

LOVE, LIFE AND BELONGINGS

Gandhara Artist Residency

February - March 2023

Aisha Moriani
Amina Cheema
Khaleeq ur Rehman
Muhammad Ashraf
Rabiya Asim
Sumbul Natalia
Sumera Jawad

Center for Culture and Development
& International Council of Museums
In collaboration with

The Lahore Museum

An ethnographic research led Artist residency based in Taxila.



ABOUT THE RESIDENCY

The Gandhara Artist Residency featured 7 artists who lived and worked in Taxila February 2023 – March 2023.

They lived in the beautiful John Marshall Residence, inside the Taxila Museum. The strategic location being inside the museum itself and near to the Gandhara Resource Centre and the Buddhist ruins and monasteries made it the perfect place to research and work.

The artists also visited the Taxila Craft Villiage where they interacted and worked along with the local artisans of Taxila.

A few site visits to the Buddhist Stupas and Monasteries were scheduled for the artists to gain a deeper insight into the history and culture of the Gandhara Civilization.

This was also followed by various discussion sessions between the artists and the local artisans as well as the director and staff of the Taxila Museum and the scholars of The Gandhara Resource Centre.

The Gandhara Artist Residency program titled 'Love, life and belongings' brought together 7 talented multidisciplinary artists, each with their unique perspective and approach to the rich cultural heritage of the region. Through their individual lenses, the artists delved into the rich history of the Gandhara civilization, exploring its art, architecture, religion, and philosophy, and re-imagining all of it in the present era.

The resulting artworks are a testament to the diversity and beauty of the region's history and culture, and an attempt at contemporarising this ancient civilization. From sculptures and paintings to installations and multimedia works, the exhibition presents a range of artistic expressions.

An exhibition was then curated and displayed in the Lahore Museum, which was a celebration of the region's cultural heritage and the talent and creativity of the participating artists. The artists, Aisha Moriani, Amina Cheema, Khaleeq ur Rehman, Muhammad Ashraf, Rabiya Asim, Sumbul Natalia and Sumera Jawad are a part of this show and have displayed their works, which were a response to their ethnographic research in Taxila. The residency and exhibition are presented by the Center of Culture and Development and International Council of Museums, in collaboration with The Lahore Museum.

Special thanks to The Taxila Museum and the Department of Archeology (DOA) for their immense support throughout.

The exhibition of the works produced was held in the Gandhara Gallery of Lahore Museum between the 19th March- 5th April 2023.

CURATORIAL NOTE

The exhibition of artworks produced during the residency in Taxila, is a celebration of the rich artistic heritage of the region and a dialogue between what was and what is. The works on display represent a range of mediums, including sculpture, painting, and printmaking, created by contemporary artists inspired by the ancient Gandharan art and culture.

Gandhara, located in present-day Pakistan, was a cultural crossroads between East and West, and its art reflects the influence of both Buddhist and Hellenistic traditions. The artists in this exhibition have drawn inspiration from this unique cultural heritage and incorporated it into their own artistic practices.

The sculptures on display showcase the skill of the artists in carving stone, which was a hallmark of Gandharan art. The works range from abstract forms to figurative representations, each telling a story of its own. The paintings and drawings display the diversity of techniques and styles used by the artists, ranging from traditional to contemporary.

The exhibition also includes an interactive element, allowing visitors to engage with the artworks and learn more about the artistic techniques and cultural influences behind each piece. Through this exhibition, we hope to showcase the beauty and complexity of Gandharan art and inspire a new generation of artists to continue exploring its rich legacy.

We are thankful to the director Lahore Museum and his team for giving us this opportunity for displaying these amazing works.

A very special thanks to Mr. Ehsan Bhutta (Previously Directorate Archeology) and Mr Malik Maqsood (Current Directorate) and to the Department of Archeology (DOA) and Tourism and Archeology (TAM) for their tremendous support as without their help our stay at the John Marshall Residence (Taxila Museum) would have not been possible.

Prof. Dr. Sumera Jawad
Curator/Organizer
Principal
College of Art and Design
University of the Punjab, Lahore.



Design and Media Coordination: Sumbal Natalia

**LOVE, LIFE AND
BELONGINGS**

Gandhara Artist Residency

February - May 2023



TAXILA, PAKISTAN

FEB-MARCH 2023



AISHA MORIANI



The Taxila residency was an opportunity to draw inspiration from the symbols used by the craftsmen of the Indus Civilisation. The patterns, styles, and juxtaposition of these symbols led to my interpretation of their universal meaning, relevance for today's Pakistan, and to establish a link between the rich tapestry of history, culture, and human bonds.

Aisha graduated from Punjab University Fine Arts department in 1992. She joined the Civil Service of Pakistan in the same year, and over more than two decades, has served in key positions in Pakistan and in the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the WTO. Aisha is currently working as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications.

Aisha's interest and passion in art is evident from her participation in various National and international art exhibitions, including in Geneva, Switzerland.

Aisha Moriani



Landscape of Silent Unions

16 x 16 In

Water mixable oil colors

Warmth of Tranquility

16 x 16 In

Water mixable oil colors

Towards new beginning

24 x 31.5 In

Water mixable oil colors

Tapestries of lives forgotten

24 x 31.5 In

Water mixable oil colors

AMINA CHEEMA

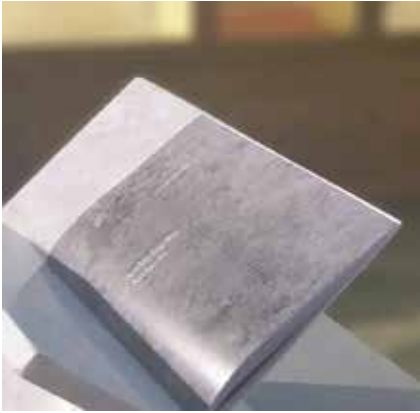


The visual anthology of Buddah's typology is the outcome of my visit to Taxila in February 2023 that led to frequent visits of Gandhara Gallery of Lahore Museum. Looking through the archaeological sites and museum archives while photographing them made me realise our longing for permanence in a transient world. The artist book titled 'Archiving the Archives' is also an exertion following the similar desire. The work aesthetics are informed by Bertillon's synoptic tables of physiognomic traits, the seriations I saw in Taxila and Lahore Museums and few favourite quotes from Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha I read a couple years ago.

In the second piece titled 'I can think, I can wait, I can fast' I have tried imagining Buddah's portrait in the book form.

Amina is an Assistant Professor at the College of Art & Design University of the Punjab Lahore. She is an M Phil in Art History and currently a PhD candidate. Besides teaching, research and writing, Amina's art practice revolves around exploring both inherited and inventive forms of a book. Her experimental publishing and artist books have taken part in art book fairs at Singapore, Art Dubai, India and USA. One of her experimental books Kar Baat is acquired by Thomas J Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum Brooklyn. She is a contributor to The Nation, The News and The ArtNow which is Pakistan's first art newspaper.

Amina Cheema



Archiving the Archives

Artist book, Digital Print on paper
6" x 9"



I can think I can wait I can fast

Book art, Plaster and archival ink stamp
5" x 8"

KHALEEQ UR REHMAN



We have the privilege of being home to the Gandharan tradition of stone carving. Unfortunately, this tradition is now limited to replicas and has lost its creative edge.

Had this tradition progressed creatively, we would have been able to see works with an indigenous contemporary flavor. I have worked to minimize this gap by finding common visual ground between the past and the contemporary and have chosen to re-imagine Gandhara in today's context. During this residency, Gandharan schist sculptures and decorative plates have been my main areas of interest. I am presenting 4 works that are inspired by Gandharan decorative plates. Three of them are carved in schist stone and one is a Siah Qalam painting. The fifth work is inspired by Gandharan schist sculptures, but carved in grey and white marble.

I have found that this tradition has immense potential for us to develop relevant works of art.

Dr. Khaleeq ur Rehman is a practicing Urologist and a Professor of Urology and Andrology at Fatima Memorial Teaching Hospital. He received his training in painting and sculpture from Saidye Bronfman Center of Fine Arts, Canada. He has been an apprentice of the traditional stone carvers of Lahore and Taxila as well as of the traditional painters of Multan. He has six solo exhibitions and multiple group shows to his credit.

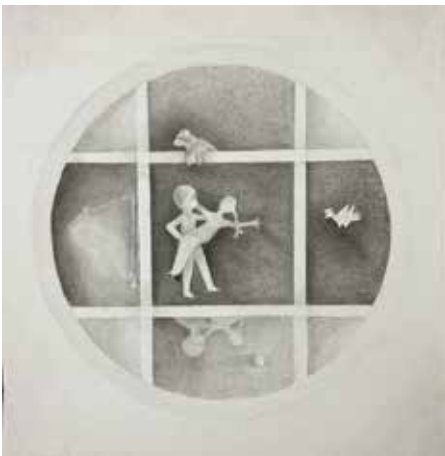
Khaleeq Ur Rehman



Neo-Gandharan Plate 1
Carving Schist Stone



Neo-Gandharan Plate 2
Carving in Schist Stone



In a Play
Siah Qalam



Around Meditation
Carving in Grey and White Marble



MUHAMMAD ASHRAF

Gandhara Artist Residency program aims to gain an experience through the traces of Gandhara Civilization at Taxila, a historical town situated 40 km away north from the capital city of Pakistan, Islamabad. During this residency sojourn, I visited the spot twice with my fellow participants. I took a lot of photographs, from museum collections to scenic beauty of Sirkap, Julian and around. This process gave me an immense understanding of ruins and artifacts of Taxila. Although there is a lot to talk about Taxila ruins and artifacts, I opted to go for the traces while taking textures of the objects and surfaces of that period. I developed a large scale (183x40 inches) drawing, by using graphite on a tracing sheet. The initial idea was to develop the complete drawing on spot at Sirkap while exploring various textures of stones at various spots at the location. Unfortunately, there was an overcast and the drizzle made me handicapped to work outdoors the day I planned. This made me limited to work only for an hour, tracing a wall which was excavated to track the different levels of historical architectural eras. The sheet got wet and torn from some spots. I completed the drawing while using my mark-making process, imagination and traced marks in my studio. Mark Making is the core process in my image-making practice.

In addition, I rendered two portraits of Buddha which were placed at the Taxila Museum. These sculpture portraits of Budha in stucco are extremely beautiful art-pieces and reflect the highest skill of the sculptor. They did not only portray the skill of the artist but also had an expression of happiness in one head and sadness in the other. In my rendition I used graphite on golden-handmade paper (each sheet sizes 22x30 inches), which I purchased on my visit to India in 1992. I tried to capture the same feelings of sadness and joy. In future, I also plan to create hand-drawn animation to document the Gandhara Civilization in Taxila which will be a sequel of this project.

Muhammad Ashraf is a pedagogue, artist, curator and writer. He graduated from National College of Arts, Lahore, in 1993 and received an MA in Fine Arts from University of East London in 2003. He has been exhibiting his works solo and in group within and outside of Pakistan. He has also curated multiple shows throughout his artistic career. As an artist, his subjects are mundane and he operates them in a broad range of styles, supported by intense technical skill. Ashraf has also published papers and art reviews in various local as well as international newspapers, periodicals and research journals. Presently He is an Associate Professor and Head of Dept. Art and Design (DoAd) COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus.

Muhammad Ashraf



Tracing the traces

183 x 40 in

Graphite on tracing sheet



Smiling Buddha

22 x 30 In

Graphite on golden handmade paper

Sad Buddha

22 x 30 In

Graphite on golden handmade paper



RABIYA ASIM

Cultural exchange has a long history in visual arts. Archeologists, historians and artists have discovered various civilizations and its inhabitants through the recovery and analysis of material culture, the remains of which are an evidence of the existent civilizations cultural significance.

My current body of work selectively appropriates and recontextualizes remnants of Gandharan classical art forms that embody a confluence of styles. It translates the semiotics of past into a contemporary visual language for the narrative structure. The symbol of lotus flower, the mythical Homa bird, Bodhi tree and the wheel of life have been drawn as pictorial semiotics, which are a reflection of cultural appropriation transmitted in artworks. The work will allow the viewer to renegotiate the meaning of anthropomorphic iconography used in the Gandhara tradition. While its aim is to subconsciously decodes the symbols appropriated in the artworks to form meanings that have multilayered metaphors. It involves a greater perception of what we see superficially as beauty of the ephemeral past or as a controlled structure to express the abstract qualities of the visual elements. As a visual artist I am interested in the transformative power of metaphor that bear mystical underpinnings. These juxtaposed elements of earthly delight invokes feelings of time, nostalgia, everyday stillness. To capture the surface appearance of transient iconography that display an unwavering integration is merely intended to bring out the dichotomy, spiritual subsistence of the inner structural and underlying metaphorical core present in the density of the matter.

Rabiya Asim is a practicing visual artist from National College of Arts, Lahore. She is currently doing her PhD in Art History from University of Punjab. Rabiya is also an Academician teaching at National College of Arts, Lahore College for Women University and a few courses at LUMS since the past 20 years.

Rabiya Asim



The Journey from Head back to the Heart

11× 16.5

Mixed Medium , Acrylic & Charcoal on Handmade Paper



The Seed of Supreme Perfect Enlightenment

11× 16.5

Mixed Medium, Acrylic, Charcoal on Handmade Paper.



Huma: Compassion & Fortune

11× 16.5

Mixed Medium, Acrylic, Charcoal on Handmade Paper.



Emerging from Mud to be Beautiful & Whole

11× 16.5

Mixed Medium, Acrylic & Charcoal on Handmade Paper.



Compassion, Gentleness, Patience & Emptiness

12× 18

Clay Mould and Plaster & Cement Cast with Gold Leaf.



Selflessness, Humility & Non-Attachment

12× 18

Clay Mould and Plaster & Cement Cast with Gold Leaf.



SUMBUL NATALIA

Taxila, the city where once the great Buddhist Gandhara civilization existed in all its glory, is now part of Pakistan, a Muslim country. Taxila is, in the present times, a predominantly Muslim community in a predominantly Muslim state. There is, therefore, an expectation of conflict in reference to how Muslim Taxila perceives the construction and circulation of sculptures of the Buddha, and by association, about the artisans who have to negotiate their craft between their private spaces and their public life. That being said, many of the Buddha sculptures and reliefs in the Gandhara sites of Pakistan have been destroyed over the centuries. To fully comprehend these tensions requires an understanding of the place of religion in this specific context and how it is associated with particular preconceptions with regards to artistic values in the realm of the arts in Pakistan. My work includes the Head-less Buddhas found in the Julian monastery of Taxila and the remnants of broken Stupa sculptures I found during my stay in Taxila. Placed around the eight pointed star, used as a symbol for Islam, my work questions the coexistence of Buddhist religious iconographic sculptures within the iconoclastic structures of an Islamic state and the survival of representational art forms in Pakistan.

Sumbul Natalia is a Lahore based visual artist, writer and researcher and a serving Lecturer at the National College of Arts (NCA). She graduated in Communication Design from College of Art and Design, Punjab University and went on to do her MPhil in Cultural Studies from NCA, Lahore. Since then, she has taught at various art institutes, teaching Art and Design History and Criticism courses. Her deep interest in the South Asian Art History drives her art and research practice which revolves around exploring and tracing the roots and routes of South Asian visual and material culture.

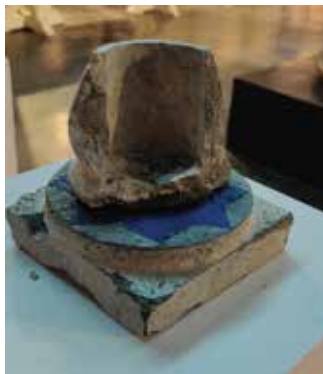
Sumbul Natalia



"The mind is everything, what we think we become"

A4

Mixed Media Collage



Make it or break it

Found objects and sound Installation



SUMERA JAWAD

The works I produced during my residency period investigates the representation of women in the sculptural tradition of Buddhist Gandhara. According to the Buddhist tradition, women cannot ascend to the status of a Buddha, one who is awake, enlightened and emancipated from samsāra, the cycle of birth and death because their bodies grow and give birth to children. That ties them metaphorically to samsāra. Due to this, the Gandharan perception of the female was highly complex: often, female figures represented abundance, fertility, and nurture, but at other times they embodied temptation, disease and death. I wandered in the Gandhara craft village, collecting the Taxila stones, which I use as a surface for my drawings. My artworks contribute to the body of knowledge on female representation in Buddhist art forms. My images and sculptures are an amalgamation of female semiotics with the elements of Buddhist art to further explore the possibilities of a utopian existence of female representation in Buddhism.

Dr. Sumera Jawad is a visual artist from Lahore. A seasoned academic of Studio Practice in fine arts at University of the Punjab, Lahore – Pakistan, as well as a practicing artist with multiple solo and group shows to her credit. She is held in high regards by both the academia for her teaching skills and knowledge as well as the professionals in her chosen field of practice. She has been a chief guest and a judge at numerous events and competitions throughout Pakistan. She is very hands on in studio practice, conduction workshops to share her valuable knowledge with upcoming professionals and students of fine arts. She stays abreast of all concepts by attending residencies and workshops herself, considering herself a lifetime student of the Arts. She is currently serving as a Professor and the Principal of the College of Art & Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Sumera Jawad



Reconceptualizing Gandhara
Pencil and charcoal on stone



Reconceptualizing Gandhara
Carving in stone (Schist)

THE ARTISTS AT WORK



Rabiya Asim



Amina Cheema



Khaleeq Ur Rehman



Sumera Jawad



Sumbul Natalia



Muhammad Ashraf