



✉ sanatgallery@gmail.com

📷 Sanat Gallery



@sanatinitiative



www.sanatinitiative.com

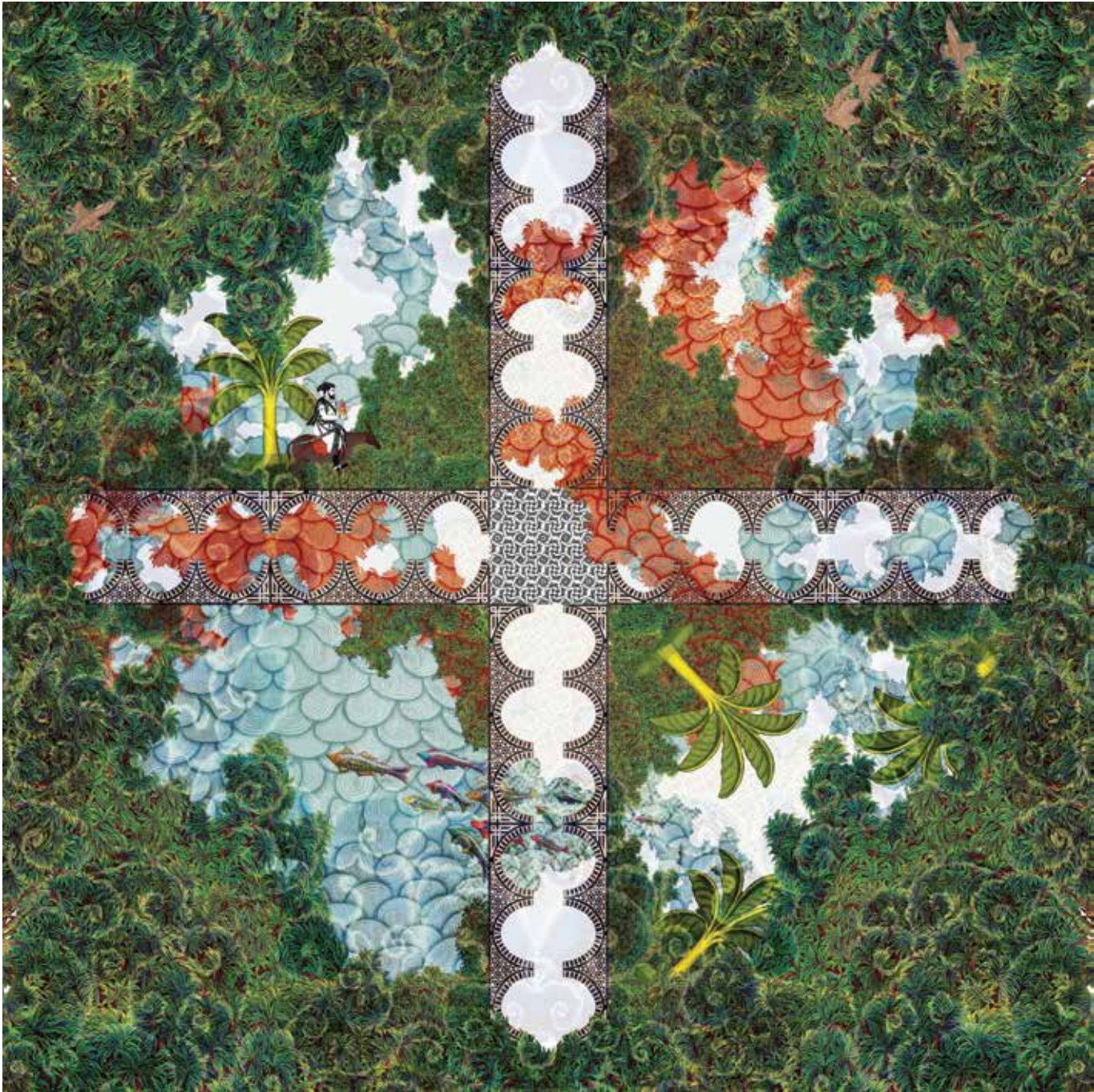


www.facebook.com/initiativesanat



GARDENSCAPE

Works by Muhammad Atif Khan





Imagings of the subconscious mind

Hajra Haider Karrar

The early 1920's marked the beginning of a movement known as Surrealism. The conception of Surrealism is rooted in the fundamental aims of Dadaism, a reactionary movement defying the establishment and conditions of the capitalist system. The Dadaists promoted themselves *as the juvenile delinquents of the arts*. Towards the end of 1910's Andre Breton, a Parisian poet and a passionate supporter of the Dada movement felt that Dadaism was losing momentum and needed a fresh perspective. He was on a quest for a new artistic movement which could incorporate Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical research; specifically on the unconscious mind and Dadaist intentions. [1]

According to Freud, repressed thoughts and experiences resurface in vague distorted forms at moments when the ego defences are lowered, representing themselves in the form of dreams. In his dream analysis Freud distinguishes between the manifest content and the latent content of the dream, former stemming from remembered experience while the latter is the symbolic meaning of the dream. [2] The surrealists believed in pure expression stemming from the union of the conscious and the subconscious mind. Breton first used the word surrealism, a term coined by his mentor Guillaume Apollinaire, to describe work found to be a fusion of elements of fantasy with elements of the modern world to form a kind of superior reality. [3] While Freud's dream analysis remains a core inspiration for the surrealists, it was interpreted in two distinct manners branching out to two kinds of surrealists: automatists and veristic surrealists. Automatists tend to believe in spontaneous 'free' thinking, where the images of the subconscious flow freely to the conscious but do not hold any meaning and neither are they meant to be interpreted. Meanwhile the Veristic surrealist's are of the belief that the subconscious holds a visual language represented in metaphorical forms which are meant to be interpreted in order to aid the understanding of the world. Surrealism has proven to be a revolutionary movement for the world, where it has made its way into the public consciousness remaining relevant a century later.

In the series of fantastical gardenscapes by Atif Khan a lone figure garbed in royal attire, devoid of color is positioned in beautiful and serene environs. Foliage in square formations is encompassed by water channels and shrouds of clouds are dotted with specs of bright colors. Upon a closer look these specs take the form of birds and fish. The presence of this lone figure is striking not just because of its lack of color but mainly due to his possession of earthly paraphernalia and enactment of mundane activities. The stark contrast in the otherwise heavenly composition is further enhanced by the guise of the Mughal prince who seems to be at ease handling objects and





machine inventions from 19th century onwards. This juxtaposition of elements transforms these fantastical gardenscapes into surreal ones. It is the tranquil colors and recurring symmetry which entice the eye yet it is the realization of these bizarre happenings which captivates the attention.

The imaginary world constructed by the artist can be confused as woven fantasy but it is the incongruous elements lurking in the depths of the narrative which create a dreamlike state. Bowers has aptly clarified this distinction further in her book on magical realism:

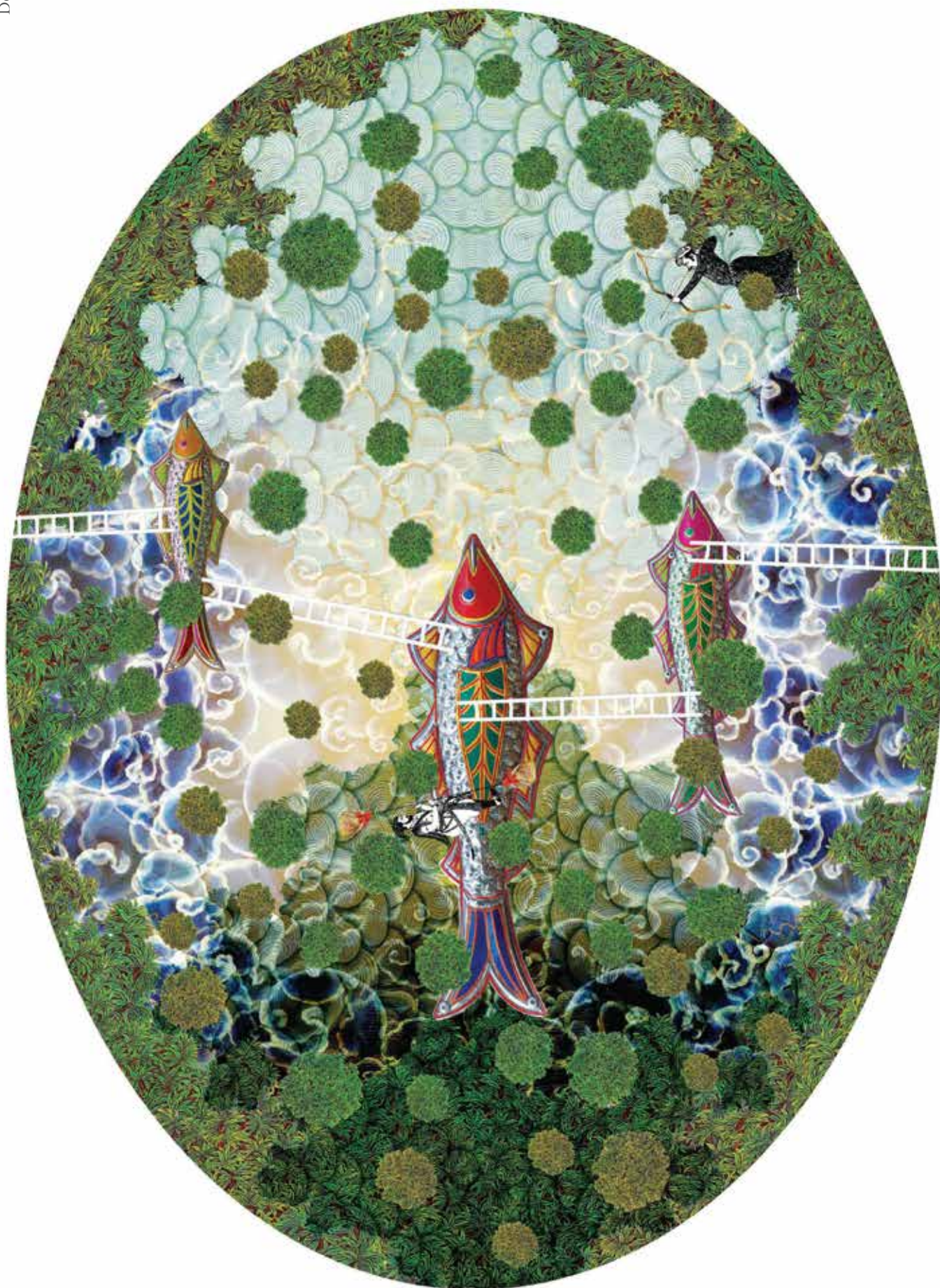
“Surrealism is most distinct from magical realism since the aspects that it explores are associated not with material reality but with the imagination and the mind, and in particular it attempts to express the ‘inner life’ and psychology of humans through art.” [4]

Khan has facilitated the narrative with ample clues which enable the viewer to unravel the layers of complexity embedded in his compositions. These suggestive markers scattered like thought fragments signify an inner turmoil triggered by the affairs of his conscious existence. The quest for a spiritual retreat culminating in self-discovery and mental rejuvenation becomes visible in the imagery of the gardenscapes. One is able to witness the inner dialogue being resolved throughout the series. The images are not restricted to tracing the artist's subconscious trajectory, but also tend to portray the constant reprieve that an individual seeks while existing in capitalist chaos.

Khan employs a combination of eras while symbolizing the heavenly and earthly worlds. These gardenscapes seem to exist in a void, suggestive either of being located in the inner sanctum of the artist's mind or situated on a celestial plane. He has depicted the Garden of Paradise or Charbagh in these dreamscapes. Charbagh, literally meaning four gardens - four symbolizing the divine order of the universe are divided in pairs; the lower pair signifies the Garden of the Soul and the Garden of the Heart while the upper or higher pair is the Garden of the Spirit and the Garden of the Essence. [5] The existence of the vibrant birds and fish in this garden enhance the harmony of the scenario, the vivid colors inspired by truck art refer to the rich cultural heritage of the artists origin where the birds are symbolic of freedom and fish, the continuation of life.

Throughout the series the solitary existence of the Mughal prince is shown traversing through the four ascending planes of subconscious that these gardens in the Charbagh symbolize. The portrayal of the figure, which bears an uncanny resemblance to the artist, as a Mughal prince tends to suggest a number of things. If assessed in entirety the compositional strategies adopted by Khan are influenced by Mughal miniature painting. The selection of imagery is similar to the court paintings which portray the sovereign in spiritual guises suggesting connection to the divine order to further enhance his position and authority. Furthermore the rendering of the water and clouds have been done after the tradition of Mughal School. These aspects could be attributed as formal decisions on the artist's part, where it is consciously presented as a reference to the cultural and political history of his region. Though reading further into the narrative he is representing the private unconstrained universe of his dreams, where he is the sovereign, governed only by his quest for meaning. The twist appears when he juxtaposes this background, a palimpsest of our political history with that of conventional activities where he is seen holding a camera, fishing for a heart, or riding away from the lake on a bicycle with a vibrant fish on his shoulder. In some instances he is shown riding a bicycle with a load of sculptural busts belonging to the colonial past, as if tracing the imperial history of the region and its lasting traces. It seems as if he might want to negotiate or rather discard this load but is hindered by the looming presence of urban barriers in his path restricting access.





There is a lurking darkness in the seemingly appeasing and peaceful scenarios created by Khan. There are two other characters which make a periodic appearance in this series. One is a creature with a head of an animal and the body of a man, yet this creature does not seem intimidating but rather seems to portray the different guises of the protagonist. Though the other character is a figure clad in black attire always positioned in a menacing stance purposefully pointing his gun straight ahead. The threat of imminent danger is a recurring feature in this series, in one instance this figure is shown standing on a column and shooting at the bird disturbing the harmony of this wondrous world. The patches of red in the stream of water, tumultuous skies and the lack of color and scarcity of the birds in the concluding works create further unease and discomfort. Perhaps these features portray the perpetual and inescapable tyranny of the system.

The shift in medium from printmaking to digital collages resonates with Khan's conceptual premise. The amalgamation of elements spanning across centuries used in his compositions extend to his medium as well. It is in the exceptional detailing like the Islamic geometrical patterns introduced in the bridges and rendering of the found images which deceive the viewer into thinking of them as painted. These digital collages are masterfully constructed where the formal aspects enhance and aid the conceptual ones. The scroll like presentation reveals the journey on different planes of consciousness which is later emphasized by the elliptical form. The vortex created by the repetition of the square formation of the Charbagh forms a labyrinth which has a mesmerizing power. The deliberate and clever scattering of the elements makes the eye restless in trying to connect the links.

The found images appropriated by Khan string his narratives to the conscious mind the way his fishing rod and the kite '*dor*' connect the prince to the heart at all times as do the found images most of which come not from the recesses of his mind but his everyday life.

“The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own, serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary.” [6]

[1].Gompertz, Will (2012).” Surrealism” *What are you looking at? 150 years of modern art in the blink of an eye.* (London. Penguin books.) 239-240.

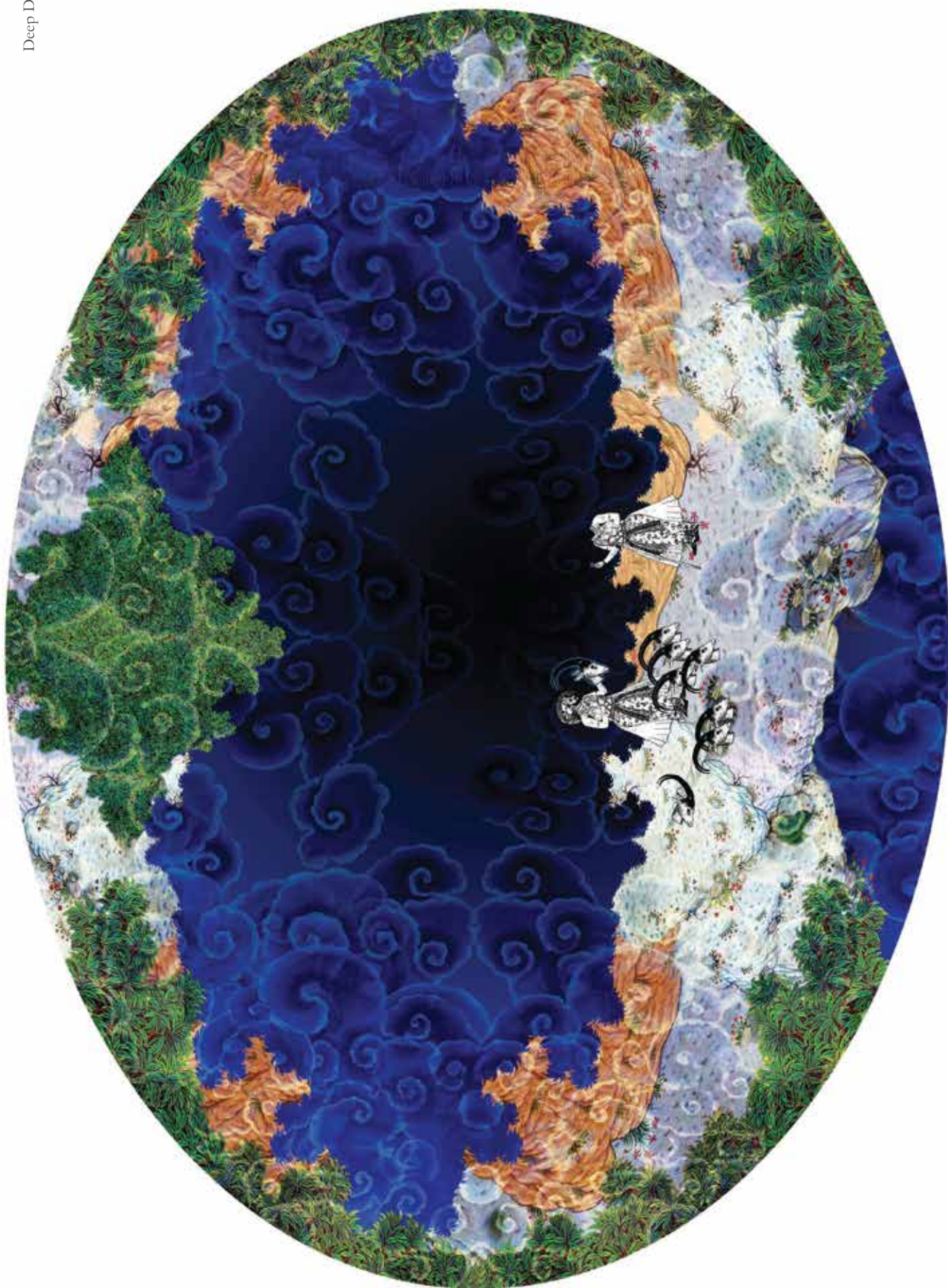
[2].Freud, Sigmund (1900). *The Interpretation of Dreams* <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Freud/Dreams/dreams.pdf>

[3].McLeod, S. A. (2013). Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/Sigmund-Freud.html

[4].Bowers, Maggie A. (2004). 'Delimiting the Terms' *Magical Realism*. (New York: Routledge) 22.

[5].Clark, Emma. (2011). Islamic Art and Architecture. <http://islamic-arts.org/2011/the-symbolism-of-the-islamic-garden/>

[6].García Márquez, Gabriel (1982), "Nobel lecture", in Frängsmyr, Tore; Allen, Sture, *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1981–1990*, Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. (published 1993)



Complex inkjet prints and large-scale public installations capture artist's colourful world of the heart.

Pakistani artist Atif Khan's iconography traces its lineage back to the aesthetically rich Mughal empire while providing a contemporary twist

Atif Khan's detailed work employs existing or found images that provide a fresh narrative on a traditional art form. As Khan told *Art Radar*, he combines imagery from the **Mughal Empire** (1524-1752), which was responsible for such monuments as the Taj Mahal and the Shalimar Gardens of Lahore, with his very own contemporary compositions:

The use of Mughal iconography in my work expands the time zone of my canvas, from the present day to a few hundred years in the past, which help the viewers to free their minds from the limitations of the real time and enter an imaginary world.

To construct my compositions on the basis of my own storyline, I work with fractions of existing or found images, created by others. I borrow these fractions of images not only from Mughal miniature paintings but also from the famous Pakistani truck art and all type of printed materials i.e. books, posters, currency notes etc. I do a kind of recycling of images; even though I extensively incorporate the found images in my work, my compositions are entirely new and very much of my own, which suggests new meanings to the viewers.

Atif Khan was born in Sahiwal, a small city in central Punjab, Pakistan in 1972. The artist graduated with distinction from the prestigious National College of Arts Lahore (NCA Lahore) in 1997 and was awarded the **UNESCO-ASHBURG Bursary**. He has participated in a residency at **Darat-al-Funun** in Amman, Jordan and has recently seen his work at the **Aga Khan Museum, Islamic Museum of Australia** and **Sharjah Art Museum**. The artist currently lives and works in Lahore, where he runs the Cowasjee Print Studio, a part of the Department of Fine Art at NCA Lahore.

As a graduate from NCA Lahore, Khan joins an internationally recognised roster of artists such as **Imran Qureshi, Faiza Butt, Humaira Abid** and **Aisha Khalid**, all of whom combine traditional techniques with contemporary "conceptual practices".

New school tech

Khan's practice embraces modern-day technology in the form of an Epson 9000 series printer, which uses Ultrachrome archival inks. Each creation is printed on Hahnemühle archival papers. These tools enable Khan to unlock his creativity and result in a very high-quality product, as the artist relayed in a recent interview with *Art Radar*:

I did my first ever Photoshop course in 2004. So I was familiar with the process and the technique long ago but I used it only to make the photo-collages for my photo-etchings. In 2008, I created my first ever inkjet print, when I was working as an artist-in-residence at the London Print Studio in the United Kingdom.

The archival quality, high-end inkjet printing with ten colours, provided me unlimited opportunity to explore the colourful imaginary world inside my heart. Graphic designers also use the same tools to create their work, so the challenge I set for myself, was to avoid the feeling of a printed poster and I think, I'm quite successful and have achieved that goal.

What is old, is new again

The protagonists and heroes of Khan's works are born from the past, and as seen in the work *One on One*, include silhouettes of Britain's Queen Elizabeth the II and Mughal Queen Nurjahan (King Jahangir's wife). The bulk of the artist's work, however, depict fictitious kings and rulers. In his *Landscape of the Heart* series, Khan highlights the escapades of a king, dressed in finery. In one particular work of the series, *Landscape of the Heart IV*, the king is seen rowing a heart across a blood-red sea, with waves eerily similar to the heart rate on an EKG machine. This particular series, as the artist told *Art Radar*, relates to humanity's quest for wisdom in an ever-confusing and bewildering world:

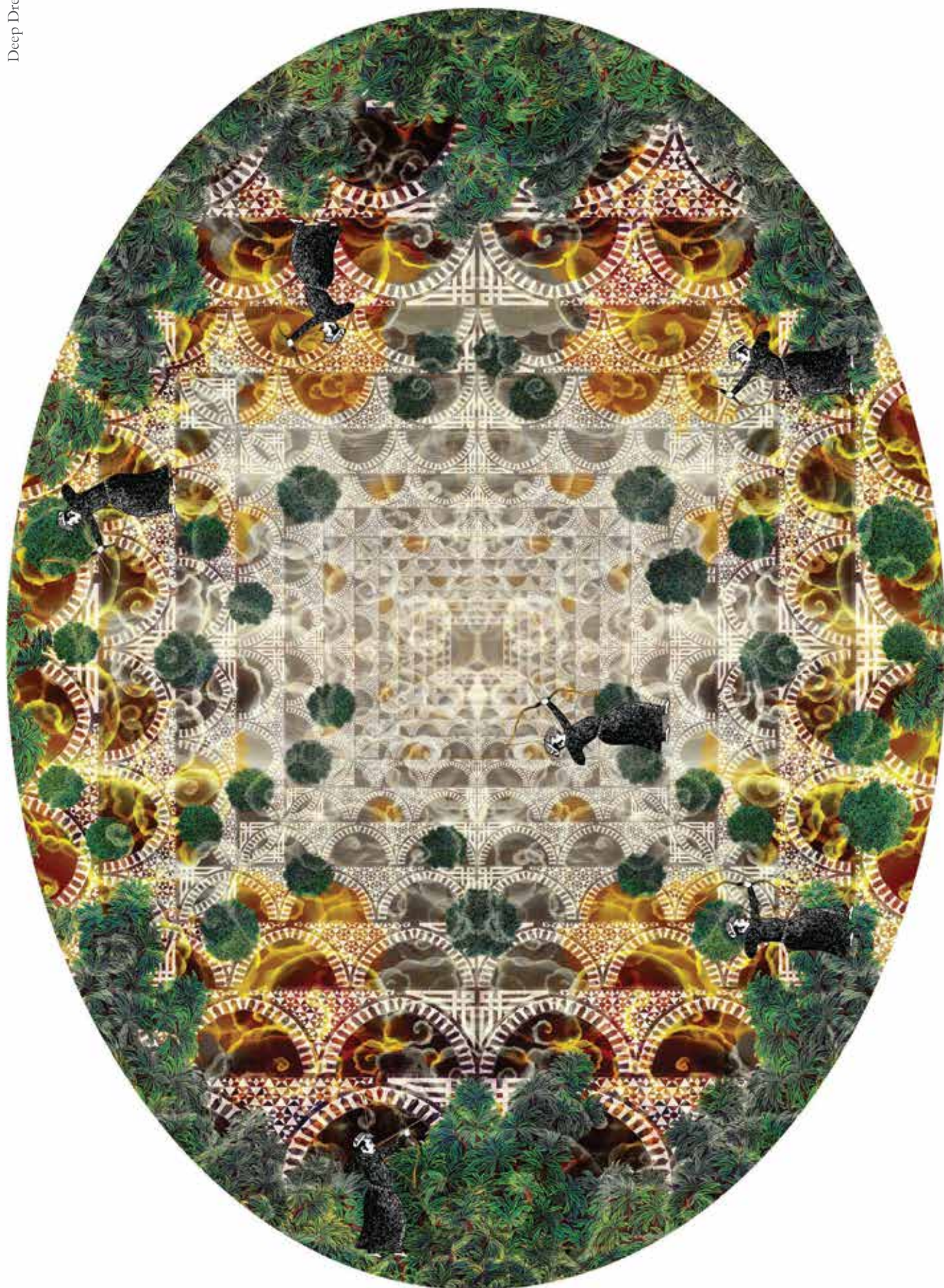
Landscape of the Heart tells the story of a king, who undertakes a journey to find his heart. He hears the angels who guide him on his quest, which takes him to faraway lands, by road and sea. It is when he understands that much of what we seek in life is already found within us, he returns home with his new-found wisdom. In essence, my work presents the transformation of the soul and enlightenment but on the other hand the use of direct and recognizable visual elements also point towards the social and political issues around us, in a subtle way.

Alongside these figures are often found lush forests, spectacular gardens, startled birds and tempestuous clouds, perhaps a result of the environ and historic city in which Khan dwells. In a work called *The Lost Garden II*, which was part of a group exhibition at Toronto's Aga Khan Museum called **"The Garden of Ideas: Contemporary Art from Pakistan"**, Khan masterfully utilises the traditional visual culture and Islamic aesthetic principles from the Mughal Period to a subtle take on what Khan says is the "royal attitude and concerns of our ruling class, which is rapidly damaging the social fabric of the society".

Pigeons and Peace

In addition to Khan's multilayered works on paper, the artist has also completed





several large-scale public installations tying in past and present. One of these pieces called *A City within a city*, is a massive, 40 foot tall birdhouse rising above **Lahore's frenetic Istanbul Chowk**. This installation was awarded to Khan from the Lahore Biennale Foundation (LBF), in collaboration with Commissioner of Lahore and Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA, Lahore) in 2015 and highlights over 400 hand-crafted birdhouses.

A City Within a City is very much a site-specific piece. As Khan relayed to art critic Shameen Arshad in an interview on e-journal *The Missing Slate*, the history around this location is important, as it is **“surrounded by age-old educational institutions”** and is near three war memorials and as such, represents an intersection where past and present, war and peace collide:

In such an environment, I found a very interesting activity that shows the real nature of the people of Lahore, which is all about love. I observed that some common people brought grain and water and put them to the roadside at the Chowk Istanbul every day. As a result, hundreds of wild pigeons who live in the nearby trees and the holes of the old buildings gathered over there to feed themselves. This activity from the common people of Lahore is completely in contrast with the war machines installed in the same area by different governments to 'please' the people.

War machines are always used as the symbol of destruction and killing, on the other hand, pigeons are a global symbol of peace and love. This comparison reminded me of my own artwork 'Landscape of the Heart' (2012). In that artwork, a Mughal king is standing on a Roman column and shooting the birds, swarming around a tree. This artwork helped me come up with the idea of a giant tree-like form, and the presence of pigeons at this site led me to think about the pigeonholes. Thus, I chose to combine these two elements to create a new form. One element came from my own art practice, and the other evolved in response to the site, but both reflect the feeling and meaning of shelter and peace.

This feeling of hopeful optimism is echoed in the artist's interactions with talented young artists at NCA Lahore and as Khan told *Art Radar*, he feels the future is indeed bright for Pakistani artists, with one wise caveat:

I learned from my students, not to give up the urge to experiment with new materials and not to suspend the struggle to expand the visual vocabulary. I really have high hopes from Pakistani contemporary artists, many of them whom are already doing great work in their respective fields. Artists who live and work in Pakistan like Imran Qureshi, Aisha Khalid, Rashid Rana along with many other brilliant artists, played a significant role in getting the world's attention towards Pakistan and showed the path to fellow artists. There is no question about the ability and the talent in the new generation of artists and students as well but they should learn the lesson of patience and hard work because the path to sustainable success is never short.

"This article originally appeared on August 15, 2016 in Art Radar - Contemporary art trends and news from Asia and beyond (www.artradarjournal.com) and has been reproduced here with their permission."



Muhammad Atif Khan

Atif Khan graduated (with distinction) in 1997 in Fine Art from the National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan. In 1998, he was awarded the 'UNESCO-ASHBURG Bursary for Artists', and was appointed artist in residence at the Darat-Al-Funun in Amman, Jordan. He received 'Commonwealth Arts & Crafts Award' in 2007. He was also appointed artist in residence at the Swansea Print Workshop in Wales (2005-06), London Print Studio in England (2008) and Glasgow Print Studio in Scotland (2008).

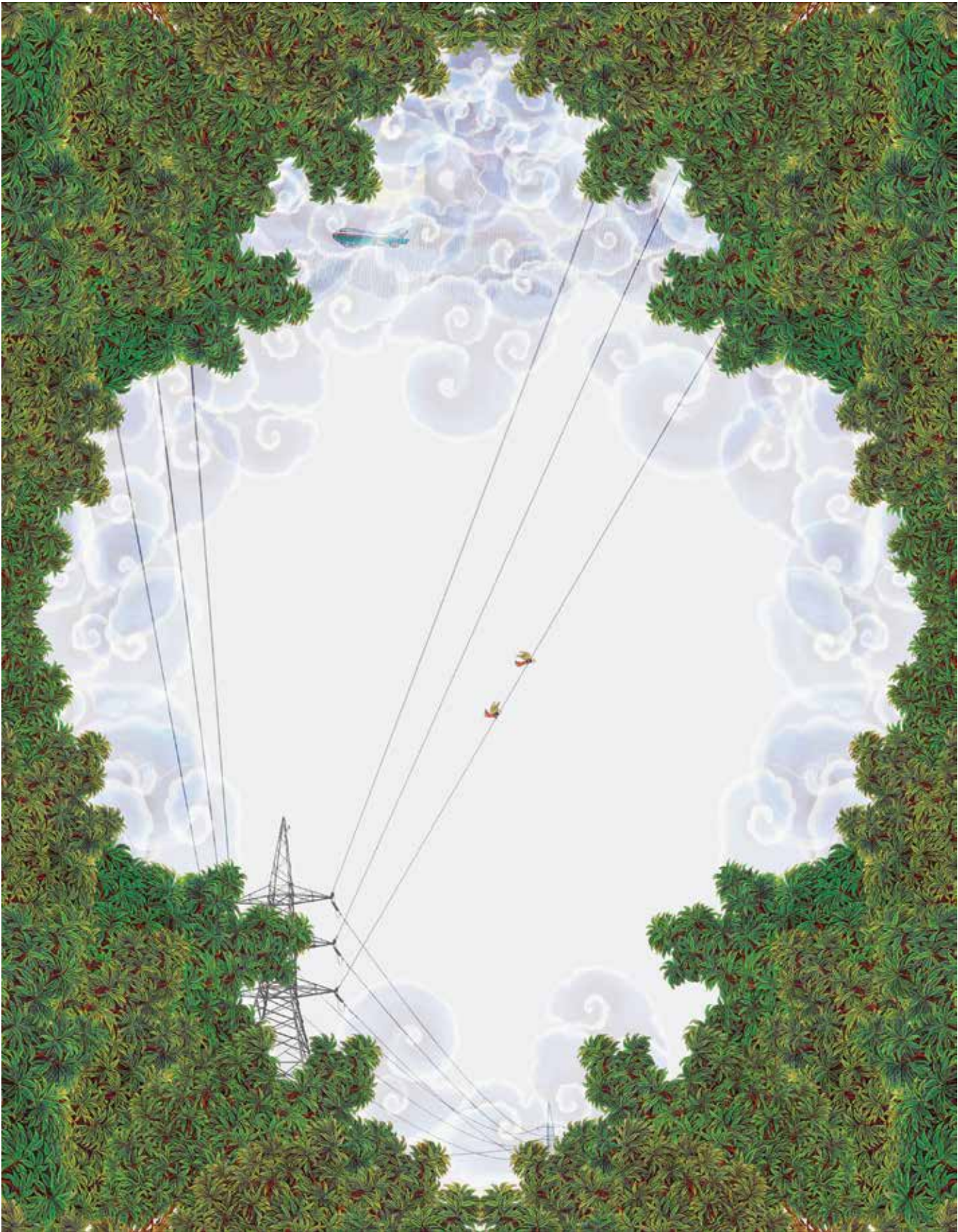
He has also participated in art workshops in India, Bangladesh, Jordan and UK. He has had several solo shows in Pakistan, UK, Jordan, Switzerland and India.

In 2014-15, he participated in 3 museum shows; 'Trajectories' at Sharjah Art Museum in UAE, 'The Garden of Ideas: Contemporary Art from Pakistan', the inaugural show of Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada and 'Hybrid ii' at the 'Islamic Museum of Australia' in Melbourne, Australia. In 2014, he was commissioned to do a series of large scale works including a giant site-specific installation for The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada.

Last year, he won the Lahore Biennale Foundation's Open Call Competition and developed a site-specific installation 'Çity Within a City' at the Chowk Istanbul in Lahore, Pakistan.

Alongside his artistic practice, Khan is the faculty member at the prestigious National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan since 2005.

Photo: Manisha Gera Baswani



Spotlight Artist: Atif Khan

Interviewed by Shameen Arshad

Atif Khan exudes nothing but positive energy. His bright countenance is further evidenced in his works. Khan is an artist that crafts his work with dedication and honesty — an honesty that is also evident when I talk with him. In short, he tells it like it is. Khan's cool and composed nature made our interview enjoyable, as he spares me the pain of hearing more run-of-the-mill, diplomatically correct answers. The Missing Slate sat down with Khan as he humbly narrated the events that led to the conception of his piece 'City Within a City'.

Khan's project is a necessity in a city like Lahore, where rich cultural heritage is constantly under attack as old structures — replete with culture and history — are being torn down to make way for urban lifestyle. In times like these Khan's project is seen as a "true gift to Lahore". 'City Within a City' rejects the idea of eliminating the old to adjust new ways of life and shows how both can co-exist.

Khan's 'City Within the City' is a gesture of love for the life amidst this space. The installation does not just cater to individuals that reside in this area, it also humours another very important presence in the Chowk — the pigeons. This junction has long been home to thousands of pigeons. These birds are endemic to this part of Lahore. They reside within the nooks and crannies of old monumental structures waiting for their feed; grain that is strewn across the sidewalk by individuals, a gesture revealing that these creatures are a vital part of life in this part of the city.

I'm no stranger to the **Istanbul Chowk in Lahore**. Having been a student at National College of Arts, one sees this Chowk every day. The Istanbul Chowk stands amidst several old institutions, educational and official — between the new and the old — making this intersection one of great significance. Time and again some sort of memorial or banners have been put up; things that you would ignore, or rather not have, on an already busy crossway. So, 'City Within a City' was a pleasant surprise.

The installation stands tall and mighty, peaceful and undisturbed by the chaos of the everyday. The Chowk, which was already rich with culture and heritage, is now adorned with a monument that captures the beauty of life within the city of Lahore — something that is an amalgamation of all the going ons locally. The square is also adorned with model fighter planes and war cannons, which according to the artist belong in a "military museum". The tranquil presence of 'City Within a City' is a good counter to these war machines, reminding the people of Lahore that their history, as well as present, are more than just war memorabilia.

Atif Khan graduated (with distinction) in Fine Art from the National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan (1997). He is a recipient of the UNESCO-ASHBURG Bursary for Artists (1999) and the Commonwealth Arts & Crafts Award (2007).

*Khan has several local and international shows to his credit, including shows in countries like the UK, Jordan, Switzerland and India. He has completed artist residencies at the **Darat-Al-Funun in Amman in Jordan** (1998), the **Swansea Print Workshop in Wales** (2005-06), the **London Print Studio** (2008) and the **Glasgow Print Studio** (2008).*

*In 2014-15, he participated in three museum shows: **'Trajectories'** at **Sharjah Art Museum** in the UAE, **'The Garden of Ideas'** at the inaugural show of **Aga Khan Museum** in Toronto, Canada and **'Hybrid ii'** at the **Islamic Museum of Australia** in Melbourne, Australia.*

*Furthermore, he was commissioned to do a series of large-scale works, including a giant site-specific installation, for The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, Canada. Last year, he won the Lahore Biennale Foundation's Open Call competition and developed a site-specific installation **'City Within a City'** at the **Chowk Istanbul** in Lahore, Pakistan. Alongside his artistic practice, Khan is the faculty member at the prestigious **National College of Arts in Lahore, Pakistan** since 2005.*

Tell us a little about your recent public art project 'City Within a City'.

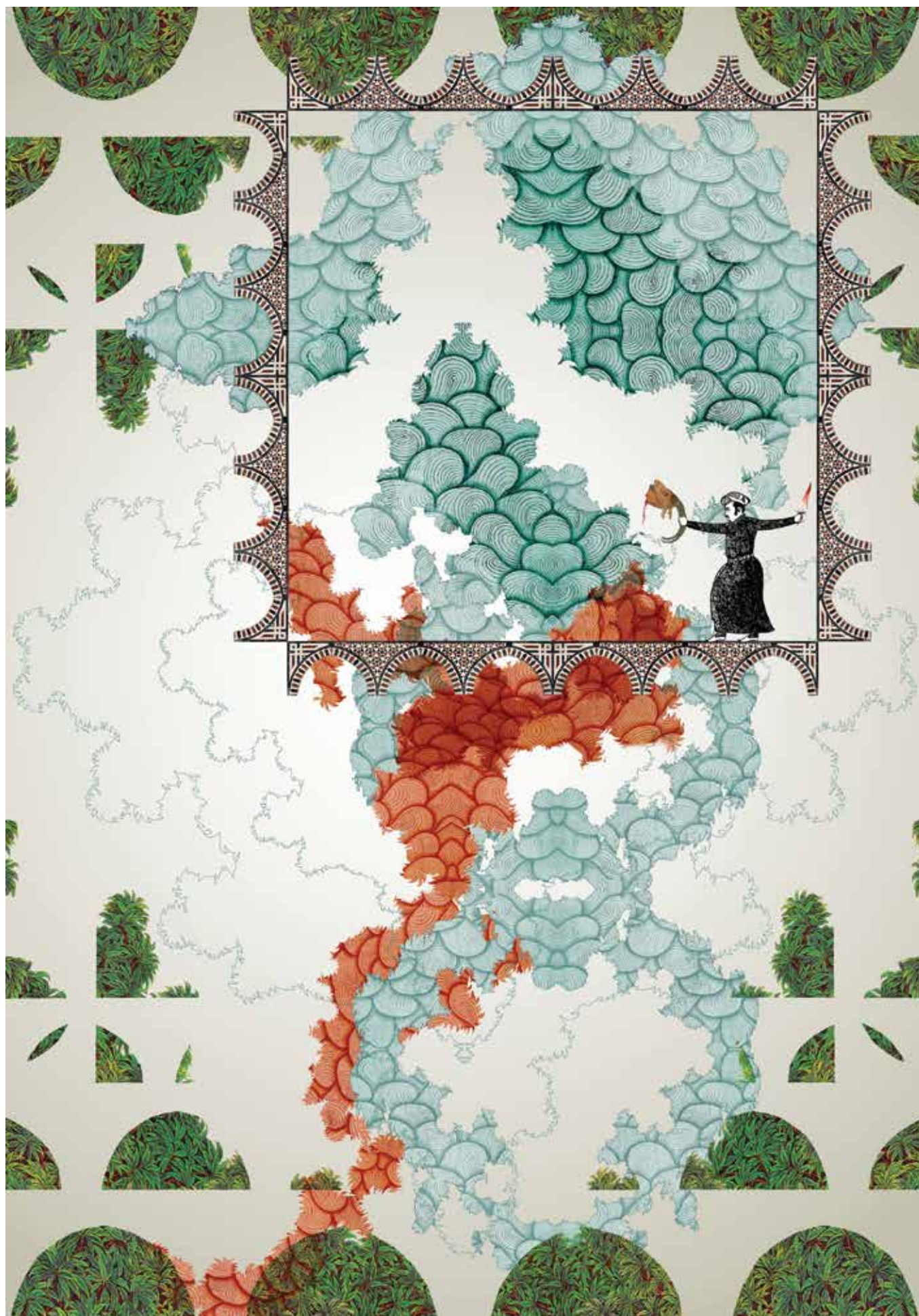
In 2015, Lahore Biennale Foundation (LBF), in collaboration with Commissioner of Lahore and Parks & Horticulture Authority (PHA, Lahore), announced an Open Call Competition to create a public art installation for the Istanbul Chowk in Lahore. A jury was formed consisting of the renowned **architect Nayyar Ali Dada**, art educationers Rashid Rana and Risham Syed. The jury selected my proposal 'City Within a City' and gave me the task to materialise the project.

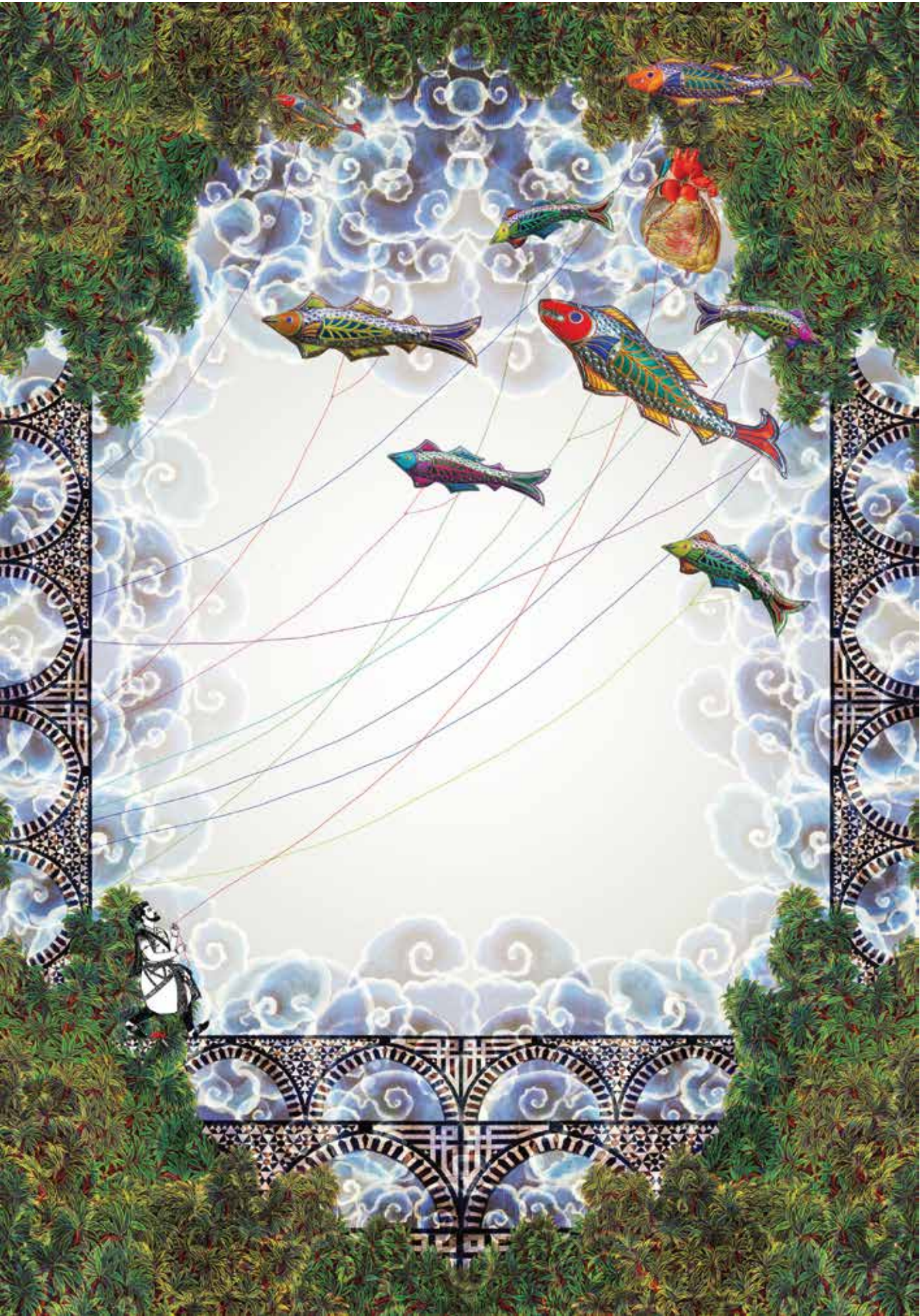
It took more than two months to finish the installation. The project consisted of 425 birdhouses made out of industrial waterproof plywood installed on a 40 ft. high metal pole, to create the form of an abstract tree. A team of 15 carpenters, welders, painters and other technicians helped me to create this monumental artwork.

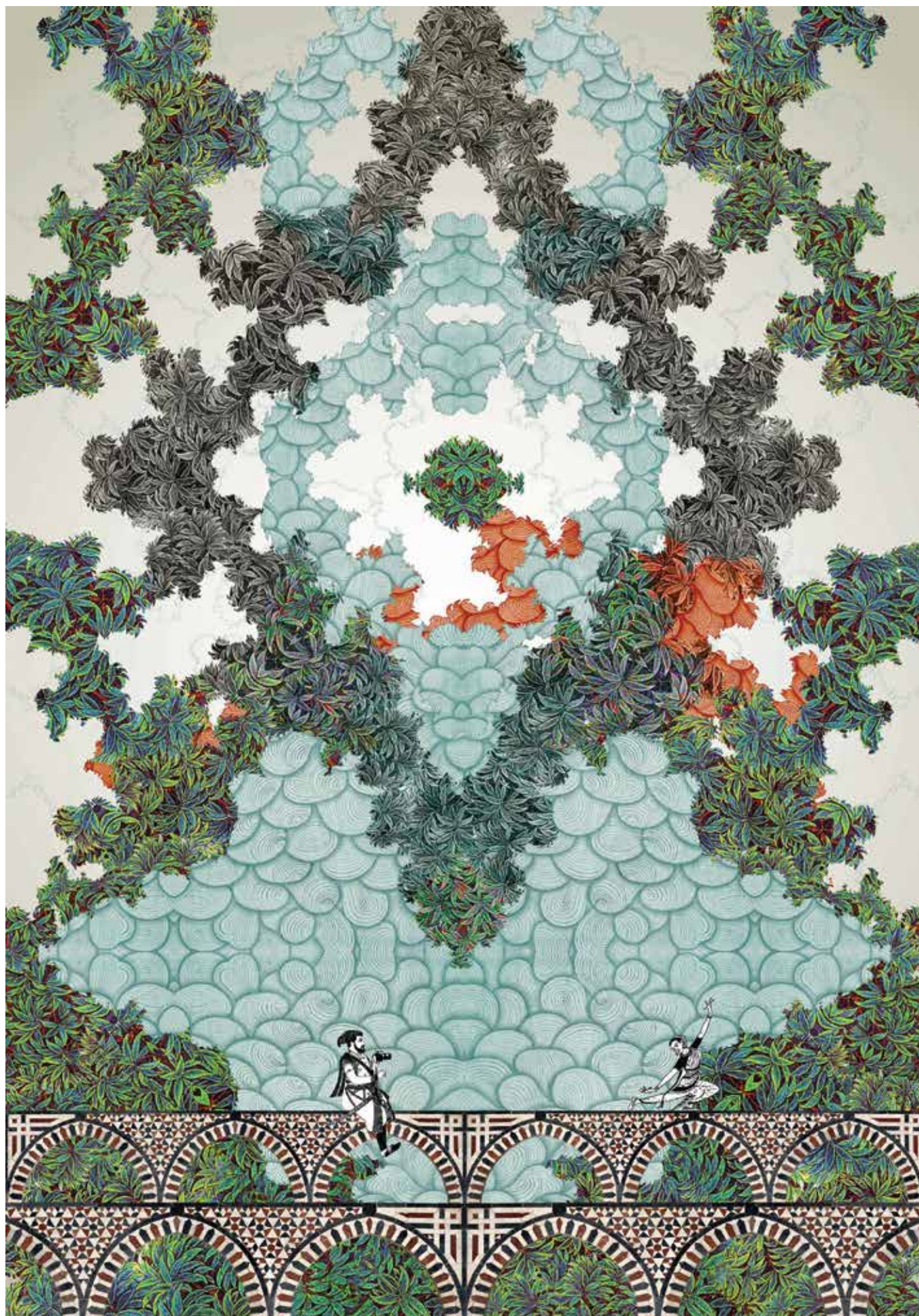
Where did you get inspiration to create the installation?

'City Within a City' is a site-specific public art project, so it is extremely important to get an idea about the whereabouts of the site. So, let me inform the readers about the surroundings of the Chowk Istanbul first.

Chowk Istanbul is located in the heart of the city and one can observe that this intersection is surrounded by age-old educational institutions, e.g. the National College of Arts, the Government College University and the University of Punjab. Lahore Museum, Nasir Bagh and the Jinnah Hall (the office of the Mayor of Lahore) are also situated in the surroundings of the Chowk Istanbul.







A few more things are significant around this intersection: a fighter jet, an antique cannon and a life-size model of a missile. All these war machines are installed as memorials around the Chowk Istanbul. At the Chowk Istanbul, they are creating a kind of juxtaposition with the peaceful environment of the educational institutions where thousands of students daily visit to satisfy their desire to attain knowledge.

In such an environment, I found a very interesting activity that shows the real nature of the people of Lahore, which is all about love. I observed that some common people brought grain and water and put them to the roadside at the Chowk Istanbul every day. As a result, hundreds of wild pigeons who live in the nearby trees and the holes of the old buildings gathered over there to feed themselves. This activity from the common people of Lahore is completely in contrast with the war machines installed in the same area by different governments to 'please' the people.

War machines are always used as the symbol of destruction and killing, on the other hand, pigeons are a global symbol of peace and love. This comparison reminded me of my own artwork 'Landscape of the Heart' (2012). In that artwork, a Mughal king is standing on a Roman column and shooting the birds, swarming around a tree. This artwork helped me come up with the idea of a giant tree-like form, and the presence of pigeons at this site led me to think about the pigeonholes. Thus, I chose to combine these two elements to create a new form. One element came from my own art practice, and the other evolved in response to the site, but both reflect the feeling and meaning of shelter and peace.

Could you share a little about your process? The hurdles, the people you had to work with, and the new challenges of creating a public installation?

After the approval of the project, I made the detailed working drawings using computer software. I asked PHA to involve a structural engineer to refine or rather approve my suggestive drawings for the metal armature.

Meanwhile, in a wood workshop, a team of carpenters were making 425 birdhouses by hand, following the given designs. Industrial quality, water-proof plywood was used to construct these birdhouses in different sizes and shapes. Later, the birdhouses were painted with heavy duty car paints to add more protection from the weather. When the metal armature was erected at the site, the birdhouses were moved over there.

Now, the work of more precision started. The challenge was to install the individual birdhouses in a tree-like form. We did it successfully at a lower height and later lifted the whole form to its current 40 ft. height, with the help of two heavy duty cranes. It took more than 2 months to finish the installation.

In this project, I directly worked with the Commissioner of Lahore, the Director General of PHA and their teams. Unlike the general perception about government organizations, I found them very talented, cooperative and willing to work for their city — Lahore. Unfortunately, the only unsatisfactory experience was the poor coordination with the Lahore Biennale Foundation.

What is the most important thing to consider when making public art?

Since this form of art is created or installed in a public space it should be something that the community can relate to. Its conceptual side should not overcome its formal side.

Viewers and art enthusiasts usually like to chat with the artist to know how a certain body of work comes into being. What is the most unusual comment or question that you have heard concerning this project?

From day one at the Chowk Istanbul, I and my team of artisans have been hearing comments from passersby who were keen to know what we were doing at the site. The comments were mostly encouraging and the people were excited that something good was happening in their area. It was quite surprising for me that some common people reached to the conceptual meaning of this installation and said that it is important to build something positive among the war machines installed at this intersection. I was also thrilled to hear a comment from an old person who said “Beta, what you are doing is a true gift to Lahore”.

Some people, including the Commissioner of Lahore, questioned me that “Do you think birds will accept these birdhouses as a nest?” My reply was quite unexpected and shocking for them, I said: “No, not at all. This is a symbolic tree made of birdhouses. If I was a bird, I would never leave my current shelters to live in these birdhouses that are surrounded by smoke, dust, heat and noise”. I am happy that they understood my point of view.

If you were asked to collaborate with another artist to create a public installation who would it be and why?

This is a very difficult question indeed. Producing art in a studio, in collaboration with another artist is not an easy job. Therefore, collaboration for a public art project makes things even more complex. Instead of teaming up with another artist, I would prefer to work with an architect, like **Zaha Hadid** or scientists like the Wright Brothers, but unfortunately, they are not amongst us today.

When art is moved out into the public place its audience changes or even increases. You are no longer just catering to a crowd of artists, galleries and art enthusiasts. Does the responsibility of the artist increase as he has to consider the sentiments of more than just art lovers?

The studio is the safest place for an artist to create artwork on whatever theme he / she chooses. Art galleries also provide a favorable environment where usually like-minded people are invited to appreciate a work of art. However, working in a public space or setting up a public display means you are putting up a live stage performance where the artist gets the response, good or bad, from the audience, immediately.

There is no comparison between the viewership of an artwork in an art gallery and in the public place. The responsibility of the artist definitely





increases when creating public art. It puts upon them the burden of decency and simplicity. The artist has to use a visual vocabulary that is digestible to the public. However, the more challenging it is, the more is the pleasure.

In your experience is public art effective in creating understanding and appreciation for art amongst the masses?

Yes, it is a very an effective tool to develop a certain type of sensibility in the masses, not only about the visual arts but also regarding the life and culture of a specific area. Many countries use public art to propagate a state's ideologies to the masses. Unfortunately, most of our public spaces are filled with meaningless monumental structures. My project is a sign that now government officials are collaborating with artists and taking interest in public art projects.

Who in your opinion sets the bar for art installations today?

It's a very personal view, but I like the work of a famous Chinese artist **Ai Weiwei** and the British artist **Anish Kapoor** for the variety and simplicity of their ideas. I cannot ignore the work of internationally acclaimed Pakistani artist **Imran Qureshi** who has a very unique style deeply rooted into our own culture.

Having put up a successful and largely appreciated installation yourself, what advice would you give to others that would like to take up public art themselves?

Artists should develop their public art ideas, approach the local government officials (e.g. Commissioner, DCO etc.) and convince them of the significance your project. I am sure most of them will be open to having a discussion on your proposal.

"This interview has been reproduced with permission from The Missing Slate (www.themissingslate.com). Originally appearing on June 14, 2016, it is part of the magazine's Spotlight Artist series of interviews."





Charbagh (i), 2016
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
76 x 76 cm
Edition: 09



The Lost Garden (iii), 2014
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
152 x 51 cm
Edition: 09



Deep Dream (ii), 2016
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
46 x 61 cm
Edition: 09



The Lost Garden (i), 2014
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
152 x 51 cm
Edition: 09



The Lost Garden (iv), 2014
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
152 x 51 cm
Edition: 09



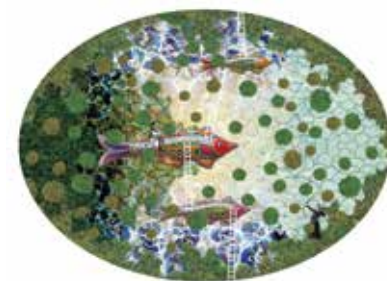
Deep Dream (iii), 2016
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
46 x 61 cm
Edition: 09



Deep Dream (iv), 2016
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
46 x 61 cm
Edition: 09



The Lost Garden (ii), 2014
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
152 x 51 cm
Edition: 09



Deep Dream (i), 2016
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
46 x 61 cm
Edition: 09



Gardenscape, 2014
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
57 x 44 cm
Edition: 09



Gardenscape (ii), 2016
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
63 x 44 cm
Edition: 09



Gardenscape (v), 2016
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
63 x 44 cm
Edition: 09



Gardenscape (iii), 2016
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
63 x 44 cm
Edition: 09



Gardenscape (vi), 2016
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
63 x 44 cm
Edition: 09



Gardenscape (iv), 2016
Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
63 x 44 cm
Edition: 09

This catalogue accompanies the exhibition

GARDENSCAPE

Works by Muhammad Atif Khan



Publisher
Sanat Initiative
F-39-1/A, Block IV, Clifton
Karachi, Pakistan

Layout Design & Editing
Anzal Afzal Khan

Printer
The Times Press (Private) Limited

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the publisher.