

HUMMAIRA

A B I D

T H E

D R **E** S S -

I N G

R O O M

HUMAIRA

A B I D

T H E

D R **E** S S -

I N G

R O O M

A B O U T K H A A S

Emerging in 2002, Khaas Gallery's repertoire of work, whilst firmly contemporary, focuses on the achievements of talented emerging Pakistani artists. Khaas has provided a platform for work that is now recognised and highly collectible. Sana Arjumand, Mohammad Atif Khan, Rabeya Jalil, Hadia Moiz, Imran Mudassar to name a few, are amongst the gallery's recently exhibited artists. We have also exhibited recognised practitioners including Moeen Faruqi, Meher Afroz, Noorjehan Bilgrami, the late Usman Ghouri, Unver Shafi, Afshar Malik, Anwar Saeed, R. M. Naeem, Abdul Jabbar Gull and Usman Saeed.

Khaas Gallery is owned and was founded by Zishan Afzal Khan, the Director & Chief Curator. Later, from 2009-10 two practicing visual artists, Alia Bilgrami and Babar Gull joined Khaas as full-time Curators. In 2016 Shameen Arshad, also a visual artist joined the gallery as Assistant Curator. The team at Khaas is committed to exhibiting artists that are non-formulaic such as Naiza H. Khan, whose last solo exhibition, *The Weight of Things* and monograph launch took place at Khaas in 2014.

We have also been involved in various other artistic projects, with a view to promote contemporary art in Pakistan kept firmly in mind. We have hosted several book launches, such as for *Raja Rasalu Folk Tales* compiled by Neelam Hussain and illustrated by the printmaker Laila Rahman. More recently, in 2015 we held a monograph launch for *Rebel Angel*, a book on the life and talents of the late Asim Butt whose last solo show took place at Khaas in 2009. Also worth mentioning is *Converging Lines*, a unique suite of drawings produced by Khaas in collaboration with Asim Akhtar, an Islamabad based Art Critic and Curator.

We brought Khaas to an international audience for the first time last year at Art15, Olympia – London's global art fair. Khaas showcased a microcosm of Pakistani contemporary art from its modernist roots till the present day. With geopolitics having thrust Pakistan into the global lime-light, the eternal notion of identity has become an insistent one as this relatively young country grapples with questions of selfhood, autonomy, integrity and trajectory. Its artists' focus upon self-awareness and self-definition has led to a fascinating indigenous visual and conceptual vocabulary that Khaas strives to showcase.

Our featured artist at Art15 was Zubeida Agha (1922–1997), whose work is rarely exhibited because it remains largely in private collections; its presence attracted the interest of both scholars and collectors. We are pleased to have been instrumental in reviving an interest in this great artist's legacy and we used Agha as our starting point since she is widely acknowledged as the pioneer of modernist painting in Pakistan. Futuristic and mainly abstract, her oeuvre was radical for its time. Inspired by a deliberate intellectual and emotional discipline, one could even go as far as to say that she was Pakistan's earliest conceptual artist. We also represented Shakil Saigol, Waseem Ahmed, Humaira Abid, Imran Channa and Komail Aijazuddin in our booth at Art15.

Khaas Gallery has inevitably been the gallery in Islamabad that contemporary practitioners gravitate towards to share and exhibit their most exciting and innovative work. This has been our primary ethos. As we bring Humaira Abid's work to a London audience once again, this time to START Art Fair at the Saatchi Gallery, we hope to build upon the global dialogue. We aim to bring more art from Pakistan to an international audience as well as to create more opportunities for our artists to exhibit overseas. Our exhibition calendar continues to reflect both our *raison d'être* as well as our responsibility towards the furtherance of new and exciting contemporary art in and from Pakistan.



Wish I Could Touch the Sky 2016 | gesso & acrylic on pine wood | 23 x 18 x 18 cm & 25 x 20 x 20 cm

THE DRESSING

R O O M

by Alia Bilgrami

When you are left alone with your thoughts, as you get ready for the day, you cannot help but be influenced by what you see around you. And even if you make it a point to turn off the telly and you don't read the newspaper it doesn't matter. At some point in the day, social media will come to haunt you with horrific news feeds; flashing text and graphic images of the next terrible loss of innocent lives. Another bomb blast, another shooting.

All of these words start to seep into your subconscious. You can't help but think about war as you iron your clothes, hoping for peace to prevail as you sip your morning tea. You cannot help but let your mind wander...thinking of the refugees with nothing on their backs as you pick out your clothes for the day. You are grateful to have a roof over your head and food on the table. And as you put on your makeup you wonder if you will make it back unscathed from your next business trip. Your suitcases are sitting in the corner as you make plans in your head. But who is to tell if all those plans go out the window? What if something happens at the airport? In transit? All it takes is a split second – for it to all be over.

You wonder about the child washed ashore lifeless – what his future would have held. That child could have been yours, you think. But all those awful stories happen to other people, don't they – we are safe, we are blameless.





None of the consequences of “collateral damage” will come knocking at our doors. Or will they? There is no one to take ownership, to claim responsibility. There is only silence. Your mind is full of thoughts and words and yet this feeling of isolation, of loss, of displacement cannot be articulated. No matter how hard you try, you will never fit in. You will never belong. You will always be *the other*. And as you fluff your hair up, you resolve to leave, and you ask yourself, is it time to give up?

You feel listless as you pack your bags. You look at your reflection in the mirror but you cannot relate to the person staring back at you. All you see are the objects around you. Inanimate objects that seem unaffected by reality. As you take a final look around, you come to the harsh realisation that this is all that is left behind. You are no longer present but these meaningless objects are likely to outlive you. They represent you, they tell a story, but in the end, they are not you.

The Dressing Room is where you begin your day. While getting dressed your thoughts about the world’s problems often overlap with what to make for supper that night or when to pick up the dry cleaning. Here is where Humaira Abid’s practice enters the picture.

In *The Dressing Room* we create an intimate space for the viewer to explore firsthand. Humaira Abid's alluring sculptures are so meticulously detailed and so life-like that you will be tempted to start ironing with them or take out one of her wooden shirts from *Breakdown in the Closet* and walk away wearing it. In her practice, Abid has invariably dealt with lending new contexts to everyday objects; she also addresses taboo and controversial subjects, often breaking stereotypes. Carving deep into blocks of mahogany and pinewood, she combines labour intensive techniques; painting on her pieces in the miniature style with gouache, almost like a three dimensional canvas. As you walk around the installation, we intend to give you the illusion of an intimate space where the protagonist has just left the room.

The objects that are left behind – the vanity with an unfinished cup of tea, the luggage pieces in *Searching for Home*, and so on, are all painstakingly crafted by hand and skillfully executed. The viewer gets a sense of the personality who inhabits the space and is very much affected by what is happening around them. Their sentiments are palpable as you walk around the installation and you become part of the story. As this sinks in, you may be overwhelmed with feelings of loss, identity, migration and transience.

Abid's practice is layered in connotation, dealing with universal subjects as well as working through very personal themes. For instance, she provokes the viewer into thinking about what the significance of the colour Red is. Does it symbolise love or anger, passion or violence? Perhaps all of these combined? *And I Was Seeking Equality in Love* illustrates these double meanings beautifully.

We leave you to decide.

Curated and conceived by
Zishan Afzal Khan, Alia Bilgrami, Babar Gull & Shameen Arshad



And I Was Seeking Equality in Love 2016 | pinewood, ebony & red stain | 68.5 x 56 x 8 cm



Searching for Home 2016 | pine wood & red stain | 183 x 91 x 48 cm



My Shame III 2016 | pine wood | 48 x 28 x 2.5 cm



My Shame II 2016 | pine wood & wire | 43 x 42 x 8 cm

H U M A I R A A B I D

(b.1977, Rawalpindi, Pakistan)

Humaira Abid spent most of her formative years in Lahore, Pakistan. She graduated from the National College of Arts, Lahore with a BFA degree in Sculpture and a Minor in Miniature Painting (2000). The artist currently lives and works in Seattle, USA.

Inspired by everyday objects and abstract forms, Abid's inspirations lead her to depict relationships through these objects. Her imagery is loaded with symbolism – a seedling represents a new life; women's handbags are like secret treasure troves; an egg form represents fertility and femininity; male shoes represent male chauvinism. Abid believes that art should inspire humour, surprise, and evoke wonder.

Furthermore, Abid believes that an artist's responsibility goes beyond simply addressing aesthetics. She states, "I feel as an artist, my goal is to raise awareness through my work and discuss issues that are often overlooked. Whatever people don't want to talk about in society is what I want to bring out through my practice."

Abid ranks amongst a small number of female sculptors to rise to the top of her field. Her dedication to her practice is illustrated by consistent participation in art residencies, art exhibitions, art fairs, symposiums and workshops. Her work has been exhibited at prestigious galleries and museums throughout the world, including Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Mauritius, Nepal, Kenya, Dubai, Bolivia, Germany, Russia, UK and USA. She has been the recipient of many Grants and Awards, most recently, the *Artist Trust Fellowship*.

Her work has been featured in the Seattle Times, the Stranger, KUOW Public Radio, the Seattle Weekly and the Huffington Post. It has also been published in the Stranger's Arts & Performances Quarterly magazine, Sculptural Pursuit, American art collector magazine and in-flight magazine of AIR INDIA. Abid's talents have also been captured in documentaries produced by PBS KCTS9 TV Channel (which got nominated for NW Emmy Awards) and Bellevue Arts Museum, WA, USA.

G A L L E R Y T E A M

ZISHAN AFZAL KHAN is an Islamabad based curator, gallerist and a devoted art collector. She is the owner and Director of Khaas Art Gallery, Islamabad. Khan has an MA (Hon.) History from the University of Cambridge, UK. She went to school in Karachi, Pakistan, and from a very young age took classes with the eminent modernist Bashir Mirza where her eye for art developed. She began collecting art in the 1980's; very much inspired by the late Ali Imam whose Indus Gallery was the basis for her earlier purchases. As Khan's interest in art grew, she started to build up her collection and decided to study art more formally. She received a Diploma in Islamic Works of Art from Sotheby's in 1995. Subsequently, in 1997 she gave up her job in a financial institution in order to pursue her passion for art full time. She opened Khaas Gallery in 2002 and has not looked back since then. Along with her role as Chief Curator at Khaas, Khan continues to support the arts in Pakistan and has a significant, growing art collection that has been featured in various art publications across the country.

ALIA BILGRAMI is an Islamabad based practising visual artist, curator and art writer. She joined Khaas Gallery as Curator in 2010 after completing her MA from Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design, London. Whilst there, she received the Cecil Collins Memorial Award for Drawing and was part of various exhibitions in London. Bilgrami grew up in Karachi where she completed her BFA (Hon.) from Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture (2007). Following her move to Islamabad in 2008, she worked for Rohtas Gallery as Assistant Curator and was also selected for a Curatorial Research Internship at the Freer & Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. that same year. She has been part of many international exhibitions and two Artist Residencies – Asilo Infantile Beatrice in Atina, Italy (2014) and Ato Nexus in Tokyo, Japan (2016). Bilgrami was nominated as a Sovereign Asian Art Prize Finalist and won the 2014-15 Sovereign Asian Public Vote Prize Schoeni in Hong Kong. Bilgrami manages the gallery full-time and alongside curating exhibitions at Khaas, she maintains her own art practice and continues to exhibit locally and internationally. She enjoys writing and is responsible for all of Khaas Gallery's curatorial research and writing.

BABAR GULL is a Lahore based practising visual artist who moved to Islamabad when he joined Khaas Gallery as Curator in 2009. Gull lived here for many years, jointly curating exhibitions and maintaining the gallery. He moved back to Lahore in 2013, the city where he grew up and is currently enrolled at the National College of Arts, Lahore in the MA (Hon.) Visual Arts Programme. Despite the distance, Gull continues to be actively involved with Khaas projects and exhibitions. He completed his BFA from Hunerkada College of Visual & Performing Arts in Lahore and maintains a career in teaching part time. Apart from pursuing his MA and curating for Khaas Gallery long-distance, Gull enjoys graphic art and has a keen sense of design that he employs in all of Khaas Gallery's publications. He continues to exhibit his own artwork locally and internationally and will complete his MA this year (2016) following which he will return to Khaas Gallery full-time. He continues to be dependable for all of Khaas Gallery's design work.

SHAMEEN ARSHAD is an Islamabad based visual artist and writer. She is a Fine Arts (BFA) graduate from National College of Arts, Lahore (2015). Shortly after graduating from NCA, Arshad moved back to Islamabad, the city where she grew up to begin her curatorial practice. She joined AQS Gallery, Islamabad as Gallery Coordinator and managed their exhibitions and other art related events. In 2016, she moved on to her role as Assistant Curator at Khaas Gallery. Arshad enjoys writing and is an art critic for publications such as Art Now Pakistan and The Missing Slate, where she frequently interviews artists and critiques exhibitions. Her paintings have been exhibited nationally and she continues her painting practice alongside her writing. She is responsible for all of Khaas Gallery's promotional material and maintains the gallery's online presence through social media. She is also responsible for the gallery website – she maintains our archives and written content for the artist database.

Text by Alia Bilgrami
Design & Layout by Babar Gull
Photography by Adeel Ahmed

Printed by TOPICAL Lahore, Pakistan (info@topicalprinters.com)



© 2016 KHAAS GALLERY

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced/stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any other means without prior permission of Khaas Gallery.

House 1, Street 2, F-6/3,
Islamabad, Pakistan
Tel: +92 51 282 4391
khaasgallery@gmail.com
www.khaasgallery.com

K H A A S

START

SAATCHI GALLERY **15-18 SEPTEMBER 2016**

GALLERY

I S L A M -

A B A D

KHAAS
ART GALLERY

خااس