

THE PIONEER ART RESIDENCY



Volume 1

curated by Canvas Gallery

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Messages



Message from Aly Khan Director

At Pioneer Cement we no longer envisage organizational growth from just a fiscal perspective. Our view over the years has expanded to include a panoramic assessment of what we define as growing (something that we constantly endeavor toward). It is with this thinking that we have begun to forge a path to converge our social responsibility with that of broadening cultural awareness for the Arts in Pakistan. This, of course, begins at home. As such, I take great pleasure in sharing this brief booklet highlighting our inaugural Artist-in-Residence Program, The Pioneer Art Residency.

The First Edition of our Program featured six emerging visual artists from around Pakistan who were invited to inhabit our factory near Jouharabad, District Khushab. They resided at our plant creating works of art over a two-week period. Today these works are displayed around our facilities for our staff and frequent visitors to engage with.

It was important for us to have invited these young artists to stay amongst our staff to foster a mutual understanding and appreciation for each other plus enable the artists to be creative away from the difficulty of their daily responsibilities.

I strongly hope that the steps we have taken set the precedent for private sector participation and contribution toward the Arts in our country. It is a cause we at Pioneer Cement hold very dear to our hearts.



Message from Sameera Raja Curator

Since its inception in 1999, the mission of Canvas Gallery has been to promote modern and contemporary art in Pakistan. In addition to working with established artists, our key focus is to showcase emerging artists - most of whom are now nationally and internationally renowned.

Our aim has been to identify artists from various parts of the country and provide them a nurturing platform. We have provided the stage for conceptual artists to showcase cutting-edge and experimental works, including digital works, sculptures, installations and video art. We are humbled by the recognition that our efforts have generated and feel truly blessed to be acknowledged as the leading contemporary art gallery of Pakistan.

Being a leader means doing things that have not been done before. With that in mind, we conceptualized and curated a two-week Residency Program for six emerging visual artists, who lived on site and produced large-scale sculptural works using the materials and expertise available at Pioneer Cement's Plant in Khushab District, Punjab. This enabled the artists to get away from the stresses of their regular urban life, live in a remote industrial area and interact with the staff that worked and lived at the Plant. Simultaneously, the staff and personnel of Pioneer Cement came in close contact with the artists and the process of art making, which they had hitherto not been exposed to.

The Residency Artists: Ehsan Memon, Jibran Shahid, Mahbub Jokhio, Safdar Ali, Suleman Faisal and Umar Nawaz are young, talented sculptors who have shown promise and who we hope will persevere in a field, which does not get the exposure and credit it deserves. This endeavor would not have been possible without the support of our three mentors, esteemed artists and art educationists; Hamra Abbas, Nausheen Saeed and Quddus Mirza, whose invaluable guidance and vision helped our Resident Artists in formulating the works for the Residency.

The works coming out of this Residency Program are now part of the landscape of the Pioneer Cement premises, which accomodates a large number of employees with their families.

Finally, my personal and heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Aly Khan and the management of Pioneer Cement for their patronage and sponsorship of the arts in Pakistan. We look forward to making this an annual event and leading the way towards more appreciation and awareness of the arts in Pakistan.

Thank you for being part of our dream.



Message from Mazhar Iqbal CEO

Pioneer Cement is a Public Limited Company, listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange. We are involved in the manufacturing and sale of cement and are located in District Khushab in the heart of the province of Punjab. Our plant can be found at a distance of 34 km from the city of Khushab in a secluded area close to the small town of Chenki, inhabited by only a few thousand residents. We are the largest industrial business in our district.

Cement Factories are normally located in isolated areas close to quarries of the major raw materials required to manufacture cement. Locations such as where our plant is, make it difficult for our employees and residents of our surrounding district to experience certain cultural attractions that are normally an easily accessible part of life in larger cities, such as public art.

It is because our organization not only believes in providing a healthy environment for our employees through different social and community activities, but also because we make a point to undertake various CSR activities for residents around our vicinity and the general public at large that we decided to enable these assorted stakeholders to experience ground-breaking art first hand.

As a way to promote and appreciate the work of creative emerging artists, Pioneer Cement arranged an Artist-in-Residence Program at our factory from the 31st of March till the 15th of April 2017 called The Pioneer Art Residency. Six emerging artists from around Pakistan were invited to our plant for two-weeks. All necessary support was provided to them for the reflection of their ideas, creativity and production of their works. The following artists participated: Ehsan Memon, Jibran Shahid, Mahbub Jokhio, Safdar Ali, Suleman Faisal and Umar Nawaz.

The artists had the opportunity to meet people from various disciplines, use multiple materials and experience life in a totally different environment from what they were normally used to. They were given the opportunity to interact with world-renowned artists as mentors, who helped them visualize their dreams. The mentors who visited them through their processes were Hamra Abbas, Nausheen Saeed & Quddus Mirza.

An open day event was organized on the 15th of April 2017 to appreciate the works of the artists. Various students and professors attended this event from the National College of Arts, Lahore and Beaconhouse National University, Lahore as well as Pioneer Cement employees and their families. District Administration Officials, Bankers and several Corporate Clients also participated in the event while heaping praise/appreciation for this first of its kind activity in Pakistan's private sector.

Of course, it is important to appreciate the involvement and efforts of Canvas Gallery and its founder Sameera Raja in making this activity and the residency possible. She worked tirelessly to conceptualize/curate the project and with the help of our team, bring it to life.

Mentors



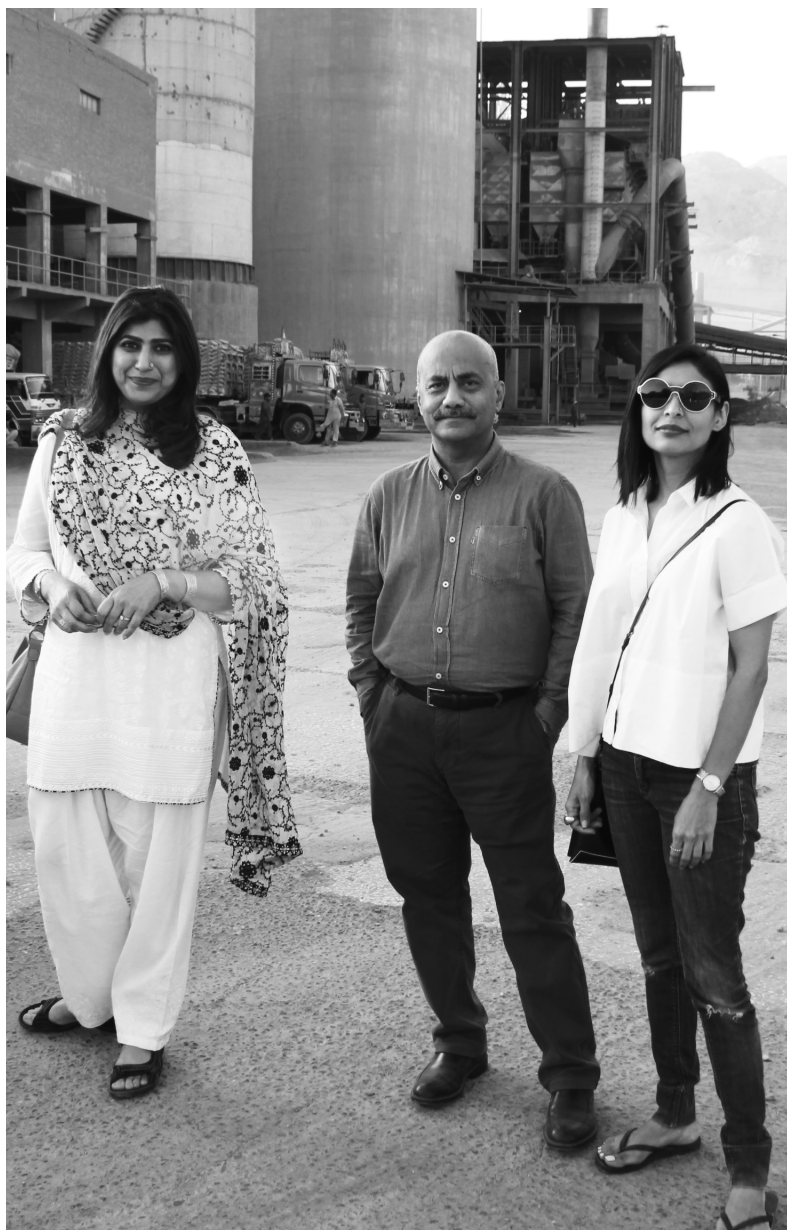
Hamra Abbas



Nausheen Saeed



Quddus Mirza



Pioneer Idea, Perfect Initiative

Quddus Mirza

In his novel 'The Informers' Juan Gabriel Vasquez writes: "... the conspiracy of things (what we call luck) was on our side". One can sense the same feeling at an exhibition of great works of art, even if the objects displayed are not by well-known artists or famous figures. It is the creative quality – or what one usually identifies as investigation into reality, that ensures the life and longer appreciation of an artwork.

Our society deals with creative endeavours in a diverse way. The public seemingly fails to understand or refuses to enjoy the outcome of these endeavours while at times the state is reluctant to support them. For our officials, bureaucrats and political leaders, art making can seem a frivolous indulgence that can be ignored or discouraged due to the immeasurable amount of other socio-economic issues we face. When we do happen to have a culturally inclined government, the idea of art is seen through a somewhat telescopic view (usually suited for the purpose of decoration in houses) and not as an experience of sharing knowledge, ideas and imagination.

Oftentimes, art making is a way of inviting others inside your private self. An inherently impossible task due simply to the fact that no matter how close a person may be to another individual (physically or emotionally) no one is able to access their dreams or grasp their thoughts like themselves. Irrespective of this, an artist desires and designs creative output in such a format that a viewer from their immediate surroundings or different locations, their present time or distant futures, may relate to his/her work while perhaps adding personal meanings and definitions to it as a means of broadening the perspective of the works connotation beyond just its creator.

Art in a way is a means to construct bridges between a person's individuality and viewer's perceptions of their collective existence; like a mirror, fluid in its interpretation from angle-to-angle, person-to-person and time-to-time. A reflection of perpetually shifting set of contexts. Making the familiar and banal activity of looking into a mirror, a mode of accepting a modified ever-changing reality. At each interaction, we not only discover something new about art, but also discover hidden aspects of our surroundings and of ourselves. Any venture

therefore, that makes this activity possible is not only about a single person's private expression, but a course to connect people across cultures, boundaries, borders, classes and classifications.

In many instances, this notion of confinement in connection with the viewer is a tightly woven part of the intricate fabric of the art world. Mediums, techniques, styles, schools of thought and commercial gains along with acceptance, appreciation and stature (feeble social constructs) often determine an artist's frame of work. Thus, any entity that creates a possibility for artists to shift from their conditioning opens up a new venue in the artists system of thought. It is only in such new shifts that artists are able to discover something exciting and different about their lives and body of work, sans the norms and pressures of their profession.

The Pioneer Art Residency provided this opportunity for a few young visual artists to move beyond their standard behaviour by exploring something unseen to them (of course what one finds in these situations is not dissimilar to what one already has within themselves, but one needs this outside stimuli to perhaps externalize their feelings out of a usual framework). In the residencies first edition, curated by Sameera Raja, the aforementioned young artists produced site-specific sculptures at the Pioneer Cement Factory deep in Punjab while having an experience that was not possible in their routine existence.

In the artist's studio one attempts to enter into a domain of dreams where everything is possible and all imaginable ideas/concepts are not only practical, but also acceptable until the reality of socio-economic context becomes apparent. The artists who were invited to The Pioneer Residency faced no such reality; instead they were endowed with endless options. The support provided by the sponsors, Pioneer Cement, enabled these individuals to visualize and fabricate their wildest ideas. An incredible chance and occasion for them as the sky was the limit.

The sky around Khushab is not the same dirty, dusty and smoky screen you see in Lahore (where the majority of the residencies participating artists live). It is a brilliant coat of cobalt blue, spread from the outlines of mountains to the edge of ones hairline. Clouds are fluffy, near and inviting, they seem like cotton candy floating above the Earth. Trees, flowers and an expanse of green suggest an idea of land that could be mistaken for a Mediterranean location, a liberating non-judgemental environment, to say the least. Living at Pioneer Cement

Factory unshackled the artists from the limits of boundaries and relations not least the constraints of space and availability in the cities in which they live.

Cement is a material that comes from local substances, but once it is packed, transported and consumed, it loses its sense of initial/indigenous identity (barring a label or trademark), the crushed powder that constitutes bags of cement however, remains identical across the globe. Unlike the worldwide universalness of cement, as we travel around the planet we come to know of problems linked with the pigmentation of our skin. These disparities between different nations and races are part of a global economic imbalance, rooted in our historical past.

Umar Nawaz, a young sculptor working in Lahore and teaching at the National College of Arts Lahore, on an unconscious level recognized these differences, so he chose to erect his residency piece made entirely of white cement. White could be a metaphor, or merely a choice of shade, which the artist wished to select against a background of blue sky and green patch. Stacks of sacks piled on top of each other look like a present day interpretation of the Tower of Babylon. For the artist the chance to add piles of white cement consolidated by watering them and removing their wrapping was a spectacle that echoes historic towers, minarets and monumental edifices. His work is poetically aesthetic, yet cerebral in its color choice.

The environment in the case of Mahbub Jokhio is not a geographical one, but one more dominating and determining. It is to some degree spiritual in nature. For him a person is seeking their identity in the present world and sometimes stumbles upon rituals or national narratives. So Mahbub constructed a combination of cubes that connect to elementary geometrical shapes/orders. The work refers to how faith, formalism, nationalism and marketing economy converge into one. Jokhio's cube-like structures have a sense of perfect mathematical solution, alluding to other such configurations of their dimension and design. His smaller cube next to his larger one addresses the matter of similarities and differences, especially in a world that thrives on the idea and practice of simulacra. In our contemporary surroundings, the distinction between original and replica, the difference between initial and copy is diminishing whether it is in the realm of art, technology, communication or other areas of cultures. Reality is often repeated to such an extent that it becomes fiction.

This relation or tension between truth and fiction is addressed by Ehsan Memon's sculpture of a weighing scale hung from the ceiling of one of the factories residential blocks. With weights

placed on both sides the scale is in perfect equilibrium, but if one looks at the scales load distribution, one notices that it cannot be equal. However, is because some of the weights placed on the scale are real while the artist has fabricated others. His manner of forging is so convincing that it is hard, rather impossible, to differentiate real (iron) and fabricated (fibre-glass). Memon's sculpture is a reminder of his past work in which he has created hyper realistic art, only a possibility because the artist's command of his material is superb.

In some instances, material fascinates the artist so much so that it takes the lead and guides his/her imagination. One can witness the importance of substance in Jibran Shahid's residency work. Huge metal pipes are cut like the nib of a pen and then joined to suggest an organic form. The interplay of solid mass and open space, and the contrast along with connection of smooth shiny surfaces with rough patches invites a viewer to imagine multiple objects, both natural and man-made.

To some, the practice of combining reality with imagination is a creative act. Suleman Faisal in his large-scale sculpture at the factory grounds has managed to accomplish that feat. Like regular civil construction work Faisal has made a column of cement, but in his work the column is not part of a building. It assumes the sense of a living entity swelling and bulging with folds of flesh. One can never connect a simple and geometric form with this 'deformity', but the builders of the columns of the Parthenon during 450 BC at the Necropolis, Athens, almost performed the same miracle. According to E. H. Gombrich "They took care to shape the columns so that there was a slight swelling towards the middle and a tapering off towards the top. The result is that they look almost as though they were elastic, It almost seems as if they were living beings who carried their loads with ease"¹. One is certain that while thinking about this sculpture, Suleman was not conscious of historic architecture, but as we are made of many particulars in our body (without our knowledge of them), in our thoughts and creativity too we are composed of several streaks of distant origin and diverse connection. So if an artist 'invents' a new work of art, it is still part of human history and legacy, only in a new composition.

The element of a column emerges in the form of a pillar in the work of Safdar Ali, as the artist rotates a concrete post on its axis. His column is made of concrete with reinforced metal rods, but moves like a small soft bar of wax. The work shows the limitlessness of art as only an artist with vast imagination can conjure up something so impossible, expanding the imagination,

and how it operates in our normal world.

Great art is about discovering, defining and delineating possibility within the impossible. One's perspective of this is an ever-shifting and subjective notion based on interaction. The works of art at The Pioneer Art Residency are very much about perspective and a blend of incredible experiences for the artists, supporters, sponsors and viewers all merged into one.

1. Gombrich, E. H. The Story of Art. Phaidon Press Limited, Oxford: 1991 (page 48)



Hamra Abbas , Nausheen Saeed & Quddus Mirza visit the Pioneer Cement Plant



Artists



Ehsan Memon



Jibran Shahid



Mahbub Jokhio

Ehsan Memon

Education

Bachelor in Fine Arts with distinction, NCA, Lahore

Exhibitions

- 2017 Four Person show, "Social Objects" Canvas Gallery, Karachi.
- 2016 Group show "I live Pakistan" Studio Seven Gallery, Karachi.
- 2016 Group show "Collective Renditions" Satrang Gallery, Islamabad.
- 2016 Two Person show "The Absolute Truth" IVS Gallery, Karachi.
- 2016 Group show "Ibtada" Studio Seven Gallery, Karachi.
- 2016 Group show "Green Signal" Zahoor ul Ikhlq Gallery, NCA, Lahore.
- 2016 4 Person show "Its all About" Canvas Gallery, Karachi.
- 2016 Group show "News From Tomorrow" KLF, curated by Canvas Gallery Karachi.
- 2015 B.F.A Degree Show at NCA, Lahore.
- 2015 Group show "About Time" at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore.
- 2014 Group show "Weaving The Unseen" at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore.
- 2013 Group show "Memories of the Future" at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore.
- 2012 Group show "Day after Tomorrow" at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore.
- 2009 Group show in Woman's Day Exhibition at Benazir Bhutto Art Gallery Sindh University, Jamshoro
- 2008 Benazir Bhutto's portrait competition at Mehran Arts Council, Larkana

Residencies

- 2016 "8th Taza Tareen" Vasl Artist Collective, International Residency, Karachi

Awards

- 2015 Young artist award in annual exhibition "About Time" at Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore
- 2008 2nd prize in Benazir Bhutto's portrait competition at Mehran Arts Council, Larkana

Jibran Shahid

Education

Bachelor in Fine Arts with distinction, NCA, Rawalpindi

Exhibitions

- 2016 Redbull Canvas Cooler, Lahore
- 2016 Tableau Vivant, Sanat Initiative, Karachi
- 2016 ATO NEXUS- Tokyo, Pakistan High Commission , Japan
- 2016 Innovative spirit, Australian embassy, Islamabad
- 2016 Emerging Artist Group Show, V.M Gallery, Karachi
- 2016 Annual Degree Show, NCA Rawalpindi Gallery
- 2014 Pakistan National Council of Arts, Islamabad
- 2014 Lok Virsa, Islamabad

Awards

- 2015 8th Position in Top Ten Honorable Mentions, Florence Academy of Arts, Italy, Summer Scholarship Contest

Residency

- 22nd – 6 June 2016 Nexus Ato, Tokyo Japan

Mahbub Jokhio

Education

Bachelor in Fine Arts with distinction, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore
Master of Arts with distinction, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore

Group Exhibitions

- 2017 Masters Degree Show, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore
- 2017 Amalgamate, curated by Aamna Hussain, Sanat Gallery, Karachi
- 2017 Premise of Promise, curated by Quddus Mirza, Canvas Gallery, Karachi
- 2017 Karachi Bienalle, Karachi
- 2015 Everything is embedded in history, curated by Qudsia Rahim, Lahore Literary Festival, Alhamra Arts Council, Lahore
- 2014 Degree Show, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore
- 2014 Portraits of Discomfiture, Taseer Art Gallery, Lahore
- 2014 Showdown, Gallerie de francaise, Karachi
- 2013 Extra-Ordinary---37 Art Ideas for Free, Curated by Rashid Rana, Canvas Gallery, Karachi
- 2012 Project-1, LEC, Lahore
- 2010 Dialogue-1, Al-Hamra Arts Council, Lahore
- 2009 Remembering Benazir Bhutto, Arts council, Sukker
- 2007 Mahbub Jokhio's Drawings, Sindh Museum, Hyderabad, Sindh
- 2003 Group Exhibition, Aliph Acedemy of Arts, Mahrabpur, Sindh

Two-Person Shows

- 2016 Museum of Wasted Loves, Full Circle Gallery, Karachi
- 2015 A Thousand Times to Moon and Back Home, IVS Gallery, Karachi

Films

- 2006 Short film 'Pardesi' for BBC Urdu Lahore

Scholarships & Grants

2015-17 BNU Full Scholarship
2010-14 UMISSA Scholarship for four year degree program

Workshops

2013 Art for Social Change, British Council, Al-Hamra, Lahore
2009 7th Ada Sain and Nuth-Khat Literary Workshop, Hyderabad
2003 6 months workshop at Aliph Academy of Arts, Mahrabpur

Publications

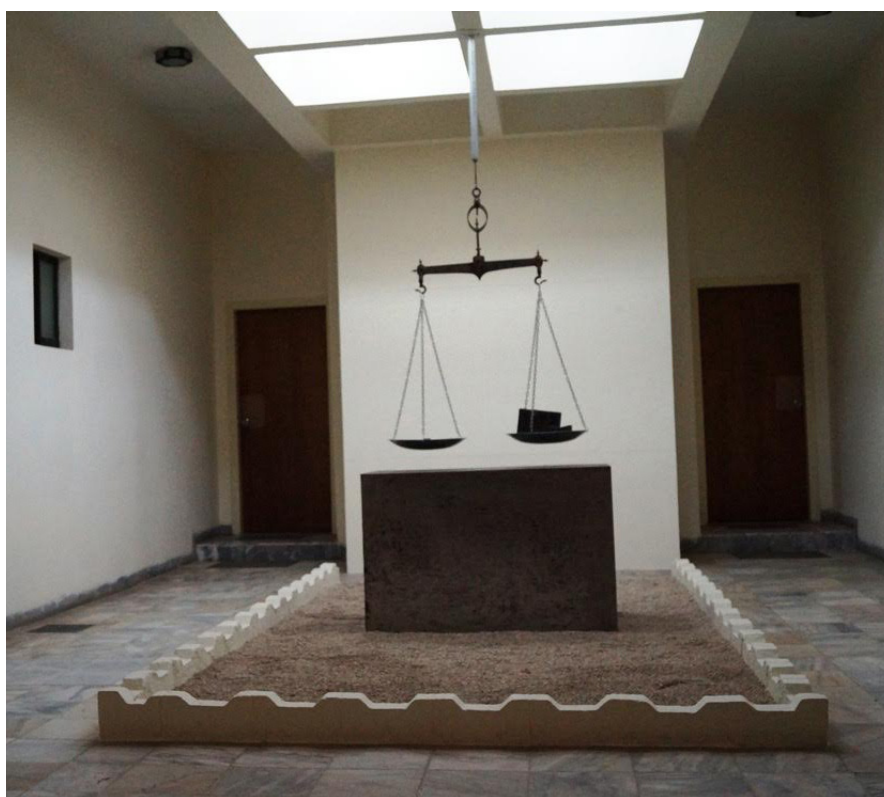
2015 Art That Cuts Across The Border by Rashid Rana, published in India Today Spice, August, 2015, India
2008 'Rugo naa'un jo aa'un mahran aahyan', A review on Mahbub Jokhio's poetry and drawings, Fortnightly, Sindh Magazine, Hyderabad

Ehsan Memon

Title: Equilibrium?
Medium: Metal and Fiberglass
Dimensions: Variable
Year: 2017







Jibran Shahid

Title: A Familiar Timber

Medium: Mild Steel Pipe

Dimensions: Variable

Year: 2017







Mahbub Jokhio

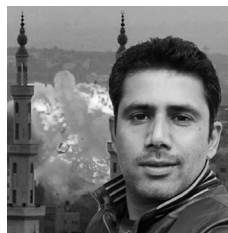
Title: The Art of History
Medium: Concrete
Dimensions: 108" x 108" x 108"
Year: 2017



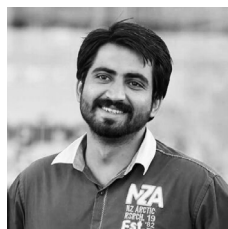




Artists



Safdar Ali



Suleman Faisal



Umar Nawaz

Safdar Ali

Education

Bachelor in Fine Arts, NCA, Lahore

Bachelor in IT, Sindh Agriculture University, Tando Jam

Exhibitions

- 2016 Solo Show (Utopia), Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2015 2 Person Show (A Thousand Times to Moon and Back Home), IVS Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2015 Group Show (In Making), Zahoor ul Akhlaq Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2015 Group Show (HOME), Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2015 Group Show (Making the Making), Satrang Gallery, Islamabad, Pakistan
- 2014 Vasl 7th TAAZA TAREEN International Artists Residency Show at Full Circle Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2014 Group Show (with Anwar), Zahoor ul Akhlaq Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2014 2 Person Show, 39K Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2014 Degree Show, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan

Publications

Utopia by Ammara Jabbar, published in online art magazine
<http://www.artnowpakistan.com/utopia/>

Art Review by Nusrat Khawaja, published in Newslime magazine, Oct 2016 issue
<http://newslinemagazine.com/magazine/art-review-safdar-ali/>

Vision of Violence by Anika Imran, published in Herald magazine, Oct 2016 issue

UTOPIA: Observations of SAFDAR ALI at the Canvas Gallery by Marjorie Hussain, published in SHE magazine, Oct 2016 issue

From minaret to mobile by Quddus Mirza, published in the news Sept. 11 2016
<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/minaret-mobile/>

Quest for utopia by Peerzada Salman, published in Dawn, Sept. 1 2016
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1281227>

Making the Meaning of Art by Sehrish Rafique, published in online art magazine
<http://www.artnowpakistan.com/articles.php?article=Making-the-Meaning-of-Art>

Home is where the heart is by Noor Ahmed, published in Dawn, June 14 2015

Experimental art: Artists inspired by fairy tales and simple things, published in The Express Tribune May 26 2014

Suleman Faisal

Education

Bachelor in Fine Arts with distinction, NCA, Lahore

Experience

2012 – Sept. 2016	Sculptor, Monarch Fiber Glass
2014	Tour Guide Internship, Lahore Museum
2007	Painter, Dolls Manufacturing Workshop
2008	Production Supervisor, Plastic Industry

Freelance Projects

Installation in Expo Center for Coco-Cola
Installation in Emporium Mall, Eid Festival 2016

Umar Nawaz

Education

Bachelor in Fine Arts with distinction, NCA, Lahore

Group Exhibitions

- 2016 Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2016 PNCA, Islamabad, Pakistan
- 2015 Satrang Art Gallery, Islamabad, Pakistan
- 2015 Alhamra Arts Council, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2015 Canvas Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2015 Swiss Embassy, Islamabad, Pakistan
- 2015 Mohatta Palace, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2014 Thesis Degree Show, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2014 Nairang Art Gallery, Lahore, Pakistan
- 2014 Gallery 39K Lahore, Pakistan

Awards

- 2014 Awarded the certificate of Participation of NCA Dramatics Society
- 2014 Bachelor degree passed with Honors from National College of Arts

Safdar Ali

Title: I Got Way Too Attached to You

Medium: Steel, Concrete

Dimensions: Variable

Year: 2017







Suleman Faisal

Title: Throw me up in The Air

Medium: Concrete

Dimensions: 132" x 48"

Year: 2017







Umar Nawaz

Title: Used, Not as it Should Have Been

Medium: White Cement

Dimensions: Variable

Year: 2017







Open House
April 15 2017





















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Canvas Gallery



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