



Almanac 2019

NEWS CULTURAL CURRENCY FIVE PLUS ONE
COUNTRY REPORTS FESTIVALS EXHIBITIONS BOOKS

9 5 >
CA \$25
GB £20
JP ¥3000
HK \$195
KR ₩24000
SG \$34
AU \$34
EU €22
NZ \$37
US \$25

0 74470 28645 5



PAKISTAN



Official Country Name
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN

Languages
PUNJABI, URDU, ENGLISH

Population
207,862,518

Median Age
24.1

GDP Per Capita
US \$5,400

Source: CIA World Factbook

Total Value of Art Exported
(UN Comtrade Database 2017)
US \$106,433,291

Arts Funding
(Cultural Services)
US \$4,885,000

Schools with Art Programs
(University Level)
34

Student Enrollment
N/A

Source: Ministry of Finance, AAP (non-official)

Museums Exhibiting Contemporary Art
5

Contemporary Art Galleries
(Commercial)
26

Contemporary Art Spaces
(Nonprofit)
11

Art Foundations
(NGO + Private)
3

Source: AAP (non-official)

On August 18, former cricket star Imran Khan was sworn in as Pakistan's new prime

minister. In addition to a mounting economic crisis, pressing concerns for Khan's government include tensions between secularists and hard-line religious parties, who attempt to control national politics and daily life, and the ongoing dispute with India over the border area of Kashmir.

To support arts development, the government-backed **Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA)** offers artist grants and funds for major cultural events. PNCA also oversees the country's only art museum, the **National Art Gallery**, which houses the national collection of art in the capital Islamabad.

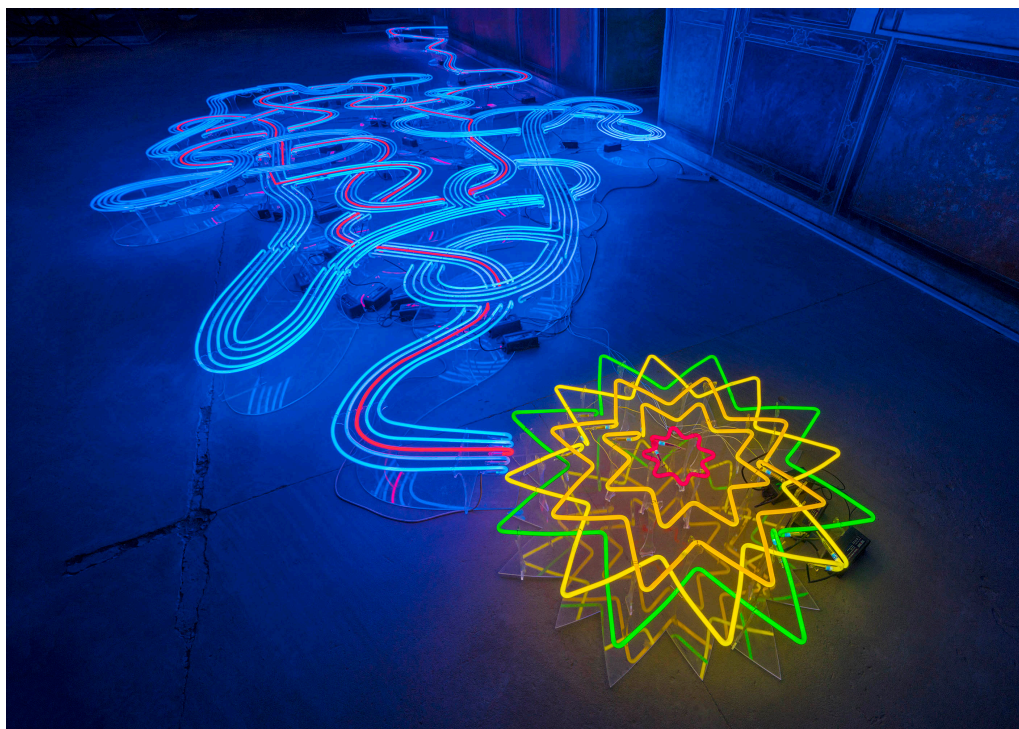
Karachi, Pakistan's economic center, is known as an independent-minded cultural hub. A longtime instigator of critical projects, **Vasl Artists' Association** is an international platform that hosts residencies and events. In 2018, Vasl presented the outcomes of Hira Nabi's three-week residency, during which the artist probed the histories of the dismantled ships in nearby Gadani, in "All That Perishes on the Edge of Land" (2/3). Haider Ali Naqvi's installations encapsulating the transformation of humanmade spaces by natural forces, created during his three-month residency, were showcased in "Conurbations" (8/27–31) at the headquarters

of the nongovernmental **Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi**. The growing need for research-based discussions was highlighted when the recently established **Habib University** hosted the well-attended Tate Research Centre: Asia, Karachi seminar titled, "Critical Perspectives on Art and Education" (3/24).

Housed within the prestigious Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, the **IVS Gallery** displayed figurative sculptures in the group show "Soft Bodies" (8/10–18).

Among other civil initiatives, the AAN Foundation operates **Gandhara Art Space**, which held several acclaimed shows including Fazal Rizvi's "The Fleet" (1/18–2/15), based on fishermen and their livelihoods. "Who Gets to Talk About Whom?" (7/5–8/4) was a group exhibition focused on collaborative practices. Nonprofit **VM Art Gallery**, supported by the Rangoonwala Trust, displayed prints by 20th-century painter Otto Dix in "War and Social Criticism" (11/22–12/19), with partners Goethe Institut and the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Germany.

Commercial galleries exist in clusters around the upscale Clifton neighborhood. **Canvas Gallery**, one of Karachi's most reputable spaces, displayed miniature paintings by Wardha Shabbir in "The Space Within" (11/20–29). Down the road, at its newly expanded space, **Koel Gallery** spotlighted Sohail Zuberi's objects culled from a two-kilometer stretch of beach in Karachi for "Archaeologies of Tomorrow" (5/8–17), while Omer Wasim's video and installations in "As the Light Turns" (11/20–29) were poetic representations



Installation view of **IFTIKHAR DADI** and **ELIZABETH DADI**'s *Roz O Shab*, 2018, mixed-media installation with neon, 762 x 487 cm, at the Summer Palace, Lahore Biennale, 2018. Courtesy the artists.

of queerness. **Sanat Gallery** had Minaa Mohsin's colorful paintings of objects found in a Pakistani emigrant family's home in California, "The System of Objects" (11/27–12/6). One of Karachi's oldest galleries, **Chawkandi Art** offered abstract paintings by Shazia Qureshi and Danish Ahmed in "Proximity" (12/13–23). **ArtChowk Gallery's** "The Censored City" (9/8–22) by Safwan Subzwari comprised canvases that had been laid out in different areas to collect pedestrian's footprints.

Lahore is Pakistan's other culturally dynamic urban center and now has its own contemporary art festival. Led by Qudsia Rahim, the inaugural **Lahore Biennale** (3/18–31) was spread across seven sites in the Walled City, featuring more than 60 local and international artists, including heavyweights Shahzia Sikander, Imran Qureshi, Lala Rukh and younger talents Wardha Shabbir and Noor Ali Chagani. Standout works included Iftikhar and Elizabeth Dadi's floor-based neon installation referencing the hidden structures of the Lahore Fort.

Several of Lahore's contemporary art platforms put up collateral exhibitions during the biennial. Among the noteworthy presentations were "River in an Ocean" (3/21–31), organized by Creative Process Projects in an old industrial space. Dedicated to the late Lala Rukh (1948–2017), the group show featured 27 artists and collectives examining gender constructs, including Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whose video pictured a post-queer revolution Muslim world. Foundation Art Divvy and **Fakir Khana Museum** invited 24 artists to respond to the

latter's collection of works dating from the 18th to the 20th centuries in "I, Too, Am a Part of This History" (3/16–31).

Lahore is also known for its institutions of higher education, such as the **National College of Arts (NCA)**. Located on the NCA's grounds, **Zahoor ul Akhlaq Gallery** hosted Saamia Ahmed Vine's drawings referencing miniature paintings of Sufi teacher Inayat Khan in "State: The Beginning" (11/20–26).

The city's commercial spaces include **Rohtas 2 Gallery**, which presented Samina Iqbal's installations, including library bookshelves filled with rubble, in "Art Factionary" (2/6–17), challenging the canonization of art history. **Taseer Gallery** explored the evolving nature of aesthetic customs via Anuska Rustomji and Marjan Baniasadi's paintings in "Transition of Tradition" (4/23). **O Art Space** held Amra Khan's "Kacha Gosht" (8/17–27), comprising canvases of homoerotic scenes. **Alhamra Art Gallery**, managed by the **Lahore Arts Council**, staged the "Alhamra National Exhibition" (11/26–12/3), surveying the country's arts scene through works by 136 artists.

Islamabad is the country's diplomatic center and has a comparably small art scene. **Satrang Gallery** exhibited "The Soul Breathes Differently" (9/27–10/27), Natasha Malik's delicately rendered paintings and multimedia works drawn from memories, and marked the ten-year collaboration of acclaimed performance duo Hurmat ul Ain and Rabbya Naseer with "Society of the Spectacle" (10/25–11/28). **My Art World** presented digital artist Umer Gilani's



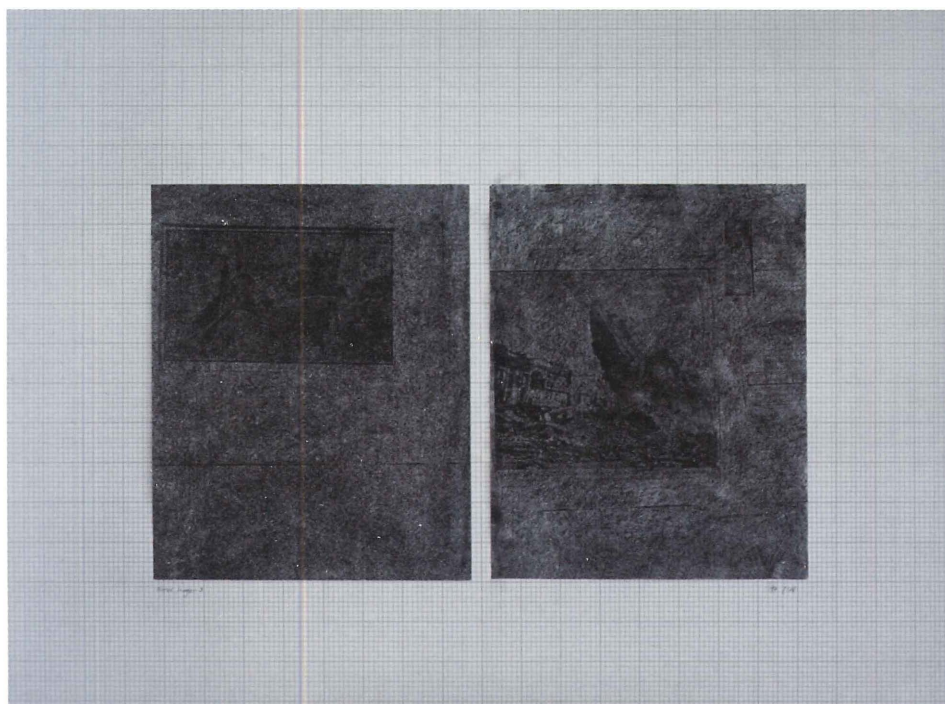
OMER WASIM, *Component No. 3 (detail)*, 2018, metal (treated with seawater), chain (treated with acid), archival print in wooden frame and graphite on paper in wooden frame, print dimensions 5 x 7.6 cm. Courtesy the artist.

"Islamabad: A Journey Through the Future" (10/11–13) while "Modulated Ambiguities" (11/10–19) at **Gallery 6** showcased monochromatic paintings and drawings by five male artists.

Around the subcontinent, Jhaveri Contemporary held Iftikhar and Elizabeth Dadi's "Tilism" (12/4–1/15/19) at its new Mumbai space. At Khoj International Artists' Association, New Delhi, Fazal Rizvi and Sandip Kuriakose's "Making Place" (12/5–10) investigated queer desire in the digital age.

The 2018 Dhaka Art Summit (2/2–10) included contributions by numerous artists from Pakistan, including Ayesha Jatoti who performed *Residue* (2016–18), involving the artist sorting and folding piles of white clothing, and Zarina Hashmi's black-and-white prints of zigzagged lines, which gesture to the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan.

Further afield, the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (11/24–4/28/19) in Brisbane had Rasheed Araeen's vibrant, geometric abstractions, Aisha Khalid's hanging tapestries pierced by thousands of needles, Naiza Khan's sculptures inspired by the female body, Ali Kazim's barren landscapes and Waqas Khan's densely patterned drawings (11/24–4/28/19). Canvas Gallery collaborated with Grosvenor Gallery to present four exhibitions in London, including Ghulam Mohammad's "Peeha (Grind)" (5/11–6/1), of the artist's delicate miniatures with layered cutouts of Urdu letters. Project Art Divvy continued its five-show collaboration with Rossi & Rossi, London, holding a group exhibition on urbanization, "Cultivating Wastelands" (7/12–8/17), and then challenged toxic archetypes of masculinity



LALA RUKH, *Mirror Image 3*, 1997, mixed-media on graph paper, 48 x 60 cm. Photo by Maryam Rahman Agha. Courtesy the Estate of Lala Rukh and Grey Noise, Dubai.

in “The Perfect Gentleman” (12/6–1/31/19). Wardha Shabbir was exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum (6/28–11/25) as a semi-finalist of the Jameel Prize. Hyperrealistic miniature portrait painter Irfan Hassan was awarded the Emerging Artist Award by Asian Art in London. Lala Rukh was represented by paper-based works and an animation drawing from classical South Asian musical compositions, *Rupak* (2016), in one of the inaugural Artist’s Rooms at Dubai’s newly opened Jameel Arts Centre.

Artists were invited to participate in prestigious residencies in the United Kingdom. The Khurram Kasim Art Foundation’s first residency at the Delfina Foundation was awarded to multimedia artist Zoya Siddiqui. Shah Numair Ahmed Abbasi was selected for a residency at Gasworks in London (10/1–12/17).

Rasheed Araeen’s momentous retrospective toured Europe, beginning at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven (12/2/17–3/25) before making stops at the Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva (5/30–9/9), and the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (10/19–1/27/19) in Gateshead. The show will continue to the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow in March 2019. The dynamism of Amin Gulgee’s calligraphy-based sculptures was evidenced at Mattatoio di Roma in “7.7” (7/26–8/26). At Milan’s Carlo Maria Martini Diocesan Museum, the Pakistan-based independent Citizen’s Foundation organized “Art for Education: Contemporary Artists from Pakistan” (10/17–11/25), featuring works by an intergenerational group of 60 artists. For the very first time, and to great acclaim, Pakistan had a pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale (5/16–11/25).

Contemporary art from Pakistan has a strong foothold in the United States. In New York, Adeela Suleman curated an exhibition that broached topics such as religious extremism with 15 artists including Omer Wasim and Saira Sheikh, and Seher Naveed in “Sweeping Back the Sea” at Aicon Gallery (8/2–9/8). Abdullah Qureshi, Aziz Sohail and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s collaborative works dissecting the politics of representation were shown in “Unruly Politics” (3/2–4/26) at Philadelphia’s Twelve Gates Art Gallery. Imran Qureshi splashed buckets of blue paint onto the steps of the Washington National Cathedral in Washington DC, evoking flowing, life-giving water, as part of the By the People Festival (6/21–24).

Looking ahead, the 2019 Karachi Biennale will be curated by Muhammad Zeeshan, while the 2020 Lahore Biennale will be helmed by Hoor Al Qasimi, director of the Sharjah Art Foundation. Seher Tareen’s private museum of contemporary and modern art, called COMO, is slated to open in February 2019, in Lahore.

ZAHRA KHAN