



GHULAM HUSSAIN

PARDE MEIN REHNE DO



Ghunahon Ka Shehar (City of Sin), 2019
 Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 70 x 97 cm

Falling in love with a place like Lahore can happen at a glance but to continue to stay enamored one has to get accustomed to its people, sights and places. This is a slow, unraveling process that comes through breathing in the culture with patience and openness. The colorful, bustling and overly stimulating streets of Lahore mesmerize and baffle as you move through them. To capture the city's culture for himself, Ghulam Hussain "Guddu" began by looking for its pulse and through the course of years, now finds himself fully immersed into it.

It was the local, Punjabi film industry and the commercial world of advertisements, media and the street culture, that first caught his attention. Media, that predominantly (read specifically) serves a male audience, hoping to provide reprieve to the frustration of the masses through the visual overload it provides.

Guddu has keenly observed such advertisements, which he encounters on a daily basis and deciphers the code of culture through these commercial posters in his work. These visuals range from movie posters in the Lollywood film industry to advertisements by local 'healers' claiming to provide reprieve in all matters related to spiritual, emotional and physical health, yet mostly focusing on libido enhancement for males. Movie posters with images of scantily dressed women in lewd poses when seen on walls and crowded inner markets are spectacular and seductive, providing sexual appeal to the male diaspora. However, alongside, if not layered under and over these posters are just as poignant flyers, advertised by various religious groups, and carrying pictures of bearded men, calling for the masses to a more pious existence and promises of heaven in exchange for such life of piety spent here on earth. Another closer look at these visual floods and you notice advertisements from home grown doctors and alchemists who promise pleasure and male enhancement drugs to a population already conflicted between piety, passion and frustration.

This idea of conflict is what comes through and hits you in the gut when you look at Guddu's work. The frustration of a picture never being clear, an image that had all the ingredients of seduction and allure but at the same time docile in its utilization of the craft of weaving. He represents the fabric that he breathes in through the visuals that he chooses to weave so precisely, that it becomes a task to decide if you should be amused or offended.

Growing up in a small town in Sindh and moving to Lahore to attend the

National College of Arts was a transition he bridged through this process of weaving. Coming from a family of artisans, weaving was a traditional craft he learnt and practiced from a very young age. National College of Arts introduced him to miniature painting, another traditional art form. It wasn't until Guddu started cutting up his own drawings, paintings, posters, pamphlets and canvases that he found a way to bridge the gap between craft and high art. Weaving a found material, like pre-existing posters and images is where tradition entered the contemporary world and we start viewing the mundane as a vital strain of survival in our society.

When Andy Warhol was asked to paint his immediate reality, something that he saw every day, he chose the Campbell soup cans that he regularly had for lunch. They were readily available and inexpensive. Something that reached the masses and fed the modern consumer culture.

The Campbell soups pieces were produced in 1962 for the first time, followed by portraits of Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe, mass produced through silk-screening processes, mirroring the consumer driven culture of the time. The "every day" had become novelty and celebrities and consumerism were the rage. What Andy Warhol did fifty seven years ago in America was to represent the popular culture through reproducing the most sensational and readily available images from the news, movies and what you saw casually in every grocery store or kitchen cabinet. High art can no longer be seen on a pedestal set apart from craft. Like Warhol, Guddu also manages to tap into the culture but picks up on the fast pace of modern life and weaves it slowly, one strip at a time for a new reality to emerge through his craft. This is the reality of a society that sees itself through the lens of religion and piety. It is split between religious extremism and being played on basic human desire. Seeped in chauvinism and propelled by the male gaze, it is equally hanging on to promises of pleasure and paradise by self-proclaimed doctors and religious leaders.

When viewed through Guddu's works we see how the society has a skewed view of itself while its reality is hidden in plain sight on walls and billboards of the city streets.

Saulat Ajmal



Sheeda Pistol, 2019
Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 95 x 71 cm



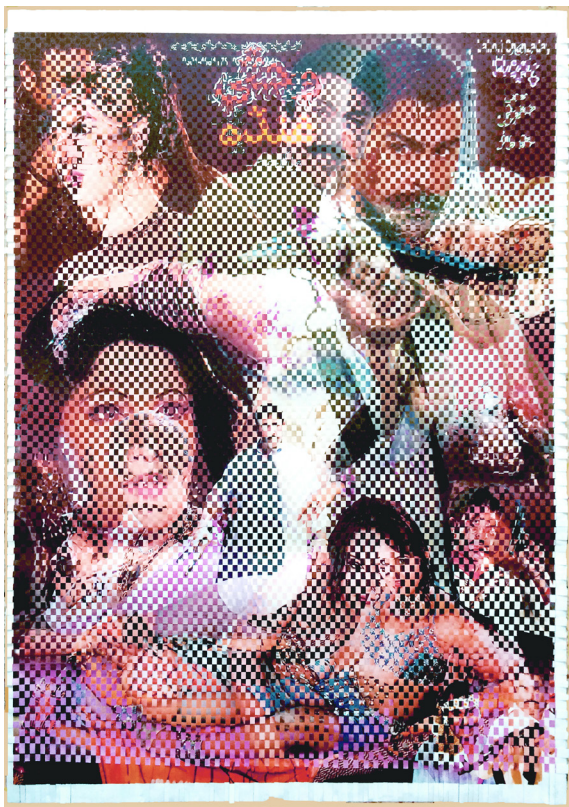
Sakhi Sultan (Generous King), 2019
Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 102 x 75 cm



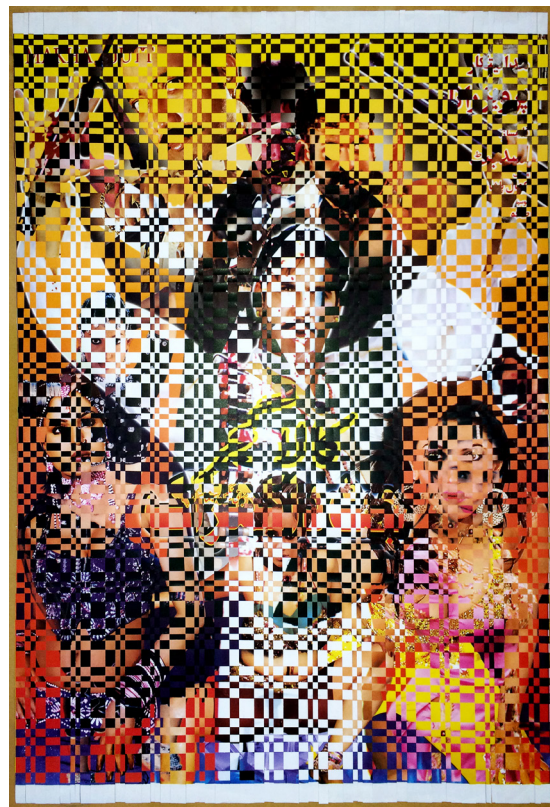
Musalman Watan Ke Rakh Walay (The Guards of Land), 2019
 Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 102 x 72 cm



Acha Gujar (Righteous Gujar), 2019
 Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 96 x 71 cm



Wahshi Gunda (Wild Hooligan), 2019
 Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 103 x 71 cm



Kaala Gujjar (Black Gujjar), 2019
 Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 102 x 69 cm



Husn Ki Jeet (Beauty Wins), 2019
Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 102 x 76 cm



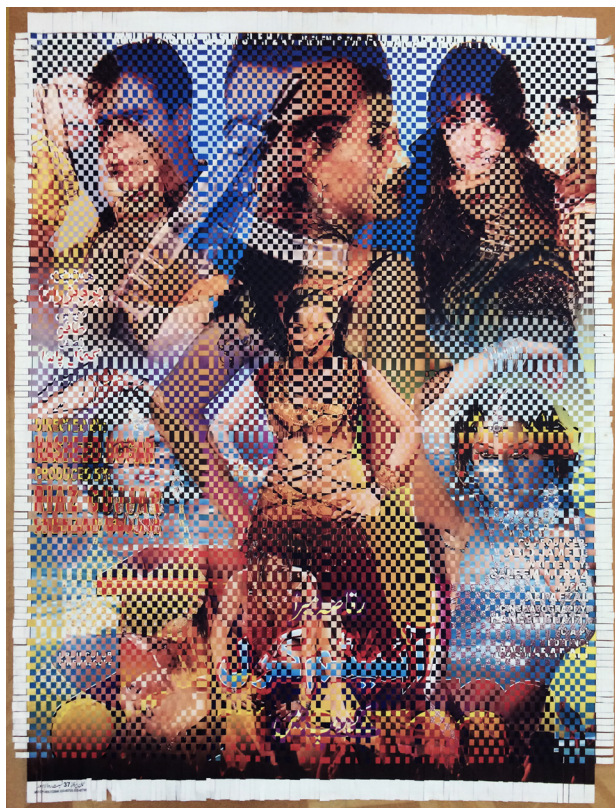
Anokha Daaj (Unique Dowry), 2019
Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 102 x 76 cm



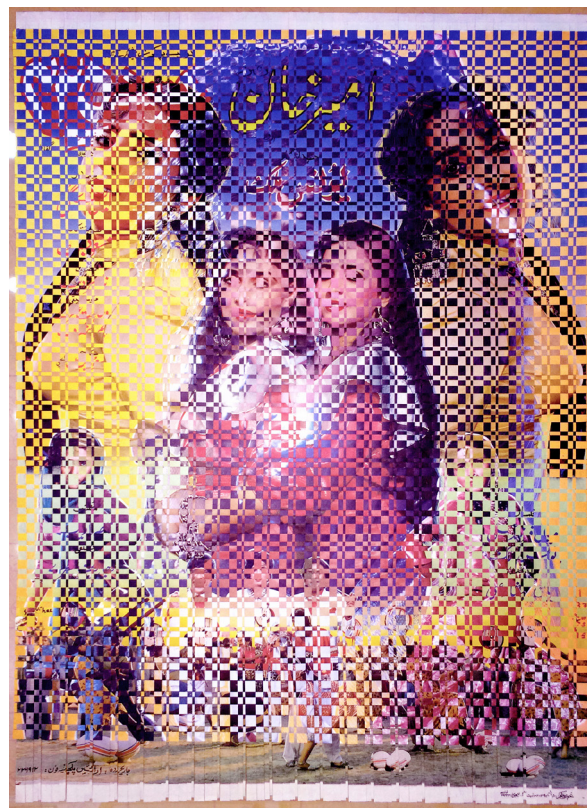
Zulam Da Badla Mile Ga (Avenge of Injustice), 2019
 Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 103 x 72 cm



Hitler, 2019
 Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 102 x 72 cm



Item Girl, 2019
 Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 102 x 76 cm



Haseena 420 (Beauty 420), 2019
 Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 101 x 72 cm



Parde Mein Rehne Do (Let it Remain Behind the Curtain), 2019
Opaque watercolor on canvas, 152 x 244 cm

Statement

I graduated in 2009 from the National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan in miniature painting. My artwork is craft-based, due to my initial inspiration from my family which is skilled in craft. I weave interesting compositions which stimulate the viewer's imagination and exploration of one's own memories.

My current body of work deals with the seductive imagery of Pakistani films as popular culture of my day. What I see around me are ads for the promotion of local film industry like posters, panaflexes and banners. Walls and streets are casually and excessively used for displaying these ads and this is what I'm encountering on a daily basis. This is not the case for a sanitized society living of the rich but the majority areas inhabited by the middle and lower classes of my society. I have woven multiple posters to create a sense of irony, the Pakistani life style in real as compared to the Pakistani Cinema. I have a strong connection with the movement of OP Art which is intrigued by the nature of perception. I have created optical effects with illusion in characters and titles of the posters which are woven in such a way that it takes a satirical form on the two perspectives of the situational identity of the film's characters and titles. These posters make up the fabric of my culture and paint a true and confounding picture of what our society looks like on the inside where the freedom of being is inescapable. Where spirituality and sexuality coexist on the same wall and religious figures compete for space with the erotically posing film stars of the local industry.

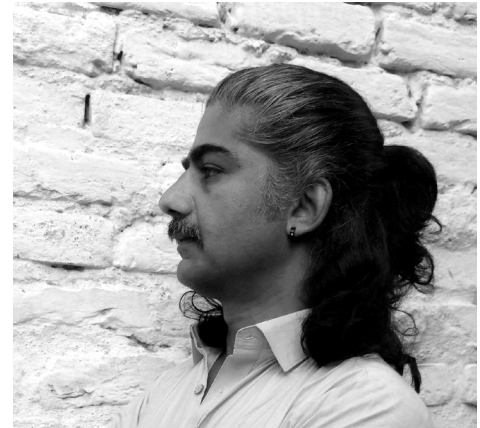
Biography

Ghulam Hussain is a contemporary visual artist belonging to the city of Hyderabad, Sindh, a home to the world's oldest civilization, Indus Valley. He is a trained miniature painter from National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan and works with High and Low Craft and Art to represent the beauty within stark contrasts of what is considered as high and low. His work is based on geometric pattern and overlapping techniques through weaving which gives a unique impression in the form of Art.

Hussain's work is distinct due to its technique and simplicity and opens up a range of possibilities both for the artist and the audience. Going back to his roots in Pakistan's province of Sindh, Hussain is challenging the notion of the high craft by integrating forms of low craft, such as weaving and brick building,

with the miniature style of painting.

Ajrak and *Sindhi Topi* are the symbols of Sindh's culture and civilization for thousands of years, connected to the civilization of Mohen Jo Daro built around 2500 BC. *Ajrak*, basically, is a name given to unique block print shawls. Sindhi culture display special designs and pattern in these shawls, *Ralli*, *Charpai* weaving and bed sheets which associate Hussain to his childhood memories. Inspired by children's sensibilities and recollection, Hussain constructs his images like the pattern weaved through in paper on canvas. His work deals with the idea of folk art and the innocence of expression both combined and blended in a new manner.



His work has been exhibited and recognized both nationally and internationally, notable among them being Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, India; Fifth Beijing International Art Biennial in National Art Museum China, Rockefeller Brothers Artist Residency, New York, The Artist Students League Artist Residency, New York, Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands, Satrang Art Gallery, Islamabad, Pakistan and Sanat Initiative, Karachi, Pakistan.

His repeated visits to New York connected him to the works of Piet Mondrian and he came up with his flourishing body of work titled "Woven Narratives Dialogue with Piet Mondrian" in 2015. His body of work in 2017 from the solo exhibition "Mind=Blown" exhibited at Sanat Initiative confronts the Op Art with the Sindh Craft Art, a step towards opening a dialogue in the art world regarding high art and low craft.

This publication accompanies the exhibition

PARDE MEIN REHNE DO

(New Works by Ghulam Hussain)



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

Front Cover: Detail of ***Maza Jawani Da (Lust of Adulthood), 2019***

Back Cover: ***Maza Jawani Da (Lust of Adulthood), 2019***

Paper collage (woven Pakistani film poster), 102 x 75 cm

A level of color inaccuracy is to be expected when images are viewed onscreen and in print version in the catalogue.

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