

ARA EEN

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NEW SCULPTURES BY RASHEED ARAEEN

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**Grosvenor
Gallery**

ART DUBAI


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Rasheed Araeen (b.1935) is a pioneer of minimalism and a colossal figure in South Asian and Western art. His publications 'Third Text' and 'Black Phoenix' are seminal, as was 'The Other Story', an exhibition organised by Araeen at London's Hayward Gallery in 1989. A champion of black artists in Britain from the 1960s onwards, his influence and importance within the landscape of 20th century art cannot be overstated.

Influenced by his education as a civil engineer, Rasheed Araeen's abstract sculptures, photographs and paintings feature geometric structures, grids and diagonals. His works explore the concepts of identity and stereotyping of non-Western artists by incorporating religious and cultural symbols from Pakistan, challenging the established Western view of art history.

Araeen's work is currently part of a major touring retrospective. The final leg opens at GARAGE Centre for Contemporary Art, Moscow in early March 2019. The exhibition has previously been displayed at The Van Abbe, Eindhoven, MAMCO, Geneva and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.

Whilst most are aware of Araeen's bold use of colour throughout his career, his affinity with black and a monochromatic colour scheme goes back to the early 1960s. His series 'Hyderabad' and 'Before the Departure' featured sets of black canvases and drawings, where the features of the crowded city peer through the murk.

opposite
Rasheed Araeen Retrospective,
Van Abbe Museum,
Eindhoven



*Black Painting No.6
(Before the Departure),
1963*



Tableau Noir, 1987



Aflatoon, (So you think you are Plato), 1991

The 1980s saw the colour take on a new, political meaning in his multi panel installation ‘*Tableau Noir, 1987*’. This work was inspired by violent clashes in London, the black panels referencing police uniforms and the brutality faced by protestors and activists. “*Black people are often subjected to police violence in Britain. In this work, the four panels show an image of police, which is from the photos of police I took when they guarded the meeting of Britain’s extreme right-wing party, the National Front. Surrounded by the image of the police, the central panel of the work comprises the semi-nude image of what looks like an Asian woman, painted on one of the walls of the Bangladeshi restaurant Clifton in Brick Lane. In the 1970s, when South Asian people were being attacked by skinheads – gangs of racist white juveniles – police gave little protection to the victims.*”

In the mid-1990s Rasheed produced the monochrome sculptural installations; ‘*Once Upon a Time, 1994*’, and ‘*Aflatoon (So You Think You Are Plato), 1991*’. These pieces referenced Eastern culture, as well as the experiences of black people in the UK;

“*Fear of, and anxieties about, a mythicized black male sexuality are but the projection onto the body of the colonised, or formerly colonised, of the colonisers’ own fantasies and practices. ‘Once Upon a Time’ addresses this issue. On a free-standing structure of black and white painted cubes and sheets of glass stands a vase from Islamic culture in which are placed peacock feathers, according to Araeen a symbol of dominant male sexuality, as well as ‘decorative’ and ‘exoticist’ symbol of ‘Orient’. This work more particularly refers to the Peacock Throne of the Pahlavi dynasty. The black and glass elements are abstract symbols for oil.*

“*Araeen argues that his structures reference not only engineering, but also to the forms of early twentieth-century European modernism, to the works of the Russian Constructivists and the De Stijl artists and designers, and to the utopian ideologies which underlie these works. One, entirely abstract work... Aflatoon, So you Think you are Plato refers to this and to the links between Eastern and Western thought. Aflatoon being the Arabic, Persian and Urdu name for the Greek philosopher Plato.*”



Once Upon a Time, 1994

The three monochrome works in the Dubai exhibition draw influence from Malevich's black square. Malevich's work, described by Iwona Blazwick; *'(Black Square) could be read as an end point – of representation and of art itself. But in fact, this simple form was to be an unimaginably protean beginning, creating a paradigm that continues to resonate with artists around the world. Progenitor of geometric abstraction, its legacy is aesthetic and political, giving form to the utopian aspirations of modernism.'*

In Rasheed's recent work is also a new engagement with geometry as an 'Islamic' as well as universal form, as well as his longstanding affiliation with minimalism:

"I first began exploring the aesthetic transformation of the lattice structure in my minimalist work of the 1960s. Although my work involving geometry emerged from the engagement with the geometric abstraction of the twentieth century modernist art, its historical roots also lie in the geometry of Islamic art. This was formulated as early as the eighth century AD and expressed Islam's own unique worldview involving the whole cosmos. ... Cubism, the most important pioneering movement of the twentieth century, led to geometric abstraction, whose ultimate manifestation occurred in minimalism. The geometric abstraction of my work is historically related to the minimalism. But at the same time, we cannot ignore the idea of looking at the world through geometry was already profoundly expressed by Arab/Muslim artists more than a thousand years ago. This fact must now be recognised within the narratives of modern art history by making a connection between twentieth century geometric abstraction and the achievements of the Islamic civilisation."

—Rasheed Araeen, 2018

Reproduced from the Aga Khan Centre's publication celebrating the artist's work *'Rhapsody in Four Colours'*

References

Rasheed Araeen, Works 1978–94, Rossi and Rossi, Hong Kong, 2017

Rasheed Araeen, South London Gallery exhibition catalogue, 1994

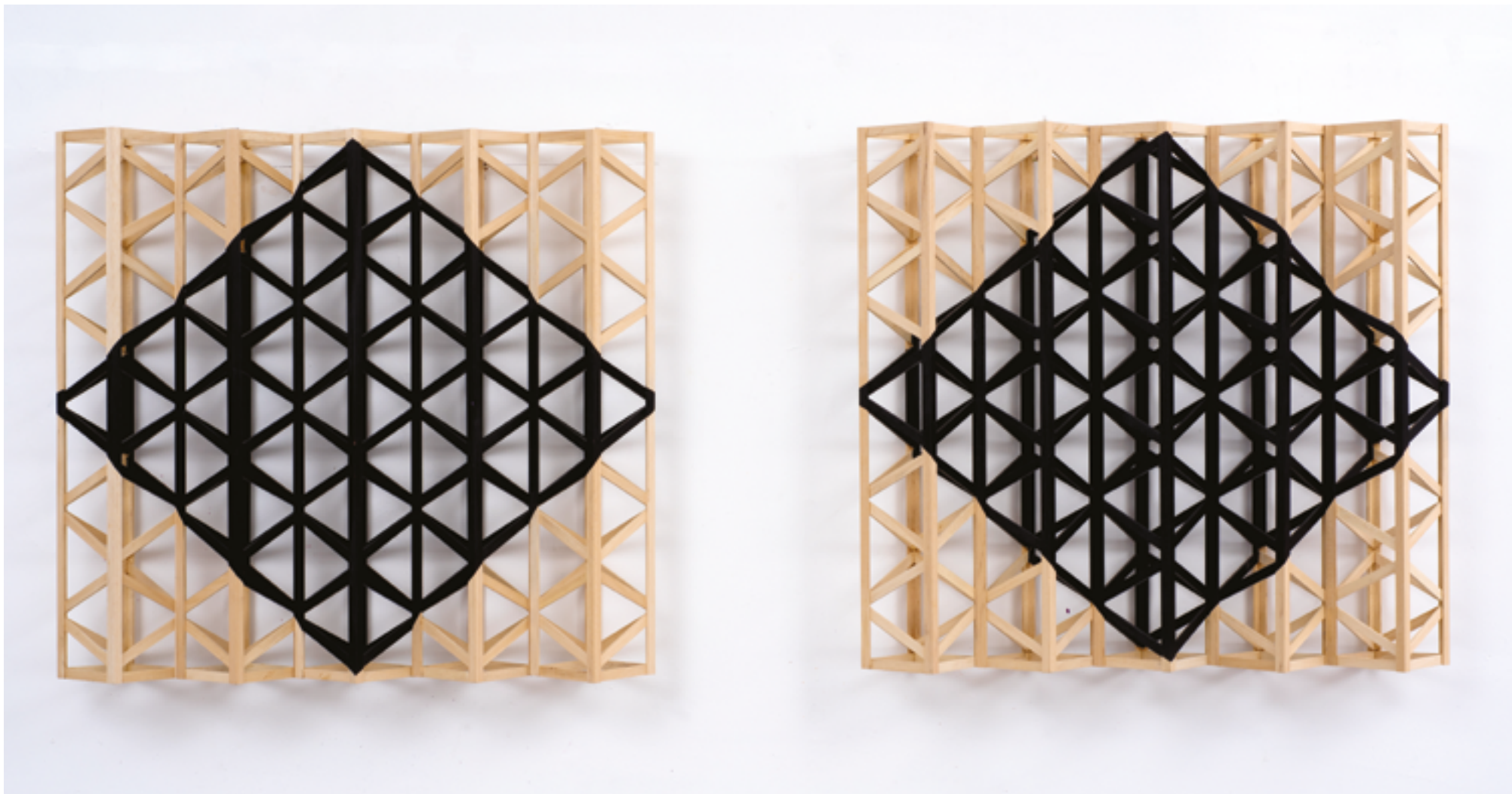
Adventures of the Black Square, Abstract Art and Society 1915–2015, Iwona Blazwick (ed.), Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2015

From Modernism to Post-Modernism, Rasheed Araeen, a retrospective: 1959–1987, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 1987

Making Myself Visible, Rasheed Araeen, Guy Brett, London, 1984

Rasheed Araeen, Nick Aikens (ed.), Zürich, 2018

WORK



[1]
Two Black Diamonds
2019

Acrylic on wood
Each: 80 x 87 x 18 cm
31 ½ x 34 ¼ x 7 in



[2]

Vertical Structure with Two Diamonds
2018

Acrylic on wood
181.5 x 120 x 19 cm
71 ¼ x 47 ¼ x 7 ½ in

“The diagonal resolves tension
without the loss of strength.”

—Araeen in conversation with
critic Patricia Bickers



[3]

Small Black Cube: 24 x 24 x 24 inch
2019

Acrylic on wood, in 8 parts
Each: 30.5 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm
12 x 12 x 12 in
Total: 61 x 61 x 61 cm
24 x 24 x 24 in

Araeen’s 8 component floor piece *Small Black Cube*, is a nod to his seminal installation *Zero to Infinity*. In that work the viewer is encouraged to interact with the work by moving the structures, creating an ever changing sculpture with an infinite composition and configuration.

RASHEED ARAEEN



b. 1935, Karachi
Civil Engineer, Artist,
Writer, Publisher

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 'Rasheed Araeen, a Retrospective', Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, 8 March–26 May 2019
- 2018–19 'Rasheed Araeen, a Retrospective', BALTIC Centre of Contemporary Art, Gateshead, 19 October 2018–27 January 2019
- 2018 'Rasheed Araeen, a Retrospective', MAMCO, Geneva, 30 May–9 September
- 2017–18 'Rasheed Araeen, a Retrospective', Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, Netherlands, 2 December 2017–25 March 2018
- 2015–16 'Rasheed Araeen, Going East' Rossi and Rossi, Hong Kong
- 2014 'Rasheed Araeen', Grosvenor Gallery, London/Dubai
- 'Before and After Minimalism', Sharjah Art Foundation Art Spaces, Sharjah, UAE
- 'Homecoming: A Retrospective', VM Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
- 2013 'Zero to Infinity', MALL, Lima, Peru
- 'Zero to Infinity', Tate Britain, London, UK
- 2010 Aicon Gallery, London
- 2007 'Minimalism and Beyond', Tate Britain, London
- 1997 The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
- Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Middlesbrough, UK
- 1996 'To Whom it May Concern', Serpentine Gallery (lawn), London, UK
- The Contemporary Arts Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania
- 1995 John Hansard Gallery, Southampton, UK
- 1994 V Habana Bienal, Havana, Cuba
- The South London Gallery, London
- 1993 'Strife and/or Structure', Modern Art Gallery, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka-Shi, Japan
- 1990 'The Golden Verses', London, UK
- 1988 The Showroom, London
- 1987 'From Modernism to Postmodernism: Rasheed Araeen, A Retrospective'; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; Cornerhouse Manchester; John Hansard, Southampton; Chapter, Cardiff, UK
- 1986 'White Power, Black Sexuality', Pentonville Gallery, London, UK
- 1984 'Rasheed Araeen: Recent Work', Pentonville Gallery, London, UK
- 1977 'Paki Bastard', Artists for Democracy, London, UK
- The Walker Gallery, Liverpool
- 1975 Artists for Democracy, London
- 1974 Indus Gallery, Karachi
- 1963 The Arts Council Gallery, Karachi

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2018 Auth Rangelay Yaar (Eight Colourful Friends), Matt's Gallery, London
 2017 Caro/Araeen, A Conversation, 13 July–9 August, Grosvenor Gallery, London
 'Occasional Geometries, Arts Council Collection curated by Rana Begum',
 15 July–20 October, Yorkshire Sculpture Park
 Zero to Infinity, Venice Biennale, Venice
 'Reading Room', Documenta, Kassel, Germany
 'Shamiyaana-Food for Thought: Thought for Change', Documenta, Athens
 'The Place is Here', 22 June–10 September, South London Gallery, London
 Frieze Sculpture Park, Grosvenor Gallery, London
 'The Place is Here', 4 February–30 April, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham
 2016–17 'Post War, Art between the Atlantic and Pacific, 1945–1965', Haus der Kunst,
 Munich, Germany
 2016 'Jameel Prize 4', Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
 'Playground', Museu de Art de Sao Paulo, Brazil
 'Between Object and Architecture', Tate Modern, London, UK
 2015 'Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society, 1915–2015',
 Whitechapel Gallery, London
 2014 'Other Primary Structures', The Jewish Museum, New York
 'The Language of Human Consciousness', Athr Gallery, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
 'Dark Waters Group Exhibition', Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, France.
 'As Exciting as we can make it: Ikon in the 1980s', Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK
 2012 Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea
 Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai, China
 'Migrations, Journeys into British Art', Tate Britain, London, UK
 'The Tanks: Art in Action, Tate Modern, London, UK
 2011 'Raising Dust: Encounters in Relational Geography', Calvert22 Foundation, London
 'The Global Contemporary: Art Worlds After 1989',
 ZKM Museum of Contemporary Art, Karlsruhe, Germany
 'A Rock and a Hard Place', Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art,
 Thessaloniki, Greece
 'Modern British Sculpture', Royal Academy, London, UK
 2009 'The Death of the Audience', Wiener Secession, Vienna, Austria
 2001 'Live in Your Head', Museu do Chiado, Lisbon, Portugal
 2000 'Live in Your Head', Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
 1999 'Art-Worlds in Dialogue: From Gauguin to Global Present',
 Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany
 1998 'Every Day', Sydney Biennale, Australia
 2nd Johannesburg Biennale, South Africa
 1996 'Inklusions:Exclusions', Steirischer Herbst, Graz, Austria
 1995 'Dialogue for Peace', Palais de Nations, Geneva, Switzerland
 1991 'Lost Illusions', Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
 'Lost Illusions', Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
 4th Habana Bienal, Havana, Cuba

1990 'A New Necessity', First Tune International, Gateshead, UK
 1989–90 'The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain',
 Hayward Gallery, London; Wolverhampton Art Gallery;
 Manchester City Art Gallery and Cornerhouse, UK
 1989 'Magiciens de la terre', Musée national d'art moderne (Centre Georges Pompidou)
 and la Villette, Paris
 1988 'The Essential Black Art', Chisenhale Gallery, London;
 Laing Art Gallery (Newcastle-upon-Tyne);
 Huddersfield Art Gallery (Huddersfield);
 Herbert Art Gallery (Coventry); Gardner 1987 'State of the Nation',
 Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, UK
 1987 'State of the Nation', Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, UK
 'Heroes', Art Gallery, London
 1986 'Conceptual Clothing', Ikon Gallery, Birmingham
 'Conceptual Clothing', Ikon Gallery, Birmingham
 'From Two Worlds', Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
 1985 'Roadworks', Brixton Gallery, London
 1984 'Creation for Liberation', Brixton Gallery, London
 1983 'New Beginning', Pentonville Gallery
 1982 'New Art Platform', Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, UK
 1980 'Accrocharge', Gimpel Fils, London
 'Accrocharge', Gimpel Fils, London
 'Forum Kunst', Rettweil; Kunstverein, Freiburg, Germany
 'Accrocharge', Gimpel Fils, London
 'Kontakt: From Contemplation to Agitation', Krakow;
 Galleria MDM Warsaw, Poland
 1979 'Art from the British Left', Place, New York
 'Art from the British Left', Place, New York
 'Art/Politics', Keen College of New Jersey, USA
 'Art from the British Left', Place, New York
 'Tape/Slide Show', Audio Arts, Riverside Studios, London
 1978 'Art for Society', Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
 1975 'Artists for Democracy', Vietnam Festival, London
 1973 'Artists from Five Continents', Swill Cottage Library, London
 1971 'SPACE', Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, UK
 'SPACE', Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, UK
 'SPACE', Geoffrey Museum, London
 1970 'Manufactured Art', Camden Arts Centre, London

AWARDS

- 1984 GLC's Antiracist Painting Prize, London
1978 Award, Arts Council of Great Britain
1969 John Moores Painting Prize
This was the first time the prize was awarded to a sculptor.
1955 Burmah-Shell Greeting Cards Competition, Karachi

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA
Arts Council of England, UK
Buffalo Art Centre, Buffalo, USA
Burger Collection, Hong Kong
CANAL+, Paris, France
Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania
Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka-Shi, Japan
Guggenheim, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Gwangju Art Foundation, Gwangju, South Korea
Imperial War Museum, London, UK
Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, India
Metropolitan Museum, New York, USA
Museu de Arte Moderna Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
M+, Hong Kong
Samdani Foundation, Bangladesh
Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
Tate Gallery, London, UK
The Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK
Wifredo Lam Centre, Havana, Cuba
ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany

PRIZES AND AWARDS

- 1955 Burmah-Shell Greeting Cards Competition, Karachi
1969 John Moores Painting Prize
This was the first time the prize was awarded to a sculptor
1978 Award, Arts Council of Great Britain
1984 GLC's Antiracist Painting Prize, London
1995 Honorary Doctorate of Arts (PhD), University of Southampton, UK
1997 Honorary Doctorate of Arts (PhD), University of East London, UK
2003 Honorary Doctorate of Arts (PhD), University of Wolverhampton, UK
2014 ARTNow Lifetime Achievement Award, Karachi, Pakistan
2016 Jameel Prize 4 Nominee