

## Editorial

For its third issue, *Hybrid* explored concrete as a theme. We considered concrete in its various manifestations and meanings; as aligned with articulations, processes, desires of world-making, and modernity; as mechanism for the decimation of natural worlds and orders; as remnants and ruins that saturate cities in/of the Global South; as forms and images central to historical and contemporary spatial imaginations; as material, as a word, and as a way of thinking.

We were interested in exploring the place and use of concrete in architecture, and in investigating practices that have opened up new understandings of concrete as material, method, and metaphor. Tropical Modernism is one such example, where the inherent conflict that comes with using concrete is negated—although not entirely—with situating its materiality as *not* in direct opposition to nature; where the distinction between inside and outside becomes *less* concrete; where its raw surfaces age with every season, taking on different hues; where edges of built spaces become a little difficult to perform. Our interest for this issue was to also explore, and pose questions pertaining to, the use of concrete in contemporary art. How are artists calling upon concrete as a material to make visible their ideas?

The use of concrete, in modernity, engages with progress and development, but what do we make of its failure in collapsed projects? When monuments constructed with concrete fall, signalling collapse of power of totalitarian regimes, they bring forth counter-visualities; how are we to think of them? With the inevitable climate change, the rise in global temperatures, the desire to make world-class cities, how do we think about its use? The change in its materiality from beginning to end—transition from viscous to solid—also opens up room for metaphors. What is the relationship of gendered/racialised bodies to concrete as built form? What are some of the ways in which concrete participates in the partitioning and gendering of space? Further, how do we understand concrete without engaging with its relationship to the abstract? By not thinking of either as situated in isolation but concepts that work in tandem through a series of determinations—our understanding of the concrete is thus fluid, exploratory, situated as a point of departure, hence not the place where we end, negating its neutrality/*factum*.

In the age of "alternative facts", what does it then mean to desire the concrete? Is concrete evidence?

Our constellation of contributors made us privy to scenarios, notions, and ideas that were not

yet a part of our imaginaries, or that which were beyond our limits of thinking when we first conceptualised the framework.

Laurent Gayer, using Sohail Zuberi's work, situates us amidst the changing peripheries of Karachi's coastline, making visible "capital and coercion" colluding to accommodate more concrete, which accounts for, supports, and strengthens "death worlds"—of agricultural land, of ecological devastation of the ocean, of solidarities across class. Rahma Muhammad Mian and Zahra Malkani's conversation, pieced into four parts over email, takes us to the heart of neo-colonial universities whose *raison d'être* is that of masking putrefaction behind, under, and between their towering "walls" to preserve the facade of offering a world-class liberal education. These very walls, walls built with and on the promise of educating and nurturing all bodies, "crush" and are "crushing", repress and are repressing, silence and are silencing historically othered bodies. Seher Shah and Randhir Singh in the photo essay evoke a dialogue between "architectural scale and materiality", communicating in and with "architectural fragments" the fragmented experience of the landscape itself. Their work challenges the concreteness of architectural presence by showing us that which comes before: plans, elevations, blueprints—operating between what is intended and what actually is, between intention/intension and presence. By calling upon scale and monumentality, Ledelle Moe's work in the portfolio section delves into notions of belonging, of identity, and of being simultaneously from a place and placelessness. Concrete in her works is a repository of gestures and mediations: of welding, casting, modelling, and carving. Each piece serves as a holder of excavated sand from specific locales that render it as a marker of a place; not in its permanence or adherence to that place as it remains mobile and transportable by the nature of its construction, but to be *of* and *from* that place in memory, cured in/with time. Himali Singh Soin, in the craft section, refuses to distinguish "between the truth and the trace", which I interpret as a refusal to distinguish between concrete and not-concrete, between concrete and abstract, between what remains and what disappears in erasure poetry. Erasure as a beginning, a "renewal", a kind of "healing", a tool for inflection, a mechanism through which time becomes fluid and gets us to think of "freedom", of not necessarily existing *outside* of the "restrictions" that language imposes on us, but by claiming, re-authoring, with elisions and in fragments, making enough room *in* the process, to inhabit it differently from within.

As I draw this editorial to a close, I go back to the very beginning of my connection with *Hybrid* and the reason why I am a part of it: Saira Sheikh. Thank you for thinking of me as worthy of sitting in for you *here*—and that is all I have done, and will continue to do, till you take it back from me. I write and make every so often, but never without you and Madiha Aijaz. This is for both of you. Our three-person team, the Editorial Board of *Hybrid*, found kinship and alliance, intellectual and otherwise, in Dr. Asma Abbas, our Dean of Academics, and I thank her for her time and genuine interest in our work. I thank Samina Khan, our Executive Director,

for her continued support toward the *Hybrid* team. Our words, punctuation, and grammar found clarity and an ally in Sunara Nizami, and I want to thank her for her time, labour, and diligent copyediting skills. I will end this by thanking and staying with friends who have kept me afloat this past year, and played a major part in this publication, but their varied and many contributions remain somewhat obscured, if not entirely invisible: Shahana Rajani for always being there, reading, reviewing, editing, and listening as I worked on this; Shayan Rajani for recommending that we request Rahma Muhammad Mian and Zahra Malkani to contribute to the conversation section; Asma Mundrawala and Durreshahwar Alvi, members of the Editorial Board of *Hybrid*, for making intellectual space for me for the past three years—when academia became excruciatingly frustrating at times, it is with them that I had moments of immense intellectual growth; and Kiran Ahmad for being an excellent designer, for keeping up with our design-related requests, and holding *Hybrid* together, quite literally.

Omer Wasim  
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