

COMO

Museum of Art

Grosvenor
Gallery



LAHORE
BIENNALE
FOUNDATION

ISLAM and MODERNISM by RASHEED ARAEEN

COMO MUSEUM LAHORE
19th March 2022 – 20th July 2022

PRESS RELEASE

We are pleased to announce the exhibition of new works by Rasheed Araeen and some historical works plotting his move from figuration to abstraction at the Como Museum in Lahore, Pakistan.

The paintings exhibited in Lahore are part of a new body of works in which the artist has merged two artistic trajectories: a new engagement with geometry as an 'Islamic' as well as a universal form, and his longstanding affiliation with minimalism.

The show will coincide with Lahore Literary Festival at which Rasheed Araeen's new book *Islam and Modernism* will be launched.

Since the 1960s, Araeen (b.1935) has resisted the association of Islamic themes or calligraphy with his minimalist sculptures, however recently his interest in classical Islamic philosophical, intellectual, and scientific developments has brought him to the conclusion that in today's society, an understanding of Islam's golden age of enlightenment is crucial to finding ways towards resolution of issues and advancement within Muslim cultures. In this sense, Araeen's engagement with geometry is not based on fidelity to motifs in Islamic art, but is conceptual and philosophical.

"This work comprises a series of paintings using the names of great thinkers of the golden age of Arab/Muslim civilisation (800-1200 A.D.). In the beginning their Arabic names are somewhat visible, which gives the impression of calligraphy. But as the painting proceeds by actually painting the names, not writing them as is the case in most calligraphic works, they become somewhat abstract. The whole process from the visibility of names to their somewhat disappearance as work continues towards abstraction, involves a process which eliminates calligraphy and by this it becomes modern." Rasheed Araeen, quoted in the catalogue for the exhibition *Homecoming*, Karachi, December 2014.

Born and educated in Pakistan, Araeen trained as an engineer before moving to Europe in the 1960s. He became one of the pioneers of minimalist sculpture in Britain and is a major figure in the landscape of international and South Asian contemporary art. His early work received no institutional recognition for his contribution to the

modernist discourse in the UK and was side-lined as a non-European whose work was consistently evaluated within the context of post-colonial structures.

As a result of this, in the 1970s and 1980s his work, in performance, photography, painting and sculpture, began to develop an overtly political content which drew attention to the way in which black artists were invisible within the dominant Eurocentric culture.

Through his activities as a publisher, writer, and artist he is one of the pivotal figures in establishing a black voice in the British arts. Published by Araeen; 'Black Phoenix', 'The Third Text' and 'Third Text Asia' were ground breaking journals which brought serious study and discussion to a whole range of practices by artists of the 20th century.

In 1989 Araeen curated 'The Other Story, Afro-Asian artists in post-war Britain' at London's South Bank Centre. This was a watershed moment in 20th century artistic history, as it was the first major retrospective of work by Asian and African artists in Britain, all of whom had contributed greatly to the artistic scene since the 1950s, without ever being formerly accepted as part of the establishment. The exhibition is considered to be hugely important to the development of post-war British art.

In Lahore there will be Rasheed's First sculpture, Sculpture number One as well as new iteration of Zero to Infinity and a new site-specific sculpture Lahore Tower 2022.

To celebrate Rasheed Araeen's first exhibition in Lahore, the artist and COMO Museum, in collaboration with the Lahore Biennale Foundation, will be donating a site specific sculpture (*Shan-e-Lahore The Spirit of Lahore*) to the city of Lahore.

He is well represented in public and private collections around the world, including recent acquisitions by Tate Gallery, London, MOMA, New York, Guggenheim, New York, Pompidou, Paris and many more.

COMO (contemporary/modern) Museum of Art is Pakistan's first private museum dedicated to the preservation and promotion of contemporary and modern art. Launched in 2019 it has an exhibition programme, recent shows included works by Rashid Rana, Salman Toor and Hamra Abbas.

Como Museum of Art, 112-D Block, 1 Ghalib Rd, Block E1, Gulberg III, Lahore

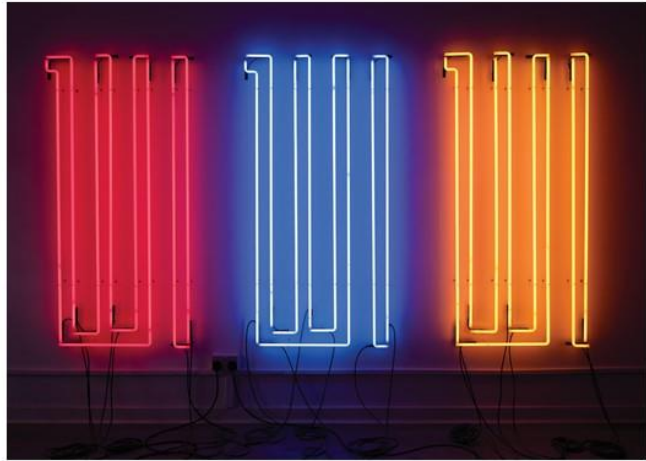
<https://comomuseum.com/>

The Lahore Literary Festival (LLF) was founded in 2012 by Razi Ahmed. It is the city's premier free-to-public cultural event which explores the dialogue and interface between literature and the arts that shape our cultural, social, economic, and political frameworks. The Festival aims to bring together, discuss, and celebrate the diverse and pluralistic literary traditions of Lahore—a city of the arts, activism, and big ideas.

<https://lahorelitfest.com/>

The Lahore Biennale Foundation (LBF) is a non-profit organisation that seeks to provide critical sites for experimentation in visual expression and experience, hoping to challenge and expand the scope of both. The LBF endeavours to actively support art related projects across Pakistan, and also hosts the Lahore Biennale every two years. The Foundation has been organising non-ticketed, non-commercial, free and open to the public programs. These public programs, both local and international, include a Research Unit, artist residencies, workshops, artSpeak talks, community meetings, an Academic Forum, Film forum, Youth forum, music programs and Afforestation Lahore.

<https://www.lahorebiennale.org/>



Clockwise from top left:

Almost Abstract no 7, 1962; *Al Nour, (The Light)*, 2021; *Al-Izmut, (Blue)*, 2022, *Noori*, 2020

Click the images above for a dropbox link to high-resolution images.

FOR ALL PRESS INQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:

art@grosvenorgallery +442074847979

info@comomuseum.com

A special thanks to Raza Ali Dada and Nayyar Ali Dada of eminent architectural firm Nayyar Ali Dada & Associates for advising on production design for this exhibition. Nayyar Ali Dada & Associates is an internationally acclaimed architectural practice established in 1976. Throughout its working history, the firm has served notable clients and produced a wide of portfolio that spans across from the private to the public sector.

