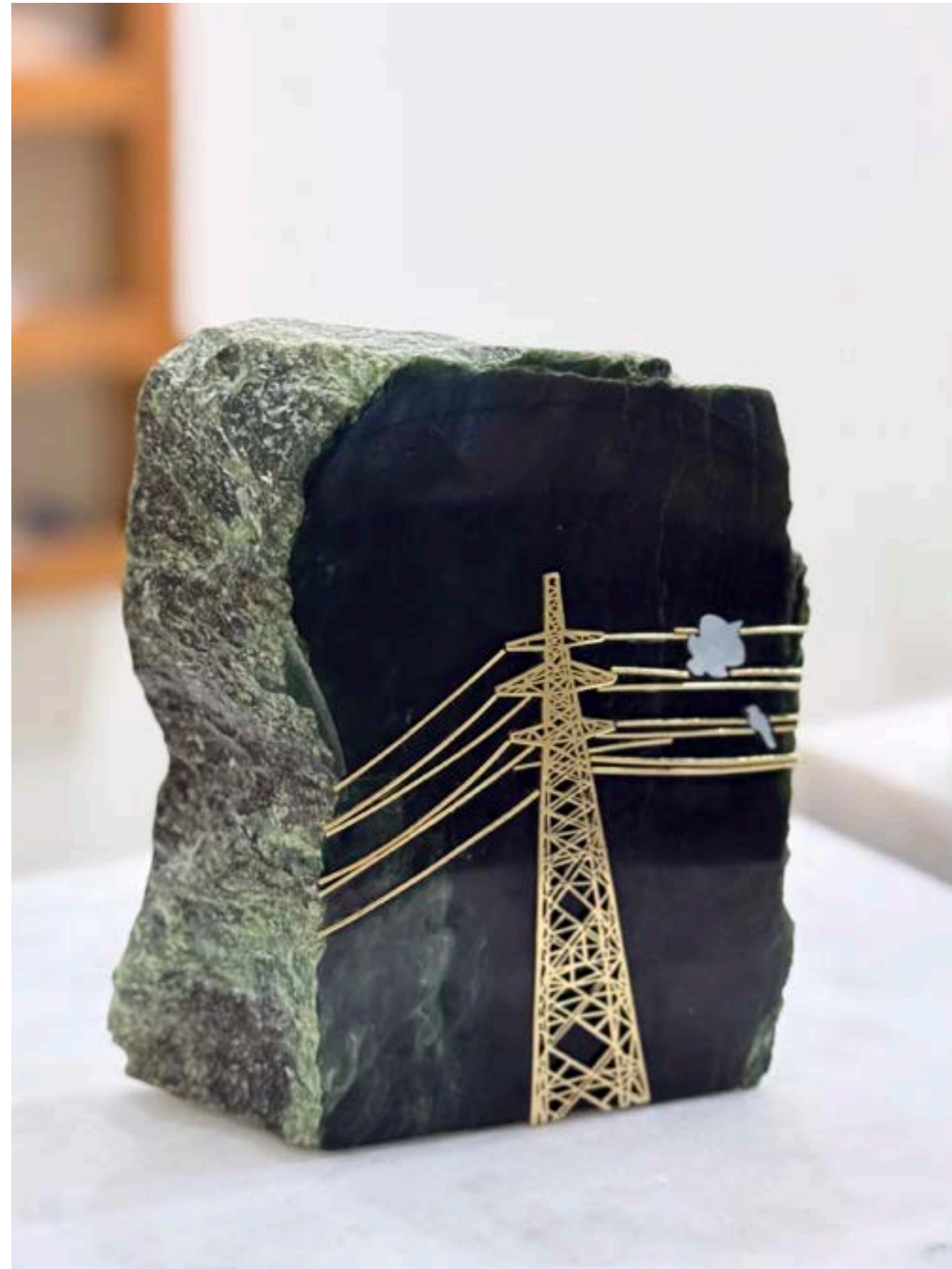


# Mariya Suhail



**Wired Symphony – A Glimpse into  
Everyday Pakistan I**  
Jade Gemstone, Brass Inlay  
6x4 inches  
2025

**Wired Symphony – A Glimpse into  
Everyday Pakistan II**  
Amazonite gemstone, Brass Inlay  
12 x 6 inches (3 pieces)  
2025



# Whispers of the Land

At Orah Jewels, we transform Pakistan's natural gemstones into timeless creations that narrate stories of heritage, culture, and the rugged beauty of the land. Our pieces draw inspiration from ancient architectural marvels like Makli's intricate patterns and the grandeur of Pakistan's historical sites, while the bold statement designs from our Omid Collection echo the raw, untamed spirit of Pakistan's mountainous landscapes. Each piece is a tribute to craftsmanship, where nature's raw beauty meets refined artistry.



**Whispers of the Land**  
Installation Shot





**Emaan – Faith Beyond Sight**  
Amazonite Gemstone, Brass  
22 x 16 inches  
2025

**Hub – The Essence of Love**  
Aventurine Gemstone, Brass  
22 x 16 inches  
2025

**Bismillah – Where Every Journey Begins**  
Amazonite Gemstone, Brass  
22 x 16 inches  
2025



**Whispers of the Land**  
Gemstone Rocks and Cabochons  
Various Sizes  
2025



# ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES





## Meherunnisa Asad | Studio Lél

Meherunnisa Asad is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice explores material storytelling to reconstruct lost histories and reimagine identity. Born in Peshawar, a city shaped by migration and displacement, her work is deeply rooted in place, poetry, and the enduring resilience of the human spirit.

Central to Asad’s work is the art of stone mosaic, a discipline that peaked during the 16th-century Florentine Renaissance with Pietra Dura, or “painting in stone.” Expanding upon this tradition, she merges it with diverse techniques- including sculpture, verre églomisé (engraving on glass), scagliola (plaster inlay), cloisonné (enameling), lapidary (gem cutting), and intricate metalwork in copper and brass. Inspired by the composite painting traditions of Indian and Persian art, she layers imagery and precious materials to evoke narratives of memory, migration, and transformation. Through this convergence of techniques, she reimagines stonework as a dynamic and evolving language, bridging the past with the present.

Collaborating with local and displaced Afghan artisans, Asad builds on a legacy of craftsmanship pioneered by her mother, Farhana Asad, over three decades ago. In her work, the craft is not merely an act of preservation but a form of resistance- a means of reclaiming erased narratives and reconstructing Pashtun identity globally. Just as Pietra Dura assembles fragments of stone into intricate compositions, she seeks to bring together a community fractured by conflict, fostering spaces

of healing, collaboration, and renewal. She pushes these art forms beyond their traditional contexts, shaping new visual languages that challenge the distinctions between craft and contemporary art.

Raised in an environment steeped in art, antiquities, and Peshawar’s historic bazaars, Asad developed a keen sensitivity to materiality and ornamentation. Her background as a conservation architect with the Aga Khan Historic Cities Program deepened her engagement with cultural heritage and its reinvention in the present. As Artistic Director of Studio Lél- founded by her mother in 1996- she has expanded its reach to international biennales and exhibitions, bridging artisanal knowledge with contemporary artistic dialogues.

A Gates Foundation award recipient, Asad holds degrees from the National College of Arts in Lahore and Pratt Institute in New York. She currently lives between Egypt and Pakistan.

### Studio Lél

Studio Lél is an interdisciplinary atelier based in Peshawar, Pakistan, founded in 1996 by Farhana Asad and now led by her daughter, Meherunnisa Asad. The studio is recognized for its innovative approach to stone inlay, merging the centuries-old technique of Pietra Dura with cloisonné, scagliola, verré églomisé, lapidary, and copper work to create contemporary expressions of material storytelling. At its core, Studio Lél is more than an atelier- it is a space where art reshapes identity and heritage is reimagined. Working closely with local and displaced Afghan artisans, the studio fosters collaboration,

ensuring that traditional knowledge evolves rather than fades. Through this interplay between past and present, Studio Lél’s work challenges conventional boundaries between art, design, and craft.

In the face of displacement and erasure, craft at Studio Lél becomes an act of resistance- reclaiming Pashtun identity through material and form. Each piece is imbued with histories of migration and survival, transforming artisanal traditions into powerful narratives of resilience.

Under Meherunnisa Asad’s artistic direction, the studio has expanded its global presence, showcasing at international biennales, exhibitions, and leading art fairs, while continuing to draw inspiration from its deeply rooted connections to Peshawar. Studio Lél remains dedicated to its ethos of transformation- where each piece carries a story of reinvention, defiance, and enduring craftsmanship.

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Instagram: [www.instagram.com/studio\\_lel](https://www.instagram.com/studio_lel)

Website: <https://studio-lel.com/>

## Faysal Khan Elahi

Faysal Khan Elahi is a travel photographer from northern Pakistan, specifically the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province. An avid backpacker and hitchhiker, he has spent years capturing the essence of landscapes, cultures, and heritage through his lens. His work has been exhibited and published internationally, and he has received multiple awards for his photography, including

recent recognition from the KPK government. Passionate about storytelling, Faysal believes that travel photography is not just about images but about preserving moments in time. His recent work explores archaeological stones, connecting history with the present through visual narratives.

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Instagram: [www.instagram.com/faysal.khan.elahi](https://www.instagram.com/faysal.khan.elahi)

## EssaNoor Associates

EssaNoor Associates focus on documentation of heritage and on archeological surveying based on 3D laser scanner, drone, GPS, GPR, and on architecture design and conservation. This work includes data processing and interpretation, so that the final project we deliver is effective in supporting conservation. We also produce digital reconstructions of heritage buildings, which contributes to interpretation of sites, supports engagement and facilitates their history to the broader public which may struggle to understand the site otherwise. We strive to ensure that all our work includes awareness raising about cultural heritage both for local people and for the authorities.

Whenever possible we add an element of on-the-job training for local people, especially women. We also engage in heritage management and promotion of heritage for tourism

We cooperate with the local authorities in Pakistan, and globally, Depending on circumstances we either implement start to end management of the projects,



or provide experts who support organisations in conducting restoration and conservation of built heritage and archeological sites.

Website: <https://enassociates.org/>

## Salman Khan

A self-made individual driven by passion and resilience, Salman Khan has navigated numerous challenges to become a leading figure in humanitarian work. Born and raised in Swat, Pakistan, Salman has witnessed the region's rich cultural heritage and its resilience, inspiring his work in storytelling, conservation, and community development.

With an academic background in Forestry from the University of Swat, Salman has worked with esteemed organizations such as Deutsche Welle, UNICEF, UNESCO, WWF, producing engaging content that amplifies marginalized voices and sheds light on pressing environmental issues. His notable accomplishments include leading the project and heritage management team for preserving late Buddhist rock reliefs in Swat Valley involving international Partners and government.

A self-taught expert in Adobe Creative Suite, video production, and storytelling, Salman effectively communicates complex ideas and inspires action. His values of resilience, adaptability, and community-driven work guide his humanitarian efforts.

He continues to leverage his skills and experience to drive positive change, promote cultural preservation,

and inspire a new generation of leaders and changemakers.

## The Architects | Studio Tariq Hasan

Tariq Hasan, Principal Architect of The Architects – Studio Tariq Hasan in Karachi, founded the firm in 1988. Before returning to Pakistan, he practiced in the USA after graduating from the University of Texas. His work has been featured in forums globally and he has received the Emerging Architects Award from the American Institute of Architects in 1984. Known for contextually relevant modern design, he returned to Pakistan, dedicating 43 years to architecture, master planning, and academia. His diverse portfolio includes hospitals, schools, universities, civic buildings, town planning, and housing projects, collaborating with organizations like AKDN, ICT, and SOS Villages to develop energy-efficient and contextually responsive designs across Pakistan. As a founding faculty member of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in 1990, he played a key role in shaping the studio design curriculum and mentoring students for 25 years, many of whom are now leading architects. Beyond his practice, he actively participates in numerous expositions exploring materiality, form, and thought.

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/studiotariqhasan](https://www.instagram.com/studiotariqhasan)

Website: <https://www.studiotariqhasan.com/>

## Syed Noor Hussain

Syed Noor Hussain is a Civil Servant and an officer of the Pakistan Administrative Service, serving in the Government of Pakistan. A graduate of the National College of Arts (NCA) Lahore, where he studied architecture, Noor discovered his passion for photography and filmmaking during his academic years.

His work is inspired by his deep interest in the history, architecture, and anthropology of Pakistan, which he explores through a blend of visual storytelling and personal reflection. Through his work he seeks to explore the connections between culture, heritage, and the human experience. His photographs and films aim to share the stories and layers of Pakistan's identity, weaving together the threads of its past and present.

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## Dr. Asma Ibrahim T.I.

Dr. Asma Ibrahim is a senior Archaeologist/ Museologist & Conservationist, who has been working in the fields of archaeology and museums for the past four decades. She is the founder/director of State Bank Museum, Archives & Art Gallery department. Dr. Asma Ibrahim is also the founder member of Sindh Exploration and Adventure Society – SEAS Pakistan, an NGO undertaking projects for cultural preservation. Her recent projects include the conservation of the 19th century Frere Hall,

Karachi and the ancient Varun Dev temple on Manora Island. She is currently working to establish the Quetta Archaeological Museum.

She is actively serving on several consultative committees for Government of Sindh, Board of Governors of various Educational Institutions, Centre for Archaeological & Environmental Research, International Advisory Committee, Aga Khan Faculty of Arts & Sciences, and served as Heritage consultant to World Bank. Chair for ICOMON (International council of money & banking Museums), Member technical committee for Sindh Cultural Heritage.

She is author of several research articles and catalogues and books. Her research projects have been featured in documentaries by BBC, Discovery Channel, ZDF and BBC Channel-4.

Website: [www.asmaibrahim.com](http://www.asmaibrahim.com)

## Muhammad Ilyas

Muhammed Ilyas is a master slate/ schist carver from a village near Haripur in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Inspired by intricate designs on graves, which reflected the deceased's profession, personality, or hobbies, Ilyas has been perfecting his craft since childhood. Learning from his father and grandfather, he has evolved the traditional art form over five decades, creating some large decorative pieces and now since the stone is not easily available some beautiful objects for everyday use.



A recipient of the World Crafts Council’s Award of Excellence, Ilyas continues to uphold his family’s legacy, despite concerns about the profession’s economic future. His work is a testament to his dedication to sustaining a centuries-old family tradition.

## Ramazan Kaka

Ramazan Kaka is a master stonemason from the Swat Valley in northern Pakistan, whose work transcends time and culture. For over 30 years, Ramazan has dedicated himself to perfecting his craft, drawing inspiration from the ancient Gandharan motifs and patterns that dates back to the 8th century.

His art, deeply rooted in the Buddhist heritage of the valley, reflects a blend of history, culture, and personal devotion. Despite facing societal-religious constraints and the financial pressures of life, Ramazan remains committed to his craft, shaping stone into intricate pots, stupas, and other artifacts. His desire to create is driven not by fame or wealth, but by a deep, almost spiritual connection to the ancient artistry that surrounds him.

A remarkable timeless beauty of craftsmanship and the quiet persistence of an artist in the face of adversity.

## Dr. Zufiqar Kalhoro

Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro is a Research Anthropologist at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). He holds a Ph.D. in Asian Studies and specializes in the anthropology of art. Kalhoro has made significant contributions to the discovery and documentation of rock art sites in Gilgit-Baltistan and Sindh, and has written extensively on material and visual cultures. He is a regular contributor to leading publications and has participated in international conferences.

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/kalhoroanthropologist](https://www.instagram.com/kalhoroanthropologist)

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## Raza Muhammad

Raza Muhammad belongs to the Burfat tribe. He learned stone carving in 2008. Born into a family of herders, his grandfather and father worked with livestock, and he initially followed in their footsteps. However, he began training in stone carving in 2008 and has continued to hone his craft since then.

Raza Muhammad’s notable projects include working on Baloch stone graves in his village of Taung and conservation work at the ancient excavation in Bhambore.

He also worked on the restoration of the historical Varun Dev Temple at Manora, a project undertaken by SEAS Pakistan. Additionally, he created a large mural for the new Islamabad Airport under Noorjehan Bilgrami’s supervision.

Other notable works include designing the gateway of Thatta Museum and participating in ‘Manzil,’ a craft/design exhibition held at Koel Art Gallery. Recently, he restored the stone arch at Nusserwanji Building, IVS, and contributed to the conservation project at Frere Hall, Karachi, both under the supervision of SEAS Pakistan.

## Muhammad Darab Muneer

Muhammad Darab is a sculptor from Karachi, Pakistan, whose work merges classical Renaissance influences with contemporary interpretations. With formal training from the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, he explores the timeless beauty of marble while incorporating modern elements that challenge traditional perceptions of stone carving.

His sculptures focus on realism, material contrasts, and fragmented forms, reinterpreting classical art in a way that resonates with contemporary audiences. He has exhibited his work in various galleries and art festivals, showcasing his ability to balance historical craftsmanship with innovative techniques.

By blending the grandeur of the past with fresh perspectives, Muhammad Darab continues to push the boundaries of sculpture, creating thought-provoking pieces that redefine the role of classical art in modern times.

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## Sherezaad Rahimtoola

Sherezaad Fine Jewellery was founded over three decades ago by Sherezaad Rahimtoola, an Architecture graduate with a keen eye for detail. Inspired by a childhood surrounded by women adorned in exquisite jewellery, she developed a deep passion for timeless elegance.

Each piece is personally designed by Sherezaad, reflecting her dedication to precision and craftsmanship. True to its Persian name, meaning “Princess,” the brand creates meticulously handcrafted jewellery using the finest precious stones, diamonds, and pearls, set in gold, embodying regal charm and sophistication.

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/sherezaadjewellery](https://www.instagram.com/sherezaadjewellery)

## Muhammad Ammar Raza

Muhammad Ammar Raza (b. 2003, Karachi) is a multidisciplinary artist studying Communication Design at Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture. His work blends self-reflection, hyperreality, and philosophical inquiry, exploring themes of self-identity, introspection, and the mundane. Ammar’s art challenges perceptions by fusing personal experiences with broader existential narratives. Through design, illustration, and experimental media, he pushes the boundaries of visual storytelling, navigating the complexities of contemporary life.

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## Nabeel Majeed Shaikh

Nabeel Majeed Shaikh, a seasoned artist hailing from Karachi, has established a distinguished artistic journey marked by significant educational achievements and a profound commitment to the exploration of diverse artistic mediums. In 2020, Nabeel completed his second bachelor's degree at the National College of Arts Lahore, following his earlier academic pursuits, including a Master's in International Relations from Karachi University in 2012 and a BA from the same institution in 2009. Specializing in sculpture, Nabeel's artistic practice is a testament to his passion.

for working with various materials, with a particular fondness for Marble and Paper. Based in Karachi, he employs his artistic prowess to shed light on a wide spectrum of political, social, and economic issues. Nabeel's artistic endeavors extend beyond his studio, as evidenced by his active participation in conferences, exhibitions, and art galleries. Among his notable exhibitions are two-person shows at Nomad Art Gallery in 2019, participation in the Islamabad Art Festival in the same year, and the showcase of his artwork at Hoxton's basement in London in 2017 under the title "Sugarcoated." Additionally, his contributions include the exhibition "Light Art and Action" at V.M Art Gallery in 2016, "MAD in KARACHI (ii)" at Artchowk The Gallery in 2013, and "Pursukoon Karachi" at Koel Gallery at Art Council Karachi in 2013.

Further enriching his artistic portfolio are exhibitions like "Analogical Paradigms" at IVS Gallery and

"AWAAZ Baldia Fire Factory Inferno" at Art Council Karachi, both in 2013. Nabeel Majeed Shaikh's work stands as a compelling narrative that transcends boundaries, offering profound insights into the complex fabric of contemporary society.

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/nabeelmajeedshaikh](https://www.instagram.com/nabeelmajeedshaikh)

## Mariya Suhail

Mariya Suhail is the founder and creative force behind Orah Jewels, established in 2012. With a passion for preserving Pakistan's rich cultural heritage, she leads a team of over 60 artisans, blending traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design. Mariya's work celebrates the beauty of Pakistani gemstones, transforming them into jewelry and home décor that reflect the soul of the region. She established Pakistan's first gemstone processing facility, pioneering the transformation of raw stones into finely crafted pieces. Currently, Orah Jewels processes 25 varieties of Pakistani gemstones sourced from across the country. Under her leadership, Orah Jewels has become a symbol of authenticity, where every creation tells a story of heritage, nature, and art.

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# THE CURATORS

## Sadiqa Tayebaly

Sadiqa Husain Tayebaly is a Product Designer and Entrepreneur with over 35 years of experience in the field of design and craft.

She studied Product Design from the Pakistan Design Institute and before that was at the National College of Arts Lahore and Karachi Grammar School.

Sadiqa founded Tali, Karachi in 2007 – a brand which works towards sustaining Pakistan’s craft and culture, collaborating with artisans nationwide, and economically empowering communities.

She is a board member of Pakistan We-Net (Pakistan Women Entrepreneurs Network for Trade) and also a trustee of the Pakistan Crafts Council.

She has been on the selection team for the Award of Excellence by the World Craft Council and was also part of the committee for the Dubai Expo Bazaar in the Pakistan Pavilion.

Sadiqa has participated in exhibitions locally and internationally and has won several awards for design, mentoring and leadership.

## Sohail Zuberi

Sohail Zuberi is a Karachi-based multidisciplinary artist whose practice critiques urban development, dichotomies, and disparities in Karachi. Utilising found materials and digital/physical archives accumulated over years, his work offers nuanced reflections on the city’s transformations.

Zuberi’s ongoing research on Karachi’s coastal ecologies culminated in two solo shows “Archaeologies of Tomorrow I and II” (2018 and 2022). He was commissioned for the Karachi Biennale (2017, 2019) and has participated in residencies, workshops, and conferences across South Asia, Europe, and North America.

With over two decades of academic experience, Zuberi has taught design, fine art, and photography at the University of Karachi, Textile Institute of Pakistan, and Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, where he also headed the Communication Design department. He has guest lectured at Eindhoven Design Academy (The Netherlands) and served as trustee for Vasl Artists’ Collective, board member for Pakistan Chowk Cultural Centre, and core team member for Numaish-Karachi.

Recent engagements include participation in two Lahore Biennale 2024 collateral shows, Ajam Media Collective’s residency at Lahore Binnale 2020 and curating the International Public Art Festival (IPAF 2020) in Karachi.

Currently, Zuberi leads design and production at Tali, a contemporary craft design brand, while teaching as adjunct faculty at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture.





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