SHAHNAMEH

FERDOWSI

COMMON BORDERS

PROJECT

CHAPTER 1

CURATED BY: MAJID ABBASI FARAHANI

شاهنامه فردوسی

FOREWORD

Written and completed by Hakim Abolghasem Ferdowsi in 1010 CE, *Shahnameh* chronicles the history of Iran through its kings, *The Shah*. Comprised of 50,000 couplets, the epic poem draws upon the primordial mythologies of creation, moves into heroic and legendary accounts of the early kings, before finally coming to historical accounts from the time of the Arab conquest of Iran.

To say that *Shahnameh* belongs in the same category as *Gilgamesh*, or as the epics of Homer, or as the plays of William Shakespeare is only fair. To start with, *Shahnameh* was composed by Ferdowsi in Classical Persian, at a time when Arabic was the preferred language for literature. What Shakespeare is credited for doing for the English language centuries later, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* did for Persian; composing Iran's vast history as a poem served to reinvigorate the Persian language throughout the expanding territories of Iran. Melding stories and histories just as Homer, Ferdowsi's audience journeys through time, experiences the spectrum of human emotions, follies, and triumphs, and traverses through the lands of Greater Persia.

As literature has the power to refine and/or establish language, shape our understanding of history, and define culture and society, so do governments and politics. Having a common border, Pakistan and Iran's relationship is deeper than the lines demarcating their lands. Reading between the (cartographer's) lines, the artists showcasing in *Common Borders* examine the relationship between Iran and Pakistan within the context of their shared histories, cultures, and even literature.

Abid Aziz Merchant
Co-Founder & Director
Sanat Initiative

Born and raised in Karachi, Pakistan & after spending 21 years as a career banker, Abid Aziz Merchant decided to entirely change his profession in 2013 & follow his passion for art & film. Sanat Initiative was conceived in 2013 with a view to change the artistic landscape in Pakistan through art exhibitions & projects. In a short span of 5 years, Sanat Initiative has become the top tier visual art space in Pakistan & one of the lead sources of distributing Pakistani visual art globally. Abid has been instrumental in developing the careers of emerging visual artists from Pakistan by giving them a platform for gound-breaking projects thereby promoting experimental & innovative streams of thought. Under the banner of Sanat Initiative, Abid has also collaborated with Iram Parveen Bilal (Parveen Shah Productions) on her film slate with their first collaboration being Forbidden Steps (shot in NYC in fall 2018 and currently in post-production) and Wakhri (One of a Kind) which is in development. In Pakistan, the film industry is in its revival phase & Abid aims to bring original & meaningful stories through film production for an audience that clearly seeks engaging content.

PROJECT BRIEF

This project aims to encourage social and cultural interaction and bring cross-border communities together. The study and investigation of the relationship between Iran and Pakistan throughout our histories is very important especially from a cultural point of view. This investigation on recognition of cultural and shared values between these two countries, that has withstood the test of time, despite historical ups and downs, bilateral relations have strengthened, bringing tangible benefits to both sides as well as to the rest of the world.

The common border has shifted through different period of governments of each country and presently stands at 1000 kilometres with an effective and increasing role in commercial and cultural relations. Common heritage of two countries language, literature, commercial, historical and cultural relations has had a huge impact on expanding relationships between the two countries. And the governments tried to keep these diplomatic relationship carved in the memory of these two nations.

Perhaps borders function as windows that allow a point of view but certainly advertising and media have a targeted role in alleviating and altering the view of nations. That is where the artist can turn the page of the history of these two nations with his elusive and laconic look and create a new story in order to create new possibilities, dialogues and enlighten the path of new cultural developments and understanding that in turn creates a world without barriers.

One of these cultural commonalities is an Iranian epic poet Hakim Abolghasem Ferdowsi and his significant work *Shahnameh*. This project is planned according to *Shahnameh* and artists from Pakistan and Iran have been invited to participate creating an amalgam of a cross border exhibit.

Common Borders - Chapter 1 showcases works by 10 artists belonging to Pakistan and Chapter 2 of this project will showcase works by artists from Iran. Both parts of the project will first be exhibited in Pakistan and will be followed by a joint exhibition traveling to Iran.

Majid Abbasi Farahani
Curator
Farahani Foundation

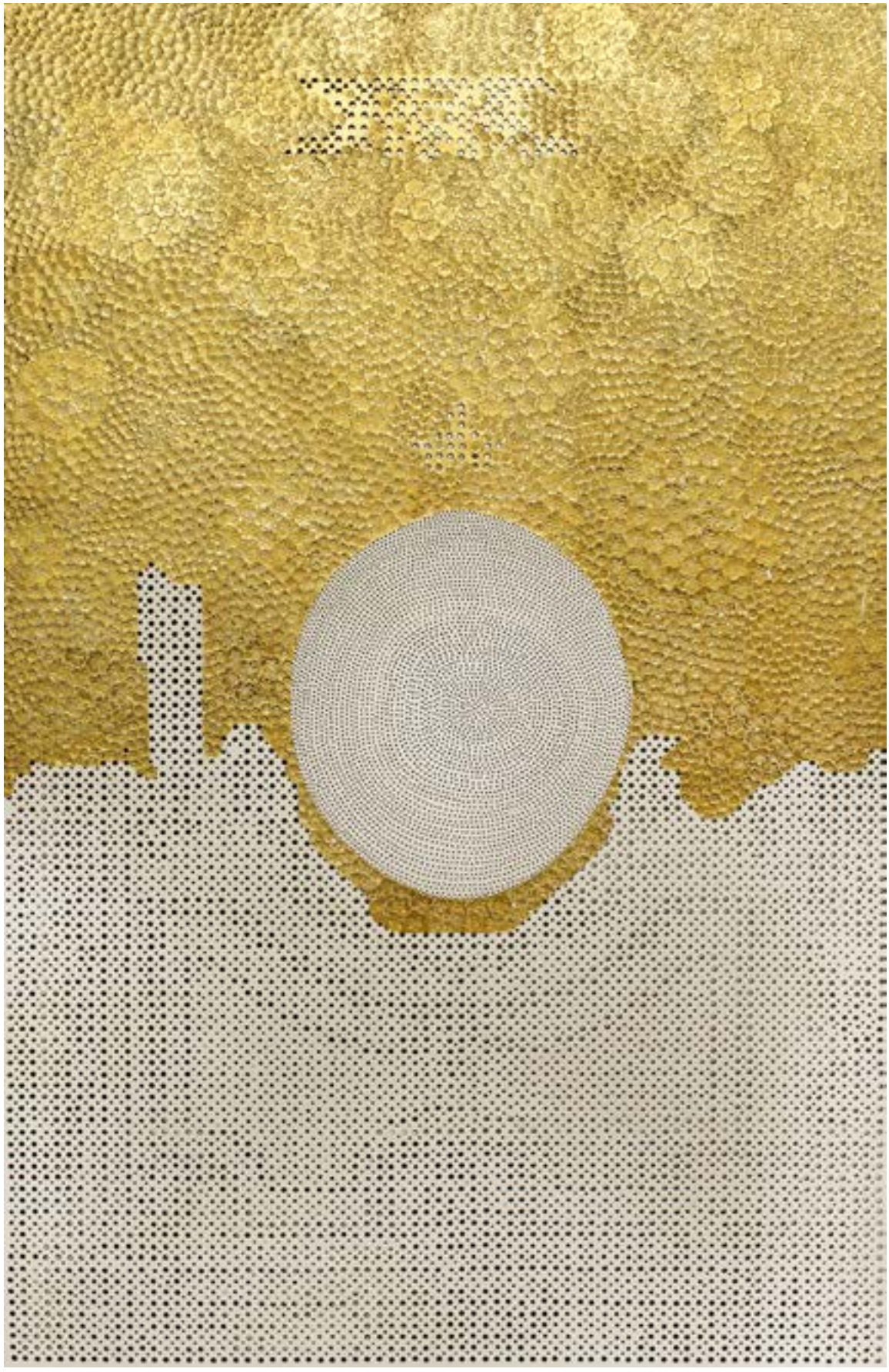
Majid Abbasi Farahani is an artist and the curator of the Iranian Contemporary Art Biennale. His most recent show for the Iranian Contemporary Art Biennale, "Peace on a Paper" has traveled around Iran and exhibited at the Abadan Contemporary Art Museum, Isfahan Contemporary Arts Museum and the Niavaran Cultural Center in Tehran. Farahani Foundation was founded in 2013 by Majid and is now one of the most prestigious cultural organizations in Iran. Farahani Foundation is an independent and non-profit organization which has been dedicated to the advancement of discourse of contemporary art. It began as a venture to showcase Iranian contemporary art by providing an international platform for innovative contemporary Iranian artists, alongside established international artists to create a space for cultural and social appreciation and exchange.

ABID ASLAM

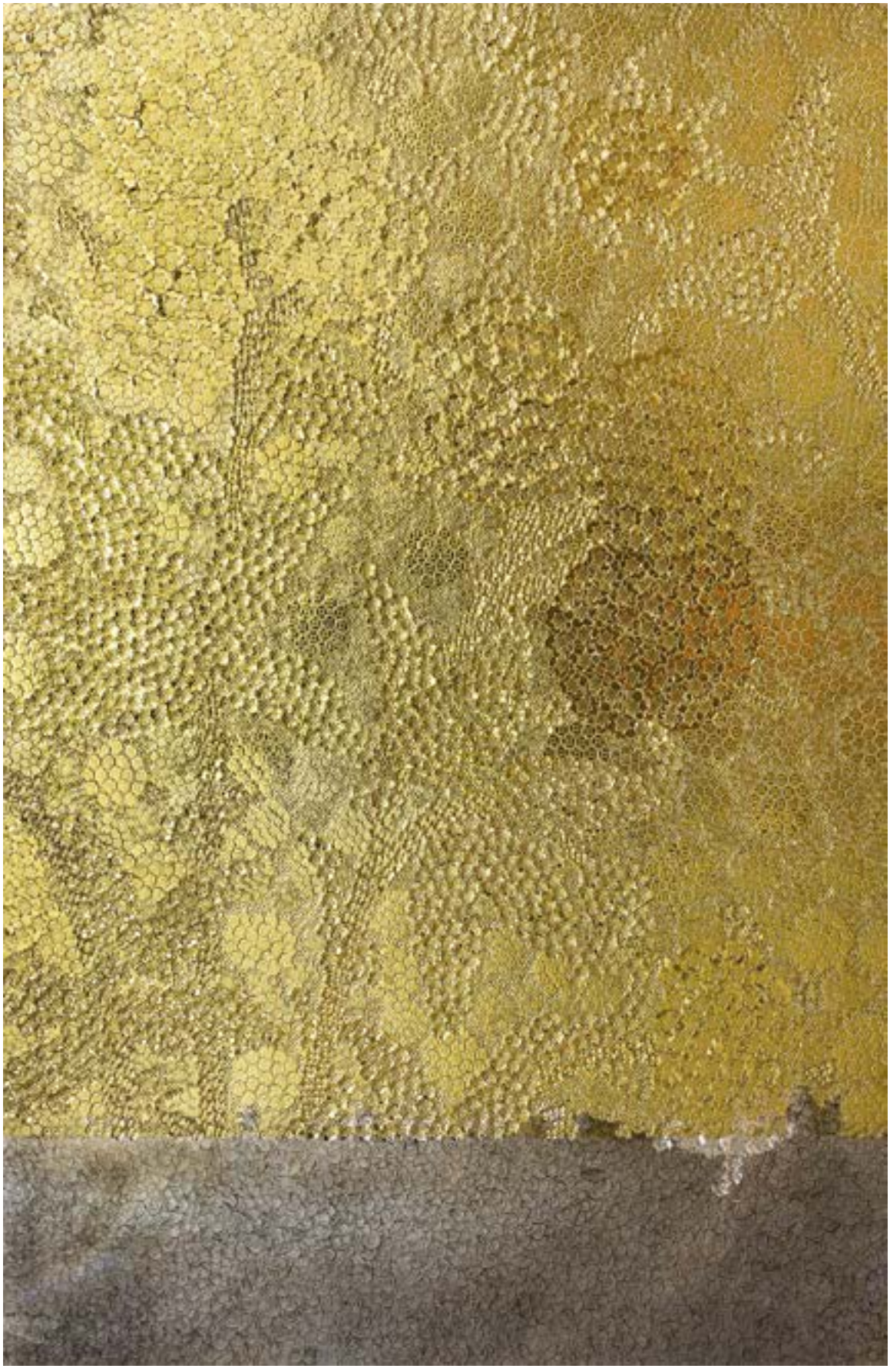
Shahnameh and its connection with the art history has always been a great influence. By keeping in mind the idea of *Shahnameh* contributing to common borders as political, social and cultural scenarios, my work actually revolves around such strategy. My body of work for this project specifically reflects the notion of socio-political and cultural exchange between Iran and Pakistan as both countries dealt and were damaged significantly with political and cultural crisis. My works for *Common Borders* are actually a true depiction of cultural, social and political scenarios that reflects my vision about such sensitive facts and issues. Different variables like metal engraving technique and patterns present in my work are extracted from Persian/Iranian history. From daily use utensils and household objects to extremely intricate metal objects, metal engraving technique covered almost every aspect of life and my use of patterns as an interpretation from the *Shahnameh* adds a complement to my body of work creating an exceptional sight for the viewer.

Born in 1986 in Lahore, Pakistan, Abid Aslam studied at the Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts, Lahore. His passion for art convinced him to pursue a master's program in visual arts from National College of Arts, Lahore in 2017 with an aim to develop a strong and independent point of view and a mature grasp of critical debate on contemporary art. Abid has to his credit 3 solo exhibitions in addition to numerous group shows. He was also represented by Anant Art Gallery in India Art Fair in 2017 and is the recipient of Special Award from Artist's Association of Punjab (2016) and Arjumand Painting Award (2015). Abid has been an artist in residence at 1st Sanat Residency (2014) and First Karachi Biennale Trust Artist Residency (2019) which was in collaboration with Orangi Pilot Project, Karachi Pakistan.

Ride, 2019
Mixed media on wasli, 102 x 76 cm



Overcoming, 2019
Mixed media on wasli, 117 x 74 cm



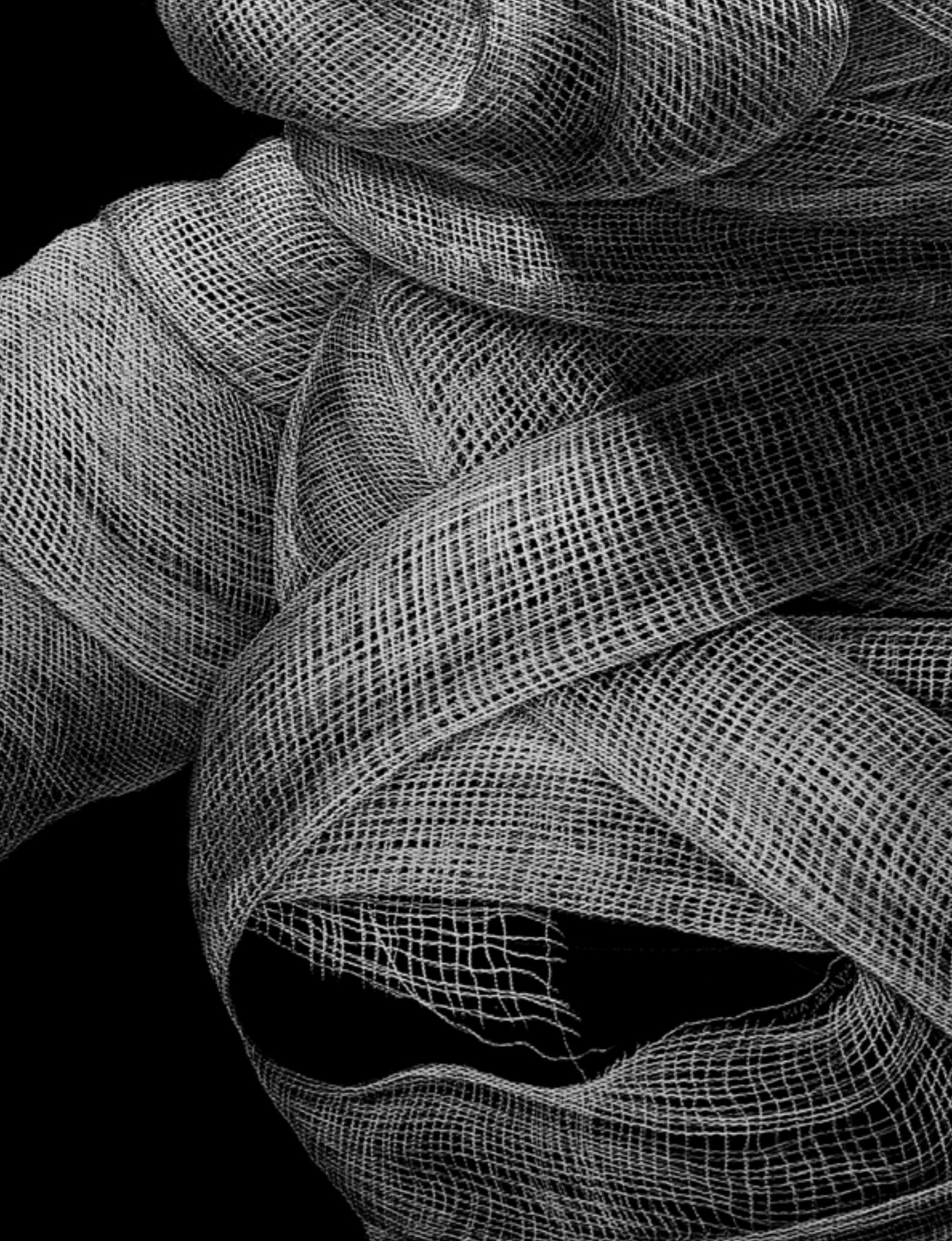
Beneath The Sea, 2019
Mixed media on wasli, 91 x 61 cm

ADEEL UZ ZAFAR

Shahnameh (شاهنامه) or "The Book of Kings" is the world's longest epic poem and magnum opus by a poet Hakim Abolghasem Ferdowsi. It is crucial to understand the context in which it was written but it tells mainly the mythical past of the Persian Empire. Shanameh is not precisely chronological and divided into three parts: the "mythical", "heroic", and "historical" ages. The demonic plays an integral role in the *Shahnameh*, establishing itself in countless forms. Demon is symbol of violence in Persian myths and has a heinous appearance and resorts to force to attain his goals. These demons are not always physical creatures; we also encounter them as immaterial forces of temptation, distraction, and fate even exist today and have left many of us suffering from a paranoiac idea that they are out there determined on destroying us.

Adeel uz Zafar works as an artist, illustrator and art educator in Karachi. Zafar received his BFA from National College of Arts, Lahore in 1998. Zafar's works have been featured in several national and international exhibitions including 6 solo shows and numerous group shows. He has also presented works in international art fairs such as Art Stage Singapore, Art Fair Philippines, Art Dubai, Art Abu Dhabi, Art Basel Hong Kong, Pulse Art Fair New York, India Art Fair and the 2nd Kathmandu International Art Festival. He has participated in both national and international residencies including the Studio R.M Residency, Lahore, Paramatta Artists Studios and Cicada Press COFA UNSW, Creative Fusion International Artists Residency, Cleveland Foundation, Cleveland, Ohio, USA and at C3A – Center of contemporary art, Cordoba, Spain in collaboration with the AAN Foundation. He is represented by FOST Gallery, Singapore & AAN Gandhara-art Space, Karachi-Hong Kong.

Demon 1, 2019
Engraving on plastic vinyl, 91 x 76 cm



Demon 2, 2018
Engraving on plastic vinyl, 91 x 76 cm

IMRAN CHANNA

Badshahnama, Series

Badshahnama (The book of Kings) is an illustrated history book from the Mughal period. This book, specially commissioned during the reign of Emperor Shah-Jehan, was presented as officially recorded documents on Mughal kings. The outcome was two-fold, on one hand acting as propaganda, while on the other, simultaneously presenting and documenting the 'official' history of Mughal kings through visual means. The book, originally produced in India is now in the British Royal Collection. Raising questions around the accuracy of pre-scripted history, this beautifully illustrated and richly informative book is bursting with sharp insights into the art, history and approach of Mughal rulers.

My approach to making this series deals with the idea of selecting and re-presenting fragments of the book in alternative contexts in order to open up new forms of engagement, relationships and meanings with the characters. Using a digital cut-and paste technique, I magnify the heterogeneous harmony of the original visual document by juxtaposing different identities in order to form an alternative narration.

The act of taking the images away from their original context, and reinserting them with alternative proportions and in different formations creates a link based on differences rather than similarities. My role becomes a builder and a demolisher at the same time to let some things go in order to get something back.

Playing with our fascination with the rich history of Mughal miniature manuscripts, this series of works highlights voids and magnifies doubt, in order to question the documentation and representation via historical artefacts.

My works for *Common Borders* re-examines the parallel between *Badshahnama* and *Shahnameh* and unfolding their processes of documenting and framing mythical past with visual artefacts and written accounts. Both *Nama's* traces historical links between neighbouring lands and their shared past. This project brings into focus the various outcomes of these visual historiographies by magnifying the myths of various *Shah*, *Badshah* and their *Nama's*.

Imran Channa was born in 1981 in Shikarpur, Sindh, Pakistan. He lives and works between Amsterdam (NL) and Lahore (PK). He received his BFA and MA (Hons) in Visual Arts from the National College of Arts Lahore in 2004 and 2008. Recently he finished his fellowships at Harvard University South Asia Institute, Cambridge, Massachusetts, US (2018), and Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, Netherlands (2016-2018). He was recipient of Gasworks Residency in London (2011). Imran is currently fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart in Germany. He is guest teacher at HKU - Beeldende Kunst, Utrecht, Netherlands. He has been part of Fine Arts faculty at National College of Arts, Lahore during 2007-2016.

Imran's work has been shown across the world in numerous exhibitions such as; "Seen Unseen" Kasteel Oud-Rekem, Belgium (2018). "Pasts in Particles" Twelve Twelve Gallery, Den Haag, NL (2018). KINO @ Nest, Den Hague, NL (2018). "Changing Places; The House Mill, Hastings Museums, Cliffe Castle, Osterley House and Phenix, UK (2017-2018). "Holy Water" Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht NL, (2018). "Holy Ghost" "The Materiality of The Invisible", Marres, Centre for Contemporary Culture Maastricht, NL (2017). Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, Netherlands (2016). "Vanishing Point" Artport, Tel Aviv, Israel (2016). "Enclosure/Erasure", Koel Gallery Karachi, PK (2015) "Age of Mythology", Art Basel Hong Kong (2013). "Lik Likoti", Canvas Gallery Karachi, PK. "The Rising Tide" Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi, PK (2010). "The Return" 3rd International Festival of Contemporary Art, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Algeria (2011) "The Memory is The Message" XVA gallery Dubai, UAE (2011). "Badshahnama", Tmproject Gallery Geneva, Switzerland (2010).

He has been awarded with the "Award of Excellence" by Artists Association of Punjab at Alhamra Art Council, Lahore, Pakistan (2013).

Badshahnama, series XLVI (Edition of 3), 2018
Inkjet print on paper, 70 x 100 cm

Badshahnama, series XLVII (Edition of 3), 2018
Inkjet print on paper, 70 x 100 cm

KHALIL CHISHTEE

Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* is part myth, part history-beginning with the legend of the birth of the Persian nation and its tumultuous history.

It was meant to protect Persian collective memory amidst a turbulent sea of cultural storms.

I am taking inspiration from Ferdowsi to make a piece which is my take on Indo-Pak history, in a way, this is a page from "My Shahnameh".

One invader eats up the previous one, and both claimed to be in love with the conquered land and its people.

سارے جہاں سے اچھا ہندوستاں ہمارا

ہم بلبلیں ہیں اس کی، یہ گلستاں ہمارا

"Sarey Jahan se acha Hindustan hamara"
"Hum bulbulein hein iski, yeh gulistan hamara"

Better than the entire world is our Hind, We are its nightingales, and it (is) our garden abode

Born in Lahore, Pakistan in 1964, Khalil Chishtee is a visual artist based in New York City. Chishtee holds a MA in studio arts from Sac State, Sacramento, CA. Before moving to States he taught at National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan, for ten years. Besides exhibiting his work, Khalil has done public commissions in various cities of Pakistan and now he is involved in several art commissions in NYC by focusing on his "desi aesthetics".

Khalil intends his art for transformation rather than decoration, diversion or indoctrination. In his view the art is meant to serve for cultivating knowledge of how to be in the world, for going through life. And it can be effective for developing a deeper understanding of your own experiences.

His installations, sculptures, and site-specific works have been exhibited internationally at locations such as 56th International Art Exhibition la Biennale di Venezia 2015, Here Today...; For The 50th Anniversary Of The IUCN Red List Of Threatened Species, London, UK 2014, Art Festival Watou, Watou, Belgium, 2014, "Brain Drain", project for Art 14, London, UK 2014 and Solo Shows: "Trash to Treasure", Berlin Baku Gallery, Berlin, Germany, 2015, "Detritus from exploded stars", Sanat Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan, 2015, "I me and mine." Twelve Gates Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, USA 2014, "Sparkling truths", Lahore, Pakistan 2011.

A page from my book of kings I, 2019
Powder coated mild steel, 157 x 71 x 1 cm

A page from my book of kings II, 2019
Powder coated mild steel, 159 x 92 x 1 cm

MUHAMMAD ATIF KHAN

Miniature paintings of the Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* were the illustrations of the stories of the kings of the past. Illustrations help readers to imagine the mythical environment and incidents happening in the stories. It was the task of the painters to provide maximum details, plus the conclusion of the story/act in their illustrations.

My work has an illustrative quality, as well, but most of the times I deliberately leave the story unfinished, at a point, from where I want people to find their own meanings according to their personal experiences, understandings and exposures about life.

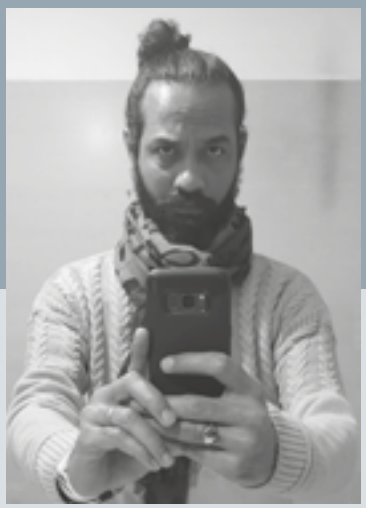
The Palace reflects the general behavior of our ruling class who always try to present themselves as super human beings to impress public. *The Stage* is about the culture of not accepting authority of the chosen ruler and fueling conspiracies against him, even though he holds the love of the public.

Lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan, Muhammad Atif Khan is an Assistant Professor at the National College of Arts, Lahore. Atif graduated (with distinction) in Fine Arts from the National College of Arts in Lahore in 1997, and a year later was awarded the UNESCO-ASHBURG Bursary, to complete a residency at Darat-al-Funun in Amman, Jordan. His career as a print-maker spans over twenty years. His work has been exhibited in India, USA, Great Britain, UAE, Australia and Singapore.

The Palace (Edition of 9), 2019
Archival inkjet on hahnemühle paper, 152 x 76 cm

Up above the world (Edition of 9), 2019
Archival inkjet on hahnemühle paper, 51 x 107 cm

The Stage (Edition of 9), 2019
Archival inkjet on hahnemühle paper, 76 x 152 cm



MUHAMMAD ZEESHAN

Understanding our culture, and our history seems to only be possible through western scholarship and western museums. For us, the post-colonial generations, interaction with our past is through the west, the colonists.

2003 BFA (Miniature Painting) National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan, Muhammad Zeeshan is a critically acclaimed visual artist who lives and works in Karachi and is an Adjunct Faculty of Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi, Pakistan. Zeeshan has several gallery, art fair, museum and institutional exhibitions to his credit including exhibitions at Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Herbert F. Johnson Museum at Cornell University, Abbot Hall Art Gallery at Kendal, Pacific Asia Art Museum at Pasadena, Art Gallery of Mississauga, British Museum, Gemak/Gemeente Museum, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum and Metropolitan Museum at Tokyo. He has been represented at the Dubai Art Fair, India Art Fair, Hong Kong Art Basel and Pulse Art Fair. Zeeshan's works are also a part of the permanent collection of British Museum, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Pacific Asia Art Museum at Pasadena and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Zeeshan is the curator of KB19, the second edition of Karachi Biennale which will be held in Karachi, Pakistan in October 2019.

VIP Lounge, 2019
Graphite & UV printing on sand paper, 137 x 92 cm

Common Borders (Edition of 10 + 2 AP), 2019
UV printing on sand paper, 107 x 82 cm

NOOR ALI CHAGANI

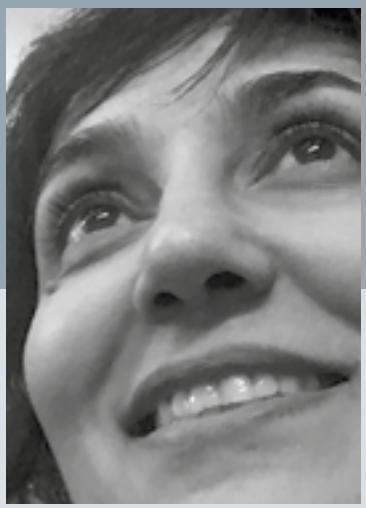
My works are illustrations of my surroundings. In fact they are the representation of my inner self. In a poetic way I normally try to present whatever is happening inside and around me. To me my works are the direct adaptation from my localities. To me walls, pillars, posters, graffiti and other mark makings are the representation of my society. To me walls are always like open canvases, placed between the people allowing them to interact with it, leave their trace and expression over it. They are always layered with information, emotion and expression. To me they are like the scripts explaining any society, their weaknesses, their strengths, power and political **behavior**. Being a miniaturist, I always see my works as an illustration of an epic of whatever is happening inside and around me.

Noor Ali Chagani (b.1982, Pakistan) received his BS Degree in Computer Science in Karachi and then later BFA in Miniature Painting from National College of Arts, Lahore. Noor Ali has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in notable institutions around the world, including Stanford University's Cantor Arts Center, California; Katonah Museum of Art, New York; Abrons Arts Center, New York; Institut du Monde Arabe, France; Casa Arabe, Spain; Victoria and Albert Museum, United Kingdom; Pacific Asia Museum, California; and the Devi Art Foundation, India among others. He was nominated for the Victoria and Albert Museum's prestigious Jameel Art Prize in 2011. He was awarded with guest residency in Rijks Academy, Netherlands in 2012, Riwaq Art Space Residency in Bahrain 2013, and the Jameel Prize Residency in Victoria and Albert Museum in 2017. Noor Ali's artwork has been featured in numerous publications including Los Angeles Times, Asia Pacific Arts, L'Opitimum n°23, Global Citizen 13 magazine, Nafas Art Magazine and several daily local newspapers. Recently he was featured in Blouin Modern Painters NY among other 'Top Emerging Artists to Watch in 2018'. The artist lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan.

The Orange Line II, 2019
Concrete, metal rods & acrylic paint, 76 x 11 x 11 cm

Wall 1, 2019
Terracotta bricks, cement & acrylic paint, 14 x 60 x 1 cm

Wall 2, 2019
Terracotta bricks, cement & acrylic paint, 19 x 67 x 1 cm



RUBY CHISHTI

“The Only Blind Spot in History”

Created with scraps of women’s sacred ceremonial garb, this three-dimensional manuscript illuminates complex stories that have vanished into the ashes of time. In contrast to the illustrated leaves of *Shahnameh*, with glorified battle scenes, conditioned Masculinity, and warfare, the series of “The Only Blind Spot In History” exudes the essence of Feminine nurture, and the angel-like presence of women who nourish the wound after destruction. Using my own iconography developed over the past two decades, such sensitive narratives depict women fashioned entirely out of cloth. Their magical presence unearth the hidden treasures of peace, as their tattered clothes tells the tale of time, persistence and survival.

Ruby Chishti is a Pakistani American visual artist based in New York City. She is primarily a representational sculptor and formally educated at the National College of Art in Lahore, Pakistan.

Over the last 18 years, she has produced a series of lyrical-sculptures and installations that touch on tenacity and fragility of human existence, migration, Islamic myths, gender politics, memory, universal theme of love, loss and of being human.

Ruby has held residencies internationally and her installations, sculptures, and site- specific works have been exhibited at Asia Society Museum NY, Queens Museum, rossi & rossi Hong Kong, Aicon Gallery (London & New York), Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi, India, Arco Madrid, Art Hong Kong, India Art Fair and The Armory Show NYC to name a few.

Ruby’s work has been published in numerous magazines and newspapers and books including Unveiling the Visible by Salima Hashmi, Memory-Metaphor-Mutations by Salima Hashmi and Yashodhra Dalmia and The Eye Still Seeks: Pakistani Contemporary Art by Salima Hashmi & Martand Khosla.

The Only Blind Spot in History II, 2019
Scraps of ceremonial clothes, embellishments, polyester, thread, archival glue, metal & metal scrap, 102 x 73 x 6 cm

The Only Blind Spot in History I, 2019
Scraps of ceremonial clothes, embellishments, polyester, thread, archival glue, metal & metal scrap, 116 x 72 x 6 cm

SAJJAD AHMED

Criticalities and Imaginations – Commonalities in icons and their subversive interpretations

Ever since the advent of documentation, history is constantly being created on various levels including the ones conceived by human and the other driven by the phenomenon of time. Often the historical formations contradict themselves by the paradoxes they carry within. Those paradoxes pave a way for validating the acute outcomes which are, ironically, both critical and imaginative. Criticality and imagination are the essential spectacles in any given civilisation and are shared commonly across regions and their respective cultures. The appearance of traditional carries the illusions of fashionable icons which seem to stay the same in their subversive interpretations.

Sajjad Ahmed has exhibited in several solo and group shows in various museums, institutions and galleries across the world. His work addresses a diverse scope of concerns around art, representation, abstraction, semiotics, region, religion and globalisation, manifested through assemblages of found-imagery, and executed in an array of mediums; prints, installations and time-based mediums. Sajjad's works have been collected by museums and institutions across Asia, Europe, Middle-East and North America, including Cathedral Museum of Atri, Italy, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Russia and Devi Art foundation, India. Ahmed is an awardee and alumni of South Asia Foundation, as well as finalist for Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Hong Kong. Along with an artistic practice spanning over a decade, Ahmed has also contributed in art academia in various institutions across Pakistan.

ICONOCLAST I (Edition of 3 + 2AP), 2019
Inkjet print on photo-matte paper, 81 x 61 cm

ICONOCLAST II (Edition of 3 + 2AP), 2019
Inkjet print on photo-matte paper, 81 x 61 cm

TAZEEN QAYYUM

My first encounter with Abolghasem Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings) was in 1992-96 during my art studies in Pakistan. Like many miniature-painting apprentices, I observed and often copied the pages of surviving illustrative manuscripts of this epic poem. While memorizing and practicing 'visual' codes of the *Shahnameh* tales, I tried to decipher many Farsi (Persian language) words which were written in the same Perso-Arabic script as my native language Urdu, resembling words and themes found in Urdu literature and poetry, which were directly adapted from Farsi. It is only through *Common Borders* exhibition research process, that I discern this partial recognition and learning as the seepage within and between the histories, languages and memories of the cultures. This led me to rediscover the *Shahnameh's* outstanding contribution to teaching and preservation of the intangible pre-Islamic Persian culture, history and language for future generations. Furthermore, the socio-political parallels between Iran and Pakistan as two powerful Islamic states that are now globally securitized solely through prisms of radical Islamic ideologies, terrorism and violence can be read and drawn through *Shahnameh*. For Pakistan, such skewed negative perceptions further problematized its constantly shifting secular, Islamic and national identities which collectively push minority and ethnic cultural histories, stories and languages to vanish if not preserved and promoted soon, possibly a lesson to take from Ferdowsi's visionary *Shahnameh*.

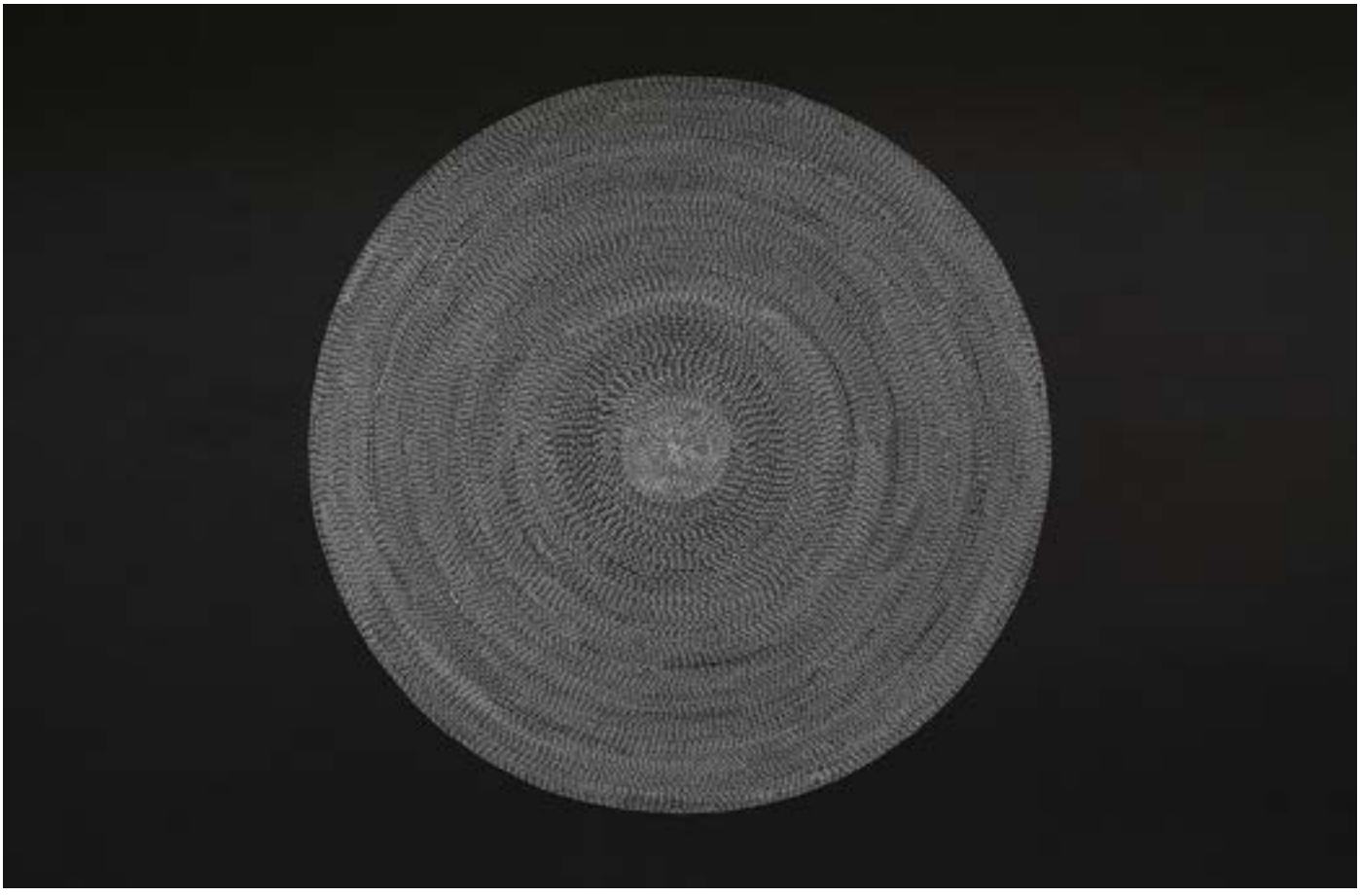
As someone who is interested in archives and preservation of conceptual and technical excellence, I was first drawn to the structure of Ferdowsi's compilation of oral histories of the mythical, the epic and the historical, masterfully composed as rhyming couplets. Discovering that each verse follows a perfect metrical rhythm, yet remain emotionally gripping, was awe-inspiring. Such concepts have strong connection with my body performances, drawings and installations through which I poetically explore socio-political realities of my own displaced identity, anxieties and assimilation, often resulted in solitary thoughts, marks and movements.

For this project, I compiled an extensive list of words that are spoken and understood in both Farsi and Urdu languages. Then a set of carefully selected words is drawn methodically. The resulting circular form resembles the organic attributes of a spiral, an eye, a mandala or a black hole in which words and thoughts are repeatedly contracted and stretched but maintain their legibility. For example, the work *Hikmat* (wisdom) is a written sequence of twenty-three different words that form an abstract circle which when read, unfolds an interpretative narrative that compliments and celebrates feats of the *Shahnameh*. Whereas *Moqavemat* (resist) and *Hifz* (preserve) are singular word explorations, pulsating like silent punctuations. Collectively, the works not only pay homage to the *Shahnameh's* conceptual and technical wonder but also its strong historical link to the shared present predicaments of Iran and Pakistan.

Tazeen Qayyum (b.1973) is a contemporary artist working between Pakistan & Canada. She received her BFA in Visual Arts from the National College of Arts Lahore, Pakistan (1996). Her work has received several critical reviews including in The Canadian Art (2018), The New York Times (2009) and The Globe and Mail, Canada (2011 & 2015). She was nominated for the Jameel Prize (2013), K.M. Hunter Award (2014), received the Excellence in Art Award 2015 by the CCAI (Canadian Community Arts Initiative), and has been awarded many grants throughout her career, including UNESCO bursary (2000) to work and exhibit in Vienna.

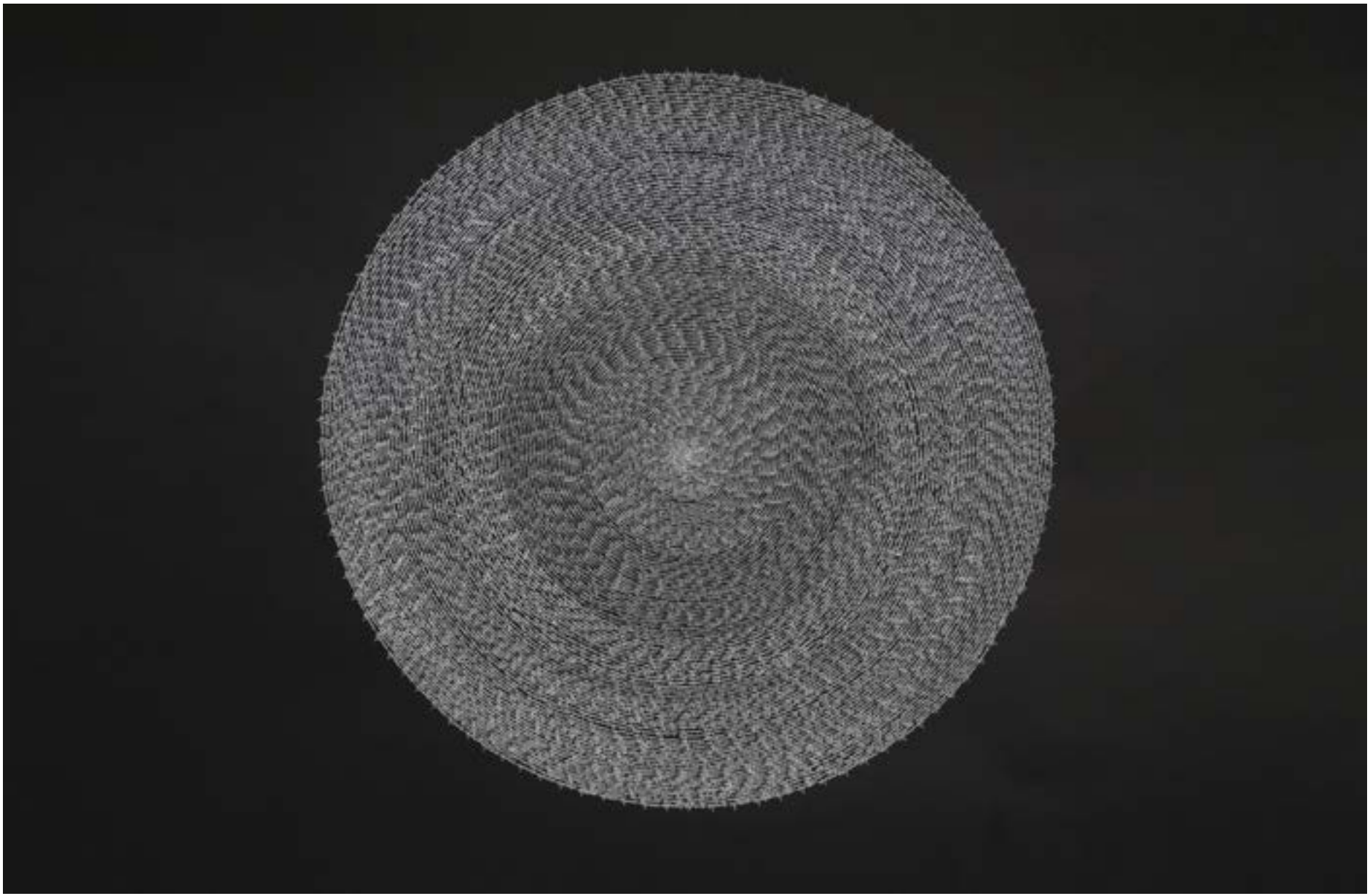
Primarily trained as a miniature painter of the Persian and South Asian tradition, Tazeen continues to explore new materials and processes through mediums such as drawing, installation, sculpture, video and performance. Repetition, rhythm, balance, and geometry are methodological devices that allows her to create artworks that are visually complex and offer a multi-layered understanding of material and techniques used. Drawing from complex issues of belonging and displacement within a socio-political and religious context, her art is a way for her to navigate identity and beliefs living in the diaspora.

Tazeen's work has been shown in galleries and museums around the world and is included in several publications as well as many private and public collections.



Hifz / حفظ (preserve), 2018
Archival pigment ink on acid-free paper, 73 x 101 cm

Hikmat / حکمت (wisdom), 2018
Archival pigment ink on acid-free paper, 73 x 101 cm



Moqavemat / مقاومت (resist), 2018
Archival pigment ink on acid-free paper, 73 x 101 cm

This publication accompanies the exhibition

COMMON BORDERS

CHAPTER 1

CURATED BY: MAJID ABBASI FARAHANI

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