Conflict

HYBRID

INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF ART, DESIGN, AND ARCHITECTURE

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The *Hybrid* is a thematic journal aimed at fostering a culture of research and writing at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and beyond. It is transdisciplinary in nature, and focuses primarily on those practices and researches that are interested in the application of any combination of art, design, architectural, and related genres, to issues of critical, cultural, political, and educational significance, inclusion, and social justice. It emphasises praxis by providing a forum for research into the creative practices that exist within urban, academic, developmental, and other milieus, especially in the national and regional contexts of Pakistan and South Asia. The *Hybrid* offers a platform for disseminating both completed as well as in-progress research, both established academic/practitioners' and students' research projects, as well as interview, photo essay, and portfolio sections. Its objective is to bring new and multiple perspectives, grounded in Pakistan and the region, to a local, regional and international audience, and to further pertinent debates.

Editorial

When the first living organism, a single-celled structure, faced a situation of conflict, it acquired a countermeasure to maintain itself.[1] As organisms evolved to become multicellular, these countermeasures increased in complexity and allowed to not only gather and retain information but also to be able to comprehend it in multiple ways. In humans, cognition allowed the development of language and communication, thus, offering a means to engage with conflict in a new way. They could now become an "observer"[2] within their immediate present and were able to record their present for future generations. It allowed for multiple observers in different parts of the world to document their understanding of their context and their world around them.

As civilisation evolved in different parts of the world, the reasons of conflict went from being rooted in survival of the physical being, to culture, ideologies, and systems of thinking—all eventually interwoven. Conflict, originally derived from the Latin word *conflictus* (to strike together), embodied not just competition that was violent in nature—for basic survival needs like food and water—but also over the way the world was perceived and which perception should prevail. Hence, conflicts between individuals and tribes became more complex as they—simultaneously and unknowingly—became about culture and ideologies. No matter how much we wish we had evolved away from such conflicts, we see its many manifestations even today and so it becomes imperative for some of us to continue striving to comprehend, resolve, and document such conflicts.

Mina Cheon's work in our "Work in Progress" section about the conflict surrounding the Korean peninsula, situates itself within the larger realm of a global as well as a regional conflict, from the perception of both the observer(s) as well as the affected/observed. While Cheon explores ways to examine geopolitics and its effects, Adeela Suleman documents a site of violence, within a neighbourhood of Karachi, infamous for its gang violence. The difference in scale can also be seen in terms of the interpretations/documentation/comprehension.

As differentiation of society[3] continued, wars were still being fought over religious and cultural ideologies. However, a new kind of conflict of ideas was also emerging. From 1500 AD onwards, within the years of the Renaissance, individuals like Copernicus and Leonardo da Vinci were pushing the boundaries of observation and understanding of the world. Old ways of thinking were being rejected for new reason, logic, and scientific facts. While Galileo (d. 1642) met his

doom in what was one of the greatest conflicts between science and religion at the time, his idea survived and paved the way for a new understanding of the world. Albeit not the same, we find ourselves at a similar turning point in the current age (as we function as a much more complex society in terms of conflicting ideas). Despite observers like Lefebvre and Heidegger, the capitalist rhetoric prevails; dictating, largely and vastly, the way human societies manifest themselves. It is these manifestations at various scales and forms, that our contributors David Brooks, Aaron Tobey & Malcolm Rio, and Zarmeene Shah analyse, document, and explore through ways of problematising existing disciplinary conflicts embodied in art and architecture.

If change is the only constant of this world/universe (as posited by Heraclitus), is it conflict that turns its wheels? And if conflict takes place at multiple scales simultaneously how does one begin to address the ephemerality of daily conflicts that occur both internally and externally in six billion (or more) people in the world? What comprises this intimate scale? How has it been targeted? Nadine Ahmed and Sadia Salim explore conflict in the realm of spoken and visual language and the aspirations that come with these forms of expression.

As Humanity negotiates its existence in the technological turn, one wonders if our unresolved systemic conflicts will make way into the systems we design for our future—if the cellular-environmental conflict is accelerated through genetic modification or permeates into human-computer interaction. Or will these technologies help us evolve out of conflicts? If they do, what shape will the new chaos-order model take? Our ability to think upon, and comprehend, this topic is perhaps the contradictory beauty of the theme itself.

Durreshahwar Alvi

Notes

1. John Mingers, "The Cognitive Theories of Maturana & Varela," *Systems Practice*, 4, no. 4 (1991): 319–338.
2. Ibid.
3. Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society, Volume 2*, Series: Cultural Memory in the Present, trans. Rhodes Barrett (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

The Trouble with the City: Considerations of Urban Conflict in Contemporary Visual Art

Zarmeene Shah

Questions of Ownership: To Whom Does the City Belong?

In his 1968 essay, "The Right to the City", Henri Lefebvre referred to the city as a site of production, change and exchange, and within it of the rights of all urban dwellers (regardless of citizenship, ethnicity, ability, gender, and race) to participate in shaping the city that they inhabit. Calling for new ways of seeing, imagining, and understanding, Lefebvre argued that no theory (or "science") of the city could be complete if its considerations included only a singular focus on urban functions, structures and forms, and did not take into account the social and anthropological needs of those that occupy it:

> [...] the need for security and opening, the need for certainty and adventure, that of organization of work and of play, the needs for the predictable and the unpredictable, of similarity and difference, of isolation and encounter, exchange and investments, of independence (even solitude) and communication, of immediate and long-term prospects.[1]

Finding at its core, Lefebvre's often radical and unorthodox Marxist inclinations, any claim to a legitimate knowledge or understanding of the urban complex then necessitated an understanding of (a) the working class, and (b) of the lived experience of the individual in the space of the city, versus objectively distant, and calculatedly theoretical "interpretations of inhabiting".[2] Where this relationship between society and the urban, between the individual and the city was forgotten, no theory could claim viability or relevance, having eradicated from its purview those that would act and be acted upon, those in whose hands the power to change, shape and reshape the city lies. For Lefebvre, the claiming of this right to the city through its renewed imagining—shaped not by the historic city remembered, but as the assimilation of past, present, and future (the city envisioned anew)—was nothing short of a revolution, in that it came to oppose old/traditional forms of understanding, shaping and governing the city, in favour of the possibility of the new.

Fundamentally, Lefebvre's city thus came to challenge existing power relations, often rooted in a capitalist system that drives urban development, and to question the modes through which the production of urban space occurs, particularly in the context of social, political, and economic relations. In the 21st century, Lefebvre's ideas still stand unwaveringly relevant, perhaps more so today than they did then, in a globalised age of disenfranchisement and dislocation, where

issues of power and of social and political relations are continually, often violently, played out upon the face of the urban metropolis and between those that govern it and those that occupy it.[3]

In the city of Karachi, Pakistan's largest urban metropolis and one of the world's largest urban agglomerations, issues of governance, of the rights of the citizen, and the right to the city are at the core of a complex web of applied and implied, overt and covert forms of conflict that have played out continuously since the city witnessed its first major migration during Partition. Since then, it has been marked by problems of security, of population, planning and development, and land, housing and infrastructure, while simultaneously being divided multiple times over by political, social, economic, religious, ethnic, and sectarian differences. However, Karachi also simultaneously remains the largest (consistently expanding) urban centre, continuing to see the highest number of (mostly economically driven) immigrants from various parts of the country (and beyond) to the city due to its position as the economic and industrial capital of Pakistan, reportedly contributing more than a third of the country's taxes.[4]

The first great movement of people into Karachi in 1947 changed the ethnic demographics of the city's population to a mostly *muhajir* (immigrants from India) base. However, over the last several decades, the city has seen a constant influx (predominantly) from within the country as well as (some percentage) from neighbouring countries in states of conflict/war. With this continued shift in its ethnic and religious populations, the city has come to be divided into areas marked by these differences: today the city can be viewed in terms of multiple overlapping sites of difference and exchange, based on political affiliation, religious belief, ethnicity, and perhaps above all economic disparity. In Karachi then, a city of divergences, where 62 percent of the population resides in informal settlements,[5] with no right to infrastructure, healthcare, education, or free, dedicated, and accessible public spaces within these settlements, how does one begin to think about the rights of the citizen to the city? Who governs and who claims ownership? Who speaks and for whom? Who is able to act and who is acted upon? Who claims the right to the city? Here, ideas of power and governance, of subjects and citizens are then perhaps central to questions of the right to the city.

In a lecture delivered at the Collège de France, Paris in 1976, Michel Foucault refers to power as something that circulates—that is based on and exercised through multiplicities and networks, by way of which it then comes to "pass through individuals". In the same lecture, he also speaks of two kinds of societies in which power is exercised in particular ways: the sovereign and the disciplinary society. In the case of the former, Foucault's discussion moves to notions of dominance, expanding on the notion of the sovereign, from king or ruler (singular/individual) to the "multiple peripheral bodies, the bodies that are constituted as power-effects".[6] Ideas of sovereignty then become intrinsically bound with theories of right, of obedience, and the sovereign/subject relationship of dominance: "[And] by domination I do not mean the brute fact of the domination of the one over the many, or of one group over another, but the multiple forms of domination that can be exercised in society; [...] not sovereignty in its one edifice, but the multiple subjugations that take place and function within the social body".[7]

Viewed thus, the face of the sovereign is not simply rendered irrelevant, but perhaps also faceless in its operation through multiplicities, nodes and networks. However, its power circulates as long as its mechanisms remain in play in this manner that constitutes subjects that must be subjectified, and a certain legitimacy or law that must be respected under this centralised, or unitary power. The feudal-type society is then a direct successor of this type of sovereign power mechanism, and is a critical complex to understand in the context of the social and political history of the country, and how power is deployed, disseminated, and received within and through this.

On the other hand, Foucault defines the mechanisms of power, employed by the society, as "disciplinary"—its origins can be traced back to the end of the 17th and the 18th centuries, which had taken firm root by the 19th and 20th centuries—and differs from the sovereign model in that it "applies primarily to bodies and what they do rather than to the land and what it produces".[8] This form of power concerns itself primarily with the extraction of time and labour through a constant system of surveillance over bodies (as opposed to the mechanics of sovereignty, which were more concerned with goods and wealth). In other words, this system finds its roots in operations of power and control through the working of juridical and legislative codes and processes, industrial capitalism, and the positioning of bourgeois society.

Central to his project, however, Foucault also sees apparatuses of knowledge as embedded within power structures, capable of disrupting/rupturing/destabilising the "delicate mechanisms" of sovereign and disciplinary power and subjugation. (Knowledge as rendered visible/invisible by mechanisms of control creates the foundation for power over the subject). The apparatuses of knowledge thus become a powerful tool in the operations of the machinery of power. In the city of Karachi then, where power is claimed, practiced, produced, and distributed through myriad formations and processes that find similarities in the operations of both sovereign and disciplinary societies in the power effects that they create and disseminate, what are the kinds of knowledge that must be produced, uncovered, and recovered in the conception of city, citizens, and rights?

Security: A Fundamental Right of the Citizen?

Artists must take on a multiplicity of roles in their navigation of the urban complex—at once they appear to be researchers, investigators, archivists, citizens, subjects, storytellers, scribes. They must simultaneously occupy the position of the observer, as well as of one who occupies the city. With relevance to Karachi, Seema Nusrat's work then embeds itself within this space both in the considerations of its construction, as well as the deployment of its narrative. Primarily a sculptor, Nusrat's practice embodies a formal investigation of found materials as metaphors for the space/site from which they emerge. Often acting as urban analogies, the works constructed from these materials form complex narratives of the divergent forces that act upon and within the city. Expanding and appropriating the notion of "found materials" within the urban context, in recent years Nusrat's enquiry has come to focus squarely on ideas of ownership, security, fear, and power, as manifested through the "soft architecture" of barriers, barracks, and bastions that have come to change the face of the city.

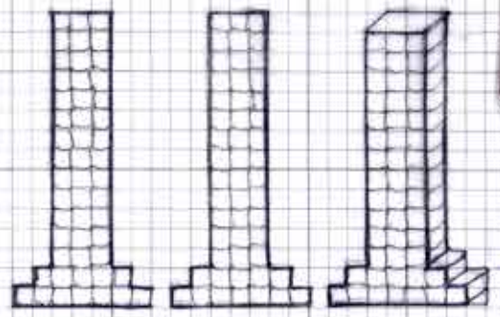
Two interconnected bodies of work—*New Urban Landscapes* (2016) and *Proposals Towards a New Architecture* (2017)—systematically focus this investigation on specific visual manifestations of securitisation and militarisation, policing and power, that have come to proliferate Karachi in the last several years: the "soft architecture" of barriers, checkpoints, barracks, and bastions that have come to be imposed upon the space of the city, shaping the lives of those that occupy it. Of these, for many years, the temporary structures created from sandbags (*boris*) remained the most common visual metaphor, with its origins and connotations rooted in bunkers constructed as military assemblages (on the battlefield, and as protection from artillery fire) in times of war.

The sack as a subverted symbol, however, first entered Nusrat's oeuvre in 2013, represented in a body of works titled *Items of Reuse* that addressed the violent corruption of the familiar in the transformation of an *everyday* object (the gunnysack) from transportable container of dry goods such as rice and vegetables, to the *specific* object symbolic of fear and violence. Stitched of recycled sacks, and stuffed as forms reminiscent of human body parts, these works arise from a dark period of heightened violence, security, and fear in the city—in 2011 when dead bodies were frequently found in garbage dumps, stuffed into sacks—and speak of the horror associated with the perversion of function in the reuse of this once benign article of everyday use.

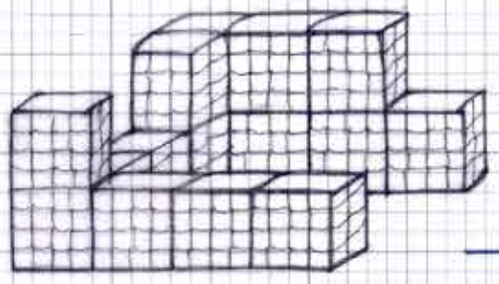
The appearance of the sandbags however, also manifested itself across the city in another formation at around the same time (2012-2013, as observed by the artist[9]), albeit performing a very different function. Taking the form of "temporary" security structures such as bunkers and barricades for police and military personnel, these structures were mainly created by the stacking of sandbags in order to fabricate checkpoints and surveillance points for the purpose of increased "securitisation" in the city.

Seema Nusrat, *New Urban Landscapes I*, mixed media on tracing paper, 2016.

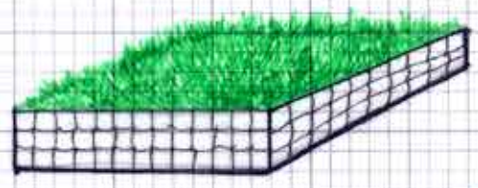
(Pages 20-21) Seema Nusrat, *Untitled*, mixed media on graph paper, 2015.



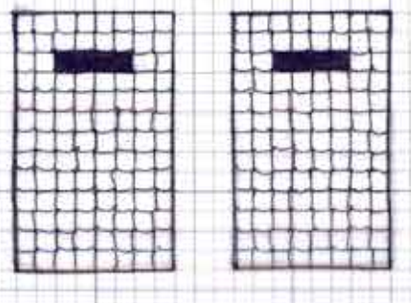
BASTION PILLARS



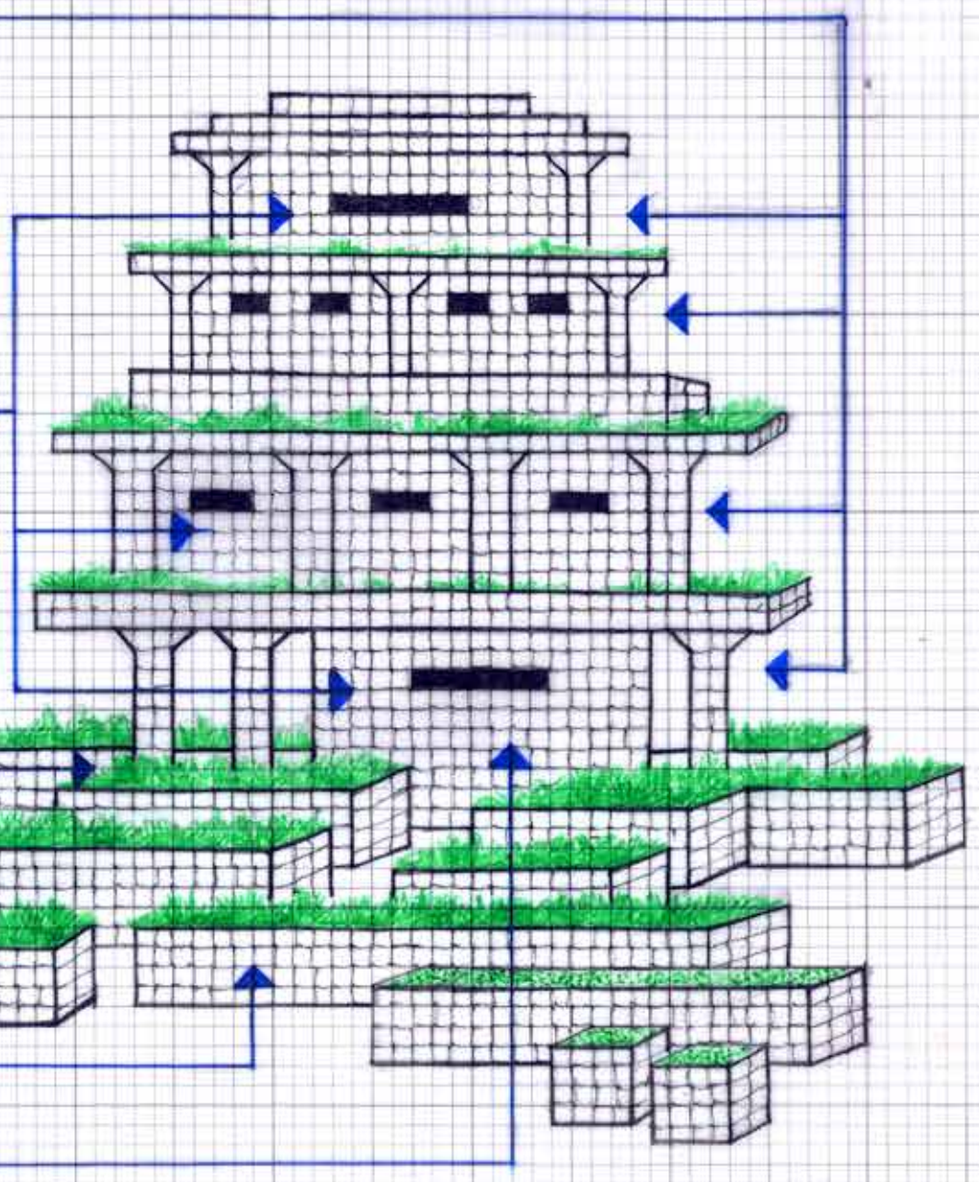
BASTION WALLS



BASTION GARDEN



BASTION WINDOWS



Therefore, while the sack remained as a metaphor within the symbolic language of conflict/violence, fear and threatened security, it came at once to enact a dual purpose within this: on the one hand offensive and on the other defensive.[10] This latter, in its evolving and myriad formation would come to juxtapose itself onto the living façade of the city, upon its planned/formal architecture, and upon the lives of those that occupy its (public) spaces. "(But) discipline involves a spatial division, and I think security does too […]".[11]

Over the years, the sandbags would deteriorate, abandoned, but never removed, resurrected in other parts of the city as required. In their abandoned form, tattered and leaking, still visible across the city today, they appear sad, like the morose traces of war, left behind by forces acting upon and through the city. Many came to be replaced by a new kind of barricade, one known as the Hesco Bastion, a collapsible wire mesh container lined with a heavy-duty weatherproof fabric and filled with sand, used primarily in military fortifications built to withstand explosions.

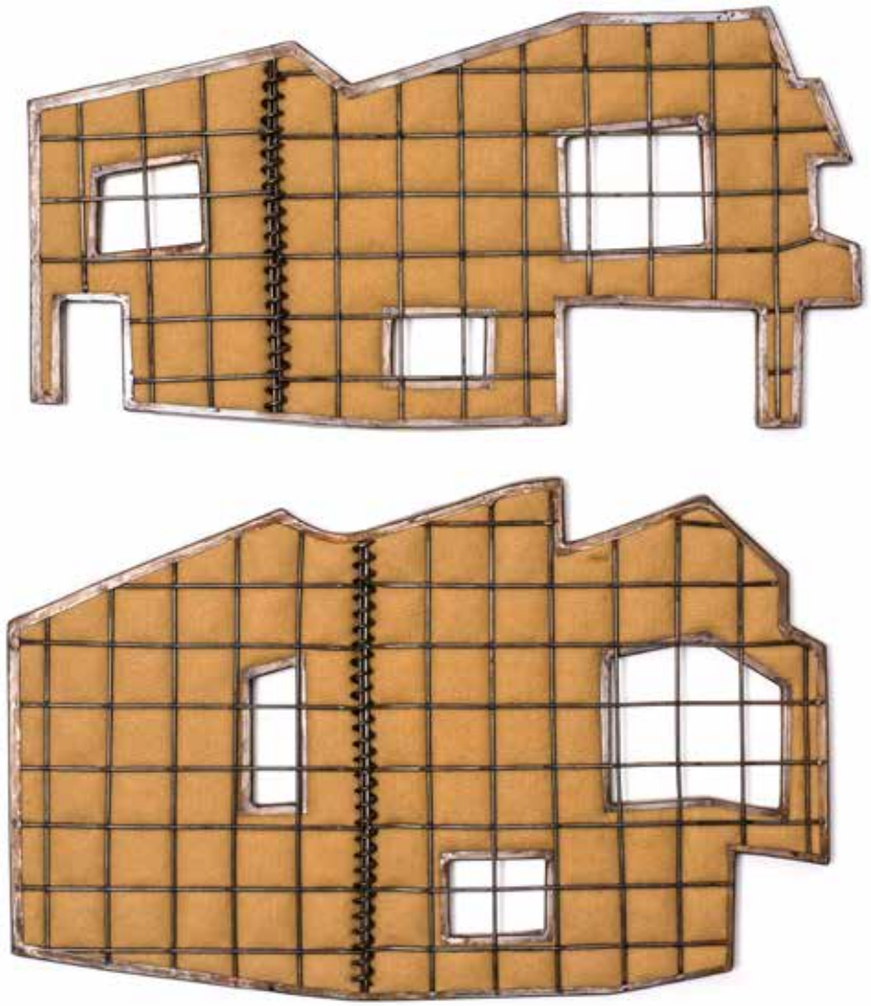
In Karachi, these came to be the form of barricading most often utilised in the assembly/fabrication of security checkpoints, and even in the construction of massive "temporary walls" lining sidewalks in front of foreign embassies and official buildings. This form of (apparently) transient "soft architecture" thus came to occupy much of the physical public space with which the citizens of the city would engage—the public interface of securitisation as recurring element in the lived experience of the city. Viewing this rapid proliferation and multiplication as a critical consideration, Nusrat's work would then come to focus on this formation as a central motif in her investigation, addressing not only the psychological impact inherent in the superimposition of this soft architecture, but also of its encroachment upon the city, upon its streets and its sidewalks, and upon its citizens. Where these forms create blockages to routes, detours must be taken, where they cover the sidewalk, the pedestrian must find another way.[12] How must we then begin to think about the rights of inhabitants to their own city?

The Elephant Called Conflict

In speaking of relations of power and control, Foucault discusses his (complex) theory of "biopower" or "biopolitics", in which individuals are governed through particular mechanisms of control that operate simultaneously on their bodies, their subjective selves and their collective relations. Further, in *Discipline and Punish*, in a discussion on Jeremy Bentham's "Panopticon", Foucault engages deeply with the idea of processes of surveillance as a mechanism of control, employed in the production of self-disciplining subjects. With the Panopticon as the architectural symbol of relations of power and control, the panoptic mechanism organises spatial units in a specific formation, i.e. through a circular building with individual cells, the windows of which face the outside periphery so that the inmates are always lit from behind, their bodies (and their every movement) constantly visible, monitored, and observed. These backlit cells are arranged around a central guard tower that operates as a constant apparatus of surveillance (and thus as a symbol of continuous power and hierarchy) that allows not only for an effective mode of seeing, but is also able "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary."[13] Thus power is most effective in its deployment when it is no longer seen and felt as such.

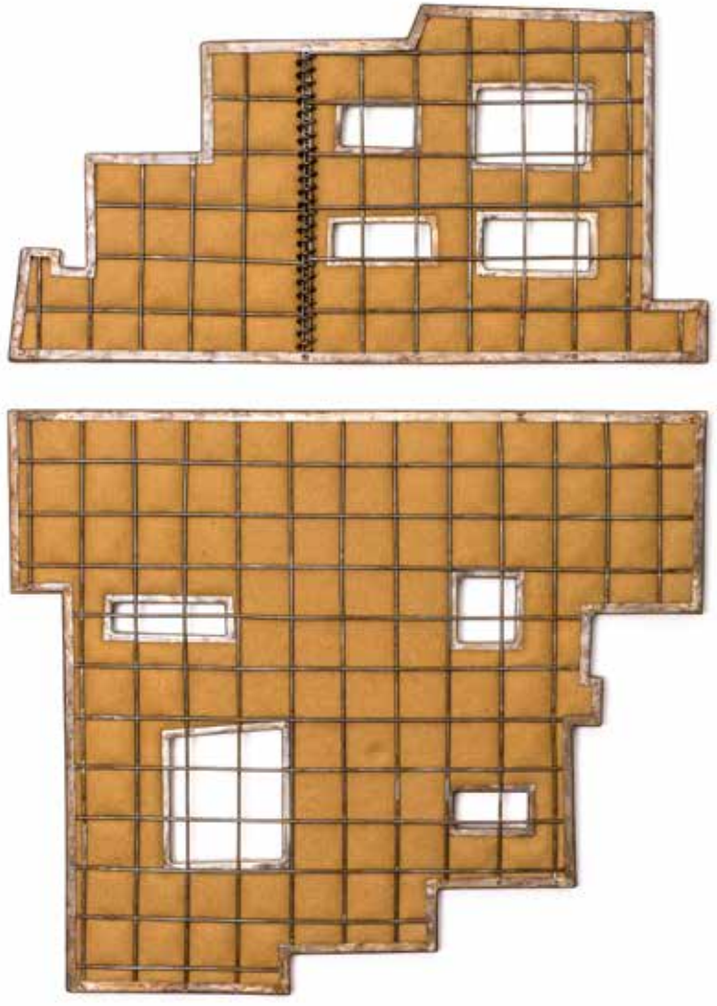
In the case of Karachi, a city marked by a history of violence and conflict, where measures of policing, securitisation, militarisation, surveillance and control are made "necessary" and "justified" both personally, administratively, and legislatively, the submission/acquiescence to structures of power signals an acceptance that renders their mechanisms of control invisible, driving subjects to perform and function according to its affects without question (or questioning). In his essay, "The Ethics and Politics of Narrative", Leslie Paul Thiele tells us "power is most effective when it is invisible, when it flows through rather than impacts one, and therefore cannot be resisted."[14] This is prefaced by a reference to Michel Foucault's discussion on "demonic" societies in which individuals are disciplined to think, act, and feel in certain ways and within certain limits, creating subjects that are unconscious of the invisible power relations that shape their identity and thus accept it as such. This is power in its most successful form, where the subjection of the individual is accepted and unconsciously assimilated into the formation of the subject's identity.

In this way, in speaking of the blockading of roads and routes, of the directed movement of individuals through the presence and placement of the sandbag structures and the bastions, the panoptic mechanism then becomes applicable to Nusrat's investigation of the symbolic operation of these structures upon the city and its inhabitants. Manned or unmanned, operational or abandoned, they represent a form of possible and perpetual surveillance, of threat and fear, which acts as a form of power and governance, able to function without the need for continuous enactment. Works such as those produced through Nusrat's investigation, then function as acts of "uncovering" or of making visible again that which has been rendered invisible through mechanisms of hegemony and control. It tackles head-on the problem that Simone Weil refers to as locating that which "links oppression in general and each form of oppression in particular to the system of production; in other words, to succeed in grasping the mechanism of oppression, in understanding by what means it arises, subsists, transforms itself […]".[15]



(Above) Seema Nusrat, *Domestic Elevation I*, welded wire mesh, non-woven polypropylene geotextile and foam on plywood, 2017.

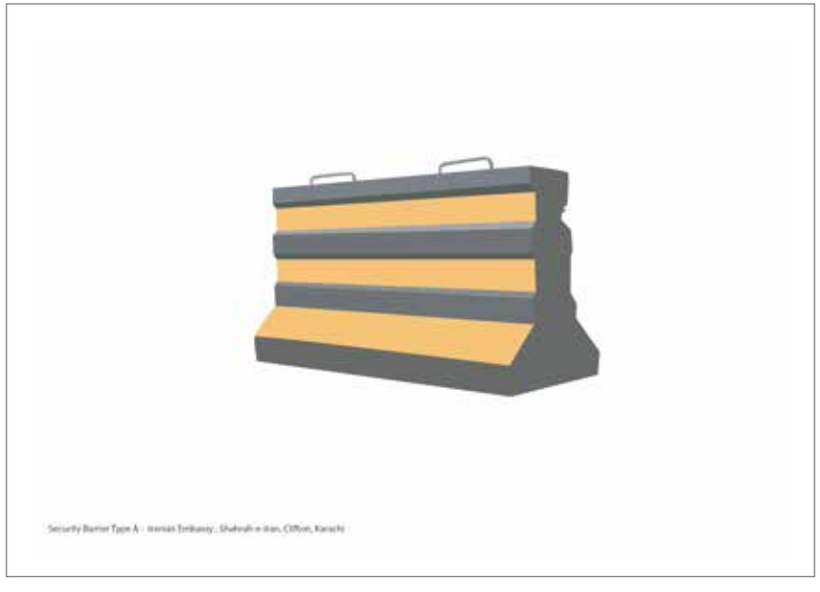
(Below) Seema Nusrat, *Domestic Elevation 2*, welded wire mesh, non-woven polypropylene geotextile and foam on plywood, 2017.



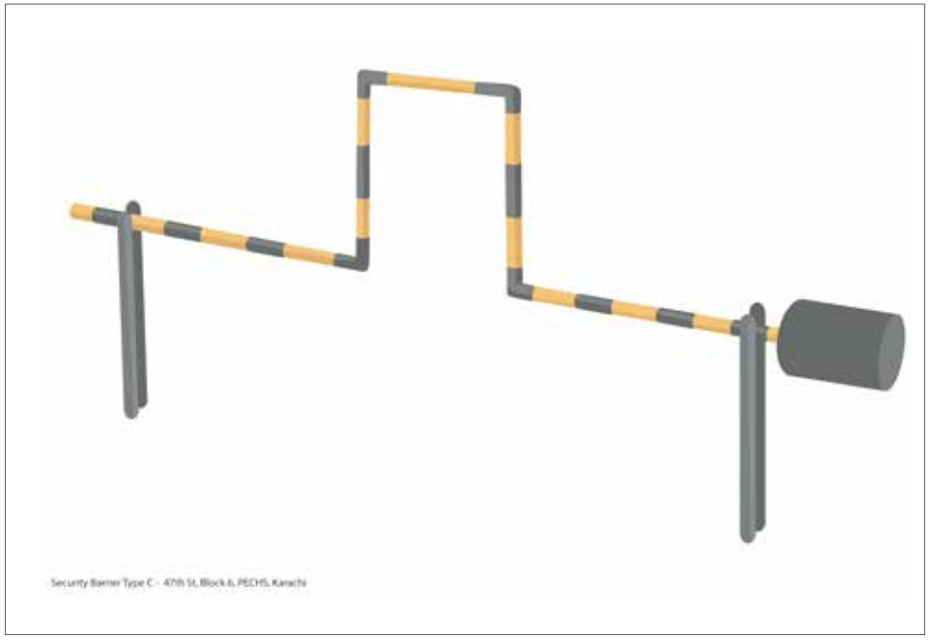
(Above) Seema Nusrat, *Domestic Elevation 4*, welded wire mesh, non-woven polypropylene geotextile and foam on plywood, 2017.

(Below) Seema Nusrat, *Domestic Elevation 5*, welded wire mesh, non-woven polypropylene geotextile and foam on plywood, 2017.

Similarly, Bani Abidi's 2008 series of digital vector drawings *Security Barriers A–L* (followed later by *Flailing Barriers,* 2015) represents a similar form of observation and destabilisation, calling to cool objective attention the proliferation of mechanisms of security seen across the city. In the production of what is described as a "design survey of security barriers on the streets of Karachi, Pakistan",[16] Abidi puts forward a series of minimalist digital works, formalist in their construction, technical in their approach, where brightly coloured renderings of various barrier forms are offset against a clean white background and titled with the barrier type (A to L) and its location in the city (i.e. "Security Barrier Type A—Iranian Embassy, Shahrah-e-Iran, Clifton, Karachi"). Seen in this way, removed from its context, the barrier becomes an isolated object, its function highlighted, disrupting the processes of "normalisation" that have served to produce a kind of "forgetting" in those who would regularly encounter them. As decontextualised and individualised objects, these barriers sometimes appear comical (another form of rupture in the identity and inherent hegemony of this structure of power), such as in the case of *Security Barrier Type C—47th St, Block 6, PECHS, Karachi* in which the sleek form of the yellow and grey barrier is moulded to allow for pedestrian passing, without the inconvenience of repeated opening and closing of the movable arm of the barrier. Wit then perhaps becomes the destabiliser of the symbol—able to break through the "invisible flow" of power and to allow for an uncovering in which one is able to once again see, or to see anew that which has been made imperceptible.



Bani Abidi, *Security Barrier Type A – Iranian Embassy, Shahrah-e-Iran, Clifton, Karachi,* digital print, 2008.



Bani Abidi, *Security Barrier Type C – 47th St, Block 6, PECHS, Karachi*, digital print, 2008.

(Page 28) David Alesworth, *Probes (Punjab Colony)*, archival image of "Probe Interventions", 2003.

Extended to the idea of violence in general, and the (variable) state of indifference/numbness that sustained exposure to this often produces, David Alesworth's series of metal *Probes* (2002) present themselves as comical and yet endearingly absurdist objects that are part celebration of the material street culture of Karachi (arising from Alesworth's engagement with and exploration of Karachi's metal markets) and part "horrified obsession" with nuclear and weapons technology, which the artist believes make a mockery ("nonsense") of human existence.[17]

While the decision for Pakistan to develop nuclear weapons technology is cited as a response to the separation of East Pakistan in the war of 1971 (Bangladesh Liberation War), and sustained conflict with India, and attributed as a formal decision to then Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1972 when he entrusted the Chairman of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) with the task of having a bomb ready within the next four years[18], Pakistan only conducted its first nuclear weapons tests in May 1998. The nation celebrated this achievement and the missile, as a symbol, came to be equated with ideas of progress, development, and in many ways a sense of triumph/conquest and pride.

In 2002, Alesworth's *Probes* appeared as a site-specific project in Karachi, positioned (individually or in small clusters) in domestic spaces, or standing casually in the middle of the shops of fruit vendors, or located in arbitrary public spaces or streets across the city, speaking of the alarming and potentially disastrous concerns and implications of nuclear proliferation, and the absurdity of the conception of this as a perceived symbol of ambition and progress. Reflecting this absurdity then the form of the *Probes* is reminiscent of early missile technology (or of early science fiction), and they are fashioned out of what Alesworth refers to as the "somewhat outmoded but delightful practice of making utensils in galvanised steel plate"[19] used to produce a variety of household products, (milk churns, utensils, sieves, canisters, funnels, etc.). Additionally, they also perform the function of acting as capped containers for storage, for rice or grain for example. The *Probes* as such, "unpolished", awkward, and endearing in their apparent clumsiness, become like comical relics, domesticised and tamed. In this they seem to act as a mirror to the condition of blindness produced by mechanisms of power that act through the production of bodies of knowledge and truths, either by processes of privileging or concealment.

In Nusrat's work this subversive wit translates into a somewhat similar, almost absurdly enthusiastic form of acceptance, which views these structures as the building blocks towards a new form of urban architecture, manifesting as a series of (two dimensional) collage and (often large scale) sculptural works that take a utopian view towards homogenisation, through a proposed architecture of the future. Taking the trajectory of Nusrat's practice in its focus on the recycling of site-specific materials into view, the structural possibilities of the deconstructed barricade become infinitesimal, where its material and the fabric of the city

David Alesworth, *Probes (Fruit)*, archival image of "Probe Interventions", 2003.

David Alesworth, *Probes (Fruit)*, archival image of "Probe Interventions", 2003.

David Alesworth, *Probes (Karachi)*, archival image of "Probe Interventions", 2003.

David Alesworth, *Probes (Sunset Boulevard)*, archival image of "Probe Interventions", 2003.

become interchangeable. The bastion is absorbed into city walls, or reconfigured into urban dwellings in the form of houses or as mobile nomadic structures.[20] The work then comes to formulate a series of ironic proposals towards a recyclable and synthesised city, taken back into the hands of its citizens: "The right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after our heart's desire".[21]

Seema Nusrat, *Mobile Urban Dwellings*, welded wire mesh, canvas and sand bags, 2017.

The Violence of Dreams and Desires

The above statement by David Harvey carries within it a certain poignancy—the "right of access" and the ability to "change the city after our heart's desire". It is a sense somehow similar to and reminiscent of that which pervades Bani Abidi's *Karachi Series–1* (2009), likened to a "love letter to the cosmopolitan, multireligious city"[22] of Karachi. A series of photographs shot at twilight depict the lamp lit and deserted streets of the city, each occupied by a single individual casually and unperturbedly performing an everyday act, such as ironing, or reading a newspaper, or sitting in front of a dressing table in the midst of this public space. The emptiness of the streets, the nonchalance of the subjects/actors within the frames, sets a surreal tone, particularly given the knowledge of the infrequency of occasions on which one may find the streets of Karachi in such a complete state of inactivity and quietness. The right to change the city after our heart's desire. It is only the (almost clinical) titles that give away the critical considerations of the work—*Jerry Fernandez, 7:45 pm, 21 August 2008, Ramadan, Karachi; Pari Wania, 7:42 pm, 22*

Bani Abidi, *Jerry Fernandez – 7:45 pm, 21st August 2008*, Ramadan, Karachi, Duratrans Lightboxes, 2008.

Bani Abidi, *Pari Wania – 7:42 pm, 22nd August 2008*, Ramadan, Karachi, Duratrans Lightboxes, 2008.

August 2008, Ramadan, Karachi; Ashish Sharma, 7:44 pm, 23 August 2008, Ramadan, Karachi.

While Foucault speaks of vast bodies of knowledge rendered invisible as functions and processes of power and domination, in some cases, particularly perhaps in that of religious and ethnic minorities in the urban metropolis of Karachi, invisibility can sometimes function as a mechanism of security. The images in Abidi's series are shot in the month of Ramadan, at dusk, when a majority of Karachi's population would be indoors, breaking their fast with the calling of the prayer at sunset. There is a power in these images, in the ownership that is claimed by the subjects in the photographs over the city in which they too are inhabitants and participants, and in the realisation of the fleetingness of this moment—this quiet pocket, the gap in the madness—of belonging and serenity.

Arif Hasan and Masooma Mohib refer to the period between 1947 and 1951 as reflective of a colossal transformation of Karachi through the arrival of 600,000 immigrants into the city, not simply demographically, but also culturally, ethnically, and religiously. A census report from the Government of Pakistan cites the shift in percentage population of Hindus in Karachi as 51 percent in 1941 to only 2 percent in 1951. Meanwhile the Muslim population during the same ten-year period grew from 42 to 96 percent,[23] while a 2002 report cites the country's "overwhelmingly Muslim population" at 90 percent of its (then) 142 million inhabitants.[24] These numbers, early as they are in the formation and development of the city, are deeply reflective of the space that is left for minorities in their claim to the city, and of the deep cultural and religious divides between ethnic and religious groups in Karachi. Lefebvre however tells us, "Between the sub-systems and the structures consolidated by various means (compulsion, terror, and ideological persuasion) there are holes and chasms. These voids are not there due to chance. They are the places of the possible. They contain the floating and dispersed elements of the possible, but not the power which could assemble them."[25] This power to assemble, to transform, to which Lefebvre refers, is limited and denied by these precise structures and systems that would seek to, and are able to restrict its right to action.

How then does one imagine the rights of the inhabitants of this city—who has the right? If one is to imagine that the rights to the city must belong to those who participate most actively within it, then how does the conception of 'participation' begin to be formulated? How is it gauged, measured, and valued? How is value calculated? How is place and space claimed on this basis?

Omer Wasim & Saira Sheikh's work then comes to embody many of these considerations, methodologies and complexities, of power and politics, of space and rights, of active participation and the allowance/ability to do so, and perhaps in particular of the notion of value, as deconstructed in its myriad social, economic and political formations. In the two projects entitled *24.8615° N | 067.0099° E* (2016) and *Optics of Labour* (2017), this is enacted in particular through a primary focus on perhaps one of Karachi's greatest mechanism of separation and conflict, manifested, produced, and disseminated through complex and profuse processes of power and control: the immense and unquestionable polarity between socio-economic groups and classes—represented through the division of intellectual and manual labour—perhaps the greatest schism at the heart of overt and covert conflict in the city. In her reading of the forces of industrial capitalism through Marx, Simone Weil speaks of the "profound changes" that capitalism had already undergone half a century ago, in the control that it manifested through its primary function of "the buying and selling of man-power", as a "factor in the oppression of the working masses".[26] She quotes Marx in his reference to factory workers as "living cogs", made possible by the "separation of the spiritual forces of the process of production from manual work, and the transformation of the former into forces of oppression exercised by capital over labour [...]".[27]

In the work of Wasim & Sheikh though, there is again a wryness, an irony here reminiscent of a form of Beckettian absurdism, as well as an extreme self-criticality. At all times aware of their own position of privilege, they choose to integrate this into the narrative of the work, problematising their own position as makers and producers, i.e. as privileged in the hierarchy created in the work. In the case of *24.8615° N | 067.0099° E*, the body of (drawing, photo, and object based) work is presented as a large archive of data analysed from a point in the future, which focuses particularly on what the artists (as future scientists/archivists) observe as "modes of hegemony and hierarchy, prefacing inevitable im-/ex-plosion of the social fabric".[28] These are made visible through an investigation and commentary on the "residential locales" of the Defence Housing Authority (DHA), where the pronounced stratification of socio-economic groups, between the elite and the working class, are perhaps most obviously manifested in the

Omer Wasim & Saira Sheikh, *1619. 1621.*, detail, archival print on archival paper, ca. 2016.

24° 49.203' N

067° 03.032' E

± 4m

1293. Scholars suggest that this area was populated with paranoid palace-owners, which is apparent from the elevated enclosures with metal bars, and thought to have been a correctional facility for them.

Unique structural formation: the cloaked space could have been used to protect the subspecies, albeit scarcely, from the evidently intense source of radiation. The fence around the structure is reminiscent of zoological gardens, rendering the subspecies visible and docile.

Notice the orange volume, which is thought to be aqueous.

See also, more examples of local flora.

Omer Wasim & Saira Sheikh, *1293*, composite, comprising archival prints, and water colour, gouache on archival paper, ca. 2016.

"palatial" homes of the owners, versus what seem like almost temporary "structures that housed the subspecies guarding the palaces".[29]

The reference to the working class employed by residents of such privileged neighbourhoods and communities is derived from clear and succinct notes and observations of the distinct disparities that appear between the living conditions of those that own these "palaces" and those that they employ in the name of security, in order to guard both person and property. These are often juxtaposed as images of the (permanent) walls of such homes, against which a lone chair appears (for the guard or *chawkidar* to sit), or a seemingly temporary shack or tent-like structure clearly assembled to house/shelter the same.

Optics of Labour then continues this investigation in the context of a very specific labour force in Karachi—that is employed by institutions such as the Clifton Cantonment Board (CBC) for the cleaning of the streets of affluent neighbourhoods such as Clifton and Defence (DHA). These workers may be amongst those earning some of the lowest wages in the city—speaking again of Weil's and Marx's commentary on the divisions embedded within the hierarchies of intellectual and manual labour. In the video works *MVI_1948* and *MVI_1970* (originally titled "Capital: Critique of Political Economy", after Marx) (both 2016) eleven city workers appear, equipped with what appear to be almost pre-historic, completely ineffective tools (the local broom known as the *jharoo* and often makeshift dustpans) to implement the impossible task of the cleaning of this mammoth city. The futility of their labour is profoundly underscored by their positioning at the beach, where they endlessly sweep at mounds of sand, which billow and settle around them once again, in a continuous cycle of absurdity and exploitation.

In another work, the workers are individually photographed (headshots/portraits), the photos accompanied by small wooden drawers, which on opening reveal the voices of the individuals, in conversation with the artists (although the voices of the artists are not heard) as they speak of their lived experience of the city, of their sentiments and concerns, of their desires and dreams. In the cool space of the gallery, with its specific and socio-economically defined audience, the fact that the drawer can be closed and the voices silenced, is perhaps even more effective as a call to self-criticality. Evocative of Bourdieu's notion of the "habitus", offered as an oft-cited formula of: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practices[30] where habitus is seen to be developed through processes of socialisation, and encompasses the various forms of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital available to individuals, and that determines "a wide range of dispositions that shape individuals in a given society" through "a durable set of dispositions that are formed, stored, recorded and exert influence to mould forms of human behaviour".[31] The "field" then is the network, or structure of distribution through which these forms of capital are organised and operate, including the intellectual, religious, cultural, educational,[32] and other fields.

Omer Wasim & Saira Sheikh, *MVI_1970* (originally titled *Capital: Critique of Political Economy,* after Marx), HD video (video still), 22:00, ca. 2016.

(Pages 40-41) Omer Wasim & Saira Sheikh, *MVI_1948*, HD video (video still), 25:10, ca. 2016.

Wasim & Sheikh thus call into question the position of not only those who receive the work (through where it is located), but also of the artists and art practitioners that act as the catalysts for this exchange and "consumption". In the making of the work, where the workers are employed, directed, and staged ("They are made to perform for our colonising gaze masked behind the camera, in the peak of summer [...]"[33], in the production of work that seeks to highlight the very same conditions to which it then seems to succumb, questions of authorship and exploitation are raised: "Should this be considered our work or that of the labourers?"[34] The question of value is then a complex one in this equation—the value of the work, the value of the artist's intangible conception of the work, the value of the contribution of the labourers to the work. How are these to be calculated? "Is this labour rewarded/paid proportionately for its contribution?"[35] Wasim & Sheikh speak of their own position—how they are made complicit in the perpetuation of the same "exploitative socio-economic and political regimes" in a continuous cycle of the same relations of power, which they seek to destabilise.

In his 1934 essay,[36] Walter Benjamin tells us that the role of the writer or the intellectual can only be defined by his position within the process of production. According to Benjamin, the only "correct" position to take (one that any writer/intellectual who was "essential" would arrive at) was one at the side of the proletariat. "The revolutionary intellectual appears, first and foremost,

All Images on page 43: Omer Wasim & Saira Sheikh, from *Optics of Labour*, detail, ca. 2017; dimensions of C-print 11 x 13 inches, overall (applicable to all); dimensions of audio component 15 x 11.5 x 4 inches (applicable to all)

Top Row (left to right)

IMG_1979
C-print
Audio component, 4:09, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

IMG_1983
C-print
Audio component, 2:50, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

IMG_1992
C-print
Audio component, 3:41, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

IMG_2002
C-print
Audio component, 6:59, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

Middle Row (left to right)

IMG_2007
C-print
Audio component, 12:46, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

IMG_2014
C-print
Audio component, 5:32, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

IMG_2022
C-print
Audio component, 3:13, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

IMG_2027
C-print
Audio component, 8:19, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

Bottom Row (left to right)

IMG_2035
C-print
Audio component, 5:41, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

IMG_2043
C-print
Audio component, 4:37, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

IMG_2047
C-print
Audio component, 5:13, looped, plywood,
MP3 player, speaker, and wiring

as a traitor to his class of origin. This betrayal consists, in the case of the writer, in behavior which changes him from a reproducer of the apparatus of production into an engineer who sees his task as the effort of adapting that apparatus to the aims of the proletarian revolution."[37] The revolutionary intellectual then becomes the one who breaks the structure that assigns him with the privileged role, resounding with Lefebvre's ideas of the necessity for the revolutionary transformation (the "radical metamorphosis"[38]) that must occur in order to conceive again the "renewed right to urban life".[39]

The city is a nuanced entity, complex, layered, living, breathing, throbbing, chaotic, violent, poignant space of interconnected relations of the social, the economic, the political and the personal, the public, and the private. Within this complex system of structures and sub-structures, how do its inhabitants navigate in order to arrive at ways that enable them to participate—to become "active subjects"; who would be "empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation"[40] in that these "newly emancipated subjects of participation" would then "find themselves able to determine their own social and political reality"[41]? What sets of conditions would need to be created for this to occur, on the part of all those who contribute to the fabric of the city, in all its divisions and differences? While Claire Bishop, in the statements above, refers to the possibility embedded particularly within participatory art, she also refers to this as a response to the age in which contemporary artists must form their considerations and articulations: a world of global capitalism and market economies, of displacement, dislocation, insecurity and fear, and of unequal sets of relations between individuals, and the forces that govern, control, and direct them. In such a situation, perhaps the agenda of the participatory stands rooted in the crucial and urgent idea of community: of coming together, of acting and speaking, of hearing and being heard, seeing and being seen, of mourning, and ultimately of hope. In the city of Karachi, often referred to as "resilient", this last is perhaps the most important of characteristics, processes, and mechanisms—amongst myriad others—through which the city is sustained, lived, and experienced.

Notes

1. Henri Lefebvre, "The Right to the City," *in Writings on Cities*, trans. and ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 147.
2. Ibid., p. 152.
3. Zarmeene Shah, "The City Recreated: New Urban Landscapes," curatorial statement displayed in Seema Nusrat's *New Urban Landscapes* exhibit, Koel Gallery, Karachi, 7 April 2016.
4. S. Akbar Zaidi, *Issues in Pakistan's Economy*, 3rd ed. (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2015).
5. Arif Hasan, "The Housing Imperative," *Dawn*, 20 June 2011, published and archived on Arif Hasan's website (16 June 2011), http://arifhasan.org/articles/karachi-the-housing-imperative, accessed 12 March 2018.
6. Michel Foucault, "14 January 1976," in *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975–76*, trans. David Macey, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, General eds. Francois Ewald and Alessandro Fontana, English Series ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 29.
7. Ibid., p. 27.
8. Ibid., p. 44.
9. Interview/dialogue conducted with the artist by the author (in the capacity of curator), at the author's home in Karachi, 4 March 2016. The discussion focuses particularly on the ideas and concepts investigated within the two bodies of work discussed in the essay. MP4 audio file archived as research material and available through the author.
10. Zarmeene Shah, "The City Recreated: New Urban Landscapes."
11. Michel Foucault, "11 January 1978," in *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège De France 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, Gen. eds. François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana, English Series ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 26.
12. Interview/dialogue conducted with the artist, 4 March 2016.
13. Michel Foucault, "Panopticism," in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 201.
14. Leslie Paul Thiele, "The Ethics and Politics of Narrative: Heidegger + Foucault," in *Foucault and Heidegger: Critical Encounters*, eds. Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 223.
15. Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*, trans. Arthur Wills and John Petrie (London and New York: Routledge, 2004; first Indian reprint, 2012), p. 54.
16. As described on the website of the artist, under *Security Barriers A–L, 2008*, http://www.baniabidi.com/#/security-barriers-a-l-2008, accessed 23 March 2018.
17. David Alesworth, *Probes*, artist statement (shared with the author), 2003.
18. Steve Weissman and Herbert Krosney, T*he Islamic Bomb: The Nuclear Threat to Israel and the Middle East* (New York, NY: Times Books, 1981), p. 45.
19. David Alesworth, *Probes*, 2003.
20. Zarmeene Shah, "New Structures, New Citizens," curatorial note accompanying the exhibition *Proposals Towards a New Architecture*, a solo show of new works by Seema Nusrat at Gandhara Art Space, Karachi, March 2017.
21. David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27, no. 4 (2003): 939–941, https://davidharvey.org/media/righttothecity.pdf.
22. Murtaza Vali, "Scenes from a Nation in Twilight: Bani Abidi," *Art Asia Pacific* magazine, Issue 67, Mar/Apr 2010, http://artasiapacific.com/Magazine/67/BaniAbidi, accessed 24 March 2018.
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24. Dr Iftikhar H. Malik, *Religious Minorities in Pakistan* (London: Minority Rights Group, 2002), http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/469cbfc30.pdf, accessed 12 November 2017.
25. Henri Lefebvre, "The Right to the City," p. 156.
26. Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*, p. 9.
27. Ibid.
28. Omer Wasim & Saira Sheikh, *Essay: 24.8615° N | 067.0099° E*, accompanying the exhibition of the same title at Canvas Gallery, Karachi, August 2016.
29. Ibid.
30. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 101.
31. Zander Navarro, "In Search of a Cultural Interpretation of Power: The Contribution of Pierre Bourdieu," *IDS Bulletin* 37, no. 6 (November 2006): 11–22, p. 16.
32. Ibid., p. 18.
33. Omer Wasim & Saira Sheikh, *Optics of Labour*, accompanying the exhibition of the same title at Koel Gallery, Karachi, April 2017.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.

36. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken, 1986), pp. 220–238. First published 1934.
37. Ibid., p. 780.
38. Henri Lefebvre, "The Right to the City," p. 156.
39. Ibid., p. 158.
40. Claire Bishop, "Introduction: Viewers as Producers," in *Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Claire Bishop (London/Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel/The MIT Press, 2006), p. 12.
41. Ibid.

English and the Post-Colonial Ghost: Language Policies vs. Linguistic Realities

Nadine Ahmed

پاکستان کے وجود میں آنے سے لے کر اب تک، اُردو کے ساتھ ساتھ انگریزی بھی پاکستان کی سرکاری زبان کے طور پر استعمال کی جاتی ہے، جبکہ بانی پاکستان محمد علی جناح نے اُردو کو پاکستان کی قومی زبان قرار دیا تھا۔ باوجود اس کے کہ زبانی پالیسی پاکستان کے ۱۹۵۶ کے آئین میں اُردو کا ذکر تو تھا، یہ مکمل طور پر آرٹیکل ۲۵۱ کے تحت ۱۹۷۳ میں بھٹو صاحب کی حکومت میں لکھا گیا۔ آرٹیکل ۲۵۱ نے اُردو کو واضح طور پر پاکستان کی قومی زبان قرار دیتے ہوئے انگریزی سے اُردو میں مکمل تبدیلی کا مطالبہ کیا مگر آج تک یہ قانون پوری طرح نافذ نہ کیا جاسکا ۔ اسکے نتیجہ میں انگریزی پاکستان کے ہر کاروباری، قانونی اور حکومتی معاملات میں غالب ہے۔ اور اس کے ساتھ ساتھ قومی نصاب اور اعلیٰ تعلیم کا بھی اہم حصہ ہے۔

مختلف حکومتوں نے لگاتار یا تو انگریزی زبان کی پالیسی کو نظر انداز کیا ہے یا پھر اس میں غیر مناسب تبدیلی کی ہے جس کا کوئی خاص نتیجہ نہ نکل سکا۔کچھ عرصہ پہلے سپریم کورٹ آف پاکستان نے آرٹیکل ۲۵۱ نافذ کرنے کا حکم دیا جس کے مطابق انگریزی پاکستان کی سرکاری زبان کے طور پر استعمال نہیں کی جائے گی۔ اس وقت کے چیف جسٹس جواد ایس خواجہ کا کہنا تھا کہ انگریزی زبان نو آبادیاتی انتظامیہ کی عکاسی کرتی ہے۔ جو بات چیف جسٹس نے کہی وہ آج تک پاکستان کے تعلیمی نظام میں نظر آتی ہے۔یعنی ہمارا تعلیمی نظام جو انیسویں صدی کے انگریزسیاستدان "مکالے"کا بنایا ہوا ہے، دو طرح کے تعلیمی نظام کی پیروی کرتا ہے۔ ایک اشرافیہ کے لئے اور دوسرا عام عوام کے لئے۔

The abrupt appearance of Urdu text (on the previous page) in an English journal (*Hybrid*) can be interpreted as "interpellation", a term coined by French philosopher Louis Althusser. This is further explained through the following example: A police officer yells out "Hey, you there!" causing a tide of people to turn around, including the one individual for whom the call was intended. Interpellation is explained here as a process of conditioning whereby a moral ideology mediates the relationship between power and its subject. Because the subjects (the people who turn around) have been conditioned to such an extent to automatically respond when a form of authority (the police officer), calls out. This preconceived notion of set semiotics has become engrained within us due to all forms of powerful/authoritative works in Pakistan being presented in the English language such as laws, government policies and documents. As a result, we have been *interpellated* into becoming subjects. The Urdu text in an English publication presents us with the institutionalised demarcations, validating at grassroots level, the authoritative nature of English language as a primary tool of discourse.[1]

The English language has been officially used in Pakistan, alongside Urdu, since the country's inception, even though the country's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, had declared Urdu as the state language of Pakistan. Although the language policy, establishing Urdu as the primary language of the country, was initially mentioned during the drafting of the 1956 constitution, it was not put into writing until the 1973 constitution—as Article 251—under the Bhutto administration. Article 251 clearly establishes Urdu as the national language of Pakistan and calls for a process to transition from English to Urdu, however, the law has never been put into practice, properly or consistently, to this day. As a result, English continues to dominate business, legal, and government affairs, and remains the medium of instruction of the national curriculum and higher education institutions.

This paper argues that, as the English language has become a form of "linguistic capital"[2] worldwide, language learners in contemporary Pakistan consider learning English essential in order to connect to the larger globalised world and are dispassionate about the post-colonial heritage of the language. It also looks into the failure of the national language policy to draft more detailed and clear implementation strategies, which has led to the proliferation of private schooling in the English language, as well as the increasing disparities between public and private schooling.

History of Pakistan's National Language Policy

Urdu language is considered a part of ancient Mughal culture and continues to be a symbol of "Muslim identity", especially in light of the Hindi–Urdu controversies that marked much of the last century. This one major element fuelled the Partition movement and thus held "emotive value" for Muslims especially when they gained their independence from India.[3] Jinnah established a language policy elevating Urdu as the state language at the inception of Pakistan, believing that it would encourage the unification of people post-Partition and become the first language of all "Pakistanis"—thus serving as a mark of Pakistani identity.[4]

Urdu was, and still is, the mother tongue of the people who migrated to present-day Pakistan from Northern India, and are known as *Muhajirs* (refugee or immigrant); they make up only 8 percent of the Pakistani population.[5] Nevertheless, the government continues to promote Urdu as an "urban language" and requires it to be spoken nationwide.[6]

In 1948, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, during his first and last visit to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) declared:

> ...let me make it clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no

> other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan. Without one state language, no nation can remain tied up solidly together and function….[7]

From the strong words used here (*in* English), it is clear that the Urdu language policy was one of ideology and seemed to completely overlook the multiple ethnicities already present in Pakistan, not to mention the former East Pakistan. The fact that speeches like this were and are made in English reifies the language's position of privilege and authority, even when the content of what is being said suggests otherwise. The coercion and intensity with which Urdu became the "national language" of Pakistan led to much conflict, especially in the context of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) where Bengali has a long and rich history.

The first language teaching policy of Pakistan was discussed during an educational conference in Karachi (27 November–1 December 1947), which laid the foundations that are still used today. The crucial parts of this policy were to make Urdu the "lingua franca" of Pakistan and to teach it as a compulsory language in schools.[8] Ordained under Article 214 (Section 251) of the 1956 constitution,[9] provincial governments (namely West Pakistan and East Pakistan) were to replace English with Urdu or Bengali, but the clause did not specify a time limit and/or implementation process.

When Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan took over as head of state in 1958, he proclaimed his preference for English. The Sharif Commission in 1959 issued a report stating that primary and secondary public schools in the public sector would change to the Urdu medium but Higher Education would continue to be in English, completely disregarding the large segment of the nation that spoke Bengali. The imposition of Urdu on the people of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), constituting 55.6 percent of the union, led to a resistance movement known as the Bengali Language Movement (1948–1952).

During Yahya Khan's era (1969–1971), Nur Khan's *Proposals for a New Educational Policy* recommended that Urdu be the medium of instruction in the West and Bengali in the East; with a target date for establishment set to 1974. The idea was to phase out English as it created a "caste-like distinction between those who felt at ease…in English and those who do not."[10] This was then reproduced as the New Education Policy (1970), which delegated the phasing out of English to a commission that never came into being, as the country then collapsed into civil war resulting in the dissolution of East and West Pakistan.[11]

The subsequent president, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, ignored this report entirely and put Article 251 into the then re-drafted 1973 constitution. The Constitution of 1973 is the only official written document in which Urdu is named as the "National language of Pakistan", and mentions that "arrangements shall be made for its being used for official and other purposes within fifteen years from the commencing day."[12] This article came into being just before the establishment of Ziaul Haq's military dictatorship in 1977. Under Ziaul Haq's rule, Urdu was further legitimised as a part of the "Muslim identity" and became integral to his regime's "Islamisation" process, in which he sought to increase Islamic values in Pakistan.[13] Urdu became a compulsory subject in all schools (public and private), alongside Pakistan Studies and Islamiat.[14] Without passing these subjects, students wishing to pursue a higher education in Pakistan would not be able to gain admission at any university, regardless of their religion or citizenship. In addition to this, the National Language Authority was established for the development of Urdu and the language became more commonly used in official government meetings and circles during Ziaul Haq's time.[15]

Therefore, from 1979, all schools (except cadet colleges and some elite schools) were asked to adopt Urdu as a language of instruction from Grade 1. However, the decision was reversed in 1989[16] and the language policy reverted to part 2 of Article 251, which allows for English to be used for "official purposes".

From 1989 to Present Day

Successive governments have changed the language medium of schools many times through government announcements or notices, but without offering implementation strategies or infrastructure. For instance, when Benazir Bhutto came to power in 1989, she declared that the medium of English would be implemented from Grade 1 onwards (previously taught from Grade 4).[17] Due to lack of planning, little change was made. Nawaz Sharif's government policy (1998–2010) towards language was indifferent, and private English medium schools continued to flourish as a result. Finally, General Pervez Musharraf took over from Sharif's government in 1999 via a coup, during which he introduced an age of "Enlightened Moderation" alongside his pro-American policies, which meant that English became an urgent priority, and was to be taught to students from Grade 1 onwards.[18] However, once more there was little done in terms of implementation to provide access to English education for the masses.

The British Council and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) have issued reports and/or published papers regarding the language issues in the education system of Pakistan[19] so that an effort could be made to teach students in their own native languages. Apart from charity schools in certain provinces, this has not yet been implemented in the national system. There are very few documents on language policy, and most of them only detail stances and ideologies issued by the government and detailed in the constitution. The National Education Policy (NEP)[20] was created to offer guidance on the national curriculum and the materials used. The NEP reiterates the sentiments of strengthening the Urdu language as students' main language.

In 2007, a white paper was published on education, which also advocated that students should begin learning English from Grade 1 and that the medium of instruction should be English for Science and Maths from Grade 6,[21] when appropriate teachers are available. This led to further revisions in the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2009.

Although the NEP nominally addresses the language policy in Pakistan, it does not address the issue of language in minute detail. In fact, the only mention of language was in relation to students learning Maths and English, which needed to be "improved in less-developed areas".[22] In terms of the positions of Urdu and English languages in the country, it says:

> English is an international language, and important for competition in a globalized world order. Urdu is our national language that connects people all across Pakistan and is a symbol of national cohesion and integration. In addition, there are mother tongues/local vernaculars in the country that are markers of ethnic and cultural richness and diversity. The challenge is that a child is able to carry forward the cultural assets and be at the same time, able to compete nationally and internationally.[23]

It is clear from this that the national language is still in place to "connect" people across Pakistan and that it is a "symbol of national cohesion and integration". However, the mention of the approximately 70 other mother tongues/vernaculars is limited and is marked as "cultural richness" and "diversity". While this is true, without explicitly acknowledging all of the languages that exist in Pakistan, the policy subtly reflects the same dismissive attitude towards Pakistan's many linguistic minorities as previous policies have. English, Urdu, and Bengali have been the main languages explicitly mentioned in language debates in Pakistan, despite the prevalence of many others.

This brings us to the judgment of the former Chief Justice Jawwad S. Khawaja in which he expressed the "need to wean ourselves off the colonial bosom" and do away with English altogether.[24] The directives cited in the judgment included assigning the inactive National Language Authority the duty of establishing a new language policy. It remains to be seen whether future governments will take action.

English has continued to persist, as an official language in Pakistan, due to an undetailed, impracticable national language policy and the continuous changes in government stances on both Urdu and English. As a result, non-state institutions have greater agency and control over how they teach languages.

Language Planning Policies vs. Linguistic Realities

The national language policies are not the only way to give "value" or status to languages in a society. This can be analysed by exploring the actual interpretation and practicability of existent policies in schools. In addition, language policy research and theory—focusing on ground realities—can reveal how language policies actually work and affect the linguistic minorities, by uncovering covert and overt practices used by agents and/or social actors in institutions and schools, which produce major complexities.[25]

Within the field of Language Policy Planning (LPP), studies place at the core specialised policymakers' perspectives and their policies, which focus on linguistic behaviour of a community, externally. The study of LPP tends to be mostly from the "top down" rather than from the "bottom up".[26] The crux of this criticism is that it underestimates human agency[27] and does not capture the processes of language planning[28] such as how school members act on behalf of the state.

Cultural theorists such as Richard Baldauf, Bernard Spolsky, Harold Schiffman, and James Tollefson believe that language policy is a social construct[29] or a socio-cultural process,[30] indicating that it is important to look at how language is taught and learnt on the ground, which is often overlooked. Further to this, Suresh Canagarajah states that the use of ethnographic methods to examine language by focusing on groups of people and how they use language as it is practiced in localised contexts can reveal what "is" happening rather than what "ought to be" happening in the classroom.[31]

The research conducted by myself across three schools in Karachi and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) in 2016 revealed just how powerful human agency can be in the learning of language and how crucial the experiences of language learners should be as part of language policy planning.

During discussion with the research participants regarding their mother tongues, it became clear that the participants had very mixed and, sometimes, difficult experiences reconciling their home languages with English and Urdu at their schools. For instance, Nausheen in a Karachi school was the only participant who believed that her mother tongue, Punjabi, was important mostly due to her family's staunch belief that it was an important part of their lives:

> Researcher: Okay so when your teacher told you to leave your language at home, how did you feel about that?
>
> Nausheen: When I was told that, I felt strange as to why he/she said this to me. Then I came and told my mother, she said that the teacher is in a way right and in a way wrong as well. He/

> she did not tell you to leave your caste. He/she just said to leave it at home, talk in English and Urdu in a clear manner. She said speak in all languages where you find it necessary [...]. In school, I speak Punjabi minimally; all my friends speak in Urdu and not in English. I started mixing words up at home with Urdu words and used to get shouted at for it [...]. I felt that once I am out, I can learn to speak in Urdu and English and can get rid of Punjabi from my life. When I use to speak in Punjabi people use to laugh at me so now I have stopped to speak it completely and now I only speak directly in Urdu and when we are in a mood to joke around; I also speak in English.

The above conversation highlights, what was likely part of the teacher's practice to ensure students spoke Urdu or English in the classroom. However, the teacher was, if not via the school, inadvertently acting as an agent of the language policy by positioning Urdu and/or English as languages for education, and Punjabi as a local language for home, hence, not important in the learning sphere.

In the ICT schools, none of the participants believed that their mother tongue of Potohari/Punjabi was important enough to be spoken and/or mentioned outside of their home and local surrounding areas. It is important to note here that Nausheen (who valued her Punjabi heritage) was at a school in the middle of Karachi, a metropolitan and very ethnically diverse city, whereas the ICT participants were located near the political centre of the country. Their anti-Punjabi/Potohari attitudes can be attributed to geo-political location if nothing else. Nevertheless, both Nausheen and the ICT participants had received direct and indirect messages and/or instructions from either teachers and/or peers not to speak their native languages in school.

The power given here to the Urdu and English languages is perpetuated from the "top down" on a macro-level. However, language specialists such as Hornberger and Hymes want us to consider the voices of language learners in a "bottom up" fashion, looking to combine learners' experiences with the study of education systems and policies. The behaviour exhibited by teachers and peers in these schools, positions Urdu and English not just as important languages but perhaps the "only" ones worth knowing.

One set of ICT participants (Mina and Shaheen) spoke of "messing around" in class by speaking in Potohari/Punjabi when their teacher was out of earshot. While another set of ICT participants (Isra and Shaheen) who were head girls, would tell their peers off for speaking in their native languages in school. The participants, taking teachers and superiors/head students as role models, effectively became agents of the language policy by further demoting their native languages in school. It is unclear whether this ultimately influenced the extent of usage of native languages among other students and/or the consideration that their mother tongues are less important than Urdu and/or English. Evidently, however, they understood that it was not to be used for acquiring education and/or in their schools.

The participants primarily considered Urdu as important, because they perceived it to be a necessity for speaking to their fellow Pakistanis. This is the "imagined community" they understand their nation to be, which possibly has about 72 dialects and languages, and not all of these people will speak Urdu and/or wish to speak Urdu due to their own linguistic ethnicities and identities being seen as unimportant. When pressed about their own mother tongues, there were only two participants (Asad and Nausheen) in a Karachi school who felt, inadvertently, that it would be appropriate for their own local language to be given some national status. However, Nausheen felt that Punjabi was equally important as Urdu, whereas Asad had a more extreme perception and did not see any other language being as important as Urdu.

Pakistan's language policy has always been very straightforward: Urdu is a vehicle to unite the nation and a symbol of "Muslim identity". However, the "standardised form of language", for "nation-building purposes" would be predominantly in print form, according to Anderson and Hobsbawm. Thus, the ideological process whereby Urdu symbolises the state as a "nation" also attaches ownership, membership, and authority of this language to the Pakistani people. This standardised form of language would alter once it is disseminated through vernacular mediums, amongst the "uneducated people", leading to derivations or dialects, which could be considered anti-nationalistic in theory.[32] This means that if Urdu was not spoken in a specific dialect, then a language learner may perceive it as an "inferior" form of Urdu and not accept any non-standardised versions of Urdu. This goes further to the "linguistic capital" theory whereby Bourdieu explains how an "accent" and/or "specific way of having been taught a language" goes further in rendering it a form of "linguistic capital".

Scholars such as Schiffman, discuss the "status" of languages and the perceived value of a named language. A language's value usually relates to its social utility, which encompasses its so-called market value as a mode of communication of a society's linguistic culture.[33] However, Schiffman goes on to state that the value(s) attached to a language does not depend exclusively, or even necessarily on any official or legal status conferred by a state through its executive, legislative, or judicial branches. The official change then from English to Urdu (as argued here) may have very little effect on the way people perceive the English language in Pakistan due to its global hegemonic value and perhaps the linguistic culture it has already created within Pakistani society. In short, national language policies are not the only way to give languages "value" or status in a society. Although, the value of provincial and/or local languages of Pakistan are clearly affected by the national language policy, the value of English in Pakistan is independent of it.

"Linguistic Capital" Breeding "Imagined Identities"

English, as a world language has been a hegemonic force particularly in developing countries including Pakistan where it is considered a type of "linguistic capital".[34] Stemming from colonial legacy, it has now become a pervading factor in political economy and an accepted effect of globalisation. Learning English is largely considered a path to social mobility within Pakistan, but it also affects interaction with international communities, science, and advancement, and maintaining ties with the West.

In 1986, Bourdieu defined "linguistic capital" as an aspect of his concept of "cultural capital" that can subsist in an "embodied state" or a "long-lasting disposition" through a process of education and cultivation.[35] In the institutionalised state, for example, when authorities appoint certain languages as national and/or official ones for predominant use by its citizens, the language becomes a mode of "cultural capital" within that social context. He focuses on both the symbolic (hegemonic power) and materialistic (i.e. currency and exchange value) power that languages yield.[36] The power that language brings in terms of cultural capital comes in the form of acquired skills, knowledge, and qualifications that can be used in the labour market. Therefore, it is accumulated over time and costs money and is invested in by individuals and public institutions, giving it economic capital. This ties in well with Norton's explanation of "investment" in learning a target language, such as English, to form an "imagined identity", which she has developed from Benedict Anderson's theory on "imagined communities".

In 1983, Anderson published his book, *Imagined Communities*, which challenged centuries-old notions of nationalism, nation, and national identity. In the book, he explains how "even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion".[37] The idea being that there is an "imagined" bond with citizens across time and space and thus has a sense of community. Anderson emphasises language as essential to national identity, in that it is a clear unifying factor for nations and "appear[s] rooted beyond almost anything else in contemporary societies", and connects people to the dead through a "ghostly intimation of simultaneity across homogenous, empty time".[38] National anthems are offered as an example of a manifestation of linguistically-rooted national identity: people who have no knowledge of each other's existences sing the same verses at the same time as one another, and are therefore able to feel an "echoed physical realization of the imagined community", or "imagined sound".[39] We see that national language and/or other taught languages, in education particularly, is clearly a major aspect of how nations preserve their identity and/or foster it.

Norton[40] furthers the concept of "imagined communities" by proffering a theory of "imagined identities". She links language and identity[41] in order to explore how learners' affiliation with "imagined communities" might affect their learning trajectories.[42] Norton explains her conceptualisation of identity as:

> How people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future…Identity references desire—the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety.[43]

It is argued by Norton and other collaborators (namely Kanno, Pavlenko, and Gao) on her works that in many language classrooms, the target language community—may be, to some extent—a reconstruction of past communities and historically constituted relationships. It may also be a community of the imagination, a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of options in the future.[44] As a result, Norton makes the case that when language learners begin a programme of instruction, they may be "invested" in communities that extend beyond the four walls of the classroom.[45] The crux of her argument is that a learner's imagined community invites an "imagined identity", and a learner's investment in the target language may be understood within this context.[46]

In the research data collected from three schools across Karachi and ICT, Bourdieu, Norton and Anderson's theories can be seen working in tandem with one another. The English language was consistently associated with "being educated", and being a necessary skill in order to travel "outside". Half of the participants also believed that being schooled in English symbolised being "educated" and/or more "knowledgeable". Bourdieu's "linguistic capital" is evident here, as the participants believed that they would gain socio-economic value in the Pakistani labour market if they were educated in English and that their social mobility would also improve.

The participants from ICT schools also mentioned that the reason they attended their school was that the natural sciences were taught in English. This further added to their notion of English as the international language of science and, therefore, advancement and progress. Two participants, Nausheen and Mina, also mentioned that the Internet was predominantly in the English language, tying what they saw as "progress" and "advancement" once more to the English language.

The participants from a school in Karachi also noted that English was important for travel and being able to communicate with people outside of Karachi and/or Pakistan. They used the word "outside" quite often, adding to the idea that these students wished to "invest" in the learning of English in order to be able to communicate with communities outside of their own. Norton's "imagined identities" presents itself once more here, in that the participants evidently believe that through learning English, they would be able to connect and communicate with people

they had not met but may meet one day.

The Karachi school was also affiliated with an American exchange programme known as "I earn", which taught the students English, "in order to communicate in other countries", where they did not speak the language. The study Norton carried out in another Pakistani school found that participants considered English a "language of possibility",[47] as they could access resources that would enrich their lives. Similar to this study, the participants in my study believed that English was an important tool for social, economic, and political advancement within and outside of Pakistan. Norton's "investment" concept also comes into play here, especially in terms of the Karachi school where the participants invested time and money in learning the language, in what Norton would describe as an attempt to add and/or alter their own identities. Sarah spoke about a programme known as "Access" run by a corporation called "I earn" and how this programme would enable learners to go "outside" the country:

> Sarah: The 'I earn' people created 'Access,' a program where they teach you English for two years in different schools. Our school is part of the program [...].
>
> Sarah: We use Urdu in everyday life. But we only use English when we go out or travel. Then we use English, but I would say that about 75% to 80% of the times we use Urdu and about 20% 25% we use English.
>
> Researcher: Did they tell you anything about English?
>
> Sarah: Yes, our teacher told us that if we go to a different city or country we wouldn't be able to speak Chinese, Spanish or Portuguese, but we can use English there. We can communicate with people and understand them and get our point across. He said that we should learn English so that we don't experience any problems in the future.
>
> Researcher: So this is the reason to learn English?
>
> Sarah: Yes [...]. What other reason could there be?

It is clear, that in Sarah's opinion, communicating with people outside Pakistan is the main objective for learning English. Clearly, the talk that the teacher in this programme gave these students reflects a form of "linguistic capital" especially considering they use examples of different languages, but emphasise the fact that the learners "will not be able to speak them", and therefore, English is a useful substitute. While this is realistic, it perpetuates the idea that these students can be successful in any country if their English is strong enough. To further enforce and/or reward this desire to learn English, "Access" has a scholarship-funded student exchange programme where students live in the US for a year with a host family and attend an American high school. Hence, this added incentive for learning English is also ever-present through the teaching and dissemination of the English language happening in many nations like Pakistan, through the investing of more power to NGO agencies (e.g. the IMF, UNHCR, and UNICEF) who promote the English language as a development measure. In this context, the English language would only be accepted if it is in its standardised form, i.e. through the teaching practices established and reflective of practices in the West. Having conducted research on the economics of languages, which demonstrates how language variables affect economic variables, Sandhu and Higgins[48] found that a person's earnings in India would be increased if they had attended an English medium school and spoke English like an English person rather than a local. Therefore, instead of it being a social and/or elite status language for the few chosen people, it has become one that is coveted by all in the hopes of improving their socio-economic abilities.

Conclusion

The English language—a post-colonial divisive tool—has become a "linguistic capital" and is now an important skill required for those who wish to be socially mobile and/or improve their socio-economic status. It is clear that Urdu continues to be the language that unites Pakistan and invokes Anderson's "imagined community" with its pro-military, Islamic sentiment, and nation-building narrative. The continued neglect of the national language policy itself, has led to successive governments changing the language of instruction to further their own agendas as opposed to helping literacy in the country.

Language learners feel conflicted about their mother tongues/local languages due to their absence in the national language policy and general public areas of discourse. The schools in Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the North-West Frontier Province) who teach their provincial languages are an exception. It is to be noted that schools and teachers have the power to influence language learners' perceptions of not just English and Urdu but their own mother tongues as well. The positioning of the importance of languages, therefore, does not necessarily flow from language policies, but the implementation by multiple forms of agencies (schools, teachers, and language learners). This needs to be considered more closely when planning the national language policy.

The ongoing debate regarding the "linguistic apartheid", in Pakistan due to two-streamed schooling and English still being considered a language "of the elite" is still valid. However, as reported by the BBC news, "Nearly every village in Pakistan has at least one privately run English medium school these days".[49] The demand and requirement by higher education institutes, office

professions, and government jobs would need these language learners to at the very least read and write in English due to official documentation being in the language.

Overall, it is clear, that it may be time to move away from perceiving the English language as a colonial language, which continues to divide people in Pakistan, but as a language continuing to connect it to the global community and in the words of the students "progress" and "advancement". The perception that people have of learning English, as an element of a "good" education has spread too far within Pakistan to be abandoned now.

Notes

1. The author credits Syed Ammad Tahir for the Urdu text and Sara Pagganwala for creative feedback.
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Problem Seeking/Problem Solving: The Limits of Critical Practice

Aaron Tobey and Malcolm Rio

The discipline of architecture, it would seem, has a superficial desire to avoid conflict. On the one hand, there is a radically pragmatist approach, such as that taken in the advanced design studio, Free Migration, taught by Keller Easterling at Yale University, in which issues of global migration and economic disparity arising from existential and embodied conflicts in fact become architecturally generative in a manner that denies the originary conflict through anti-solutionism—a design method which views plights of real subaltern peoples as opportunities for exploration rather than exhaustive resolution. Conversely, in an urban design studio at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cities by Sea, solutionism through further "resilient" urban development (as a response to the climate crisis these very developments precipitate) was the assumed form of practice.

Taught in the fall of 2017, Cities by Sea was concerned with the retrofitting and (re)districting Boston's urban waterfronts in order to make them more resilient to the increasing threats of flooding, storm surges, and sea level rise. Students assessed sites of potential damage, loss, or vulnerability to urban infrastructure, property value, and urban resources and later proposed design and planning strategies to Boston's water edge in order to combat these ecological threats over the next 50 to 100 years. Free Migration, taught in spring 2017, tasked students with rethinking how human migrations (forced or otherwise) are discursively and practically structured by designing linkages between transit and destination that leveraged the time required for migration. Working in a fundamentally "siteless" manner, students assessed existing narratives and support infrastructures for human migration and proposed recombinations of these narratives and infrastructures to produce effectual approaches to the current refugee crisis in the Mediterranean basin that did not recapitulate institutional violence, but rather were empowering, connective, and value producing.

Both Cities by Sea and Free Migration were what are often called "critical practice studios"—intensive courses in which students propose design-based responses to contemporary, real world issues in an exploratory manner that expands the boundaries of architecture as a discipline. That is to say, that they extend the power of architecture as a field of integrated work and study to organise physical and discursive spaces and actions—what Foucault would describe as architecture's disciplinarity—through (re)enforcing its institutionalised practices in diverse contexts.[1] The reinforcing nature of this disciplinary structure, most evident in the architectural pedagogy such as critical practice studios through which it is continually reproduced, has onto-

epistemological impacts, meaning it structures and conditions in what terms and through what means architecture students come to imagine themselves and the world in which they operate. One of the ways in which these onto-epistemological impacts are manifest is the process of Othering by which those who do not subscribe to or who challenge the terms set by disciplines as the conditions for understanding the world are excluded from recognition, made to be an Other, against which the disciplinary subjects can define themselves. This process of Othering is organised around a distinction between Conflict, the necessary and constitutive encounter with the Other that holds the potential for the destabilisation of power through mutual recognition, and conflict, disputes and differences that are not constitutive of subjectivity but which nonetheless influence the relationships of social, economic, and political power. What Othering accomplishes is the suppression of Conflict and the foregrounding of conflict in order to maintain the underlying structure on which disciplinary power relations are based even as it allows for variation within the discipline over time and space relative to the conflicts it encounters. The structures of disciplinarity and their correlates in onto-epistemological processes of Othering that we will examine as essential aspects of Free Migration and Cities by Sea then, we would argue, are indicative of the persistence of Modernity—the institutionalised faith in rationality, progress, and individualism—as *the* defining structure of social, political, and economic relationships. To that end, despite their divergent methodologies, a reflection of the utopianism of architectural discourse that is founded on death-denying philosophies of Western Modernism can be seen in these studios. At their root, such philosophies externalise conflict by producing an "Other", insulating the discipline from the possibility of critical reflection that goes beyond the terms the discipline itself sets. The external appearance of no conflict in the discourses that these studios then represented is an unconscious admission of the intellectually precarious propositions on which they operated.

This conversation questions the discipline of architecture's paradoxical need for conflict and its simultaneous denial of conflict. As representatives from each school and emerging voices in the field of architecture, we are invested in challenging the normativity of these death-denying philosophies as they are instantiated in the contemporary discourses of our respective institutions. We instead embrace the conflicts inherent in everyday life denied by both studios' design methodologies while rejecting the epistemological and ontological absolution manifested through Othering. We will discuss our beliefs that though architecture cannot solve particular problems, this inability does not absolve the discipline from needing to meaningfully address problems as problems. Yet the discipline cannot assume it will have solutions to intractable problems that will not reinscribe hierarchies of privilege on which the discipline itself has historically been based. This conversation seeks to (re)frame the discursive space through which the discipline understands and engages with conflict by (re)examining the relationship between praxis and pedagogy at two prominent schools of architecture.

Aaron: Over the last few years, I think we could agree, there has been a trend away from issues of formalism and esoteric theories towards "critical practice" and that this trend has become the standard, or at least more prominent, in American architecture schools' studio courses.[2] I think in many senses this trend is part of broader and hopefully sincere shifts within the discipline to seriously address what now feels like decades of complacency regarding the discipline's dependence on its unacknowledged complicity in cultural crises for its value and legitimacy. In other words, these critical practice studios, with their focus on pertinent contemporary global issues from refugee migration to climate change, are attempts to assert that architecture is a relevant discipline, that has a valuable knowledge-base and spatial skill set that can be put to use in solving problems and supporting cultural agendas, rather than on abstruse and self-indulgent formal language games.

Malcolm: I agree. I do think these efforts to bring the discipline closer to previously overlooked socio-political issues are in some respects timely, important, and commendable. However, I also think that they reveal a much more central, deep-seated, persistent, and problematic disciplinary need for conflict as well for a contradictory denial of conflict. This paradoxical relationship exposes a continued disciplinary attachment within the current trend of critical practice, at least in the West, to the death-denying philosophies that underscored Modernity. Namely, a desire for the end of the Hegelian dialectic and a continued faith in the Liberal Human Subject predicated on the (rational) Man vs. Nature schism. It seems that in contemporary critical practice studios like Free Migration at the Yale School of Architecture and Cities by Sea at the MIT, these age-old conflicts between life and death, thesis and antithesis, and the analytic vs. the continental, are deployed only to deny inherent contradictions between these civic and social concerns and the Modernist manner in which the discipline still operates—boiling down wicked problems to rationalist, formalist, and "objective" interventions. Or, they are at least an attempt to temporarily mitigate these contradictions through an apparent virtuosity and ingenuity of student-proposed design solutions.

Aaron: That student projects, no matter what studio they are in, are typically colloquially referred to as solutions is telling of the death-denying philosophical structure on which the discipline of architecture and architectural education are predicated. Given situations are understood to possess problems that are solvable, and whose solvability has implications for the continued existence, either of one's self or of the established order of things, and these problems must therefore be solved. In other words, problems must continuously be sought and solved, because doing otherwise risks an onto-epistemological crisis.

I think what differs from earlier periods which sought timelessness as a solution to the same conflict between life and death framed in terms of persistence of form (modernism), persistence of meaning (post-modernism), persistence of organisation (parametricism), is that

the timelessness sought today is framed in terms of its embrace of reflexive, if arbitrary, self-criticality. This reflexivity has turned the discipline itself into *the* crisis because the discipline continuously fails to define its *raison d'être*. This constant crisis of identity supports the development of strategic approaches to solving problems which maintain the apparent continual march of progress by drawing on the conflict between life and death as the impetus for further development precisely to the extent that this conflict is kept external to the discipline.

Malcolm: You bring up a critical point in clarifying the discipline's contradictory relationship with conflict. These critical practice studios reflect an emerging disciplinary ideology that offers a less disruptive means for architecture and architect to continually produce the appearance of solutions necessary for disciplinary legitimation while simultaneously denying the totality of the intractable issues these studios build upon. To do otherwise would expose the deceit inherent in proposing "solutions", and undermine the grounds from which architecture claims its value as a discipline and profession within the progress-centred onto-epistemological regime of Modernity. Despite the postmodern turn in architecture, I think the injection of the death of the meta-narrative into the discipline has ironically strengthened the discipline's resolve in Modernism by recycling the postmodern critique in a fatalist fashion.

Aaron: It sounds like what you are saying is more or less similar to the proverbial firefighter who set fires in order to be rewarded for having put them out. In order to produce evidence of its ability to solve problems, architecture in the form of critical practice studios frames problems in a particular manner that allows the discipline to prove its relevance while simultaneously denying these situations pose any true existential threat to the discipline. I think we can frame this structure of the simultaneous requirement and denial of irresolvable conflicts that provides legitimacy to the discipline of architecture under two perpetual meta-crisis cum meta-solutions: the constant need to seek and colonise new frontiers into which the discipline can expand, which we can refer to as problem-seeking (interventionism) and the constant need to demonstrate effectiveness in managing the intellectual, material, and social terrains it already occupies, which we can refer to as problem-solving (solutionism). The search for new frontiers of practice, framed by the radically pragmatist situation of critical practice studios in present conditions is, in fact, a means of ignoring past problems—the palimpsest of conquered and denuded terrains that have been continually constructed to legitimise architectural practices from labour exploitation to the conscious use of toxic materials and the complicity of architecture in perpetuating them. Instead, a disciplinary "manifest destiny" subsumes new intellectual terrain, material skill sets, and social relationships, using them to cover over or divert attention from its previous behaviours in order to sustain itself and its position within society, economics, and politics. The demonstration of effectiveness is framed within the latent and almost naive empiricism mobilised by critical practice studios to justify their outcomes, combining pseudo and "real" science to demonstrate the discipline's power to produce "facts" or "truths", or at least the conditions for determining factuality and acting on them. By operating within this framework, when the discipline of architecture demonstrates its effectiveness through the production of facts it positions itself within the onto-epistemic meta-structure of death-denying modern philosophies: it refuses recognition of the people, places, and relationships which do not comply with its claim to producing a solution, which insist on some conflicts being irresolvable.

Malcolm: To put it another way, in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the discipline, its labourers are obliged to compartmentalise their own identities in such a way that it essentially begs the question of whether individuals are onto-epistemologically defined by their own means of labour. By only embracing an affirmative response while disallowing objections to the premise of the question, critical practice studios continue the disciplinary foreclosure of alternative ideas of value that might propose a more complex and non-hierarchical structure.

Both the search for new frontiers generated by problem-seeking and the demonstrations of effectiveness generated by problem-solving manifest in critical practice studios. However, they both are commonly regarded as oppositional design methods and are positioned against one another, with problem-seeking critically framing problem-solving as reductive and totalising, and problem-solving critically framing problem-seeking as exploitation of real suffering for theoretical exercise. In doing so, the discipline feigns a false sense of innocence that purports a neutral expression towards forces outside of its own control; architecture becomes merely a medium with no stake in any conflict. However, these two methodological responses to the discipline's need for meta-solutions both perform the same onto-epistemic absolution of architecture through their continuous process of Othering in which conflictual or non-cooptable spaces and practices are constructed as "outside the discipline". These constructed "outsides" range from the nonexistent or the unknowable to the not yet understood or the not yet included, and therefore serve as both alibi and promissory frontier, or else as something over/in contradistinction to that which the discipline expresses its own power, i.e. the ineffective. The construction of this absolution through Othering arises from the discipline's unwillingness to embrace the totality of Conflict because doing so would undermine the foundational logic of disciplinary necessity. Thus, in these critical practice studios' exclamations that "the global refugee crisis is an architectural problem", or "climate change is an architectural problem", what is foregrounded is a faith in disciplinarity that cannot exclaim, "these are human problems" because this faith is built on the categorical structuring of knowledge around abstract ideas that are taken as givens and that which are somehow beyond construction through practices and discursive regimes of legitimation.

Aaron: In that sense we have yet to move past the debates between Hobbes and Boyle over the air pump, because despite architecture's postmodern turn, you bring to light how the discipline

devalues the multiplicity of lived experience in favour of measurable and therefore apparently rational and logical evidence. In essence, the discipline as a Discipline must deny the truths of Others in order to maintain its own singular and universal truth. Even with the postmodern turn and the contemporary focus on critical practice, it is clear that the discipline of architecture does not take the multiplicity of onto-epistemic regimes seriously. The discipline itself remains unquestioned. Despite, if not through paeans to interdisciplinarity or engagements with non-Western forms of practice, the core of the discipline is preserved as an autonomous and unassailable set of spatial knowledge that cannot be shared, and which is protected by a wilful inability to acknowledge other onto-epistemic regimes, such as those of indigenous peoples who do not recognise private property as properly spatial.

Malcolm: What results is a hierarchy of subjectivity which privileges architects' spatial knowledge and skills as inherently objective and having both value and merit, while coding the lived experience of Others as subjective and therefore of lesser value. Architects it would seem, in both postmodernism and critical practices, cannot be both the everyday human and a labourer within the discipline, but rather merely conflict-circumscribing organisers of language and data respectively.

I think we noted earlier, the use and denial of conflict that underscores this process of absolution through Othering is inculcated in both students and professors through the organisation of design studios within architectural education, and is thereby continuously folded into the discipline of architecture as its dominant mode of practice. In these studios, claims structured as declarative statements of judgement must be made because there is no room for ambiguity nor, more tellingingly, a politics of refusal—such as autonomist Marxism in Italy in the 1960s. Further, these claims must be made within the already circumscribed boundaries of recognised and conflict avoidant disciplinary norms. They therefore foreclose the possibility of critical reflection or empathetic action.

Aaron: Exactly! A hug, or an acknowledgement that a situation "sucks" would not count as valid "solutions" to situations posed as problems because they neither seek to resolve conflict, nor are they considered inherently architectural, even if by their "staying with the trouble" they might be the most honest and useful responses possible.

All of this seems especially pertinent given the raft of critical practice studios and seminars addressing contemporary global crisis today, especially those with ostensibly anti-solutionist theoretical orientations like Free Migration headed by Keller Easterling at Yale in 2017, which focused on the ongoing migration of refugees around the Mediterranean basin. Looking back at this studio, the disjunction between theory and practice indicative of the process of absolution through Othering, respectively represented by Professor Easterling's body of critical writing and the student design projects that were produced as part of the studio, is immediately evident.[3]

Malcolm: I imagine that the critically theoretical stances that Professor Easterling could put forward in writing became almost impossible to realise because they met with the resistance of engrained disciplinary structures, ways of working and thinking manifested in design studio pedagogy.

Aaron: This is quite possibly true. To that point, while what the students produced were not necessarily (just) buildings, the work did not appear to seriously question the premise that human migration was a problem to be solved and that architecture had some role in solving it, much less address whether architecture might share some responsibility in contributing to the conditions that necessitate migration or that have coded it as problematic. While this seeming structural inability to question premises is unfortunate enough because it maintains the discipline of architecture's conflict relying/denying status-quo, the discipline's need for new frontiers and to prove its effectiveness in the face of what it insists are problems, (re)casts the anti-solutionist intention as an almost superficial desire to avoid conflict.

Malcolm: I would say that by framing problems as methodological, this (re)casting erases the originary conflict, leaving only superficial oppositions. Conflict, in that sense, would instead be reductively understood as a failure of viewpoint—an inability to see the potential in a given situation—to that which the ingenious and innovative architect provides an opportunistic corrective. To that end, did you feel that in the case of Free Migration the lived experiential conflict between property and mobility were understood primarily in terms of territorial/personal sovereignty?

Aaron: Sure. I feel like critical practice studios often fail to engage with the lived complexity of the crises they are centred on because they don't acknowledge the partial and contingent nature of architectural knowledge and skills. What that leads to is the treatment of the specific crises of migration, climate change, and other globally scaled/historically rooted but locally/contemporarily experienced conflicts as interchangeable variables. Taken as variables, global issues are used to search for new methodologies and sites of practice and to prove the discipline's ability to use these methodologies and sites to solve problems. Studios like Free Migration participate in a kind of meta-problem seeking that treats the real suffering of human beings as transient research interests, in service of historically amnesiac arguments for the discipline's future value. Many of the approaches proposed by students in Free Migration were described as being equally applicable to other seemingly intractable and tenuously "similar" problems such as reconciling shifts within national demographic and economic spatial patterns. Though many of these approaches were open-ended and systemic in structure, and therefore anti-solutionist to the extent that they proposed no final static state, this systemicity was circumscribed by the

scope of what could be considered systemic and architectural, as well as by the pedagogical limitations of a single studio.

Malcolm: When reviewing the work from that studio, I'm curious as to why there were drawings of cruise ships and airports and not viral videos of students occupying the offices of elected officials along with illustrated civil disobedience manuals, or why the plight of refugees did not get injected into the discussions of urban housing, museum, and library design studios that Yale held in parallel to Free Migration. Perhaps, like the anaemic attempts by most schools of architecture to hire faculty of colour, the inclusion of a critical practice studio on a prominent issue within curricula allows the discipline to "feel" morally well-adjusted or progressive, tap into a cultural zeitgeist (that well of shared humanity beyond the limits of what the discipline can truly claim), and claim "I'M WOKE TOO", as if such a claim necessitates a congratulatory pat on the back without requiring critical self-(re)examinations or the questioning of fundamental assumptions on which the discipline operates.

Aaron: I think, more than anything, that what problem-seeking critical practice studios and the non-solution "solutions" they produce represent is the luxury of time afforded in the studio through the process of Othering that abstracts foreign trauma into methodology. This luxury allows the discipline to seek new frontiers and prove its effectiveness, because it removes it from the existential immediacy of having to deal with the same complex, day-to-day, lived reality faced by those it Others. Conflict becomes an ahistorical intellectual novelty that one gets to put down and walk away from when the stakes get too high, or when it stops opening new spaces of practice and bringing new affirmations of value.

Malcolm: It is that kind of ahistorical treatment of conflict that ignores or adulturates cultural differences and (re)inscribes the dominant onto-epistemic regime of the day (modernism, postmodernism, etc.) as a fatalist default. The ahistorical treatment of conflict you speak of present in problem-seeking studios like Free Migration is also present within problem-solving studios like MIT's Cities by Sea, taught by Alan Berger, Jonah Susskind, and Rafi Segal. I see in both studios, though for slightly different reasons, a treatment of conceptual and physical infrastructures as neutral and superficially historical, or at the very most, politicised in a manner that positions the discipline as a neutral moderator, which allows these infrastructures to be disregarded as needed in order to ensure the production of ever-new terrains of practice (sometimes literally) as well as allow for the production of evidence of the discipline's effectiveness, even when in practice these infrastructures are anything but. Contrary to Free Migration, Cities by Sea was wholly engaged in the "real" problems of climate change that affirmed problem resolution as an ethical and moral obligation of the discipline. Though the studio's intentions were laudable, the manner in which the studio operated was tautological and insistent in its solutionist prognostications of what sea level rise could mean. Only specific socio-political and spatial approaches, already prescribed within the studio's framework, were considered as serious and viable problem-solving tactics. Conceptual or theoretical approaches were regarded as impractical or conceited, which insulated the studio's solutionist approach from any sincere criticisms and debased any alternatives to them as cynicism or conspiracy. For example, after expressing my initial reservation in engaging with the issues of climate change within a discourse of resiliency because its rhetoric reflects a design methodology that is both propagated by and (re)inscribes a culture of paranoia that I felt the studio should be critical of, my professor immediately challenged my commitment to socio-political issues as well as my resolve for humanitarian work. Rather than recognise my concern about operating under an explicit disciplinary rhetoric imbued with militarist and pro-capitalist language, the professor implied that my criticism was symbolic of me being a climate change denier, incapable of understanding the very real and immediate threats of climate change. The moral expectation was to produce solutions and not theoretically challenge the framework in which those solutions are produced. Anything deviant was regarded as non-serious, self-indulgent, and shameful. The use of shaming students has sadly become an increasing habit within architecture schools' studio courses. It is employed to ensure the production of specific solutions and neutralise the threat of conflict.

Aaron: Are you saying the morality affixed to problem-solving instils a humility when working with problems culpable for real human suffering, but when taken to an extreme, it uses shame as a tactic to avoid conflict?

Malcolm: Correct. The need for the discipline to demonstrate its own effectiveness within its own language can result in the production of evidence validating what was already assumed, allowing the discipline to operate without systemic shock to its core values. Ironically, this could be seen as an onto-epistemological resiliency.

Aaron: Your pun is ironic. I see within the discipline another paranoia—an apprehension that other disciplines (and the larger world) will discover that architecture is guilty of sustaining the intractable problems it wishes to resolve for the sake of its own legitimacy. For the past several years, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) has pushed sustainable building practices as a means to reframe the fact that buildings—in their construction and operation—are the largest contributors of global carbon emissions. It seems you are saying that the design practice of problem-solving attempts to produce solutions as a way to safeguard the discipline form a systemic admission of guilt. The AIA's solution to CO_2 emissions is not, and cannot be to stop building buildings nor is it to regulate the number of buildings being built, but rather, to produce evidence of sustainable building practices that shifts the location of conflict within the discipline from the unchecked need to continually build more buildings onto the failures of contemporary technology.

Malcolm: Exactly! It is similar to your analogy to Hobbes and Boyle's debate over the air pump. Cities by Sea began with analyses of strictly Western coastal cities—Copenhagen, Malmö, New York City, Amsterdam/Rotterdam, San Francisco, Miami, Hamburg, Sydney, and Newcastle—with the exception of Singapore, whose roots are deeply embedded in the British Empire and its role as global trade port. The specific attention to Western cities made sense within the framework of the studio because we were ultimately concerned with Boston's resilience against future sea level rise. These precedent cities offered parallel infrastructural concerns that we could model and apply. However, what seemed less important, if not outright irrelevant, was any discussion on the historical roles these cities and their infrastructures played in the development of the onto-epistemic regime that created the climate crisis. Rather than question the Western way of urban life and its production of "externalities", which would have been regarded as overly-theoretical and therefore impracticable, the studio accepted a fatalist position that made imagining any non pro-Western or pro-capitalist "solution" impossible. In other words, we studied Western cities not solely because they offered precedents we could apply to Boston, but also because they reflect the very urban way of life the studio was ultimately trying to preserve and protect despite the underlying contradiction of "sustainable" capitalism.

Aaron: I find this to resonate with Judith Butler's critique of MIT Professor David C. Page's mappings of the Y-chromosome and his claim that it is *the* determining gene of sex. There is a similarity between the epistemic feedback loop conditions of the laboratory to the way in which many critical practice studios are taught in American architectural schools. Both scientist and architecture student end up constructing the conditions in which they test ideas, and these are in turn studied as the conditions of truth. I wonder how we can counter the fatalist rebuttals—the selective postmodern readings the discipline utilises in the wake of the death of metanarratives to deny conflict and contradiction—that underscore the discipline's onto-epistemological framework and process of absolution through Othering? Mumbai, Bangalore, Hanoi, Karachi, Dhaka, Dakar, and Port-au-Prince are all infrastructurally rich cities that will inevitably be victims of climate change despite not contributing to it on the same scale or same manner as the cities studied by Cities by Sea. Yet, I can foresee your professor offering the rejoinder that their study would perpetuate, not ameliorate this inequality. I would argue that presumed commonality of cities in distant geographic and climatic regions but confederated under the umbrella of Westernism reflects the problematic side of the philosophy of kinship—Us vs. Them, the Standard vs. the Exception—that has characterised most of what appears to be mainstream architectural history and practice.

Malcolm: Architect Cedric Price famously said, "technology is the answer…but what was the question?" I feel his quotes accurately encapsulate this problem in problem-solving studios. The "applicability problem" you have mentioned in Free Migration's treatment of real suffering for intellectual play is also present in problem-solving studios; interventions are often de-historicised in order to resolve the inability to comprehend totality. In these interventions, Othering becomes a means to disregard o/Other forms of knowledge that are apparent but conflicting. In Cities by Sea, our professors developed a "performance-based set of design and planning strategies" that students were expected to replicate in their projects. The squaring of continued capitalist-oriented urban planning and the threat of sea level rise was reduced to a four-step process, beginning with identifying critical infrastructure—power stations, fuel and food storage, and major transit systems—calling out existing soft and hard infrastructure that could provide a "thick [or redundant] line of defense" and therefore be leveraged to protect existing critical urban infrastructure from predicted inundation, and lastly upzoning/developing areas of safety and downzoning/displacing areas of high risk.[4] These tactics were applied throughout Boston to districts that had their own distinctive economic, racial, socio-political characteristics. The deployment of these tactics relied on exiting market-logic embedded with all the bad-isms that perpetuate systems of inequality in which the opportunity of choice is foreclosed by the market itself for those subjectivised to these -isms. Because the studio operated under a capitalist fatalism, the studio (at best) could only superficially acknowledge these racial and economic inequalities. "Affordable housing", socially, physically, and conceptually amorphous and defined only in relation to market-rate, became the catchall solution representing the ubiquitous applicability of these tactics. Rather than subjugate the meta-narrative resiliency attempts to avert the injection of conflict, the studio was unable to recognise the embeddedness of its upzoning and downzoning processes within market-logic as a (re)inscription of historical power systems: green-lining, the new red-lining.

Aaron: So where does that leave us as students of architecture and the discipline at large? Neither problem-seeking nor problem-solving are panaceas in and of themselves. There are no easy answers and no one way of working is going to rectify centuries of feigned or naive disciplinary innocence.

Malcolm: I think we need to find a way to temper the methods of problem-seeking and problem-solving with one another. If architecture is a discipline that is truly concerned with the real suffering caused by intractable problems, then critical practice studios must find a way to "stay with the trouble"[5] and inject more conflict into their frameworks; something we could best refer to as problem-posing. We must stay with the trouble and not forget the terrains of that which came before when seeking new frontiers and producing evidence of our effectiveness. Problem-posing attempts to understand existing structures, and pull them apart to help expose contradictions and propose them as the architectural intervention to destabilise a faith in authority. We need to find new theoretical frameworks that confront the rigid onto-epistemological frameworks the discipline thinks of and produces as solutions. This requires, in part, the theoretical play problem-seeking produces, but also a sincere incorporation of existing spatial, social, and ontological theoretical frameworks, including those outside the discipline, to

problematise our own truths. I think you can agree that the discipline of architecture has long claimed to be a generalist field, yet, both its professional workforce and its pedagogical canon have remained Eurocentric and exclusionary. I think we need to find a way to be comfortable with contradiction and irresolvability, and that we should strive to sincerely "seek out" and produce "solutions" to problems that keep the discipline relevant, but also generate problems that agitate our own assumptions.

Aaron: I think it would be a fair criticism to call our "solution" subpar—that we've taken the cliché academic route of straddling between two methods without fully committing to one, an approach often critiqued as flippant. However, I would argue that this perception is evidence of the discipline's deeply-rooted onto-epistemological logic at work. We are trained to desire a resolved and non-conflictual response that argues within an either/or logic. I think our desire for problem-posing could be read by our critics as a cop-out *because* it creates a conflict of clarity and purity. I think we are ultimately calling for contradiction. And this means finding a way to use critical theory in a manner that does not allow the performative use of critical theory to shut down the potential of critique to bring about effective change. In other words, finding a way in which the discipline can use critical theory that acknowledges the need for consistent conflict while producing solutions at the same time.

I think both studios are valid in addressing the complexities of modern life, and are applicable to the multifaceted frameworks of everyday existence—there are real problems that need to be solved—but we also need to find problems and use them as a means to think in a future-forward, generative, and radically pragmatic manner. And we can also wish to see the discipline support a studio space that proposes problems and agitates the discipline itself because all three prime or foreground the irreconcilable role that conflict plays and that conflict is not bound by the theoretical walls of a discipline.

Malcolm: I whole-heartedly agree, and I think introducing a methodology of problem-posing begins to chip away at the "rational" Man vs. Nature schism. Architectural education should stop treating its students like abstract entities and provide them with the dignity and the ability to be imperfect and problematic. So much of contemporary education mimics Paulo Freire's concept of "the banking-system".[6] This is especially so within professional degrees like medicine, law, and architecture where their education models reify the philosophy that subjectivity is defined by labour and a universal Liberal Human Subject. However, while universal humanism provides a unique way of thinking about our shared existence in this world as separate from Nature, it is also predicated on the denial of personal humanism(s) while insisting on individuality. I think we cannot forget the productive tension of the conflictual narrative of the individual within the collective—something between agonistic pluralism and imagined communities.

Aaron: We should acknowledge that there is a privilege in the conversation in the two of us agreeing on many points. We more or less had a conversation about the need for conflict and problem-posing without a conflictual voice interjecting. I find this to be disappointing, and part of a larger problem of intellectual homogenisation that we are both to a degree party to as students in institutions of elite American architectural academia. The lack of dissenting voices, or the voices of people historically excluded from engaging with the discipline of architecture is perhaps one of the reasons we both feel so disenchanted with critical practice studios. I think the lack of outside voices in architecture and in this conversation is not because we do not want to engage voices that are conflictual to our own, but because we have almost unconsciously adopted the discipline-developed vocabulary and methodology, which exclude the participation of others. It is troubling, because even acknowledging this kind of constructed privilege seems to systematically reinscribe it. But then again, that is the attitude that absolution-seeking gives rise to. Maybe as a start, we all need to get okay with being a little less comfortable in who we talk to.

Malcolm: Ironically, I agree.

Notes

1. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1977), p. 222.
2. Examples of this trend are numerous enough to warrant a course on their precedents and journal articles discussing their overall relationship to the discipline. "Precedents in Critical Practice," MIT Architecture, accessed 15 March 2018, https://architecture.mit.edu/subject/fall-2011-4210; Jane Rendell, "Critical Architecture: Introduction," *The Journal of Architecture* 10:3 (2005), doi:10.1080/13602360500162501.
3. Easterling's writing regarding critical practice and design pedagogy is perhaps best summarised in her recent series of lectures, courses, and a book, all entitled *Medium Design* and all advocating for anti-solutionist stances. Keller Easterling, *Medium Design* (Moscow: Strelka Press, 2018).
4. Rafi Segal, Alan Berger, and Jonah Susskind, 4.163J/11.332J: Urban Design Studio—Cities by Sea, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Architecture (2017).
5. Donna Haraway, S*taying with the Trouble* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
6. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

The Building

Adeela Suleman | *Photographs by Razin Rubin*

> For the residents of Karachi, including the barricaded city elites, violence has become part of the order of things. This is not to say that violence has become acceptable to *Karachiwalas*, but simply that they cannot imagine a future without it.
>
> – Laurent Gayer[1]

The building—from its walls to furniture, from its narrow passages to classrooms, from its entrance to the courtyard—echoed with horrors of its dreadful past. Violence in its myriad manifestations had left its marks on this site; traces of which were visible in wall chalkings, broken windows, and an absence of human beings, all encapsulated in dust and cobwebs.

I first encountered the building, Vocational Training Centre in Khadda Market, near Abdullah Haroon College in Lyari, during my visit to the area to watch the screening of a documentary film, *Perween Rahman: The Rebel Optimist*.[2] As I drove in and around Lyari to locate the site, I witnessed remnants of violent gang wars, crime, and neglect that have coloured our perception of this part of the city.

According to Laurent Gayer, "Lyari derives its name from the word *Iyar*, a tree said to bloom in graveyards [...]. According to the legend, it is here that Mai Kolachi, the fisherwoman who gave her name to Karachi, lived with her seven sons, six of whom lost their lives to a gigantic crocodile".[3] It is believed that the dead sons are buried at a site, which is now a busy intersection under a flyover, near Lyari. The first residents of Lyari were Sindhi fishermen and Baloch nomads from Makran, Lasbela, and Kalat districts. The signs of settlements are from the early 18th century. Historically, the inhabitants of Lyari were among the first settlers in Karachi. Even though Lyari is considered Baloch in local imaginaries, according to sociologist Nida Kirmani, "Lyari is actually multi-ethnic and includes Punjabis, Mianwalis, Kutchis [...], Memons, Sindhis, Pashtuns, and a small number of Urdu speakers at its outskirts".[4]

One enters the building through a large barren ground, surrounded by shuttered down and broken windows, signalling an absence of human life. A man guides me to the staircase, leading to the first floor. The place starts to transform with each step of the staircase; still the same, but markers of life, of human presence, slowly become visible.

Abdul Latif Dorai—a local resident of the area, manager in the morning, and *kebab* seller in the evening—took over a portion of the Abdullah Haroon Vocational Training Centre to offer classes to girls in sewing, computer skills, beautician courses, and English language. Latif says, "We started this small Centre (Latif Bhai Centre) within the Vocational Training Centre as a small window for the girls to breathe. In their tiny apartments, they are not even allowed to stand in the balcony. Their movement is monitored by their fathers and brothers. They are not allowed to watch TV programmes of their choice as the remote of the TV is in the hand of either the father or brother."[5]

I learned over many conversations upon my later visits that the Vocational Training Centre is working under the umbrella of the Sindh Technical and Vocational Authority, Government of Sindh, and is in the process of revival after being non-functional for a long time. However, no efforts have been made towards activating it.

Prior to Operation Lyari, the institute was used by Ustad Taju and Uzair Baloch's group of gangsters as a torture cell, for nearly six years, to hide persons kidnapped for ransom.

Uzair Jan Baloch, a scorned young man powered by the thirst to take his father's murderer to task, a crime lord originally from Lyari, a key front man of Karachi's organised crime has been long associated with the disreputable gang war in his hometown. According to a report published in *The Friday Times* on the history of gang war in Lyari in 2012, Ali K. Chishti writes:

> […] [I]n 1964, Dad Muhammad, also known as Dadal, formed a gang with his brother Sheru, who worked at Rex Cinema, and began to illegally sell Hashish. Dad Muhammad was the father of Rehman Baloch, now known as Rehman Dakait. Together, Dadal and Sheru took on the biggest drug peddler in Karachi, known as Kala Nag. Nag was later killed in a police encounter.
>
> Nag's son Fazlu (or Kala Nag II) and Iqbal Dakait aka Babu competed with rival Haji Lal Mohammad aka Lalu, who was Rehman Dakait's godfather. In the 1990s, Rehman consolidated his power in Karachi with the support of PPP-backed Khaled Shahanshah and others.
>
> In the mid-1990s, Rehman Dakait abducted Saleem Memon, a trader from the Kharadar area, for ransom. Lalu asked Rehman to release the man for free, but secretly took the ransom himself. Ties between the two men broke down after that.
>
> Later, Lalu's son Arshad Pappu abducted businessman Faiz Muhammad—who was Rehman's cousin—and killed him. Faiz's son Uzair Baloch eventually became Rehman Baloch's successor.
>
> Uzair now heads the controversial People's Aman Committee (PAC) in Lyari, Lalu operates from Dubai, and his son Arshad Pappu was recently released by the police. Both the groups claim links with the Pakistan People's Party.[6]

According to Abdul Latif Dorai, the stains of terror were visible on the walls when he first entered this building. "The centre had become a symbol of fear and people were scared to even cross the street [where it is located]".[7] Ustad Taju and Uzair Baloch's name—both notorious gangsters, with the former now serving time in prison—are still engraved on the walls in the Centre. These engravings register as ghost marks, hovering between presence and absence, bearing witness to countless lives lost and persecuted. Despite the discolouration of the markings, their presence is palpable. When violence seeps into the *very* existence of architecture, it leaves traces that can never be forgotten, erased, diminished.

According to Abdul Latif Dorai, "the classrooms that you see with machines and furniture are the responsibility of the Sindh Technical Board, inhabited by ghost students and ghost teachers."[8] Admissions take place every year; students come and sit outside their classrooms. Gulzar Bibi, caretaker of the Centre, un-shutters the classrooms, sweeps the floor, lets the air in, and all the new students wait for their teachers. Gulzar Bibi knows the reality, but the new students do not, not yet. They wait only to realise that the teachers will never show up. The wrinkles on Gulzar Bibi's face tell a thousand stories that can only be experienced and not entirely shared. She took over her husband's job in 2002, after his accidental death by electrocution in 1989.

Upon request from Abdul Latif Dorai, I initiated a weekly art class in the grounds of the Centre, which has continuously deepened my association with the place. Some of the rooms that were once used as torture cells are now utilised as classrooms for various courses. This small initiative in the landscape of violence has become a refuge for girls in the area. It is a space within a space, same as Lyari—a state within the *state*.

ALTO


WELDING WORK SHOP

Notes

1. Laurent Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 4.
2. *Perween Rahman: The Rebel Optimist*, produced and directed by Mahera Omar (Karachi: 2016).
3. Laurent Gayer, *Karachi*, p. 127.
4. Nida Kirmani, "Life in a no go area: Experiences of Marginalisation and Fear in Lyari," in *Cityscapes of Violence in Karachi: Publics and Counterpublics*, ed. Nichola Khan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 107.
5. Abdul Latif Dorai, interviewed by Adeela Suleman, Vocational Training Grounds, Khadda Market, Lyari, Karachi, 17 March 2018.
6. Ali K. Chishti, "The Story of Lyari: A History of the Gang Wars in Karachi's Oldest Town," *The Friday Times*, 4–10 May 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20120512225956/http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta3/tft/article.php?issue=20120504&page=5.
7. Yusra Salim, "Changing Fates: Lyari Torture Cell Building to Become Vocational Training Centre," *The Express Tribune*, 24 December 2016, https://tribune.com.pk/story/1273082/changing-fates-lyari-torture-cell-building-become-vocational-training-centre/.
8. Abdul Latif Dorai, interviewed by Adeela Suleman, Vocational Training Grounds, Khadda Market, Lyari, Karachi, 17 March 2018.

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Notes toward a Manifesto for the Future Infrastructuralists!

David Brooks

I **Infrastructure is Nature!** Infrastructure is alive. It is an active extension of society and, thus, is active within the living world.

II **Infrastructure is power!** And is representative of power. Therefore, it must reflect the desires and well-being of all the human and nonhuman constituents it entangles. Though this mandate has never been realized and may be impossible, this mandate is the main principle through which all other mandates flow.

III **Infrastructure is the shape of a society's desires and ideologies!** As it interfaces with natural systems or with a multiplicity of other infrastructures. Infrastructure is the mechanism of society that aligns the contours of the individual to the contours of the landscape within the contours of that society. It is an organismic network that realizes society's collective desires and ideologies through society's physiologies in real time and space.

IV **Our daily motions and priorities dictate the shape of our infrastructures!** Which in turn dictate the shape of the landscape around us, which affects the health of the larger biosphere, which thusly dictates our daily motions. One who takes these concerns seriously is an infrastructuralist. The infrastructuralist works to bridge the psychological and economic gaps between the activities of the individual and the biosphere—for they are intra-related. An intra-relation is one in which none of the constituent parts precedes another in formation, but rather in which the parts emerge into their individualized forms through their entanglement with each other.

V **Infrastructure shapes the natural world and the natural world shapes infrastructure!** They are sometimes interchangeable, and their demarcations are occasionally impossible to discern—for they are intra-related. Therefore, any definition of nature is not a given, but is an ideological notion constructed by a distinct culture at a particular time.

VI **Our current infrastructures have failed us!** They not only contribute to the unavailing practice of domination over the world's resources and perpetuate the marginalization of peoples, but they literally point the way and pave the roads to

such. Our current infrastructures galvanize such practices through their sprawling stagnating tendrils that sever the land and its natural systems into unsustainable island bodies, segregating peoples and proliferating food deserts. Our current infrastructures underline the delusional bifurcation of "culture over here" from "nature over there", as propagated by the failed Enlightenment project and the ensuing miasma of anthropocentrism.

VII **We may have stepped out of the food chain, but we have not stepped out of nature!** We are propelled by the sobering truth that regardless of our efforts, or lack thereof, we all will succumb to the laws of metabolic existence. One day, a variety of fungi will decompose all of our bodily forms into nutrient rich soil. ~~This should be cause for catharsis, not self-aggrandizement or nostalgia.~~

VIII **Infrastructure must align with unfolding evolutionary adjustments!** By relinquishing the hubris of predetermination and failed attempts at stasis. The process of evolution mandates that all living things be in a constant state of flux—existing in perpetual response to relations with other subjects and their environments *in the present*. The living world does not emerge along a predetermined plan. It materializes and takes momentary shape through the infinite reoccurring of singular moments in the ever-developing present. Infrastructure must learn these lessons of frenetic evolutionary longevity, if infrastructure is to have the opportunity to supply a unifying platform—the bridge to togetherness. Upon this platform, the following phenomenon will never lessen: the more we know, the more we realize how little we know.

~~IX **With this manifesto, I have expressed nothing new!** But have simply re-arranged thoughts that have been thought before with nothing new beyond context and scale. (By scale, I mean proportions but also intensities and speeds.) Precisely because I have expressed nothing new, this must be expressed again and again, often at different scales, and always in different contexts.~~

X **If infrastructure cannot adapt then it should cease!** Infrastructure is required to make perpetual adjustments to its form and scale as it traverses ever-changing contexts. It must resist the unchecked urge to rule. If it cannot, then it should cease to act. Neoliberal development and its imperialist tendencies do not accommodate the diversity of constituents that they entangle. The stakeholders do not solely consist of the investors. The immediate gratification of beneficiaries is shortsighted, and without exception, results in a collective net loss for future generations of humans and nonhumans alike.

XI **We cannot import 20th century models of infrastructure into the 21st century!** The scale and context have changed. Overpopulation is overpopulated, pollution is too polluted to notice, and monocultures form the new biodiversity. Issues of history, aesthetics, biotic and abiotic conditions, economic mobility, social justice, and infrastructures are all common grounds within today's landscape and must be addressed simultaneously, for they are inextricably linked.

XII **Infrastructure is wrought with hubris!** Infrastructure needs to be made humane, free of hubris, full of humanity. ~~All societies have an infrastructure. But that does not presuppose that all must articulate their infrastructures with the~~ *scorching breath* ~~of hubris.~~

XIII **We reject the perpetuation of the human body as a common denominator in the landscape!** The infrastructuralist must contextualize the human body as one infinitesimal constituent amongst many constituents occupying the same space at the same time. It is imperative that the hierarchal location of the human body above all other bodies is renounced in order to cease the domination of nonhumans and the surplus consumption of the world's resources.

XIV **Our infrastructure does not relate the human body to the larger biosphere!** Though our infrastructure is the link between the micro and the macro it was nonetheless made without consideration of its subject, or of subjectivity. This took place before we ever came to acknowledge what exactly the human-as-animal *is* in relation to the biosphere. We've never been human enough, which has resulted in an infrastructure that does not relate the human body to a larger biosphere—as but one of many other bodies, human and nonhuman alike. ~~If we considered an equitable human body then we could perhaps have a truer infrastructure~~, ~~and vice versa.~~

XV **Detail, object, and environment must be considered as one and the same in the collective landscape! This is what the infrastructuralist may refer to as the simultaneity of scaled thinking:**

a. Detail = the quality of intimacy and a fine-tuned focus on surface
b. Object = that which can be held and therefore possessed
c. Environment = a space that includes the individual within the formation of publicness
d. Landscape = that which is beyond an individual's singular perceptual capacity; it can be perceived, but only through duration or through the aid of imagination

Individual >Species >Ecosystem >Biosphere >∞
Species >Biosphere >Individual >Ecosystem >∞
Biosphere >Ecosystem >Species >Individual >∞

XVI **To think geologically is a form of simultaneously scaled thinking. Simultaneously scaled thinking is the natural evolution of our co-habitation with humans and nonhumans alike!** Considering one's awakened state in the present moment while beholding 571-million-year-old Proterozoic formations while also acknowledging their continued state into the distant future is a form of simultaneously scaled thinking.

XVII **When Jonah looked up,** after the great storm at sea, he was enveloped within what seemed a coarse wet cave. Being thrashed about in this cave, Jonah was an object contained in an environment. As the story is told, that environment was actually an object, a whale—in which Jonah was merely a detail of the contents of its mouth (a detail from God). For Jonah, the whale was an environment. For the whale, Jonah was a detail of its mouth, an object. Here detail, object, and environment are not only indistinguishable, but merely a matter of perspective. Therefore, the predicament that Jonah found himself in was that of a *detail*, that of an *object* and that of an *environment*; all three of which work together to form the symbolic gesture of divine will through the varying relations of the individual body of Jonah. In this narrative, the occupant's body is the common denominator within fluctuating perspectives and therefore the physical, psychological, and symbolic liaison between consciousness and the collective palpable landscape.

XVIII **It is not the body of Jonah that is of paramount importance to us today. It is the body of the whale!** One of the humbling wonders that keeps our anthropocentric impacts in perspective is the sheer scale of possible life. In the three billion year history of cellular life, the Blue whale is the largest animal ever known to have roamed its surface, and it still coexists with us to this day. It can exceed 100 feet in length and 200 tons in weight. This scale of life competes with the scale of our own infrastructures. It would take more than 2500 people to equal the weight of a mature Blue whale—a population four times that of the town in which I grew up. The Blue whale's scale reframes our perspective on the natural world from one in which we lord dominion over all life to one of humble celebration. We can think of the Blue whale within the entirety of its being: (A) as a *detail* (a detail of the oceanic abyss); (B) as an *object* (an object in terms of its body containing mass and mobility); (C) as an *environment* (it was indeed an environment for the intrepid Jonah); and (D) as a *landscape* (Jonah could certainly perceive the mouth of the whale as an environment, but as the entirety of the whale's body was not in view of Jonah's singular perceptual capacity, it therefore existed for him as a larger landscape that had to be imagined).
Once we are able to understand the Blue whale as all of the above, we are able to employ a multitude of empathies toward it simultaneously—what the infrastructuralist may refer to as the simultaneity of empathetic thinking. [*See* XV.]

XIX **The infrastructuralist embraces that which defies any one person's singular perceptual capacity!** ~~One particular variety of fungus, the *Armillariaostoyae* has a single individual whose myceliun mass covers four square miles of seamless land area. It is the largest known organism on earth with a perpetually mutating shape delineating where it begins and ends. In terms of infrastructural networks, there is much to learn from the ever-mutating infinitesimal hyphae of myceliun. It is easy to imagine this single organism blanketing an entire landscape, or even becoming a landscape itself,~~ all contained within the mutating boundaries of its autonomous body~~—albeit a body that defies any one person's singular perceptual capacity.~~

XX **An ecosystem is a detail of the biosphere, and of the larger landscape!** However, it is also a thing, and of course an environment, filled with an indeterminate quantity of details. This nebulous environment sustains itself and its sovereignty through the processes of its parts—its intra-active building parts. These parts generate a process and this process generates products that are a service to us: clean air, filtered water, food, climate, habitat, etc. These products, or *ecosystem services*, make our daily motions possible, by providing the life-sustaining elements that support us through the world. We are intra-related to ecosystem services. As above, the infrastructuralist understands that though we may have stepped out of the food chain we have not stepped out of our ecosystem.

XXI **One must employ one's imagination to form an understanding of an ecosystem!** It is impossible to witness an ecosystem in its entirety, as if simply watching a car drive by. An ecosystem is as much of a process as it is a thing; therefore to witness it requires the iterative activity of reconstructing past observations. As a result, the products of an ecosystem remain elusive to an observer looking for a discrete product to define. It is not there. It is only there through time. Our relationship to ecosystem services suffers from a delusional distance and an unconscious disavowal of our reliance on them.

XXII **The infrastructuralist does not treat the dynamics of an ecosystem as a service!** Much like the theory of commodity fetishism, the service provided by an ecosystem is often taken for granted as if it magically appeared at our doorsteps and will continue to do so in perpetuity. Like market driven economies, an ecosystem's products are

disjoined from the convoluted processes that form them. They are ascribed economic value, as if intrinsic to them and apart from the ecosystem that produced them. An ecosystem reduced in our apprehension to its most obviously useful products becomes a machine perpetually at our service, disconnected from the dynamic processes of its larger operation.

XXIII **Biodiversity is part of our daily lives!** The architects of The Biodiversity Conservation Network, in the *UNEP Global Biodiversity Assessment* appropriately define their ideology in terms of the economic patterns that govern our daily lives: "Besides the profound ethical and aesthetic implications, it is clear that the loss of biodiversity has serious economic and social costs. The genes, species, ecosystems, and human knowledge being lost represent a living library of options available for adapting to local and global change. Biodiversity is part of our daily lives and livelihood and constitutes the resources upon which families, communities, nations, and future generations depend."

XXIV ~~**We can transfer ecological principles to economic systems** through cultural production. As evidenced above [XXII], this impasse cannot be resolved by political and economic trajectories alone, for the breach between the economics and ecology of everyday life is a cultural construct by origin and inevitably must be reckoned within the cultural sphere~~.

XXV **We are a debt species!** Meaning our extinction is inevitable but our ultimate disappearance is delayed. We live in a distinct moment within our extinction debt, hyper-aware of the impact of our actions on the larger biosphere even as we pummel forward with increasingly severe impact. We knowingly, if slowly, render others and ourselves extinct. Through infrastructure we finesse our interfaces with the larger environment and prepare the path for future nonhumans. Infrastructure can be that bridge to togetherness.

SELECTED WORKS
Courtesy of David Brooks

Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird: A Prehistory of Governors Island

2017

Continuous profile core extractions from three historic sites on Governors Island, NYC; situated in the subterranean magazine of Fort Jay atop a customized scaffold system that follows the flight paths of an Asian Tiger Mosquito and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird through the vaulted architecture that once housed military ordnances.
Dimensions variable.

Commissioned by the Trust for Governors Island

Rock, Mosquito, and Hummingbird digs down to the core of the place we now call Governors Island, to expose the strata of history of this floating rock at the entrance of New York Harbor—layers stretching down to a foundation of Manhattan Schist that predates complex life on earth.

Probing three sites on the northern side of the original footprint of the island, David Brooks bored through the ground surface to a range of 90 to 125 feet in depth, telling a story of this ancient place in cobbles, soil, silt, shells, clay, and bedrock. This excavated narrative leads visitors beyond the dominant military and colonial history of the site to imagine a landmass that for millions of years played a part in a larger strategic operation—the origin of land and life itself.

Situated in the subterranean magazine of historic Fort Jay, David Brooks' winding sculptural intervention of three long continuous core samples are assembled in contrasting trajectories referencing fast time (the flight of a mosquito and hummingbird) and slow time (the creation of bedrock).

– Excerpted from the exhibition's press release.

Rotosonic drill near historic hospital extracting continuous core down to 125ft.—through glacial till, original 19th century seawall, to bedrock.

Credit: *Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird*, 2017, process image. Governors Island, NYC (Photo by David Brooks).

Detail of geologic core path entering the North Powder Magazine with sections of Manhattan schist and fossilized marine organisms visible.

Credit: *Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird,* 2017. Continuous profile core extractions atop a customized scaffold system that follows the flight paths of an Asian Tiger Mosquito and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird through the vaulted architecture that once housed military ordnances, Governors Island, NYC (Photo by Timothy Schenk).

Installation view of Magazine Court with glacial till installed atop three pathways—the straight line emblematic of geological time, mosquito and hummingbird flight paths emblematic of rapid time.

Credit: *Rock, Mosquito and Hummingbird,* 2017. Continuous profile core extractions atop a customized scaffold system that follows the flight paths of an Asian Tiger Mosquito and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird through the vaulted architecture that once housed military ordnances; Governors Island, NYC (Photo by Timothy Schenk).

Of Discriminating Artistic Feeling (The Appropriator, The Industrialist, and The Aesthete and Socialite)

2017

Animal cages designed for the two macaws, two pair of monkeys and owl that James Deering kept at Vizcaya as personal companions—whose respective designs are emblematic of Deering's own character qualities: as an appropriator, an industrialist, and an aesthete and socialite.
Dimensions variable.

Commissioned by Vizcaya Museum and Gardens

Of Discriminating Artistic Feeling consists of three animal enclosures displayed throughout Vizcaya, in areas that might have originally housed James Deering's birds and monkeys. David Brooks highlights the distinctly nonhuman presence these residents contributed to the estate, and how their habitats and sounds added to the overall immersive experience of Vizcaya.

In addition to housing James Deering's two macaws, four monkeys and one owl, the unique cage designs are each emblematic of Deering himself—one conveying his identity as an early 20th century industrialist, one that regards his disposition as an aesthete and socialite, and the third which enacts his delectation as an appropriator of many architectural and artistic styles. The last was made in collaboration with artist and woodworker of South Florida renown, Brian Booth.

The cages, as if succumbing to their own affectations overwrought with their respective design motifs, are ultimately rendered uninhabitable due to their very own sensory overload.

– Excerpted from the Vizcaya Museum's press release.

Installation view of *The Industrialist*, owl cage.

Credit: *Of Discriminating Artistic Feeling; The Industrialist*, 2017, galvanized HVAC ducts and aluminum pallet with brass, steel and copper hardware; Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Miami (Photo by David Almeida).

Desert Rooftops

2011-2012

Asphalt shingled rooftops, wood, vinyl siding, metal interpretive signs
16 x 92 x 54 feet

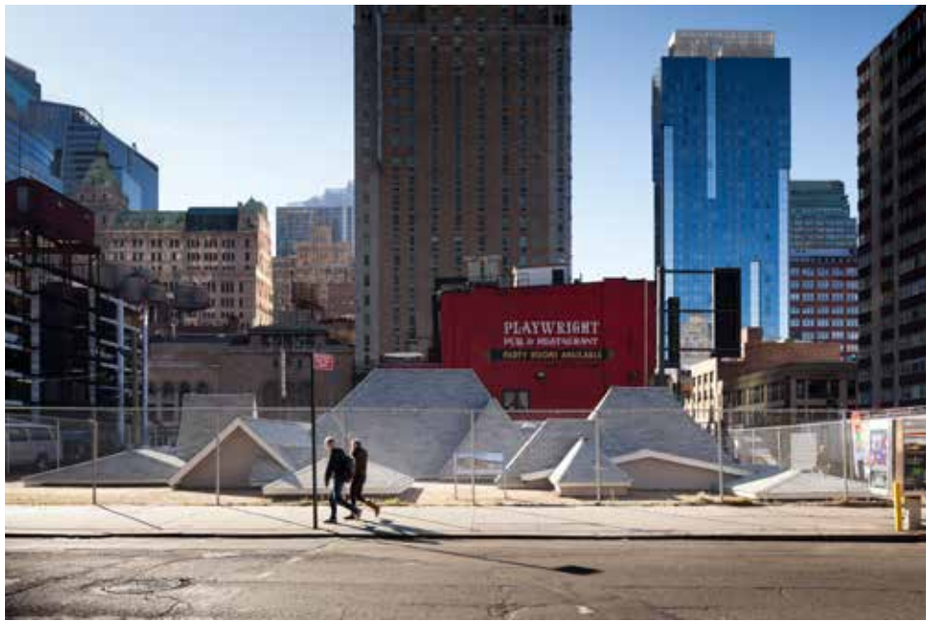
Commissioned by the Art Production Fund for the Last Lot at Times Square, 46th and 8th Ave. NYC, November 2011–February 2012.

Desert Rooftops is a 5,000-square-foot sculpture that is an undulating configuration of multiple asphalt-shingled rooftops similar to those on suburban developments, McMansions and strip malls conjoined to resemble a rolling, dune-like landscape.

The piece examines issues of the natural and built landscape by comparing the monoculture that arises from unchecked suburban and urban sprawl with that of an over-cultivated landscape—creating a work that is "picturesque, familiar and simultaneously foreboding".

David Brooks' sculptural approach gives a nod to Robert Smithson's earthworks and Gordon Matta-Clark's building cuts while offering a much needed sense of humor to help digest today's somber environmental issues.

– Excerpted from the Art Production Fund press release.



Installation view of *Desert Rooftops*, 2011–2012, Asphalt-shingled rooftops, Times Square, NYC (Photo by James Ewing).

Installation view of *Desert Rooftops*, 2011–2012, Asphalt-shingled rooftops, Times Square, NYC (Photo by James Ewing).

(Page 121) Aerial view of *Desert Rooftops*, 2011-2012, Asphalt-shingled rooftops, Times Square, NYC (Photo by anonymous).

A Proverbial Machine in the Garden

2013

Dynahoe tractor, concrete, earth, landscape, steel grating
66 x 28 x 12 feet
Storm King Art Center, NY

The notion of a "machine in the garden" is a cultural symbol that underlies the tension between the pastoral ideal and the rapid and sweeping transformations wrought by industrialized technology. David Brooks's work considers this ongoing conflicted relationship between the individual and the built and natural environment.

Speaking to Storm King's past—as an agricultural site—and present—as a carefully sculpted pastoral environment—A Proverbial Machine in the Garden addresses questions of how humans use, consume, and perceive of the natural world.

David Brooks's piece is subterranean and invisible from afar. It is designed to be experienced as a natural landscape or topography would be—by viewers walking across it.

– Excerpted from the Storm King Art Center press release.

Aerial view of *A Proverbial Machine in the Garden*, 2013, Dynahoe tractor, concrete, earth, landscape, steel grating; Storm King Arts Center, NY (Photo by Jerry L. Thompson).

(Pages 124-125) Detail view of *A Proverbial Machine in the Garden*, 2013, Dynahoe tractor, concrete, earth, landscape, steel grating; Storm King Arts Center, NY (Photo by Jerry L. Thompson).

Preserved Forest

2010-2011

Nursery-grown trees, earth, concrete
Dimensions variable
Installation at MoMA PS1, NYC

One of the more unusual sights [during installations for MoMA P.S. 1's Greater New York 2010 show] was a cement mixer outside. It was not there to smooth out the sidewalk or resurface P.S. 1's courtyard, but to put the finishing touches on "Forest Preserved," by the 34-year old artist David Brooks.

[...] Mr. Brooks stood in P.S.1's 26-foot-high duplex gallery, where concrete had just been dumped, pumped, and sprayed over a forest of trees trucked in from nurseries in Florida [...]. [T]he trees had been arranged to approximate an Amazonian rain forest.

As the [cement] mixture was drying—and delicately encrusting the trees—the leaves began wilting, cast in a gray haze of heavy concrete [...]. Mr. Brooks added that the work "will change every day as it decomposes."

– Excerpted from *The New York Times*, "A Petrified Forest" by Carol Vogel, 20 May 2010.

(Page 127) Installation view of *Preserved Forest*, 2010–2011, Nursery-grown trees, earth, concrete; MOMA / PS1, NYC (Photo by Cathy Carver).

Myopic Wall Composition (with chainsaw-cut wood found at Walden Pond)

2014

Chainsaw-cut wood found in historic Walden Woods, MDF, paint, metal scaffold
Footprint dimensions variable; height 9 ft
Installation at deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA
October 2014–April 2015

This piece contains chainsaw-cut and hand-hewn wood collected from Walden Pond State Reservation and historic Walden Woods. Thus, what appears to be a "natural" object is in fact an object formed by culture. Much like the "wilds" of Thoreau, the wilderness is not a place void of culture, but intimately intertwined with it, although not always visibly so.

These irregular wooden forms are reduced to two-dimensional surfaces as they are embedded into museum-style walls. Yet the "back" of the walls reveal the elaborate scaffolding needed to support their precise locations, alluding to a rich world made invisible.

The installation proposes a myopic or shortsighted perception of the natural world. This is indicative of a paradoxical sentimentality that simultaneously values land conservation, often fueled by texts like Walden, while jeopardizing the very same environment through rampant consumerism.

– Excerpted from the artist's statement.

Rear installation view of *Myopic Wall Composition*, 2014, Chainsaw-cut wood found in historic Walden Woods, MDF, paint, metal scaffold; deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA (Photo by David Brooks).

(Page129) Front installation view of *Myopic Wall Composition*, 2014, Chainsaw-cut wood found in historic Walden Woods, MDF, paint, metal scaffold; deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA (Photo by David Brooks).

Gap Ecology (Three Still Lives with Cherry Picker and Palms)

2009-2015

60 ft aerial boom lift, Majesty palms, weather
Dimensions Variable
Installation at Fischer Landau Center, NYC, 2009
Socrates Sculpture Park, NYC, 2013
Nuit Blanche, Toronto, 2014

And an unbuilt commissioned proposal for the Public Art Fund, NY in which an armada of cherry pickers with palms were to hover over dormant construction sites throughout NYC.

In the Amazon, storms often result in the felling of towering canopy trees, ripping holes in the forest canopy and forming a "light gap." This gap is quickly colonized by opportunistic species that capitalize on such improvisational events for rapid growth.

This sculptural intervention makes an analogy between this phenomenon typical of rainforest ecology and that of urban light gaps in our sprawling built environments—from dormant construction sites, rapid development, or natural disasters. These aerial boom lifts, or cherry pickers, behave as active and opportunistic species in the built environment.

– Excerpted from the artist's project description.

(Page 133) Installation view of *Gap Ecology*, 2014, aerial boom lifts, Majesty palms, weather; Installation for Nuit Blanche, Toronto (Photo by David Brooks).
(Pages 134-135) Installation view of *Gap Ecology*, 2013, aerial boom lifts, Majesty palms, weather; Installation at Socrates Sculpture Park, NYC (Photo by David Brooks).


JLG LIFT
JLG LIFT
JLG LIFT

Picnic Grove

2012

Douglas fir, hardware, Silver birch trees
Dimensions Variable
Installation at Cass Sculpture Foundation, West Sussex, UK

Picnic Grove is a work built out of custom-made outdoor wooden furniture and spread over the entire 18,000m of the Deer Hut Field at Cass Sculpture Foundation.

The 34 picnic tables and garden chairs are constructed in an interlocking manner, with trees heedlessly growing through the furniture like opportunistic weeds. As the picnic tables traverse the field and impose themselves on the landscape, the trees perforate the structures like a verdant grove, creating ambiguity as to which is dominant.

While visitors are encouraged to utilize the installation for communal enjoyment, they will also find themselves negotiating the playful interruptions created by the erratic placement of the trees, fostering a similar sense of ambiguity as to who is imposing on whom.

– Excerpted from the Cass Sculpture Foundation press release.

(Page 137) Installation view of *Picnic Grove*, 2012, Douglas fir, hardware, Silver birch trees; Cass Sculpture Foundation, West Sussex, UK (photo by David Brooks).

(Page 138) Detail of *Picnic Grove*, 2012, Douglas fir, hardware, Silver birch trees; Cass Sculpture Foundation, West Sussex, UK (photo by David Brooks).

North Korean Lives Matter, Why Dokdo Matters, and the Ongoing Global Peace Projects and Research

Mina Cheon

One of the greatest public problems a global Korean can focus on is the ongoing conflict between the two Koreas, which echoes the many worlds politically, economically, culturally, and religiously divided. We see global conflicts everywhere. With the escalation of threats between North Korea and the USA, Korean unification seemed impossible until the displays of hope and peace during the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea. There, athletes from the two Koreas not only marched together under the flag of unification—Korea's third flag—but also played as a joint team in women's ice hockey. Today's mantra is "One Korea".

Perhaps the unification flag is an "agitprop" signifying a new kind of Korea for both the North and South. Moreover, even if it serves as a mere charade and political propaganda, it is a good sign to see the symbol of peace and cultural diplomacy over military threats. At the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games, when the North and South Koreans marched with the flag of unification (a silhouette of the undivided peninsula in cerulean blue), they made multiple statements: Korea is strong, Korea is united, Korea is peaceful, Korea is technologically savvy, and Dokdo is ours, that *Dokdo is Korean*.

Eat Choco•Pie Together, 10,000 Choco•Pie installation for audience to eat, Ethan Cohen Gallery, exhibition *Choco•Pie Propaganda: From North Korea with Love*, 2014. Image courtesy: Ethan Cohen Gallery and Mina Cheon.

(Page 143) *Eat Choco•Pie Together*, 2014, detail. Image courtesy: Ethan Cohen Gallery and Mina Cheon.

I am Kim Il Soon (a.k.a. Mina Cheon) a Korean-American artist who dreams of unification, who paints about North Korean liberation, and has made American audience taste North Korean desire by creating artwork like *Eat Choco•Pie Together*, with 10,000 Choco•Pie[1] snacks for the public to eat in a gallery. My exhibition, *Choco•Pie Propaganda: From North Korea with Love* (23 January–28 February 2014), organised at the Ethan Cohen Gallery, New York, comprised my North Korean social realist paintings and an installation that covered the entire lower level of the Ethan Cohen Gallery with Choco•Pies. It (Choco•Pies) became an overnight sensation and the number one smuggled good in North Korea. The Orion Corporation donated 10,000 individually wrapped Choco•Pie cakes in support of the Choco•Pie art installation and the call for Korean reunification. In my artist statement, released with the exhibition, I wrote:

> As a Korean, the idea of having two artistic identities, South Korean Mina Cheon and North Korean Kim Il Soon, is an obvious reflection on the country's state of being divided. It makes all the sense in the world that if a country is split so should the artist in practice….
>
> While the Korean peninsula may be demarcated by a 38th Parallel, the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the history and culture is nevertheless shared, the country is united by one country's people and language. Moreover, Korea is ubiquitously tied by the never-ending heated debate on reunification and national identity, whether we are at war, armistice, trade, or peace. This is our business.[2]

Comparable to the American Twinkie, Choco•Pie has been sought after in North Korea, ever since South Koreans gifted Choco•Pie to the North Korean labourers at the Kaesong Industrial Complex as a token of appreciation for their hard work since giving money or tip would be considered bribery. Symbolically, the Choco•Pie has opened up North Korea and formed a loving exchange between the North and South, something that even the Korean governments have failed to do. Truly, this is a postmodern, viral, and an addictive kind of co-national cooperation. The Chinese character "Jung" on the packaging means love and friendship and these went into North Korea in thousands. At the exhibition, Choco•Pie was shared for connecting North Korea, South Korea, and America through art, i.e. *Eat Choco•Pie Together.* "Hanguk" (meaning Korea) signifies "one country", and is commonly used to address both states. While most of the world has been focused elsewhere, this covert operation of sharing Choco•Pie initiated Hanguk's "Sweet Revolution", which can eventually lead to the two Koreas opening up to each other.

The ongoing North Korean awareness project aims to change the world's impression of North Koreans. The North Korean government/regime is one thing, but ordinary citizens have the right to access information like the rest of the world, the right to be educated, and even learn art history. Original and creative, artist-driven art projects can influence North Korea to be more receptive, thereby contributing to the anticipated Pyongyang Spring.[3] Since the American and North Korean political leaders are not proactively encouraging cultural diplomacy, cultural

Umma Rises: Towards Global Peace, 2017, Yves Klein Blue Drip, on archival digital print on canvas, 30 x 40 inches. Image courtesy: Mina Cheon Studio.

agents and activist artists must help promote a future of the Koreas to work in cooperation, and by setting an example, help us look towards a future of resolution and global peace.

As an artist, I have been sending contemporary art history lessons as video art into North Korea on/through USB flash drives for quite some time now, and have also exhibited at the Ethan Cohen Gallery in a solo exhibition titled *UMMA: MASS GAMES—Motherly Love North Korea* (20 October 2017–11 January 2018). The art history lessons include themes of Art and Life, Food, Power, Abstraction and Dreams, Feminism, Social Justice, Technology, and the Environment. My videos on contemporary art history covered artists from all over the world such as Marcel Duchamp, Nam June Paik, Ai Weiwei, Shirin Neshat, Mark Bradford, and Kim Sooja. The art history lessons, transmitted into North Korea in video art form, are supported by anonymous North Korean defector-led NGOs in South Korea and by people who have made it their life's mission to help liberate North Koreans.

These defectors, the collaborators of this aspect of the work, believe that this kind of information has the power to educate North Koreans about foreign culture and media. They are sending the work on USBs directly to people they know, such as friends and family members, as a part of care packages. These care packages, which include information, entertainment, and basic needs, are for ordinary citizens of North Korea and not for those belonging to the elite society of Pyongyang or the government. Sending art into North Korea was not done with the assumption that "North Korea" needs these contemporary art videos; it is actually a *very* unique and creative exchange.

Some key scholars/historians, the known pioneers of Korea Studies, such as Bruce Cumings, Victor Cha, Charles K. Armstrong, and Hyun Jin Preston Moon, inspired this work. Some of these pivotal writers have studied North Korea, predicted Pyongyang Spring, and the immanent internal implosion of North Korea. Professor Seok-Hyang Kim from the Ewha Womans University studies the words of North Korean defectors. While oral history is questioned in the academia, her work of documenting and interpreting interviews by the defectors includes North Koreans' consideration of human rights. The interviews reveal North Korean psyche and ideological measurement of where they fit in when it comes to *lives mattering*. The *invisible strength* of Professor Kim's work prepares the ground for my work to take place in very specific ways. With the availability of critical research and studies on North Korea, it is natural for an artist like myself, interested in working on North Korean awareness, to participate in an already existing media penetration into the hermit kingdom.

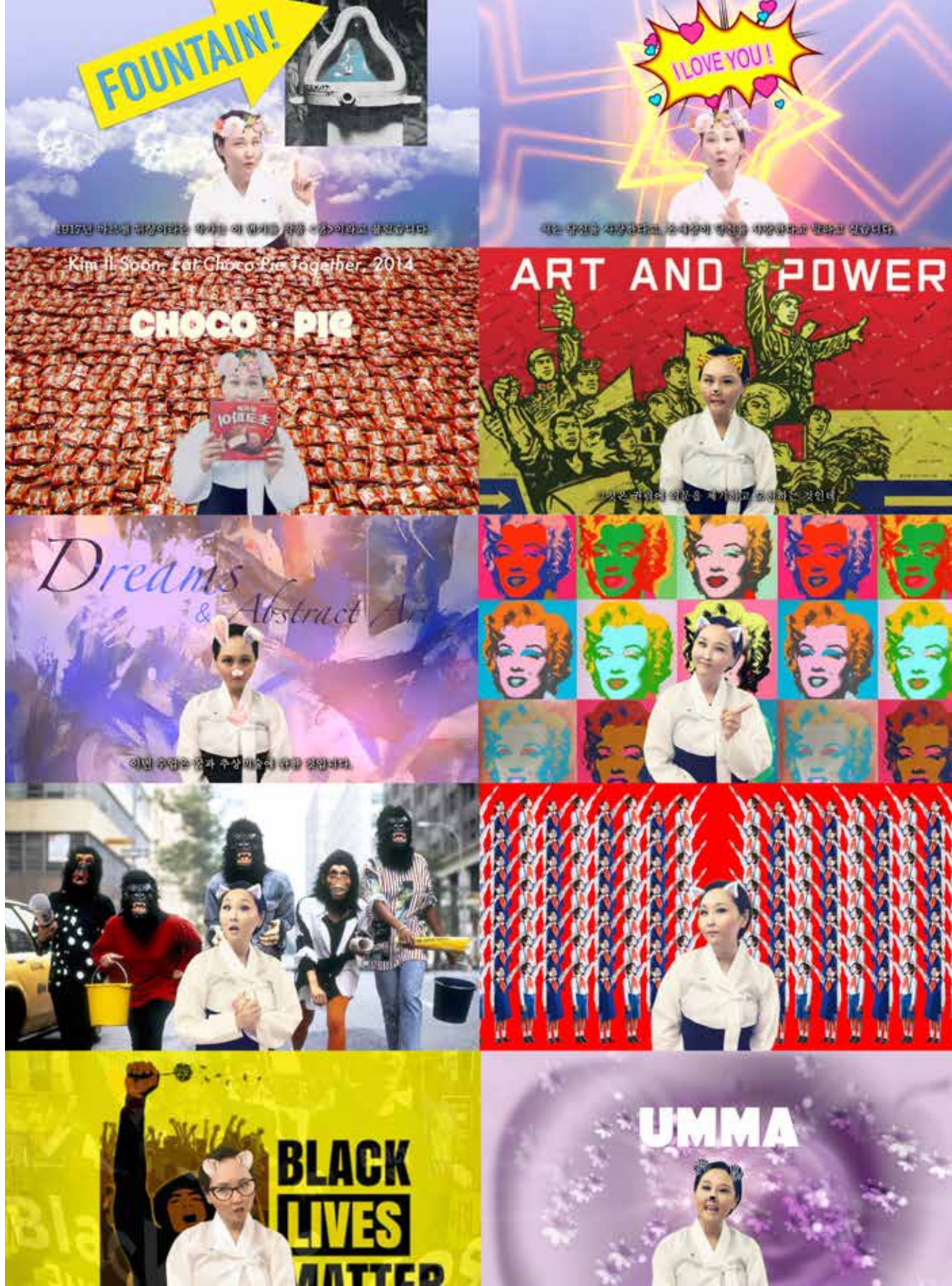
Since the Choco•Pie hit the black market of North Korea and became the number one smuggled good, hundreds of helium balloons, transporting Choco•Pie, have been sent into North Korea over the border between the 38th parallel, followed by USBs through China—with bribery for

Display of 10 notel players that played the 10 videos of *Art History Lessons by Professor Kim*, exhibition *UMMA: MASS GAMES—Motherly Love North Korea*, 2017–2018, Ethan Cohen Gallery, New York. Image courtesy: Ethan Cohen Gallery and Mina Cheon.

(Page 147) Video stills, *Art History Lessons by Professor Kim*, exhibition *UMMA: MASS GAMES*, 2017–2018, Ethan Cohen Gallery. Image courtesy: Mina Cheon Studio.

(Page 149) *Umma and Mass Games: Flagging Unification*, 2017, Yves Klein Blue Drip, on archival digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 inches. Image courtesy: Mina Cheon Studio.

(Pages 150-151) Gallery shot of exhibition *UMMA: MASS GAMES—Motherly Love North Korea*, 2017–2018, Ethan Cohen Gallery, New York. Image courtesy: Ethan Cohen Gallery and Mina Cheon.



safe passage—via the underground network. However, the covert operation—sending the USBs with the care packages—could not be revealed to the press during the exhibition, as its disclosure would halt the operation, jeopardise the project, and expose the people involved. As an artist, I was conflicted between disclosing the project and proper promotion.

Umma vs. Mass Games are almost oppositional. Mass Games is the rigid presentation of the ability to cohere, and *Umma* (mother in Korean) is the indefinable terrain of the unknown, highlighting cultural liminality. Here, I am thinking of Victor Turner's postulations on the subversive power of symbolic liminality in ritual spaces.[4] South Korea's overnight modernisation is also attributed to mothers getting together and creating an internal banking system, called *getdon* (gyedon in Korean[5]). The idea that development occurred with what is known in Korean as Umma's *chima baram* (skirt wind—by the wind of the skirts) is important. This signifies all the mothers and women who have worked and sacrificed for the development of the nation. This type of historically unrecognised feminist wave and power is about passage, movement, strength, and solidarity. So, the concept of Umma (instead of Dear Father/Leader) should be understood as a catalyst, and not a defining point or the ultimate solution.

The Rock-iness of Dokdo (aka Takeshima): Between Nation-"Ness" And Nation-"Less" in Global Media Culture

In early February 2018, the media highlighted Japan's discontent regarding the inclusion of the Dokdo Island (literally a small ink dot you can barely see) on the Korean unification flag, displayed during the 2018 Winter Olympic Games. Dokdo stirs up a lot of tension between the two countries. The set of islets that raises the geopolitical conflict between Korea and Japan is known as Dokdo in Korean and Takeshima in Japanese—Dokdo is also known as Liancourt Rocks, a name given by French whalers in 1849.

Dokdo comprises 2 large islets and some 30 smaller parts that cover 46 acres in the East Sea (aka Sea of Japan) between Korea and Japan. To this day, the island keeps bringing out the historical grievance of Japanese colonisation of Korea (1910–1945), and resurrects the colonisation history, echoed in the unsettled debate on whose island it is.[6] Although, Dokdo was recognised as Korean territory before it was annexed by Japan in 1905, yet its return to Korea—after the colonisation and the end of World War II—has become a continuous point of contention. Japan views Korea's claim for Dokdo as illegitimate as the island was not listed for return in the San Francisco Peace Treaty (1951). Some Korean protestors believe that Dokdo was created to handle Cold War strategies of power and presents this idea as a move against the West.[7]

While both South Korea and Japan are known for their high tech modern society, there is

Travelling to Dokdo, video stills, three-channel video installation. Image courtesy: Mina Cheon Studio.

something antiquated about the way in which South Korea protests regularly against Japan for the right of Dokdo as its property, and people get Dokdo-happy in media and organise events as patriotic gestures across the land, selling nationalism as commodity.[8] While Japan wants it as a safe haven for its people during North Korean missile testing, South Korean radical leftist activists, outdoing the conservative powers (such as the radical activist group Uri Madang[9]), claim Dokdo as the prime location for North and South unification. Both Japan and South Korea are using Dokdo as political and military decoys, either to take over or create a safe haven for their own kind. Moreover, North Korea also considers Dokdo as its own since Korea used to be one country. So, who owns Dokdo? With technology, everyone has a piece of Dokdo.

Dokdo is also recognised as the pinnacle of East Asia's contested space that resonates other symbolic spaces of conflict such as the three-country dispute over the uninhabited island chain known as the Senkakus in Japan, the Diaoyus in China, and the Tiaoyutai Islands in Taiwan. Dokdo's actual site is relatively primitive and only includes a small number of residents; the more recent official occupancy is merely by one Korean couple, a fisherman and his wife. The narrative of staking claim to the island, however, furthers the multinational tension on information and media war. Whether it is the actual fishery line or natural resources that are being fought over, new tourism is polluting the environment around the island, generating more hype and interest by global environmentalists today. It is obvious that politically, each country uses its version of reality of the island as placeholders for co-national anxieties. Dokdo is the perfect example of a contemporary political and ideological decoy used to produce fear of the other and in propagating co-national rivalry.

The frenzy over ownership and the consumption culture surrounding Dokdo draws our attention to the international Law of the Seas and to question whether sea lines subvert or promote cooperation and global peace. This is going to be the next phase of my research on Dokdo, to further understand its cultural implications and geopolitical history explained by law.

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My video, *Travelling to Dokdo* (45 minutes looped), one of the three single-channel video art pieces shown as an installation, was first exhibited at the Sungkok Art Museum in Seoul, South Korea, during my mid-career solo exhibition *Polipop: Political Pop Art* (13 January–11 March 2012). It highlights the symbolic meaning of getting to the desolate islets—physically and virtually. The symbolic meaning, however, that raises the issue of nationalism, tied to territory, is far greater than the contested physical property.

The video footages in the piece include travelling to Dokdo by boat and via Google Earth, online 3D tour, and Second Life. It also includes footage of myself running the Dokdo Marathon

Travelling to Dokdo, three-channel video installation, Sungkok Art Museum, Seoul, South Korea, exhibition *Polipop: Political Pop Art*, 2012. Image courtesy: Sungkok Art Museum and Mina Cheon.

in Seoul on 25 October 2011 wearing a spy camera and capturing all the people running to celebrate Korea's National Dokdo Day. This video is juxtaposed with an overlapping inner video frame of myself as "URKorean", a Korean tiger avatar, roaming around Dokdo in Second Life.

Many other layers of documenting Dokdo are shown as a way to reconstruct the idea of the islets, which is experienced through media and the imagination, as larger than life, yet paradoxically miniscule in actual scale. The sounds range from breathing during the demonstration run, water waves hitting the boat travelling to Dokdo, to downloadable K-pop music soundtrack *Daehanminguk*[10] as well as the famous song *Dokdo is Our Land*.[11]

I plan to work with the Imaging Research Center, at University of Maryland, in order to create a virtual and augmented reality art installation. This project would recreate the experience of Dokdo as "the global peace island", a space of unity between North and South Korea, a place of cooperation between Korea and Japan; it will also signify change in spaces of cultural divides. The immersive virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) environment will be a myriad of imaginative navigational paths with great plasticity, where audience can participate to reshape the space and experience of conflicted geopolitical space. With the collaboration of other experts in the fields of law and social science, we hope to create an artwork that can help influence policy and cultural diplomacy towards global peace.

In addition to being specific to Dokdo, the project has implications for understanding political and geopolitical conflicts more broadly. It makes clear how human beings latch onto specific events, places, people, or things and evolve them into symbols of division—engines of conflict that define identity and cultural difference. What are the goals (political, ideological, or otherwise) for nations and states in maintaining such conflicts? We see the binary power construct played out in US politics, struggles between Palestinians and Israelis, culturally divided East and West, as well as post-Cold War First and Third Nations positioning.

So this is where I am, making connections between North Korea and that dot on the map surfacing in global media due to nuclear threats and the Olympics. Although, the geopolitics surrounding that dot are decades old, yet it has come out as a new headline on East Asia in present times. The hype over Dokdo is about expanding territory, claiming ownership of property, nationalism, and imperialism. While Dokdo is merely a set of rocks, its rockiness is about the lack of grounded identity and its national fragility that echoes the fragility of East Asia. I am thinking of Benedict Anderson's way of considering how a nation is performative and how nationalism is created as an imagined community.[12] Alternately, we can use a semiotic read of space by thinking of Michel de Certeau's "Spatial Stories",[13] to help us think about the

(Both Images) *Travelling to Dokdo*, video stills, three-channel video installation. Image courtesy: Mina Cheon Studio.

relationship between his idea signified fixed points in theories of place and its relationship to how the experienced narrative can be re-scripted by newly experiencing site and space. Perhaps, we have the opportunity to script a new narrative of Dokdo as a future space for global peace and to face Dokdo's many colliding histories and agendas, especially through VR and AR technologies. This is where my project must head. As a physical, metaphysical, and virtual space, it can be a shared democratic and transformative space for co-national cooperation and conversations, in legal and artistic terms. I imagine a global peace island as a place where artistic creativity is the primordial concern, and where art making takes precedence over sports and military, and global collaborations are done with creative output for securing a future of peace.

See you in Dokdo.

Notes

1. A South Korean confectionary made with chocolate, marshmallow, and biscuit manufactured by the South Korean company Orion Corporation.
2. Mina Cheon aka Kim Il Soon, "Sweet Revolution: Choco•Pie Propaganda," in *Artist Organized Art*, 23 January 2014, accessed 18 March 2018, http://artistorganizedart.org/commons/2014/01/mina-cheon-dictation-kim-il-soon.html.
3. "South Korean K-pop stars perform for Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang," *The Guardian*, International Edition, Sunday, 1 April 2018, accessed 29 August 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/01/south-korean-k-pop-stars-perform-for-kim-jong-un-in-pyongyang.
4. Victor Turner, "Betwix and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 93–111.
5. *See*, http://talktomeinkorean.com/lessons/gye/.
6. "Profile: Dokdo/Takeshima islands," in BBC, 10 August 2012, accessed 18 March 2018, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-19207086.
7. Hyon-hee Shin, "Japan's 'incorporation' of Dokdo in 1905 was not just about Sea Lions," in *The Korea Herald*, 3 October 2012, accessed 18 March 2018, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20121003000255.
8. "The Commodification of Dokdo Island: Nationalism in the Marketplace," in *The Korea File*, episode 67, accessed 18 March 2018, https://www.spreaker.com/user/koreamoments/the-commodification-of-dokdo-island-nati.
9. Kim Ki-jong, a social activist, formed Uri Madang, a group focused on studying Korean folk culture to strengthen inter-Korean ties and understanding of Korean history, in the early 1980s. Source: https://www.nknews.org/2015/03/ambassadors-attacker-has-history-of-violent-protests/, accessed 29 August 2018.
10. The 2010 Korea World Cup song by K-pop singers and groups known as BEG, Rain, 4Minute and more.
11. Composed by Park Inho (aka Park Moon Young) in 1982 and sung by Jeong Kwang-Tae. To this day, this song remains synonymous with the national anthem.
12. Benedict Anderson, "The Origins of National Consciousness," in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 37–46.
13. Michel de Certeau, "Spatial Stories," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 115–130.

Anderson, Benedict. "The Origins of National Consciousness." In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, pp. 37–46. London and New York: Verso, 1991.
Cheon, Mina aka Kim Il Soon. "Sweet Revolution: Choco•Pie Propaganda." In *Artist Organized Art*, 23 January 2014. Accessed 18 March 2018, http://artistorganizedart.org/commons/2014/01/mina-cheon-dictation-kim-il-soon.html
De Certeau, Michel. "Spatial Stories." In *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall, pp. 115–130. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984.
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[Ir]relevance of *Kashikari*: Traditional Craft in Pakistan

Sadia Salim

View of three tombs displaying the finest *kashikari* work. From left to right: Baha al Halim, Bibi Jawindi, and Ustad Nuria from the 14th and 15th century, Uch Sharif. Image courtesy: Abdul Fateh Saif and Shahzaib Arif Shaikh.

(Page 161) Ruins of the interior chamber of Baha al Halim's tomb, 14th century, Uch Sharif. Image courtesy: Abdul Fateh Saif and Shahzaib Arif Shaikh.

The roots of the traditional crafts in present day Pakistan can be traced back to the materials and methods of production from the earliest known civilisations of the region. The archaeological finds of the Indus Valley Civilisation demonstrate a mastery of the craft in the production of faience beads, bronze figurines, stone sculptures, gold, and other metal ornaments and terracotta objects.[1] Over the centuries, the trade routes and conquests facilitated an exchange of objects, ideas, skills, technology, and methods of production, between local and foreign artisans. As a result, the crafts transformed or developed with time, assimilating several influences from crafts of other regions. Some crafts have survived over the centuries and continue to be produced in select centres where artisans persist with their family professions.[2]

This essay aims to examine the conflicting views on the importance and existence of traditional craft in contemporary times, studied through the craft of *kashikari*. In the context of this essay, the word *kashikari* refers to traditional Islamic architectural ceramics and vessel forms produced in Sindh and Southern Punjab regions. Currently the craft practice continues in Hala and Nasarpur in Sindh, and Multan in Punjab (historically Multan was part of Sindh).[3] It analyses literature in the field and takes into account the views of the practitioners, the *kashigars*,[4] specifically Ghulam Hyder Daudpota, who works towards contemporising *kashikari* with the knowledge of its history and understanding of its guiding philosophy. He has established his workshop in his native town Nasarpur, a historical centre of *kashikari* in Sindh. The essay concludes with the discussion of Bhong Masjid, a mosque situated in Bhong, a village in Punjab. The mosque project is an apt example to discuss in the context of this essay, as at the time it was conceived and subsequently constructed, two of its aims were to revive the traditional crafts and exemplify the Islamic architecture of the region. The project appears to have achieved some success in its former objective but negates the spiritual and philosophical ideas that promoted the development of *kashikari*, and the critical, intellectual, and theoretical discourse prevalent in contemporary architecture.

Islamic Art and Kashikari

The study and documentation of the traditional crafts of different regions of Pakistan reveals that most crafts are in a dismal state. Many artisans working in traditional methods have either passed on or have become too old to work, and their children have left the family profession, finding other occupations for their sustenance. One such craft is *kashikari*, a remnant of Islamic Art[5] in the region. *Kashikari* encompasses the materials, techniques, and processes used in the production of traditional Islamic architectural ceramics and vessel forms.

The following discussion points to several historical influences on the aesthetic and technological

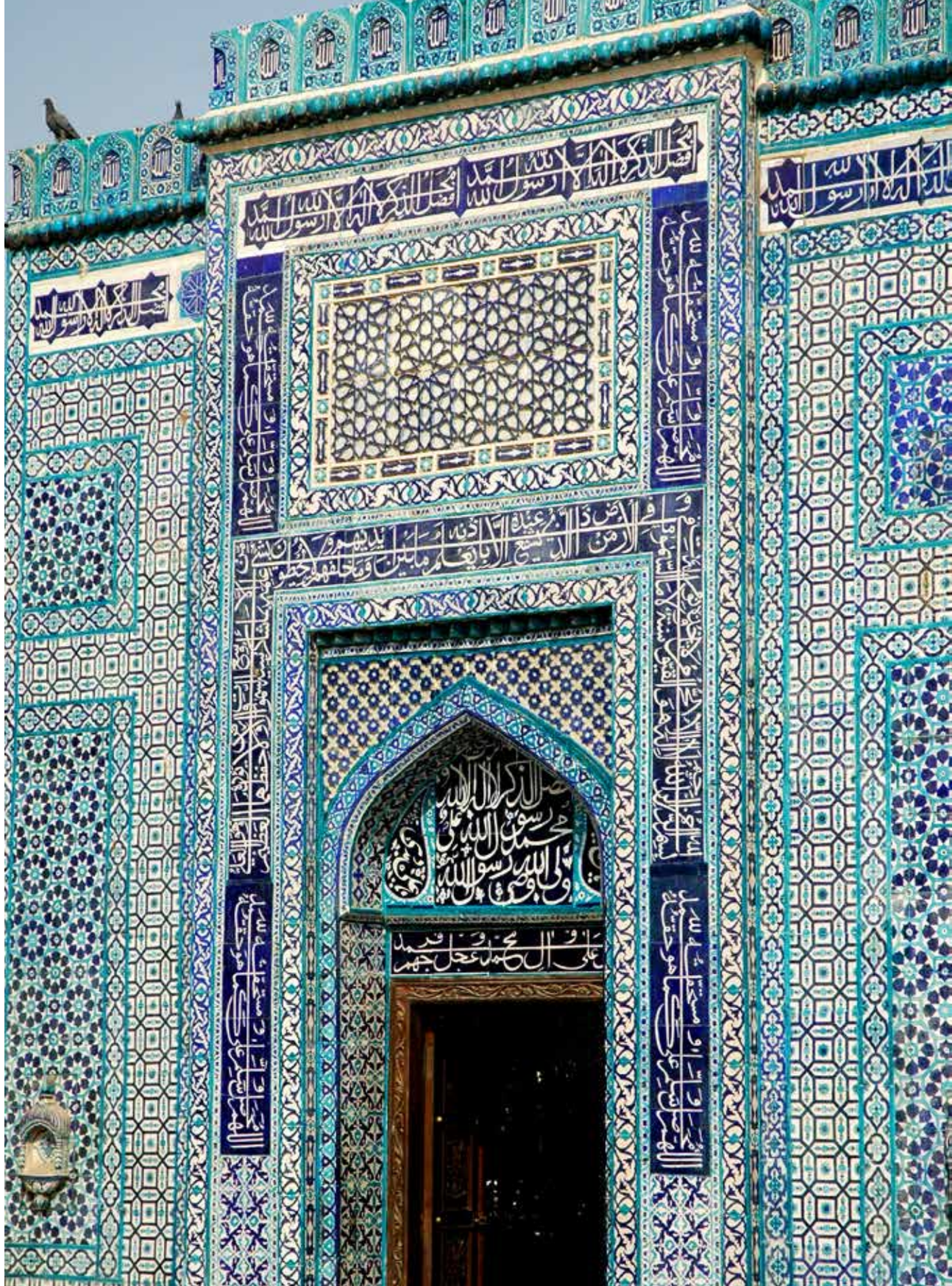
development of the craft of *kashikari* in the region, in addition to the overarching influence of the symbolism of Islamic geometric patterns. This has resulted in its uniqueness, as it varies from the craft produced in other regions of the Muslim world—from Turkey and Africa to Central Asia.

According to various records *kashikari* began in Kashan, Iran, in mid-10th century, and it was refined to an incredible perfection over time. Some speculate that the craft finds its roots in Kashgar,[6] China, and/or the word *kashikari* is derived from the Arabic word *kash*, meaning glass. During the Muslim rule in the Indian subcontinent, artisans from Persia travelled to the Sindh region and set-up their workshops here, while some might have stayed others moved back after transferring their skills and technology to the local artisans.[7] Moreover, some of the glazing techniques used in tile making in the present day Sindh region, evolved from craft practices of the Indus Valley Civilisation.[8] In Sindh, the ancestral craft has survived over the centuries as the knowledge is passed on from one generation to another within a family. However, in recent times, the number of workshops specialising in *kashikari* has declined and so has the quality of the craft.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, renowned scholar of Islamic Studies, speaks about the origin of Islamic Art neither being in the Divine Law, nor in juridical sciences and theology. It is not based on individual inspiration and creativity, is not concerned with outward appearance of things, and does not imitate outward forms of nature. Islamic Art reflects the inner quality of the outward existence of things; it is to the inner dimension of Islam—the *batin*—that one must seek the origin of Islamic arts and not in the outward/apparent—the *zahir*.[9] Nasr connects Islamic arts with the search for the truth, *Hikmah* (wisdom), and Sufism (the spiritual dimension of Islam).

The sacred architecture of the Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, mosques and mausoleum of saints, are covered with Islamic geometric patterns. The patterns, also used in *kashikari*, developed from the key elements of classical traditions of Greeks, Romans, and Sasanians in Iran.[10] They were appropriated, elaborated upon, and perfected to create the Islamic geometric patterns that stressed the importance of unity and order.[11] According to Nasr these patterns, "are a result of visions of an archetypal world by seers and contemplatives who then taught craftsmen to draw them upon tiles and alabaster".[12] On the surface, they represent the inner structure of corporeal existence and the configurations of animate and inanimate objects, but more importantly, they unravel the structure of cosmos and draw attention to the Centre, which is everywhere and nowhere.[13]

The geometric patterns, including mosaic and arabesque[14] produced in *kashikari*, adorn an architectural structure in a repetitive manner creating intricate surface decoration. According to Ghulam Hyder Daudpota,[15] a practicing *kashigar*, this repetitiveness is a reflection of cosmological principles and it is meditative like the *zikr* of God. The underlying grid of these



patterns is reflective of the unity and order that we find in nature, of how things move systematically; any disturbance in the order results in catastrophe. Outwardly, these patterns represent the beauty of paradise. Imran Ali Daudpota,[16] who is also a practicing *kashigar*, says that the connection of the makers, and generally Muslims, to *kashikari* is *rohani* (spiritual). It is important to note that Imran Ali has not received formal education in his field of work and is not able to articulate the knowledge of his craft as well as Ghulam Hyder, however he knows that the craft, which adorns mosques and shrines in the region, is a spiritual reflection of Islam and not strictly religious.

When one visits historical sites in Sindh and Punjab, the use of Islamic geometric patterns is visible in the craft of *kashikari*, more than the crafts of fresco, stone carving, and woodwork.[17] Ghulam Hyder adds that *kashikari* was used extensively to adorn buildings in the Muslim world, as it was the most durable and technologically advanced material at that time.[18] The material's durability can be seen from the survival of centuries old buildings and their adornment. The medium was further favoured in this region as all raw materials, such as terracotta clay, and

View of the exterior central panel of Bibi Jawindi's tomb, built in 1494 CE, Uch Sharif. Image courtesy: Abdul Fateh Saif and Shahzaib Arif Shaikh

(Page 165) Central panel of the tomb of Sheikh Mohammad Yusuf Gardezi with painted and glazed tiles, calligraphy, latticework, mosaic tiles, and parapet, built in 1152 CE, Multan (restored). Image courtesy: Abdul Fateh Saif and Shahzaib Arif Shaikh.

metallic oxides and pigments used for making coloured glazes, were either available locally or were produced by the artisans.[19]

Ghulam Hyder firmly believes in the preservation of age-old methods of production, as it is a means to conserve built heritage. He elaborates that the documentation of the guiding principles, designs, materials, techniques, and processes, facilitate production of traditional craft as and when needed. The understanding of the philosophy that motivated the development of the craft, keeps one connected to the history. On the other hand, he realises that due to the technological advancements, subsequent changes in built environments, and lifestyles, the times have changed and the understanding of this craft in its essence is limited. He admits that the sustainability and quality of a craft is possible only when people are interested in its continuity, or it risks extinction. Nasr states, "[...] whenever and wherever Islamic art has experienced a peak of its creativity and perfection there has been present the powerful, living intellectual—which also means spiritual—current of the Islamic tradition".[20]

Ghulam Hyder has set up a workshop in his native town Nasarpur, a historical centre of *kashikari* in Sindh, and works towards revitalisation of the craft. He has faced numerous challenges in establishing the workshop but believes in research and experimentation to develop his work. His family background, education, and professionalism are major factors in sustainability of his workshop. Since his uncle was a *kashigar*, Hyder learnt the traditional craft from him and now works with his relatives who are also well trained, establishing a trusted network of workers. Additionally, his education at the Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London adds depth to his practice, apart from providing numerous opportunities in teaching, connecting with professionals from the field, and securing projects. In Hyder's workshop, both traditional and non-traditional making methods are employed and both types of work are produced, based on a project's demand. He understands that if wood is not available for firings and it is not an environmentally suitable fuel, then he should move away from traditional firing methods and look for alternate fuels for firing. He often experiments with new materials, methods, styles, and aesthetics that may be based on the traditional craft but are quite a departure from the traditional *kashikari* of the region. Being an optimist, he feels that there is an interest and revival in traditional designs as seen in textiles and fashion. It is an interesting time when things can improve if one makes an informed effort. Therefore, it is imperative that artisans find ways to make their work relevant in the current times and keep on improving it and maintaining its quality.[21]

Detour—Lateral Thinking in Art, Craft, and Technology

Extending the above discussion, this section draws from other prominent thoughts on art,

A *kashigar* painting oxides over white slip, in Ghulam Hyder's workshop, Nasarpur, Sindh. Photograph by Sadia Salim.

(Pages 170-171) Exterior of the Bhong Masjid displaying various types of traditional and industrial ceramic tiles, ceramic minarets, cement and marble tiles, and architectural pieces. Image courtesy: Mohammad Ali/White Star.

architecture, craft, and technology. Walter Benjamin delved into the notion of the lack of aura, or if one may broaden it to the lack of spirituality, in mechanised methods of (mass) production of art.[22] As a positive consequence, the mechanical reproduction reaches the masses more easily and adds a political dimension to liberation from aura, i.e. democratisation. At the same time, a copy or a reproduction raises the issues of authenticity.[23] Benjamin's ideas, of technological advancement, mass reproducibility, lack of aura, democratisation, and issues of authenticity, make an interesting reading in the context of the proceeding discussion.

In every era humans endeavour to move forward, building on the knowledge of their ancestors. During Industrialisation societies advanced from the perfection of the handmade to mechanisation. In some cases, traditional crafts were also mechanised to further flawlessness and mass production. Sometimes people also take a step back to appreciate what may have been overlooked in human progression as observed in Wabi-Sabi,[24] the Japanese aesthetic of finding beauty in imperfection. Wabi-Sabi developed in the 16th century when Sen no Rikyū elevated ordinary craft objects to the same level as the imported (Chinese) luxury objects.[25] Much later (and perhaps indirectly), it also led to Yanagi Sōetsu's Mingei[26] movement that primarily focussed on the appreciation and preservation of the handmade by the unknown craftsman. The survival of Japanese traditional crafts today is the result of the Japanese philosophers' vision (from Sen no Rikyū, who was informed by Taoism and Zen Buddhism, and Yanagi Sōetsu influenced by Korean pottery). This vision shared by the society, enabled crafts to remain part of the everyday existence of the Japanese people. Both Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Ghulam Hyder concur with this idea that development of arts is dependent on the seers and when their vision is shared by the people, architecture, art and craft survive and prosper as part of the living traditions.

The idea of authenticity is explored by Ayad Rahmani, architect, scholar of urban development and associate professor at Washington State University, with reference to the current building trends in the Muslim world. Architecture plays an important role here due to the forthcoming discussion in the essay about the Bhong Masjid, and dependence and existence of *kashikari* and many other architectural crafts on architectural structures. Rahmani compares Dubai and its development as a mega metropolis to Las Vegas and Disneyland. In essence, this kind of architecture is inauthentic with no point of origin, creating a sense of placelessness.[27] In the Muslim world, the aimless aping of the West, and a disregard of local contexts, histories, cultures, materials, and environments (aided by technology), is in complete contrast to earlier Islamic architecture that considered these elements in buildings and urban planning. The current trends in architecture in the Muslim world, such as Dubai, do not follow any particular school of thought and due to excessive use of technology, negate the local contexts.

Mohammed Arkoun, an influential and secular scholar of Islamic Studies, discusses the historical

rupture in the Muslim world and calls for intellectual and scientific enquiry in academia to understand its consequences. In the absence of critical approaches towards tradition and religion, the rupture is translated in a discontinuous built environment, where on one hand we see rich modern building styles and on the other, deteriorating ancient architecture and haphazard development. According to Arkoun, "These show clearly a dislocated society, a dependent economy, and a disintegrated culture".[28]

The Conflict

Individuals and experts in the field often contend that the traditional craft practices should not go extinct and must be preserved in their authentic state as these crafts reflect our identity. With reference to *kashikari*, it is a means to preserve an important part of our built heritage, our shared history within and outside the region and our identity as distinct from others. Some argue that a craft, which came into being as a result of the scientific, social, religious and/or aesthetic necessities of a certain time in history, may not be relevant in contemporary times, and need not be preserved in its authentic form. Additionally, if there is no market demand for the traditional crafts, the artisans must find other ways of making a living.

Extending this discussion beyond *kashikari* to traditional crafts of the country—partly inspired by Islamic arts—the questions that arise are: Should one move along with a globalised world and popular and populist demands and slowly let traditional crafts fade away? Should one strive to keep a connection with the history and identity and try to preserve the crafts? Can history and identity be static or are they constantly in flux? Should traditional art and craft keep abreast with the present times or is the current state of crafts reflective and representative of our times?

The above questions motivate us to examine the modes and methods in which the traditional forms of craft survive in Pakistan. It seems befitting to answer the questions and conclude the essay through the discussion of a mosque in a village in Pakistan. In Bhong, a village situated near the town of Sadiqabad in district Rahimyar Khan, Rais Ghazi Mohammed, a wealthy landlord of Bhong, decided to construct a mosque—a house of God that would be a sight to behold. From its conception in 1930, construction and expansion continued for more than 50 years till Mohammed died in 1982.[29] According to its successive patron, Sardar Rais Shabbir Ahmed, son of Rais Ghazi Mohammed, the objectives of the built complex were to provide a congregational mosque for the villagers and a place for learning for the students from the region. In addition, Rais Ghazi Mohammed wanted the crafts to flourish therefore workshops were set up for training artisans of the country. It is said that two generations of artisans were trained here and that there were over 200 skilled artisans working for the project at one time.

Exterior of Bhong Masjid decorated with industrial tiles, painted designs and kashikari, Bhong. Image courtesy: Tanzeel Uz Zaman Babar (This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license).

This section of the mosque shows a complete departure from the traditional style of mosque architecture and ornamentation. Image courtesy: Time Blight, http://urbanduniya.com

Interior of the Bhong Masjid decorated with *naqqashi*-fresco, mirror, and marble work, with crystal chandeliers and stain glass, Bhong. Image courtesy: Tim Blight, http://urbanduniya.com

Sardar Rais Shabbir Ahmed goes on to compare the mosque to the buildings sponsored by great patrons of Islamic architecture.[30] Set against humble mud and brick houses, the Bhong Masjid is (an apt example of) a masterpiece of contemporary art. At the outset, the project was meant to project grandiosity; it encapsulates the pulse of the people of this country in the most extravagant way.

Kashikari has been used extensively in the ornamentation of the Bhong Masjid, along with other traditional crafts including stucco, gilt, woodwork, stone carving, *naqashi*-fresco, mirror work, and glasswork. Alongside, and mostly on the exterior, modern building materials such as imported industrial tiles, terrazzo, wrought iron, cement tiles and artificial stone, have also been used. The mosque incorporates stylistic influences from Islamic architecture of Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Spain, and Western colonial building styles of 1940s. The project won The Aga Khan Award for Architecture[31] in 1986 on the basis that it "enshrines and epitomises the popular taste in Pakistan with all its vigour, pride, tension and sentiment", and that an individual took it upon himself to bring attention to the traditional crafts and build infrastructure in the village for the sustenance of its people.[32]

Despite the award, it is not an example of erudite architecture. Due to its numerous influences, it has no singular point of origin. The influences are not imaginatively employed but are whimsical and fanciful internal visions of Rais Ghazi Mohammed, its architect and patron. The award description further states, "They [the borrowing of stylistic elements] are the product of boisterous gusto reminiscent of the vitality and vulgar insouciance of the self-confident millionaires of nineteenth century America".[33] The mosque does not adhere to Islamic principles of sacred architecture. Outwardly it may represent the beauty of paradise or perhaps the Creator too (albeit subjectively), but in principle it does not reflect Islamic spirituality, the structure of the cosmos, the *batin* and the unseen heavens. It relies on mimesis and projects an outward appearance of splendour through an amalgamation of multiple styles, crafts, and materials. It is a modern-day spectacle that disregards the essence of the Islamic tradition (of spirituality, unity, and order) and yet a monumental effort to revive and preserve the traditional crafts. It is a democratised representation of the people of this country and our contemporary times—a result of certain disconnect with history and therefore its fragmented interpretation. The traditional crafts thrive in Bhong Masjid's uninformed architecture and serve a decorative purpose—an outward beauty of things.

For a number of influential scholars of Islamic arts, including Nasr and Arkoun, the Bhong Masjid may represent a desacralisation of the Islamic arts, a rupture in tradition and a chaotic disposition. However, Arkoun, also considers a strict adherence to tradition as suppression of creativity and advocates critical approaches to spirituality in the face of globalisation. The members of The Aga Khan Award for Architecture jury recognise that the mosque's architecture may not be authentic, but also see the creativity and originality of artisans in bringing together disparate styles, materials, and techniques. In the process, new meanings may have evolved from new contexts and juxtapositions.[34] As discussed earlier in the essay, the art and craft of the Muslim world appropriated from the knowledge of those who came before them, thereby assimilating multitude of influences and evolving with time. This was also observed in Ghulam Hyder's work and his methods of production in his workshop in Nasarpur. If human history were linear, Islamic Art could have creatively developed to further perfection, complexity, and universality by Muslims. Perhaps it was developed in places outside of the Muslim world and in other forms that we have failed to recognise. And as for spirituality, access to the Centre and nearness to the Creator, we already know that one can find it anywhere, everywhere, and nowhere.

Notes

1. Michael Jansen, Maire Mulloy, Günter Urban, eds., *Forgotten Cities on the Indus: Early Civilization in Pakistan from the 8th to the 2nd Millennium BC* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1991).
2. All crafts do not survive in their entirety but either retain certain stylistic elements, or continue use of similar materials and methods of production.
3. It is quite likely that it is produced in some other cities or towns, too.
4. *Kashigars*, descendants of traditional *Kashigar* families, are the makers of glazed tiles and panels, intricate cut mosaics, architectural pieces, and vessel forms. Traditionally *kashigars* were always men, as the craft was not taught to the women in the family. Nowadays, one who practices the craft regardless of the family background is called a *kashigar* or *kashikar*.
5. The term "Islamic Art" is highly contested and considered a product of the Western thought to represent the significant *other*. It has been challenged by a number of scholars due to the vastness of what it intends to represent, such as the geographical areas, periods, and styles (especially those informed by local traditions). The scope of this essay does not permit discussion on the topic, but touches upon it in the concluding section. In the context of this essay, the term Islamic Art (and/or) Architecture refers to arts that were shaped by the spiritual understanding of Islam.
6. Kashgar is one of the westernmost cities of China located near the border with Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan. One can see examples of *kashikari* (or its variants) in all of these cities and countries.
7. It is interesting to note that the potters producing terracotta pots in Karachi *Kumbharwara* have recently upgraded their kilns. According to them, they were designed and constructed with the help of visiting Iranian potters. Sadia Salim, "Survival and Revival: Clay Traditions in the Sindh region," *Craft Research* 7, no. 2 (Intellect, 2016): 207–230 (24).
8. Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, "Craft Traditions of the Indus Civilization and their Legacy in Modern Pakistan", *Lahore Museum Bulletin* 9, no. 2 (July–December 1996): 1–8.
9. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (New York: SUNY Press, 1987), p. 6.
10. Department of Islamic Art, "Geometric Patterns in Islamic Art", *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/geom/hd_geom.htm (October 2001).
11. Abdul Hamid Akhund and Nasreen Askari, *Tale of the Tile: The Ceramic Traditions of Pakistan* (Karachi: Mohatta Palace Museum, 2011).
12. Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, p. 49.
13. Ibid.

14. The link between Islamic geometric patterns and arabesque is considered debatable. For this essay, geometric patterns in ceramics include arabesque and mosaics. In addition to geometric patterns, *kashikari* on sacred buildings also includes Islamic calligraphy.
15. Ghulam Hyder Daudpota is not a direct inheritor of the craft of *kashikari*, as it was practiced on the maternal side of his family. In traditional setting, the craft is passed on from father to son and not to daughters, as they may reveal the secrets of the craft to their family through marriage. Daudpota learnt the craft due to the proximity within his family from his maternal uncle and through his studies at Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London. Currently he works with his family members, some of whom have also studied the craft and/or are part of the *kashigar gharana* (family).
16. Imran Ali Daudpota works with Ghulam Hyder Daudpota in Nasarpur.
17. Ghulam Hyder Daudpota, interview, 17 February 2018, at VM Centre for Traditional Arts, Rangoonwala Community Centre, Karachi.
18. Ghulam Hyder is referring to the time beginning in mid-10th century and the following centuries when the craft was technologically improved.
19. Sadia Salim, Field notes, Hala (Sindh), 20 December 1993, "Kumbhars of Sindh", unpublished dissertation (Karachi: Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, 1994).
20. Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, p. 9.
21. Ghulam Hyder Daudpota, interview.
22. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (New York: Sage, in association with The Open University, 1982), pp. 217–227.
23. Ibid.
24. The initial inspiration for Wabi-Sabi's metaphysical, spiritual, and moral principles came from ideas about simplicity, naturalness, and acceptance of reality found in Taoism and Chinese Zen Buddhism. Leonard Koren, *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1994), p. 25.
25. Leonard Koren, *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers*, p. 25.
26. The Mingei movement began in 1920s, influenced by Korean pottery, and formally declared by Yanagi Soetsu in 1926. The term Mingei was coined by Yanagi and potters Hamada Shoji (1894–1978) and Kawai Kanjiro (1890–1966).
27. Ayad Rahmani, "Catching up with *The Kite Runner:* Architectural Authenticity in a World Overrun by Globalization," in *Heritage and Sustainability in the Islamic Built Environment*, ed. Bashir A. Kazimee (Southampton, Boston: WIT Press, 2012), pp. 173–186.
28. Mohammed Arkoun, "Islamic Culture, Modernity, Architecture," in *Architectural Education in the Islamic World*, ed. Ahmet Evin (Singapore: Concept Media/Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1986), pp. 15–21.
29. The complex expanded over the years to house the main mosque, a small mosque used as female prayer hall and library, madrassa, dormitories for students and visitors, and gardens. Apart from this complex, Rais Ghazi Mohammed also built a palace for himself, and roads and infrastructure for the village including irrigation and water system, and a market. He is also known to have built the shrine next to the shrine of Shah Rukn-e-Alam in Multan, and smaller shrines near the city of Sadiqabad.
30. "Bhong Mosque," in *Space for Freedom: The Search for Architectural Excellence in Muslim Societies*, ed. Ismail Serageldin (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1989), pp. 144–154.
31. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture is given every three years to projects that set new standards of excellence in architecture, planning practices, historic preservation, and landscape architecture.
32. "Bhong Mosque," in *Space for Freedom*.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.

Zarmeene Shah is an academic, independent curator, and writer currently based in Karachi, Pakistan. One of the first qualified curators in the country with an MA in Critical & Curatorial Studies from Columbia University, she has curated and been involved in the production of several notable and often large-scale exhibitions, both institutionally and independently. She is currently Associate Professor and Head of the Liberal Arts program at the Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture in Karachi, and was Curator-at-Large of the inaugural Karachi Biennale 2017.

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