



ZAHOOR-UL-AKHLAQ GALLERY
National College of Arts
4 Shahrah-E-Quaid-E-Azam
Lahore, Pakistan, 54000

AMIN REHMAN
OTHER HISTORIES
A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT WITH TARIQ ALI

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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ARTS

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Foreword: Dr. Murtaza Jafri

Curator: Amra Ali Co-Curator: Aasim Akhtar

Essays: Tariq Ali, Ken Giles, Salima Hashmi, Maureen Korp



Foreword

Amin Rehman's work is a testament to the times we live in: a chaotic world rife with senseless violence, myopic views coupled with the all-pervasive influence of capitalism, and in the midst of it all is Amin Rehman's voice which, although poignant at times, urges us to rise above it all.

Amin's quiet voice stands tall, for it rings true and clear; it is the voice that advises, warns, admonishes and most of all it gives us hope when it challenges our perceptions.

Intelligently and with great finesse, Amin's works walk us through time and history, but just as we begin traversing those many cultural pasts he does the unexpected; he pricks our conscience by overturning their meaning and in doing so unfolds the complexities of religion, identity and politics in our world today.

Mere nostalgia for the past is left far behind then as Amin Rehman comments on the angst of living in a world that forgets before it even begins to accept.

It would be unfair to say that Amin Rehman simply uses text or is an artist who incorporates text into his work, as his art making is so fluid and multifluous; its voice, in its musing and contemplation, carries with it so much more in the process.

For it is the act of manipulation, this careful and deliberate tampering with the sacredness of the written word in conjunction with the choice of objects that becomes the pivotal factor in lending his works that maturity which one seldom sees in art today. The act of appropriation is neither flippant nor is it irreverent, as is sometimes the case; it is solemn and effortless both in its thought and presentation.

By overturning historical narratives as we know them, Amin Rehman brushes away the layers of dust that have gathered over these objects and they begin to whisper to us in the language of today: through new mediums, new expressions that are interspersed with the old; what is revealed to us is the timeless nature of certain truths in history that we must learn from in this day and age; with reference to Amin Rehman's *This is Not Who We Are* he literally and metaphorically wants to show us both sides of the coin.

Dr. Murtaza Jafri

Principal, National College of Arts, Lahore

←

You Are History – 2014

Mixed media on board 25.4 cm diameter

for globalization
WAR IS JUST A RACKET.
to work, the empire
A RACKET IS BEST DESCRIBED
cannot be afraid:
AS SOMETHING THAT IS NOT WHAT
the hidden hand of
IT SEEMS TO THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE.
the market will
ONLY A SMALL INSIDE GROUP
never work with
KNOWS WHAT IT IS ABOUT
out a hidden fist

Reading from a Wider Cultural Lens: Amin Rehman

The prospect of curating any artist's show is a matter of great privilege. It allows the curator a special lens to enter the discourse, to locate the process and contexts of a given narrative. The critic as curator brings a reading that is based on the larger concerns of the artist, and partakes in a re-reading of the work in its new physical (gallery or other space) and cultural context. At the same time, this proximity of the critic-artist mediates with the viewer in interesting ways. It invites those at the receiving end of this process to enter a process of negotiation with the work, to connect to the art as something other than a 'commodity', and to become a different type of consumer. In other words, the 'object-ness' of the art is explored beyond 'market' value, as a necessary discussion of life and contexts that are situated outside the picture frame.

The critic/curator, whose job is not to hang the work in an appropriated museum-like manner (as is commonly understood in Pakistan), or to hang the work at all, faces the challenge of breaking the hierarchies of museum-like spaces. So, it is as much a re-imagining of the gallery/western-museum-like space as 'another' creative space, as much as it is to re-align the art to that space and vice versa. The parameters and clues are contained within the art, which is interpreted in many ways so that it is able to be 'read' in as many ways. The curator works on the tenor and tone, at different locations of the same work. In this case, the image and text are so closely entwined that one cannot be imagined without the other, and what draws the viewer into the work is the 'reading' of the work, and the layers within.

The text becomes image, and the image is 'read' as text. The overlapping of histories is manifested through interconnected readings: Amin Rehman, the artist, reads Tariq Ali, the writer/activist. And yet, because the picture frame holds the two, there are possibilities of conversations, of critique, of re-imagining art as something else, an 'other', as idea, and as action. If it is a picture, it is also script. Tariq Ali's script comes from a sustained body of knowledge, and discourse on the dynamics of power, as it is critique and resistance. Ali writes in his essay 'The Lahore Connection' for Rehman's *Other Histories*:

←

For Globalization – 2012

Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm

Foreground: Excerpt from a column by Thomas Friedman, *New York Times Magazine*, March 28, 1999.

Ali, Tariq. 2002. *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*. London: Verso. 260/61

Background: Excerpt from a speech delivered in 1933 by Major General Smedley Butler, USMC.

Ali, Tariq. 2002. *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*. London: Verso. 259

Art alone can never be enough / But in order to transform a world that is desperately crying out to be re-made, we need action that transforms the way we live. We have to reclaim the wealth that is monopolized by the global one percent and the freedoms that are slowly being whittled away. Without them we will suffocate.

Rehman, therefore, allows the artist to be a mediator, a vessel, and not 'subject'. This is a significant subtext to his work, as he is willing to sit outside the comfort zone of the art market. At the same time, and especially important in the context of Pakistan, he mediates a valuable space, he negotiates at the risk of becoming a theorist. Artists are generally vary of the written word, and often view is as something outside their discourse. One reason is the language division between Urdu and English. The other, that art education does not locate discourses within eastern or western philosophies, literature, histories, as part of the art narrative. Therefore, art has been viewed as image, as material, outside the language of ideas, and the image or mark has been viewed as separate from the context that it is born out of. There are many other reasons for this divide, and Rehman's work draws us into this discussion. The work draws us into the critique of culture, as well as of art.

The curatorial narrative for Amin Rehman's travelling show *Other Histories*, and my input at Chawkandi Art in Karachi, has been possible due to shared conversations and an ongoing critique stemming from his earlier work. His discourse on issues of exploitation of globalization play a significant role in negotiating within the aesthetic and cultural frame of his location in North America, and his simultaneous connection to his country of birth, Pakistan. Between two worlds and in both, the artist as cartographer charts an unconventional route, as he delves into a discussion which permeates the boundaries of consumerism and defies expectations of the market in both places. In fact, to situate his aesthetics within art in Pakistan is a challenge, as Amin speaks through references and a language that requires translation within the local context/s. Furthermore, his narrative intervenes in the gallery space as it questions the linearity of the familiar art discourses. The work draws us to ask questions: Is he a painter, calligrapher, new-media artist, installation artist, sculptor? Is he all of these or none? And does it even matter? Perhaps he is a reader, and an idealist, a writer?

Rehman's critique of globalization has touched on issues of child labour at ship-breaking ports of Gadani, the hazardous and toxic waste that has been dumped into the waters of third world countries, issues of governance, colonization, racism. He has visited Pakistan with important shows such as *Power Tools*, in 2008; *Loha Toar* (Iron Breaker) in 2010, and more recently *Crisis State*, in 2014.

The present body of work is particularly inspiring because the art falls in between the narratives of art and culture. If it exists in the realm of the gallery space, it flows out of it into the larger discourses of cultural studies. His text-based work challenges many hierarchies of aesthetics, and one is compelled to ask if the text (and/as image) and its context can be separated at all; what are the intermediaries between the text and

image, and how is it interpreted by the artist, by the writer, by other writers (critics, artists) and by the critic (in this case, the curator)? As the artist converses with the writings of Tariq Ali, we are faced with broader issues on the role of art and artist, and also on the role of the art critic and curator, in this context, of Pakistan.

The dynamics between the artist, writer and art critic are further explored in the essays that form part of the catalogue. Tariq Ali, Salima Hashmi, Ken Giles, Aasim Akhtar, and Dr Maureen Korp discuss the work and its context, each of them bringing their particular and contextual relationship to their milieu, into the reading of Ali through Rehman. It is also interesting to note here that the individual critic becomes part of a collective debate in a shared ground. There is no great spectacle: the work simply refers to the urgency of concerns that are part of our times. In other words, the art is an intermediary that brings important socio-political issue into debate. Tariq Ali writes about Rehman's 'abstract calligraphy' in which the word does not 'retreat from the truth'; in fact, Ali speaks of it in terms of 'a new aesthetic of resistance'.

Professor Salima Hashmi traces her family link to Tariq Ali's, of their early years when her father Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Ali's father Mazhar Ali Khan were 'among the team that set up *Progressive Papers Limited*, whose publications *Pakistan Times* and daily *Imroze* were the foremost newspapers of the Left.' Ali Khan was the editor of *Pakistan Times* and Faiz was arrested in the 'infamous Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case, stood trial and was sentenced.' Hashmi's link to Ali and to the history of resistance and a subsequent critique in her own art has been a model close to Rehman, as he grew up in Lahore and acquired his initial training at the National College of Art in Lahore. Hashmi also establishes connections of word and image in the works of early Pakistani masters such as Abdur Rehman Chughtai and the modernist Shakir Ali. She re-reads Rehman in the context of the city that inspired him and nurtured his ideals; center, return and continuity.

Hashmi speaks of words as 'talismans, (that are) endowed with an aura which goes beyond the literal or even the symbolic.' It is interesting that Dr. Maureen Korp locates the work in terms of the image that the text makes, and 'fills the gallery with rhythms / a visible calligraphy of pacing, meter, etc.' In reading Rehman, Korp reads Ali: 'Tariq Ali too searches the shift of meaning in language over time—who sees, who hears, remembers—and more important, who calls the shots.' Each reading, says Korp, 'makes another truth, another thought, and further remunerations.'

In the text and the reading of it, in the reading of the art, the reader/viewer crosses distances of geography and culture, of viewpoint and history, as we have another layer of text in the accompanying essays. Just like Hashmi and Korp are located in separate historical contexts, Aasim Akhtar and Ken Giles, from Pakistan and Canada respectively, come together in this space created by the artist's engagement in both places that he calls home. In fact, it is the artist who curates the many voices that are linked to his discourse and his concerns. The curator is part of the same dynamics.

Amra Ali

Independent curator, art critic and researcher

at the heart of this dysfunction
is the domination by the army,
and each period of military rule
has made things worse. This has
prevented the emergence of
stable political institutions.
Here the empire bears direct
responsibility, since it has
regarded the military as the only
institution it can do business
with and, unfortunately, still
does. This policy has forced choppy
waters into a headlong torrent

Marginal Annotations

The reading of the world precedes the reading of the word.—Luis Camnitzer

Amin Rehman's conceptual 'drawings' are highly polished and applied in various ways with words and phrases. In *Other Histories*, the viewer is included among their reflections, a factor intimately related to the content of the work. The text, inscribed in Kufic and Nastaliq in various sizes, broken up into lines of simple phrases and longer observations, has the salutary effect of visual clarity, which seems to be Rehman's major concern. The simple but powerful presentation strengthens the artist's message that history is to be shared, rooted in continuity, focused on generations, transferred along the memory of sudden losses.

In places, the texts are aphoristic, with a taut, abstract style—particularly in the large, stencilled title phrases, which can resemble slogans: 'Where do we go from here?' The viewer is invited to consider a visual shorthand that pares language down to essential statements; these coalesce around generalisations that are hard to test as right or wrong; they are not transparent enough. In some places, the language tends to undermine itself in self-referentiality, but elsewhere it spells out meaningful consequences.

Rehman is clearly interested in the relationship between art and language in his insistence on the visuality of the object that mediates the meaning of the words. The will to identify in his work a one-sided obeisance to linguistic art forms is to be countered with the fact and form of its distinction from other prototypes. Above and beyond a post-Duchampian positing of art as that which is presented as such within the institutional framework of its definition as art, the tautological self-nomination of Rehman's work resorts to the visual structure of language, to its iconic significance—not merely as a representational mode, but also as a performative process of signification.

In spite of the fact that the work deploys linguistic definitions as options equal to the physical object, its focus is on the interchangeability of the artistic medium: art is what the artist calls art. Rehman rebuts intentionalist gestures of this variety, which could be interpreted as a vigorous



At The Heart – 2014
Metal installation, 61x40.5 cm
Ali, Tariq. 2008. *The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power*.
New York: Scribner. 188

confession of faith in the auteur theory, with reference to the systemic character of the artistic medium. The tautological objectivity with which the work allows ontological distinctions—between image and representation, signified and signifier, original and reproduction, reference and self-reference—to collapse shifts the essentialist question of the status of art to an inquiry into the value ascribed to one medium among others within the ecology that is art.

Jacques Rancière takes this same phenomenon to its logical conclusion when he writes that ‘the image (is) not exclusively an element of the visible’, and that some things are ‘visible but not an image, as well as images that consist only of words.’ Rehman’s oeuvre does not imply a liberation of objective perception from the material world. Rather, it advocates aesthetic perception’s reference to language as a medium of that mass culture which keeps art in circulation and guarantees its reception, not merely in the form of works, but of reproductions, information, and communication as well.

The conjunction of the politics of decipherment with the delight in the fantastical, the imaginary, and the parodic typical of Cervantes, who served as inspiration to Borges, comprises the basic elements of Amin Rehman’s art, as well as Tariq Ali’s writings. This exegesis is motivated not only by the fact that Rehman’s concerns suggest just such a historical expansionism, but also by the fact that Ali’s thesis affords an object lesson in the workings of an astonishing historical phenomenon: the transvaluation of the culture of an occupying power in spite of the most horrendous cruelty. The salient feature of this emancipation of the subaltern subject from a hegemonic construct is as follows: far from being rejected, the alien paradigm is metamorphosed into the cultural stuff and vector of a fresh identity construction. Rehman seems to be concerned with the recognition of multilingualism, dialect, and orality, the equality of literary and visual education, and the possibilities offered by creativity for the reorientation of pedagogy away from the bare appropriation of knowledge and skill.

The emblematic process arises from the belief that the world in all of its phenomena is inscribed with secret messages, replete with occult allusions, with hidden—and thus discoverable—significance. Ultimately, the discipline of emblematics is also pedagogical, concerning as it does, decipherment and hence the subversion of a complacent world by means of poetics, which is, I believe, the very strategy of Rehman’s artistic oeuvre: its continual redefinition of the interdependence of image and text. For that too is Rehman’s poetics; he addresses not only tautologies, titles, and hypnosis, but the unspeakable as well, such as torture, imprisonment, and murder. And just as the artist cannot be categorised in thematic terms as he conjures up humour, empathy, lament, melancholy, and agitation, so too does he shuttle among media, from graphic arts to installation, to say nothing of writing, with dependable economy, purpose,

and precision. Within the confines of the work of art, everyday life and politics are shot through with Cervantes’s impulse in ever-changing attitudes, and thus become an emblematic cognitive space in which artistic openness coexists with pedagogy as it exhorts us to do our part for liberation by using our eyes. Enabling the viewer to develop from a consumer to a creative agent is part of a deeper-seated ideology, which foregrounds Rehman’s need to emit liberating impulses. These are ‘things’ that have nothing to do with the concept of beauty, but solely with the question, ‘What can be salvaged of the habitat they have stolen from us?’

Dense formations of English text spin across vinyl installations, encaustic tiles, mixed media coins and neons, in a constellation of words and sentences. These political phrases have been derived from texts by Tariq Ali or from the print media. The works pulse with affective energy and gesture towards an elemental mode of translation that multiplies and massifies individual yet undifferentiated forms. *Other Histories* extends Amin Rehman’s past works and introduces a transformative new body that extends the artist’s exploration of meaning inwards and subsequently crafts a new discourse on globalisation, marginalisation, and neo-colonialism. The calculus inherent in these meditations dismantles the notion of fixed paradigms of control and power. The artist’s self, his process, and his art are folded into each other, placed alongside each other, and their unity allows them to interact in a kinetic way. The polemical inhabits all spatial and temporal planes simultaneously in endless permutations and is reflected in the formations that constitute the work.

Probably no single intellectual from Pakistan since the 1960s, a watershed decade in the entire world that saw the establishment of student reforms in the wake of mass protests, has informed intellectual and artistic discourse in Pakistan to a greater extent than the Pakistani-English scholar Tariq Ali. No one has had more influence on shifting perception of the ‘Orient’—and above all its curiously named southern flank, known as South East Asia. Ali’s cross-disciplinary study of the roots of imperialism in Occidental culture literally turned cultural studies on their head, for he gave expression to what people in the East felt, in a language the West could understand. The ‘Orient’ as Edward Said had argued, was and is a European ‘invention’—consistently portrayed as an unfathomable place, teeming with exotic beings, subterfuge, seduction (read sedition) and revenge. Ali is concerned, not with checking the correspondence between Orientalism and some real ‘Orient’, but with investigating the process through which the Oriental is ‘Orientalised’. Though he fiercely challenges value-fraught representations of the Orient, Ali’s point is that Orientalism is far more than a structure of misrepresentations and distortion that can be debunked and dispelled, responding far more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object. In other words, Orientalists were part of a project of imperial domination, and the knowledge they produced served that project.

Yet for political reasons the Pakistani reception of Ali's work (his painstaking anti-essentialism notwithstanding) has construed it as a kind of apology for an unjustly beset-upon Islam—as though his books were a study in hopelessly antithetical and antagonistic identities. This is paradoxical, for Ali was arguing for an alternative to the whole network of knowledge and power he had laid bare, and ultimately the elimination of the notions of Orient and Occident altogether. For indeed, South Asian self-representation, self-critique and internal debate is the inherent blind spot in his analysis, Ali's approach makes it possible not to deal with Islamic culture at all, but only Western representations of it.

The weak legitimacy of local regimes—further weakened by globalisation—leaves the most essential themes of political destiny hanging, thus creating a vacuum filled easily by populists, theocrats, and civil wars. The intellectuals, who ought to have been in the forefront of encouraging change, have largely failed in that role. For the most part, they have been unable to detach themselves from an identity-based tradition of defending 'our' causes in the face of the 'enemy.' In short, whereas Said and others tend to conflate modernity with imperialism, Ali argues that though Empire was certainly an important component of modernity, it was not an essential one, and the latter cannot be reduced to the former. Said's position leads to a critique of external causes; Ali's to the critique of internal causes. One might, of course, be tempted to applaud an intellectual division of labour, within which both a critique of imperialism and a more introspective critique have an important role to play. This opposition, at any rate, is constitutive of the intellectual climate in Pakistan today.

Repetition is a key component in the process of creation; texts form images, the images shape the text, and in each case the line is an originary point, it is elemental and atomised, but Rehman's work is anything but linear. Rather it is an assemblage of histories, theories, geographies and convivial relations between them all.

Process and being, as well as image and word, are braided together and crafted onto a single surface to create intense depth and an opacity that mirrors the artist's own encounters with globalisation. According to this passage, the concatenation of the artist's existence and the art he creates is eternal, and it is his own passion and desire that fuel his capacity and his art. The process outlined here probes the relation between art and the self, between the production of self and of art. In this method time is collapsed, reference points are ailinear, and the intervention the artist makes to his milieu reconsiders the paradigms of regional specificity and essentialised stories of origin that are often mapped onto geographic terrain.

Though often tethered by critics to the concept of identity politics, Amin Rehman's art has never been about the simple affirmation of identity or about the positing of any correct form of cultural politics. Take the text of the work that reads, 'The ideological dominance of the Empire, backed by its military ascendancy, has now grown so pronounced that many of those who were once critical of the way this power was used are reduced to found

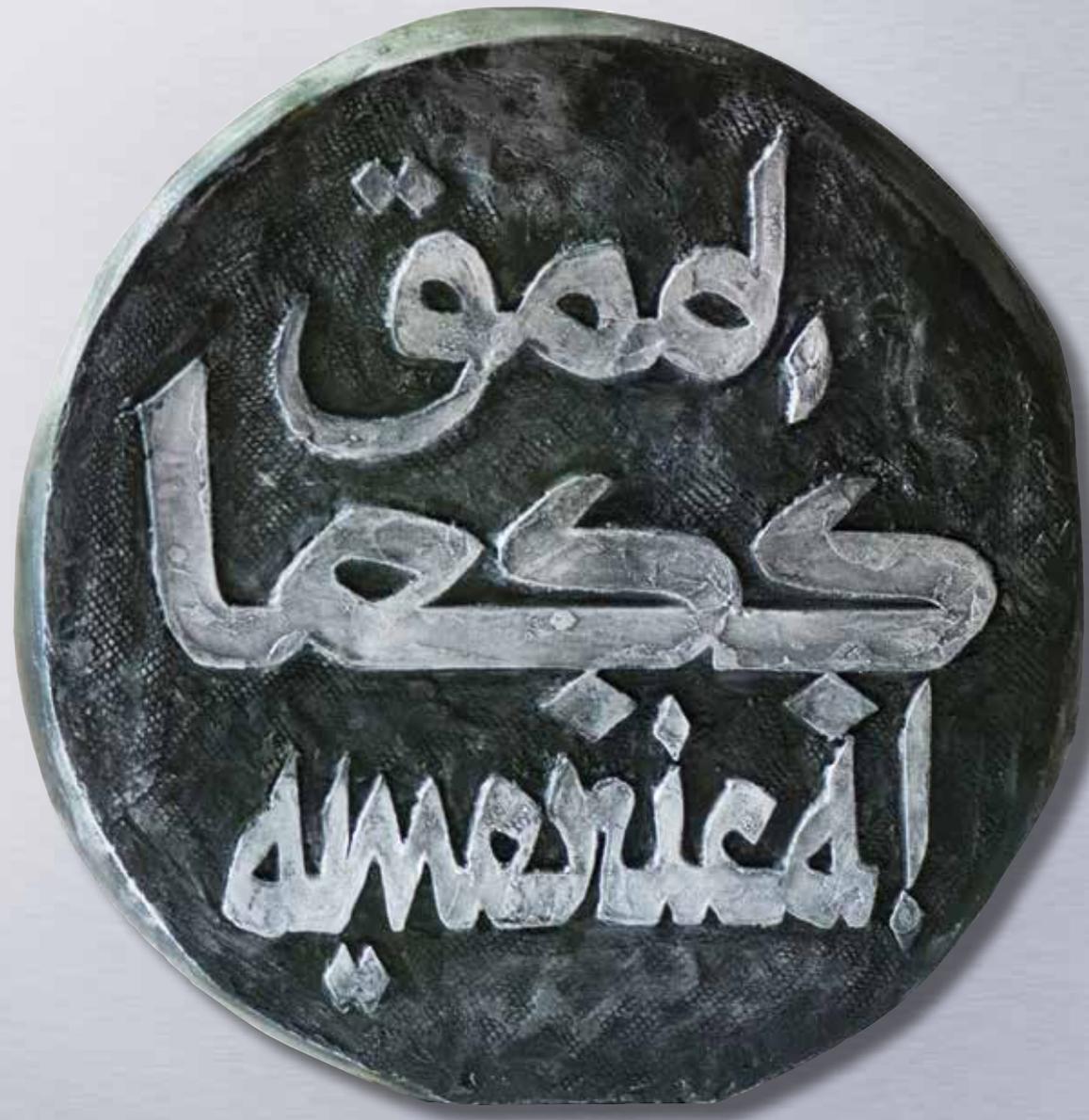
purring and trite eulogies.' As done by Rehman, the raw language and syntax of the text contribute to a broader sense of impropriety. The text's dual meaning flows in part from the cadence and logic of the narrator's delivery. Reconstituted as a text painting, the slogan is distanced, though not entirely dissociated, from the narrator's voice. It is now the viewers who must mouth these words, whether silently or aloud, and thereby speak the rage barely veiled beneath their humour.

Other Histories traces a recursive path, rather than a linear plot, through the last two decades of Rehman's career. Early projects and artistic concerns resurface through the lens of later experiences and creative commitments. Rehman channels a past that is at once immediate and remote, lived and imagined, visible and evanescent. As a viewer and critic of his art, I want to allow for its shifting temporalities and multiple references rather than to fix them in place.

Rehman's dialectical engagement with history is nowhere more intense than in his current body of work. By using the antiquated diction, style and syntax, the artist draws out the latent effects of history on the current moment, including the world's qualified embrace of globalisation. Rather than situate the narrative securely in the past, he insists on the continuing relevance of that narrative to contemporary life. The printed proliferation and stylistic backdating opens a space, at once critical and creative, for the artist to comment on various aspects of his personal experience.

Aasim Akhtar

Artist, art critic and curator



The Lahore Connection

It's almost a decade ago that I received the first email from Amin Rehman, introducing himself and suggesting that we collaborate on a project that linked his art to my take on world politics and history. I had no idea what exactly he wanted or how it would work. Frankly, I was not sure of my part in all this, but he persisted. We Skyped—Toronto-London—in Punjabi which was reassuring and a few months later he arrived at my front door in North London. We talked. He too was born in Lahore, the son of a well-known Lahore artist, Ustad Bashir ud Din, who had been among the younger members of the Lahore School dominated by Chughtai. The city had a strong artistic tradition stretching back to the sixteenth century when the Mughal emperor Akbar established an atelier.

To my surprise it turned out that he had grown up on Muslim Road, a few minutes away from Nicholson Road where we lived. The area, to this day, known as Qila (Fort) Gujjar Singh remains lively. Gujjar Singh was the dominant member of a Sikh triumvirate that occupied the city for a brief period in the 1760s. Lahore was like a see-saw. It typified the condition of Northern India as a whole. The collapse of the Mughal Empire had created a power vacuum. Sikh tribes battled with Afghan rulers for control of the city and its outlying region. The Sikh confederacy had the advantage of being local and the Afghan king, the dreaded Ahmed Shah Durrani was regarded as a merciless plunderer. He took the city twice and emptied it of its valuables before being recalled home to deal with a threat from Persia. The Sikhs were soon back in power. Their leader, Ranjit Singh, was the effective ruler of the Punjab, but his heirs were militarily defeated by the British and succumbed politically to the new, pink-faced Commissioners and deputy Commissioners, who would take their places among the most loyal of British Indian troops, more so than the Gurkhas who went on strike in 1946.

And so Qila Gujjar Singh retained its character till the Partition of 1947 when Lahore's much-vaunted cosmopolitanism was blown away in six months. Centuries of cultural co-existence between different communities vanished in an instant. The recovery was slow but, as Amin Rehman and I discussed, the city recovered its vibrancy. Poets and painters, short-story writers and literary critics, commingled in its cafés. Basant, the kite-flying festival, was celebrated as it had been for centuries.



recto: *Flip the Coin #1* – 2014
Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter

I was a total addict, flying kites the whole year round in preparation for Basant. Our conversation brought back many memories of the city and how it had changed while still remaining the same. Its humour; its passions, both political and those of the other kind; its street food, the sweet shops on Beadon Road, the narrow lanes of the old city, its monuments, the hustle and bustle. I hated it when the family moved away from here in 1954 to the Shah Jamal desert three miles east. Apart from the sixteenth-century Sufi saint Baba Shah Jamal's tomb, then as now a meeting place for mystics and bhangis and lovers of music, there was little else. The newly built bungalows—all three of them—belonged to my father and his sister. Quila Gujjar Singh, where we had street cricket teams and where some of *Bhowani Junction* was filmed (my friends and I had watched the filming and stared without restraint at Ava Gardner, never to be forgotten (her co-star, Stewart Granger, we found less compelling). Especially the kites. There were no *guddas* or *guddis* or *patangs* lighting up the winter skies. No kite duels to enliven the atmosphere. That was then.

Now a fellow-Lahori in a different politico-cultural time and a different century was showing me some of his art. Amin Rehman's work could not differ more from that of his father's art—Ustad Bashir ud Din's style combined the romanticism of Chughtai with the realism of the miniature tradition. This did not always work, but his technical skills and his eye for colour helped transcend the weaknesses.

The instinct for colour must be genetic. Amin has inherited it, though on every other level his work could not differ more from that of his father. He works in a surprising new form, an abstract calligraphy, almost as if he thinks that the pure abstractions of early Islamic art (when the injunction against images was strictly observed and gave us tiles and calligraphy that has yet to be bettered) is a better model for these bad times. Abstract calligraphy? It sounds like a contradiction, but it isn't for though the style is abstract the words that Amin Rehman paints are not obscure. Meaning lies at the core of his abstract calligraphy. There are no ambiguities, no coyness, no retreat from the truth, no desire to please any establishment. The combination of carefully chosen words and colours defines his work. What he is attempting to create is nothing more or less than a new aesthetic of resistance. He was embarked on this path long before he encountered my work. I was delighted to work with him, but let me emphasise that I did very little apart from pointing him in the right direction as far as various texts were concerned. He did the lion's share and the result does not disappoint.

Painting can be subversive (one thinks of the avant-garde that lit up the century starting with the Constructivists and ending with the videos of Shirin Neshat or the work of the impressionists in the preceding century, Pissarro in particular, that slightly distorted reality to make it more real), but in our subcontinent, traditional forms dominated regardless of whether it was Tagore or Chughtai. Later, Bhupen Khakhar, Vivan Sunderam and others in the Baroda school, began to challenge existing verities. Khakhar defied tradition by painting homosexuality in powerful, explicit images often set against lush backgrounds as well as depicting the

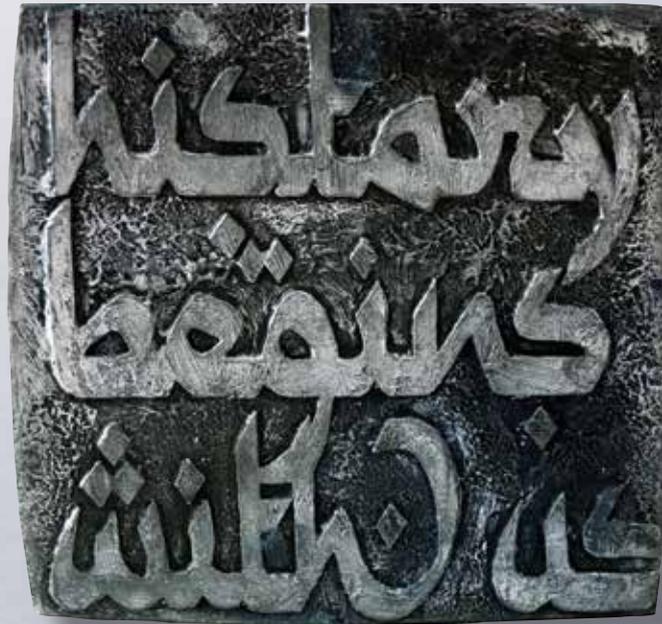
street lives of ordinary people in extraordinary colours. It was his use of the latter that elevated him above his contemporaries. Sunderam was openly political with series like *The Heights of Macchu Picchu* and in 1991 *The Gulf War*, painted with charcoal and engine oil.

The Lahore School and its heirs were hampered on many fronts: the combination of military dictatorships and the religious fundamentalism that they spawned tended to handcuff creativity. Even earlier resistance had come from the great Punjabi poets of the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries, not the masters of the miniature. Waris Shah's epic, *Heer Ranjha*, is not simply a love story. It is a savage denunciation of class and caste and the hired mullahs who defended these institutions. The confrontation between Heer (forced into marriage against her will) and the Qazi representing patriarchy and religion could have been written today, but wasn't.

We are living in a period of transition and how this century will end is a matter for debate. A number of guidelines need to be followed. When unthinking empire loyalists shout 'God Bless America' the response should not be to compete with the strongest imperial power in torture, drones, violence, etc. Instead we should reply by subverting the slogan: God, Less America. Art alone can never be enough. A novel, a poem, a painting, a piece of sculpture; monumental art can make people think, which is not unimportant. But in order to transform a world that is desperately crying out to be remade we need action that transforms the way we live. We have to reclaim both the wealth that is monopolised by the global one percent and the freedoms that are being slowly whittled away. Without them we will suffocate.

Tariq Ali

Writer, journalist, historian, playwright and film-maker



History Begins With Us

What belongs to a language game is a whole culture.—Ludwig Wittgenstein

Entering the Thames Art Gallery, we see a continuing investigation into how written language shifts and defines our historical identities. In Amin Rehman's *OTHER HISTORIES*, words, sentences and phrases are procured from the influential British Pakistani activist and novelist Tariq Ali. More specifically, they derive from *A Sultan in Palermo*¹ and from his growing archive of Western news media sources, from which Rehman constructs a collision of 'fact' and 'fiction.' *A Sultan in Palermo* is set in Medieval Sicily, where Christian King Roger II of Sicily reigned under the title of Sultan Rujari, all the while maintaining a fictitious identity as a Muslim.

The novel depicts the twelfth-century cartographer Muhammad Al-Idrissi's life as he attempts to survive as a Muslim within this deceptive kingdom. This fourth novel in *The Islam Quintet* stands out as an insightful restaging of a moment in which the intermingling of religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) found a fleeting and beneficial coalescence.² Ali's weaving of ancient historical fact and fictional characterization allows for a critical inquiry to why Islamic culture is deeply marginalized in Western society. The intentional use of passages from this text elevates Rehman's neo-conceptual art practice with a rich source of ancient consequence and contemporary interrogations on the naïve imperialist perception of Islam as having no artistic, cultural or social historical significance. In these numerous panels of vinyl words, neon sentences and freestanding oversized carved shekels, in the unfolding language game on the walls and token coinage before us, we see (and hopefully read) an awakening reappraisal of the persistent ignorance of the plurality of eastern Mediterranean, Arab and South Asian cultures.

Cleverly weaving media text taken from foreign policy briefings with Ali's medieval accounts of cultural manipulation and insurrection, the slippage between historical portrayals and information media generates a cautionary reminder of the threat that cultural authoritarianism poses to humanity. These panels are essential in order for us in the Western world to become aware of the immense human

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History Begins With Us – 2013

Mixed media on board. 25.4 cm diameter

Mooers, Colin Peter. 2006. *The New Imperialists: Ideologies of Empire*. Oxford: Oneworld. 47

Lahore – 2013

Mixed media on board. 25.4 cm diameter

capacity to recycle cultural, political, religious and social ideology under the concept of protectionist 'truth.' Tariq Ali's protagonist Muhammad Al-Idrissi is the perfect lens to magnify Rehman's layering of ancient and current histories. Through this lens, Ali examines the human fear of oblivion, a fear that ultimately leads to a blind arrogance to otherness—better known as the cultural status quo. Al-Idrissi recounts seeing the written word erased from a multifaceted culture, thereby allowing the ruling power direct control through keeping its subjects unaware of the true benefits of a pluralist humanity:

*rebels with long beards belonging to sects that preached the virtues of purity and abstinence... burnt the books of learning, outlawed philosophical discourse, punished scholars and poets, thus beginning the process that would allow the enemy to enter through the pores of our weaknesses and destroy everything.*³

Just as Al-Idrissi recounts how the loss of the written word is central to retaining power, Rehman's words also illustrate how a language game (in any time period) is a poignant reminder of the way in which today's global sameness marginalizes the full spectrum of human cultural and intellectual variety. Rehman's strategy of using words as an art form prompts us to recognize how any language game stems from a predefined usage under which any culture can slowly wither under the beating sun of an authoritarian reign. Rehman uses Al-Idrissi's voice to infiltrate 21st-century information media. The textual strangeness of two competing rivals orchestrates a narrative cadence warning us about keeping difference in a collective memory. Just as *A Sultan in Palermo* is a critical reflection on imperialist arrogance, these all-encompassing appliqués of words and glowing neon sentences simultaneously entertain us while they educate us. Confronted with the repeating patterns of decorative lines of text that ebb and flow in an instability orchestrated within the spatial spectrum of the Thames Gallery, we proceed with apprehension, searching for our own oasis where the rhythmic expanse of 'foreign'-looking words are playing off a deeply Orientalist cliché of mystical intrigue. Stepping out of this imperialist perspective, we, like Al-Idrissi, have to map out a route for survival in a reign of words that appear to be different.

Capitalizing on a longstanding technique of word use in mid-20th-century conceptual art, Rehman keenly exploits a simple question found in his vinyl panel: *why do I tell you this?* This question activates the power of words when used in a talismanic tradition distinctively seen in ancient and contemporary Islamic mosques. Decorative words attached to surfaces evoke the authoritative power of God, and the gallery walls become a reminder of the naive Western view that mainstream news media has appropriated some type of god-like ownership on 'truth.' If words are ammunition in a Western war on terror, however, Al-Idrissi's ancient cautionary words attempt to free us from the raging sandstorm of ignorance to Islam's diverse artistic, cultural, historical, scientific, and political influence. Ignorance to the power of language, and to the

ease with which it can sustain a cultural status quo, culminates in a modernist Orwellian idea that 'all the beliefs, habits, tastes, emotions, mental attitudes that characterize our time are really designed to sustain the mystique of [politics] and prevent the true nature of present-day society from being perceived.'⁴ At this moment of reckoning, we can see created in text before us Ludwig Wittgenstein's longstanding aesthetic position that 'what belongs to a language game is a whole culture.'⁵ Here, we see our current obsession with obtaining knowledge in our digitally-sourced global culture; our new rituals of comprehension of otherness through internet sources have become nothing more than high-tech translations of written and spoken language, which have become the intermediaries of Nietzsche's 'will to power,' first articulated in *The Birth of Tragedy*. According to this theory, 'will to power' defines how we seek power under the conditions of protection and enrichment. In these aspirations of protection and enrichment, the textual tenets adhered to the gallery wall finally unveil the language game that creates a form-creating understanding of any given culture—simply based on a font precursor. As we circle around each other in the gallery, reminiscent of whirling Dervishes, we catch glimpses of others spinning to read the text for the locus of knowledge. These panels reveal our inner longing for valuation to our being. In a gauged expression of how font aesthetics can visually express both cultural interpretation and cultural perspective, while calling to attention the residual effect of a colonialist language game still being practiced, these confined but free floating words become stripped of their power and lay bare the obviousness of cultural Imperialism. With nothing but a blank slate as a carrier of emptiness on which these words are attached and read, just as words, Rehman's shrewd act of conceptual minimalism, so reminiscent of the 1960s conceptual art strategy, makes these defiant lines of text simply exemplify language based on aesthetic evolution. That imperialist language game must be prefaced with this cautionary response: *because how you decide to live after your victory will determine how long you will survive. If one of you decides to become the lord of the land and the rest of you accept, you will not last long.*

By examining the evolution of words used as visual objects, Rehman's art confronts Western 'ownership' of these same words, globally broadcast 24/7. All great art is one of challenge, and by using a seemingly ancient-looking kulkufic font, the language game intentionally played out before us is one that capitalizes on the classic anthropological theory of visual difference. Admitting that, since 9/11, visual difference has become a defining referent for radicalism, we may react to the font style difference without even reading the words. However, by doing so, we reveal our culturally imperialistic bias for democratized surveillance. Rehman's restaging of Tariq Ali's words challenges the habitual ignorance towards difference felt by many in the West.

In the *Socialist Review*, Ali remarked that '[t]he history of the development of Islamic civilization is one of adaptation and intermingling.'⁶ These vinyl word panels are not simply a cacophony of words statically

attaching themselves to the walls. The works are signposts to the adaptation and intermingling of our histories and they come to remind us, through a font type, of how influential Islamic culture has been on the Western facets of humanity. Accepting 'the word' as a weapon can lead to oblivion if used with hatred. Fear of that fate is the fuel that ignites xenophobic venom against pluralist humanity. 'The word' is conditional based on its usage, and it can be associated with any particular organized set of ideological and religious doctrines. If words are neutral until hurled, then accepting the premise that history begins with us generates a moral obligation to take ownership of our words and use them wisely. In fact, as Henri Bergson suggested in the early twentieth-century, any given society has a foundation built on a multiplicity of particular obligations — what he calls 'the whole of obligation.'⁷ If obedience is an ingrained human trait, then, art is the escape route off the hierarchical power pyramid. The human desire to survive has led Rehman to scrutinize how obedience to one language game over another has narrowed the social aperture to focus on only preordained religious, political or ideological power. Ironically, although narrow-minded obedience to a single cultural identity has resulted in many of our great works of art throughout human history, *OTHER HISTORIES* is asking us not to overlook the fact that history does begin with us. Here before us the aesthetic differences forced into confinement become a mirror where their thin surfaces reveal that a visual strangeness of opposing fonts is the pluralist future we should strive to reflect.

Before exiting, take a moment to see beyond the surface and contemplate on the power of words: '[to] describe their use or to describe what you mean by a cultured taste, you have to describe a culture [and] what belongs to a language game is a whole culture.'⁸ Like the cylinder seals of ancient Mesopotamia, a word carried may only appear as a two-dimensional pattern on a movable surface. However, as it is attached by ownership, it carries with it personal attachment. These exaggerated tokens of language games ask how 'the word' is a cultural point of reference from one age to the other. Initially, just looking will only provide an aesthetic engagement to the decorative nature of words. However, the instant we recognize the externalized power, the faster we concede that our own language game is a cultural survival instinct, reminiscent of Al-Idrissi's manoeuvres to maintain his own Muslim identity. The sooner we freely admit our own obedience to political, ideological and religious words, the sooner the veil of ignorance will be lifted, providing an unfiltered perspective on how artistic, cultural, ideological, political, religious and social words shape our intermingled history. What first appeared to be a disarming gallery of conflicting words has now become a journey where **امریکہ کے آغاز کی تاریخ** (history begins with us).

Ken Giles

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Notes

1. Tariq Ali, *A Sultan in Palermo* (London: Verso Press, 2005)
2. The quintet includes *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*, *The Book of Saladin*, *The Stone Woman*, and *Night of the Golden Butterfly*.
3. Tariq Ali, *A Sultan in Palermo* (London: Verso Press, 2005), 70.
4. See Chapter 1 of George Orwell's *Ignorance is Strength* (1949). <http://www.panarchy.org/orwell/ignorance.1949.html>
5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Point #26, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California P, 2007), 8.
6. Talat Ahmed, *Interview: Tariq Ali*, *Socialist Review* (November 2006). <http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=9871>.
7. Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Trans. R.A. Audra and C. Brereton (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame P, 1991), 25.
8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) , 4th ed., Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker (ed.), and Joachim Schulte (ed.) (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 8.

the soil of my land
blessings be upon the soil of my land
in pakistan itself the long
where they have decreed the custom
night continues as the cycle
that men should walk no more with
restraints: military leadership
heads held high, and if a lover should
promising reforms degenerates
set out on an errand of love, let it be with
into tyranny, politicians promising
downcast eyes, and a skulking gait
social support to the people
this in the new order for all those of faith
degenerate into oligarches.
that bricks and stones are incarcerated
pakistan will oscillate between
and only the dogs are free, the alters of
these two forms of rule for
tyranny must be propitiated, there must
the foreseeable future
always be the few, who will keep the faith...

Lahore's Other Histories

In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, when God creates Adam and tells him what riches he is heir to he says 'And you will see Lahore of the Mughals'. Presumably, the blind poet was acquainted with the magic of Lahore. But not only poets, artists and musicians have, for centuries, been dedicated to Lahore; often having to pay dearly for this passion.

Masud Sa'ad Salman (1046–1121), Lahore's first documented poet, was incarcerated in Lahore from where he called out

*Oh Lahore, how do you fare without me?
How are you illuminated without your bright sun?*

One thousand years later, another of Lahore's poets suffered a similar fate—also confined in the Lahore's fort, Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911–1984) called out to his 'City of Lights'

*And my heart is troubled this night O city of lights
Will the tide of hope too lose its heart and shrink away?
May the heavens smile on your bright maidens, tell them everyone
In this night when they light their lamps, let them be Brighter Lights.*

Faiz's poetry not only became the voice of the down trodden, the voiceless—it also summoned singers and composers to set his words to music, stirring wide audiences and engaging those who never aspired to read poetry or study literature.

To a visual artist like Amin-ur-Rehman, growing up in Lahore was already heir to a tradition where text and image have befriended one another for as long as one can remember. Sufi poetry is sung daily in the courtyards of Sufi shrines. The Greek traveller Megasthenes (ca. 350–290 BCE) wrote of La Bokla, definitely Lahore, which has since disappeared, but Lahore is still defined by its patron Sufi saints.

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The Soil of My Land – 2014

Metal installation, 61 x 40.5 cm

Foreground: Salima Hashmi, Shoaib Hashmi. 2009. *Song For This Day: Aaj Kay Naam*. Lahore: Sang-E-Meel Publications. 51

Background: Ali, Tariq. 2008. *The Duel: Pakistan On the Flight Path of American Power*. New York: Scribner. 181

Apart from the great Ali Hajveri Data Ganj Buksh (from whose presence one never returns empty handed or empty hearted) there is Ghoray Shah, who loved horses. As a little boy, he rode a wall, which eventually came to life and moved! Those who pray at his tomb today bring little terracotta horses as offerings. The sculptures are part of popular street art.

The Moghul presence embodies a more classical visual tradition. Text intertwined with arabesques and floral patterns appears in illuminated manuscripts and frescos, portraying myths, legends and the exploits of emperors. Thus the Lahore of our times took for granted the friendships between writers, poets and artists. From the legendary Abdur Rehman Chughtai [1897–1975] who was the proponent of the Lahore School in the early 1930s, to the modernist Shakir Ali [1914–1975] of the 1950s and 60s, the connections between image maker and writer were tangible. Chughtai illustrated the two greatest Urdu poets, Iqbal and Ghalib, and made the cover for Faiz Ahmed Faiz's volume of jail poetry, *Dast-e-Saba* (1951). Some of the artists of Lahore Art Circle in the 1950s were also writers and the back-and-forth between art, fiction and poetry was an intrinsic part of Lahore's social milieu. But this aspect is only a fragment of Lahore's many histories. Lying in the pathway of the subcontinent's many invaders, Lahore has witnessed invasions, conquests, pillaging, conflicts and deep fractures. Afghans, Mongols, Moghuls, Sikhs and the British left their mark, often violent and long lasting.

The partitioning of the Subcontinent at the time of Independence from the British tore apart the fabric of the city as homes were looted and whole neighborhoods massacred. Saadat Hassan Manto (1912–1955) dwelt on this madness in his short-stories, as the city turned upon itself in its darkest hours. His stories etched the pain so deeply that it can be recalled today and for all times to come. Arriving in Lahore as a small child in 1947, I was acutely aware of a great movement of human beings, of darkness and suffering beyond comprehension. Faiz's lines from *Freedom Dawn* begin:

*This leprous brightness, this dawn which reeks of night
This is not the one—the long awaited morn*

Ustad Daaman (1911–1984), the great Punjabi poet pleaded for mutual forgiveness after the carnage of Partition:

*The crimson in your eyes gives you away
You have wept as we have wept*

Interestingly, Tariq Ali, also a child of four, born in Lahore in 1943, remembers nothing of Partition. In the prologue to his book, *The Clash of Fundamentalism* he states he learnt much later of how 'Lahore changed completely.' He describes how his father's wet nurse, a sweet woman who had supervised his childhood, recalled 'She had bought me a little green and white crescent replica of the emblem of the new State and insisted that I wave it enthusiastically and chant 'Pakistan Zindabad' (Long Live Pakistan). If so, it was an experience that I never had occasion to repeat!'

Tariq Ali's family lived in a part of the city sheltered from the massacre in the streets of the old city and were spared the horrific scenes which engulfed the lives of people in both parts of divided India. Muslims were entering Pakistan from across the subcontinent as traumatized as the Sikhs and Hindus who were leaving it.

But Lahore withstood that exodus as it had many others in its past.

In these sixty-eight years, Lahore has been both vulnerable and triumphant. Artists and poets have probed and mediated its vulnerabilities, its fractures and its determination to survive its turbulences. Thus the artist/poet becomes the documenter and the commentator.

Tariq Ali's family and my own were closely linked. Our fathers were among the team that set up Progressive Papers Limited, whose publications, the daily *Pakistan Times*, in English and the daily *Imroze* in Urdu were the foremost newspapers of the Left. Our mothers were tireless organizers in the Democratic Women's Federation and the women's wing of the Railway Workers Union. Both families were in the eye of many a political storm. Mazhar Ali Khan, Tariq Ali's father, took over as editor of the *Pakistan Times* when Faiz Ahmed Faiz was arrested in the infamous Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case, stood trial and was sentenced. Both households were (as described by Tariq Ali) agnostic, yet part of a culture which was undoubtedly Muslim and were enriched by its cultural milieu. Tariq Ali muses on the fact that describing himself as a 'non-Muslim Muslim' is an appellation that doesn't quite fit. He aptly observes that the House of Islam has produced so many secular intellectuals and artists in our time, such as Nazim Hikmat, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Mahmood Darvesh and so many others; he also poses the question of whether it is intellectual life in the Islamic world which has become stunted, making Islam a static and backward-looking religion.

Against this complex tapestry, how does one read the work of Amin ur Rehman, once a child in these streets, then an art student at its most prestigious art school, the National College of Arts, and subsequently a practitioner, a teacher, and now a voice from a distant land? The National College of Arts (NCA), embattled

and targeted during the eleven-year regime of General Zia ul Haq, struggled to protect its students from the onslaught of obscurantism and political oppression by closing ranks and negotiating survival strategies with diligence. As an NCA student, Rehman absorbed political realities and sensed the precarious nature of academic freedoms and unavoidable compromises. He witnessed the tumult in the streets and the viciousness of the regime. The brutality of floggings, imprisonment and torture silenced Lahore's populace, but images found their way into art, in layered nuanced, oblique ways. The poet's response was more direct. Women poets entered the fray, reciting, inciting.

*We sinful women, who are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear gowns
Who don't bow our heads
Who don't sell our lives
We don't fold our hands together*

railed Kishwar Naheed, while Fehmida Riyaz prophesied,

*The time is coming
For accountability
when they will have to account for it all
But then to answer for this,
Where would you be?*

Faiz, Faraz living in exile, were on everyone's lips.

The young Amin ur Rehman experienced firsthand the power of the word and its seditious intent. He saw how a seething turmoil was successfully suppressed and a sullen populace went about its daily business. He was part of the student unrest at NCA, resisting assault by right wing student groups.

But there was still music, Faiz's words were sung, as was the ageless Sufi poetry of Bulleh Shah (1680–1751). The Sufis' rebellions so relevant that his words were proscribed on television, radio and the stage.

Lahore is no stranger to irrepressible poets and saints. Pir Zaki, buried outside the gates of the Old City, defended it against the Moghuls. They say his body was cut into two, the head flew off and the torso went on fighting. The head and the body are buried separately at his shrine at Yakki Gate, so you pray in both places. Those who know Lahore can well believe in this fierce, implacable spirit. This stubborn resilience is what still informs Lahore and its creative voices today. The shrine of Data Gunj Bukhsh attacked by sectarian terrorists (July 1, 2010), shocked its people who have seen the Shrine's pluralistic beliefs come

under attack in recent times. This then is the face of the scourge which moves like a shadow across the region and beyond.

Lahore's current histories bear the stamp of global conflicts and shifting of power bases to the north, west and east of the country. Suddenly thrust into becoming a conduit for drugs and arms in the Soviet-Afghan war, it has continued to be tossed around in the aftermath of 9/11. Today the heart of the Old City is taken over by an Afghan presence. Pashto is more often heard in the side-streets than Lahori Punjabi. It is a new kind of invasion, barely recorded, barely realized. Visual artists, performers, music-makers absorb the stress; shards which slice substance, shred life.

Amin ur Rehman's passion for Lahore is tempered by the desire to analyze and probe both ancient and recent histories. Words are like talismans, endowed with an aura which goes beyond the literal or even the symbolic. These layers live in both past and present. Thus when Faiz evokes the 'Blessings Upon the Soil of This Land', the artist lays the invocation alongside the tangibility of people's lives in Tariq Ali's text. Faiz's poem was written in prison in the 1950s, but it is resurrected each time Pakistan succumbs to one military dictator after another.

I am reminded here of a prank carried out by a trio of school boys during the regime of Pakistan's first dictator, General Ayub Khan, who took over in 1958. Pakistan had aligned itself firmly with the US in the Cold War and signed strategic regional security pacts like CENTO. Lahore's citizens woke up one morning to see the legend 'Yankee Go Home' scrawled across the walls of Governor's House in red paint. The consternation of the security agencies was palpable as they scrambled to search for the culprits. Soon found out, three fifteen-year-olds were interrogated by the police, while BBC radio broadcast the news of an emergent civil protest. One of the culprits was young Tariq Ali; his companions were his childhood pals, Shahid Rehman and Salman Taseer.

Military dictators have weighed heavily on Pakistan's history and consistently thwarted the possibility of growth of a democratic sensibility in public life. By their very nature they have a contempt for public debate and no tolerance for diversity.

Tariq Ali's words in Amin ur Rehman's works emerge to remind one of the last dictator and the subsequent elected oligarchs that replaced his dispensation. The poem thus penetrates the screen of contemporary realities. Like components of a *mashrabiya*, they exist together, interlaced. One timeless, the other more urgent; dissecting, investigating, searching. 'The Custom that Men Should Walk No More with Heads Held High' shadows 'The Long Night Continues as the Cycle Restarts'. But the poet is insistent 'There

Must Always be the Few, Who will Keep the Faith’, reminding Tariq Ali that while he sees no change in ‘the foreseeable future’, the fight must go on.

Amin ur Rehman’s talent, like his father’s before him, was nurtured in the architectural complex of buildings which include the Lahore Museum. John Lockwood Kipling, father of Rudyard, was the first curator of the Museum as well as the founding Principal of the Mayo School of Arts (now NCA). The Museum’s coin collection is one of the finest in the subcontinent. The young Amin must have not only contemplated it many a time, but also dwelt upon his own personal collection inherited from his maternal grandfather. Thus old Lahore, its Museum and the attached Academy form the warp and weft of Amin’s mixed media installations which include encaustic tiles and coins. The historical texts on coinage are replaced with fresh depositions which refer to the turmoil we are now encountering. Contemporary interpretations of history come from Tariq Ali’s novels. In this instance the inspiration is ‘*A Sultan in Palermo*,’ set in the twelfth century. Tariq Ali wraps his narrative of myth and legend in overtones of current neo-colonial maneuvers. Amin embraces the possibilities in Tariq Ali’s account and refashions visual histories accordingly.

Speak up From Your Grave refers to the deeply poignant Amrita Pritam poem about the blood-letting of 1947. Six decades later, the carnage continues, sectarian hatred replaces communal enmity. The Shia minority braces itself on a daily basis in Pakistan. Sixty members of the Hazara community were massacred in Quetta in 2013. The community, whose weekly death toll instigates ‘The Walking Dead,’ is steeped in pain, but couched in a visually serene language.

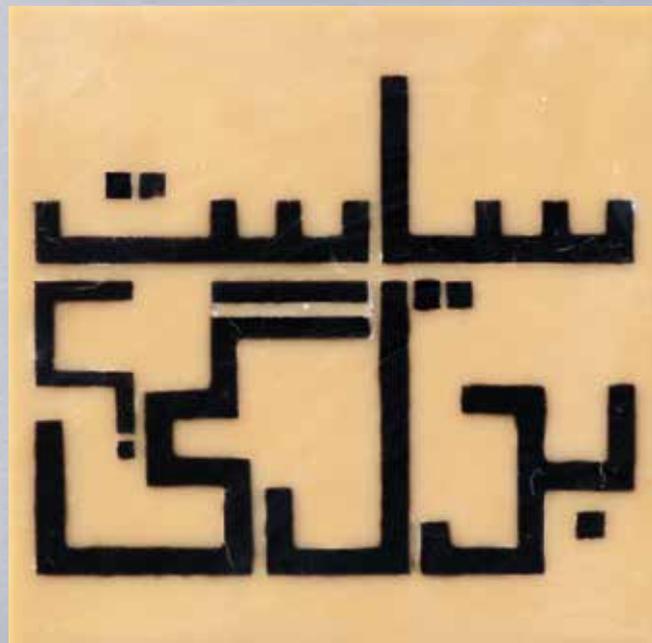
The erosion of stability in present day Pakistan is strangely countered/contradicted by the immutable, ageless, almost indestructible quality of text, object and image in *Other Histories*. There is a pervasive calm in *History Begins with Us* which belies the world’s current tumult. The sensory quality of the surface gently intimates the weariness of an object which has survived much and lived to tell a story. It bears witness to disorder, yet is a patient reminder that survival happens.

Amin ur Rehman is adept at mining the diverse processes he has tried his hand at over the last two decades of his art practice. These range from archaic mediums like encaustic wax, to the use of neon signage. The visual cross currents and inferences are fertile. He prods and sifts his way into issues of cultural invasions and throwbacks. Try as he might, the diaspora cannot be the point of entry for Amin ur Rehman. The diaspora can only widen his context, not replace it. As he seeks to plant himself ‘over there’, he consistently finds himself ‘over here’. His options are limited, because he remains firmly in the embrace of his roots, i.e. his histories in Lahore. No doubt the thinking artist in Rehman casts around for an idiom

which can adopt his experiences, readings and apprehensions. Yet turning back to heritage and origins is hazardous. Burdens of ritual and custom abound. Not only artists living in the diaspora, all practitioners who scrutinize the past for clues on how to reassemble traces which can be rejuvenated find it a perilous project. Evading facile visual entrapments is a challenge. In *Why We Died*, humiliation is only the first phase in the story of struggle. Very delicately, as the calligraphic forms reject and retreat, they bear testimony to a steadfast spiritedness. It is as though the artist cannot bring himself to either accept or take up arms—metaphorically speaking—against the monster that is triumphing. Amin ur Rehman identifies an aperture which provides glimpses of endurance. Evidence of a human ability to rationalize, compete and assemble language, texture, hue and sensation into a healing totality.

Salima Hashmi

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Other Histories

All words have rhythms, stresses heard against a complicated backbeat of ambient sound. There are layers upon layers of trafficked noises from out there to in here. Seek silence. Hear the wind against the window, count someone's footfall down the hall. Quiet, please.

In Amin Rehman's compositions, rhythms of sound are the visible rhythms of hand. There are panels, stele, to be read everywhere. Reading words, whispering sounds, shapes the air. We are breathing air others have shaped with sound.

Amin Rehman fills the gallery with rhythms, a visible calligraphy of pacing, meter, cadence. His compositions are built with line, light, colour. Line becomes word, words become rhythmic patterns, tablets of sound, stele to be read upside one way, down and across yet another way.

The artist composes the rhythmic patterns of his work in counterpoint. His shifts of scale in font and colour permit, invite, indeed, often necessitate multiple text readings. There may be as many as six levels of intention in some of the patterns.

The shifts of font and colour apparent in *Nuclear Weapons*, for example, produce at least six patterned, multi-leveled readings of text. At one level, the text reads: **great advantage weapons, schools, universities, hospitals, clean water in the villages**. At another level, we read: NUCLEAR WEAPONS WEST INDIA PAKISTAN WEAPONRY SACRED. There are four more levels to be seen and considered. Each reading makes apparent another truth, another thought, further ruminations.

At the Heart is another of the vinyl wall installations. It not only presents two major texts interleaved top-to-bottom, it too, like *Nuclear Weapons*, has four additional reading levels. Each is cued by counterpoints of text signed by shifts in font, size, colour. We read, for example: EMPIRE RESPONSIBILITY MILITARY BUSINESS UNFORTUNATELY ROCKWATERS HEADLONGTORRENT. At the same time, another level suggests why: **domination army military worse prevented political**.



Noora Kushti: A Fixed Match – 2015
Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm

Siasat Badal Hai?: When did politics alter? – 2015
Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm

These texts are stele of light and dark marking the backwards and forwards of how a tale may be told; first one way, then another. As rhythms pick up here, there, elsewhere, the counterpoint of this, that, and the other, time holds still, at least for a moment. Each reading reinforces and verifies the fact of first reading... and then one 'sees' the whole. The effect can be oceanic. Start swimming.

The artist has chosen his texts well. His compositions are drawn from the language of the renowned essayist, novelist, and social critic Tariq Ali. In his oeuvre, Tariq Ali, too, searches shift of meaning in language over time—who sees, who speaks, who hears, remembers, and, importantly, who calls the shots.

The materials Amin Rehman uses are the impermanent markers of our time—vinyl and neon, encaustic and paint. The work is presented as wall-mounted vinyl panels, small encaustic tiles, simple neon signs, and small mixed-media work on board. Nothing is writ in stone.

The encaustic tiles, are textured with the rhythms of the artist's own hand. On each we see only a small phrase, a cry: *What Has Gone Wrong; Where Do We Go; A Different Destiny Lay Ahead*. The artist's words cry out to be touched.

Eight small mixed-media texts are entitled *Shekels*, the coins of ancient Palestine. Their words, too, are heartache statements: *You Are History; Speak Up From Your Grave; Wayward Wisdom; We Are The Walking Dead; Who Knows*.

The three neon signs of the artist's installation are long stretches of light, a rhythmic calligraphy formally mounted on the wall, words of light brought near to hand. They tell us simply: *History Begins With Us; Who Knows What I Am; Extreme Centre*.

For peoples everywhere, light is and has been a sign of hope. Ancient Chinese readers devised their mnemonic scripts by throwing large bones into the fire. As the bones cracked, the fissures could be read. The cracks were words from another side of the universe. So, too, the fissures and cracks of caves and rock shelters honoured by our ancestors.

Amin Rehman uses light to guide us across the dark of our histories.

In *Other Histories* there are words coming at us from every side of the room. Pay attention.

Maureen Korp

PhD, University of Ottawa

lecturer, writer, independent critic, and curator of contemporary art

→

Nuclear Weapons – 2014
Vinyl Installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
Foreground: Ali, Tariq. 2008.
*The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight
Path of American Power.*
New York: Scribner. 213 and 214
Background: Ali, Tariq. 2008.
*The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight
Path of American Power.*
New York: Scribner. 413

AS FAR AS NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE
it would be to the great
CONCERNED, THE DOUBLE STANDARDS
advantage of both
OF THE WEST ARE NOT HELPFUL AND
countries if the weapons
ARE VIEWED WITH CONTEMPT IN MOST
were used to build schools,
OF THE WORLD. NONETHELESS IT'S A FACT
universities, and hospitals
THAT NEITHER INDIA NOR PAKISTAN
and to provide clean
BENEFITS FROM THIS WEAPONRY, WHICH HAS
water in the villages
BECOME A NEW FORM OF SACRED PROPERTY

pushing through legal ruling
yet another Gordian knot in
the country's history known
as the 1990s which withdrew all
cases pending against politicians
accused of looting the nation's
treasury the ruling was crucial
for Bhutto since she hoped that
the money laundering and corruption
cases pending against her would
now be dismissed the breakthrough
was loudly trumpeted in the west and
a white washed Bhutto was presented
on a U.S. net work as the champion
of democracy rather than the
fugitive politician facing corruption
charges in several countries

Aluminum installations

Heart of Darkness, Legal Ruling, Political Movement, The West Prefers, Your Country, Wayward Wisdom and In the Interest of Others are independent texts and mimic the writings on the walls and gravestones describing the ongoing crises of aggressive globalization and neo-colonialism has created for some global communities.

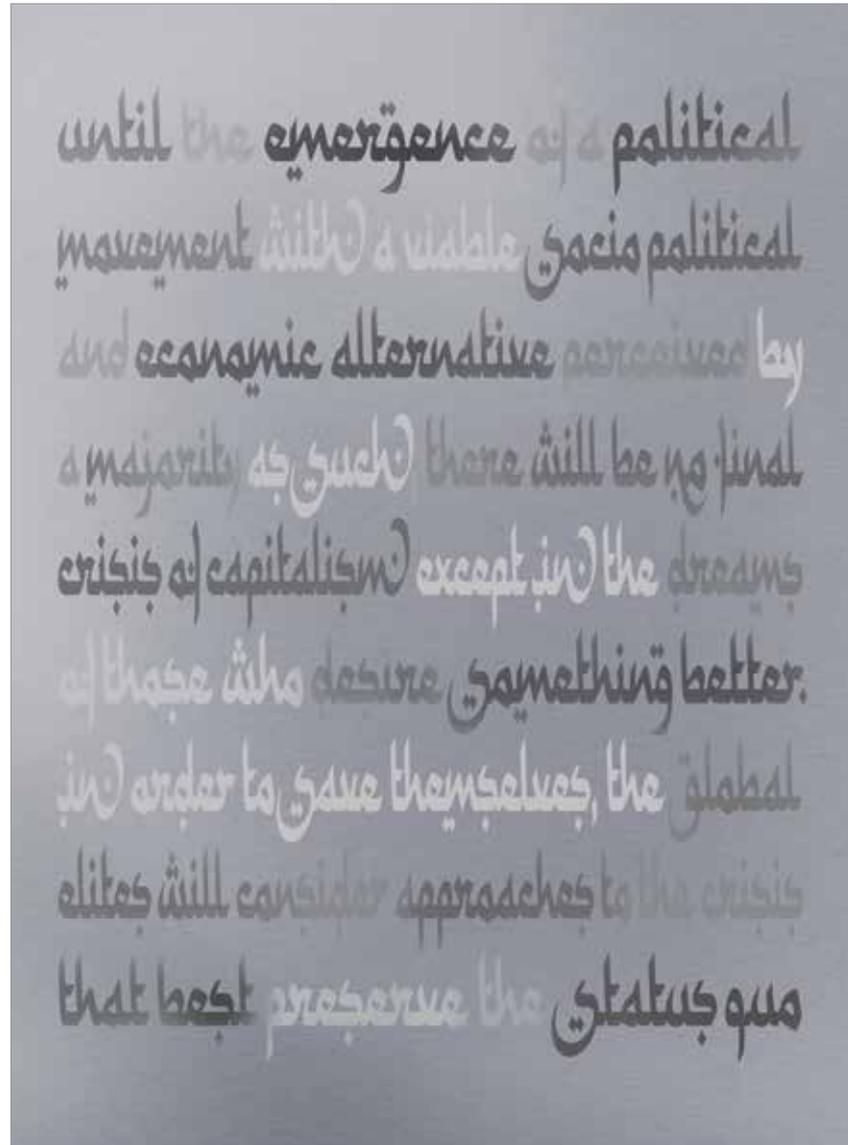
there were conquerors and for
that you want only brute force
nothing to boast of when you have it
since your strength is just an
accident arising from the weakness
of others they established that they could
not for the sake of what was to be
it was just robbery with violence
a great scale of murder and
and man coming at it blind very
proper for those who tackle a darkness
the conquest of the earth which means
means the taking it away from those who
have a different complexion or
flatter noses than ourselves is not a
pretty thing and you look into it too
much and it redeems only

←

Legal Ruling – 2014
Metal installation, 61 x 40.5 cm
Ali, Tariq. 2008. *he Duel: Pakistan on
the Flight Path of American Power*
New York: Scribner. 160

→

Heart of Darkness – 2014
Metal installation, 61 x 40.5 cm
Conrad, Joseph. Excerpt from *Heart of Darkness*.
Ali, Tariq, and Oliver Stone. 2011.
On history Tariq Ali and Oliver Stone in Conversation.
Chicago, Ill: Haymarket Books. 104
<http://site.ebrary.com/id/10510217>.



←
Political Movement – 2014
Metal installation, 61 x 40.5 cm
Ali, Tariq. 2010. *The Obama Syndrome: Surrender at Home, War Abroad.* London: Verso. 87

→
Inspiration From Above – 2014
Metal installation, 61 x 40.5 cm
Ali, Tariq. 2008. *The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power.* New York: Scribner. 5

The West Prefers – 2014
Metal installation, 61 x 40.5 cm
Ali, Tariq. 2008. *The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power.* New York: Scribner. 4 and 5



HERE THE EMPIRE BEARS
at the heart of this
DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY,
dysjunction is the
SINCE IT HAS ALWAYS REGARDED
domination by the army,
THE MILITARY AS THE ONLY
and each period of
INSTITUTION IT CAN DO BUSINESS
military rule has made
WITH AND, UNFORTUNATELY,
things worse. this had
STILL DOES SO. THIS ROCK HAS
prevented the emergence
FORCED CHOPPY WATERS
of stable political institutions
INTO A HEADLONG TORRENT

Vinyl installations

*For Globalization, If America Want,
The Repression, The Ideological Dominance,
The People Cannot Be Blamed, But All This
Had Really Happened and Why We Died* use
the strategy of merging and absorbing layers
of text. These texts contrast, compliment,
contradict and superimpose upon each other.
The background text often speaks for the
pessimistic, while the foreground layer is
the optimistic voice, although sometimes
these are reversed.

←

At the Heart – 2014
Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
Foreground and background: Ali, Tariq. 2008.
*The Duel: Pakistan On the Flight Path
of American Power.*
New York: Scribner. 188

→

Who Knows What I Am – 2014
Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
Foreground: Bulleh Shah poem
Ali, Tariq. 2008. *The Duel: Pakistan On
the Flight Path of American Power.*
New York: Scribner. 17
Background: Rudyard Kipling poem
Ali, Tariq, and Oliver Stone. 2011.
*On history Tariq Ali and Oliver Stone
in Conversation.*
Chicago, Ill: Haymarket Books. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10510217>. 103

if any question why we died,
tell them, because our fathers lied
who knows what i am
and in "a dead statesman," he wrote,
neither a believer in the mosque
i could not die: i dared not rob:
nor an unbeliever worshipping clay
therefore i lied to please the mob.
neither moses nor pharaoh
now all my lies are proved untrue,
neither sinner nor saint
and i must face the men i slew.
who knows what i am...
what tale should serve me here among
mine angry and defrauded young?

THE IDEOLOGICAL DOMINANCE OF
the earliest manifestations of america's
THE EMPIRE, BACKED BY ITS MILITARY
imperial destiny became visible in the
ASCENDANCY, HAS NOW GROWN SO
nineteenth century, first in relation to
PRONOUNCED THAT MANY OF THESE
latin america, later in the pacific
WHO WERE ONCE CRITICAL OF THE WAY
with the conquest of the philippines and
THIS POWER WAS USED ARE REDUCED
an early declaration of interest in japan
TO FOUND PURRING AND TRITE EULOGIES

←
The Ideological Dominance – 2014
Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
Foreground: Ali, Tariq. 2002. *The Clash of
Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and
Modernity*. London: Verso. 255
Background: Ali, Tariq. 2002. *The Clash of
Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and
Modernity*. London: Verso. 256

→
Imperialism – 2014
Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
Foreground: Ali, Tariq. 2002. *The Clash of
Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and
Modernity*. London: Verso. 107
Background: Ali, Tariq. 2002. *The clash of
fundamentalisms: crusades, jihads and
modernity*. London: Verso. 106

The Suez Invasion – 2014
Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
Foreground: Ali, Tariq. 2002. *The Clash of
Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and
Modernity*. London: Verso. 105
Background: Ali, Tariq. 2002. *The clash of
fundamentalisms: crusades, jihads and
modernity*. London: Verso. 106

in february 1958 a union between
imperialism, oil and, after 1948, israel,
egypt and syria - united arab republic
were the three factors that gave a
(war) - came into existence. this was
tremendous boost to arab nationalism.
the merger that, in the twelfth century,
the existence of the soviet union provided
had enabled saladin to unite the arabs
it with a pillar to which it could cling in
and take back jerusalem. the historical
moments of difficulty. in the zionist state
memory of the arab world goes very
deep, and the news stirred many an arab
nationalism would have disappeared
heart. the yemen and the lebanon expressed
with the withdrawal of britain and france
interest in becoming part of a wider federation.
from the region and been replaced with each
but the west was preparing an alternative
country, defending its national interests

the thinking behind the first
the aftermath of the suz
oil war was clearcut. britain and
invasion offered a dual
france wanted to destroy the
opportunity: to punish the nato
nationalist alternative offered
powers - britain, france and
by nasserite egypt to protect
turkey - by sequestering their
interest elsewhere in the region.
enterprises and simultaneously
britain feared the loss of iraq.
to create the basis for economic
france was worried by the birth
planning. the streets were
of a nationalist movement in algeria.
jubilant. cairo recalled the
the zionist regime in israel wanted
words of its poet ahmed shawqi:
to weaken egypt and prevent
'the morning of hope wipes out
the spread of radical nationalist
the darkens of despair, now is
ideas. the repercussions of the
the long-suspected 'daybreak'
debacle had the opposite effect

the people cannot be blamed for the tragedies
 the twentieth century was not kind to pakistan.
 that have afflicted their country. they are not to
 the last three decades, in particular, had witnessed
 blame for the spirit of hopelessness and inescapable
 a shallow and fading state gradually being reduced
 bondage that sometimes overcomes them.
 to the level of a stagnant and treacherous swamp,
 the surprise is that more of them don't turn
 official and unofficial, flourished at various points,
 to extremist religious groups, but they have
 but without the aid of education, technology, or science.
 generally remained stubbornly aloof from all
 a tiny number of people acquired gigantic fortunes
 that, which is highlighted in every election

←
The People Cannot Be Blamed – 2014
 Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
 Foreground: Ali, Tariq. 2008.
*The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path
 of American Power.*
 New York: Scribner. XI and XII
 Background: Ali, Tariq. 2008.
*The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path
 of American Power.* New York: Scribner. 1

→
Why We Died – 2014
 Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
 Foreground: Mudhafar al-Nawab poem
 Ali, Tariq, and Oliver Stone. 2011.
*On history Tariq Ali and Oliver Stone in
 Conversation.* Chicago, Ill: Haymarket Books.
<http://site.ebrary.com/id/10510217>. 105
 Background: Rudyard Kipling poem
 Ali, Tariq, and Oliver Stone. 2011.
*On history Tariq Ali and Oliver Stone in
 Conversation.* Chicago, Ill: Haymarket Books.
<http://site.ebrary.com/id/10510217>. 103
 modernity. London: Verso. 106

*But All That Had Really
 Happened* – 2014
 Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
 Foreground: Fakhar Zaman poem,
 Ali, Tariq. 2008. *The Duel: Pakistan on the
 Flight Path of American Power.*
 New York: Scribner. 278
 Background: Fakhar Zaman poem,
 Ali, Tariq. 2008. *The Duel: Pakistan on the
 Flight Path of American Power.*
 New York: Scribner. 277

i have accepted my fate
 is like that of a bird,
 if any question why we died,
 and i have endured all
 tell them, because our fathers lied
 except humiliation.
 and in "a dead statesman" he wrote,
 or having my heart
 i could not die: i dared not rob:
 caged in the sultan's palace.
 therefore i lied to please the mob,
 but dear god even birds
 no all my lies are proved untrue,
 have homes to return to.
 and i must face the men i slew.
 i fly across this homeland
 what tale should serve me here among
 from sea to sea, and to prison
 mine angry and depressed young?
 after prison, after prison,
 each jailer embracing the other

but all this had really happened:
 how can he who lost his eyesight paint?
 without eyes, we painted
 how can he who lost his hands sculpt?
 without hands, we sculpted statues
 how can he who lost his hearing compose music?
 without hearing we composed music
 how can he whose tongue was cut out sing?
 deprived of tongue, we sang
 how can he whose hands are tied write poetry?
 handcuffed, we wrote poetry
 and how can he whose feet are fettered dance?
 with fettered legs, we danced
 with muffled nose and mouth how can
 and the fragrance of flowers pierced our
 one inhale the scent of flowers?
 muffled mouths and nostrils

the cold winds of hindu kush have, through the centuries, frozen both **more strategically, afghanistan** native reformer and foreign occupier. **has become a central theater** to succeed, a real peace process must **for uniting, and extending the** be organically linked to the geography **west's power and its political grip** and ethnic composition of the country. **on the world order. it provides** those who argue that all that is needed **an opportunity for the empire to** is to throw money at the afghans to buy **shrou of its failures in imposing** off their tribal elders, as the british used **its will in iraq and persuading its** to do, have little idea of what is really **allies to play broader role there** happening on the ground. the resistance **is assuming classical proportions**

←

The Cold Winds – 2014
 Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
 Foreground: Ali, Tariq. 2008.
The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power.
 New York: Scribner. 243
 Background: Ali, Tariq. 2008.
The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power.
 New York: Scribner. 245,

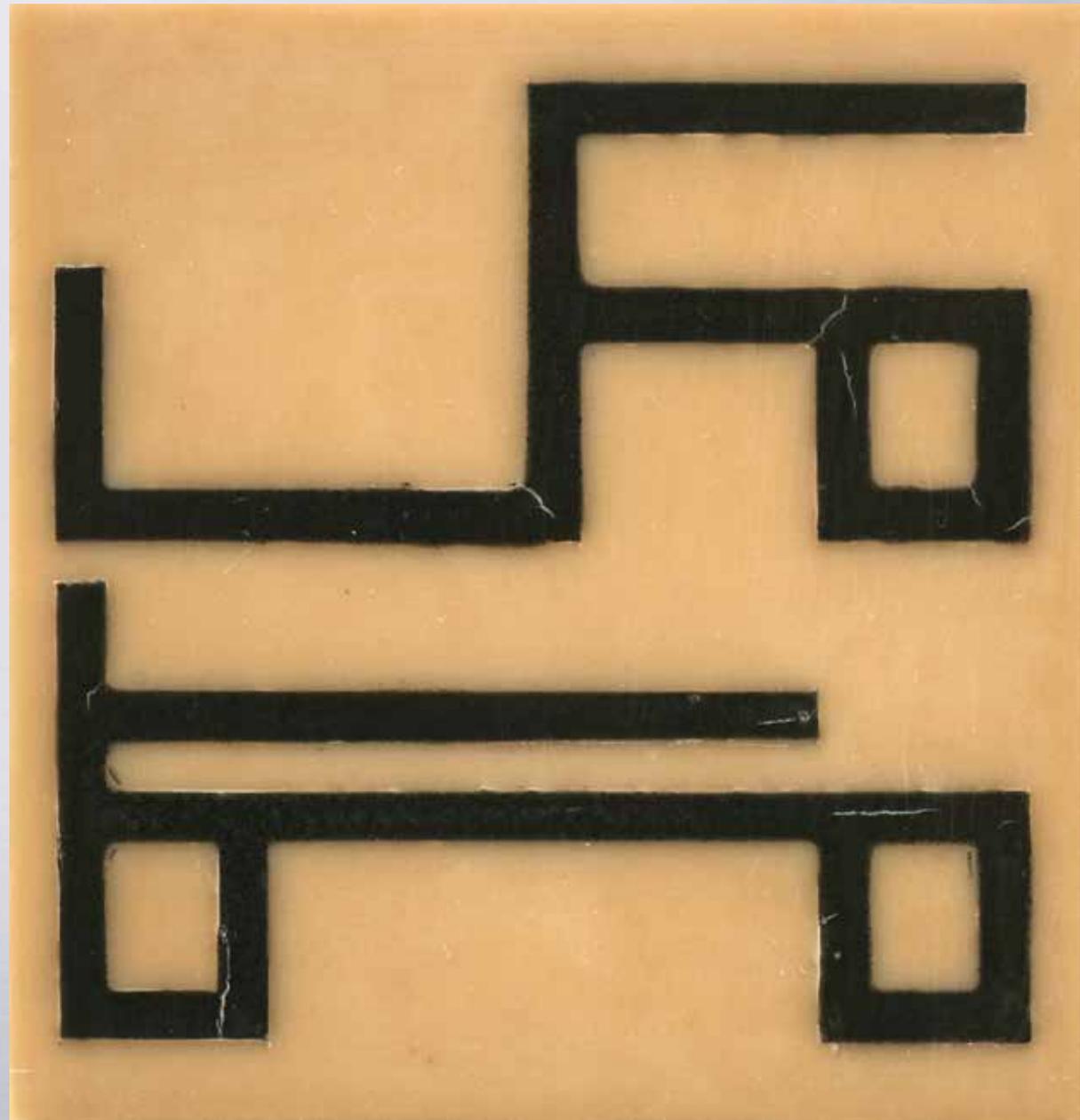
→

In Reality – 2014
 Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
 Foreground: Ali, Tariq. 2008.
The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power.
 New York: Scribner. 248
 Background: Tariq Ali. 2012
The West 'Created This Monster'
 Radio Free Europe, September 20, 2012
<http://www.rferl.org/content/islam-interview-tariq-ali-innocence-of-muslims-film/24713593.html>
 December 15, 2014

You Cannot Occupy – 2014
 Vinyl installation, 152.5 x 122 cm
 Foreground: Ali, Tariq. 2013
The Consequences of War – Confronting War Ten Years On 09.02.13
 21st century U tube,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCcmIsvBNZc>. Time 0:45:47-47:46
 Background: Ali, Tariq. 2013
The Consequences of War – Confronting War Ten Years On 09.02.13
 21st century U tube,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCcmIsvBNZc>. Time 0:45:47-47:04
 Published on 10 Feb 2013

you have a situation today where **in reality, the strategic** the empire occupies a number **needs of the empire are not** of countries in the arab world [like] **destabilizing the region.** qatar, saudi arabia, libya, which is **what is the people of the** nato protectorate, and they are very **region reject these imperial** close to the military in terms of **fantasies? will they, like** creates a new mood, which is **their states, also be** people react in this way **dissolve and created a new?**

21st century is not the same as the 20th century **you can not occupy a country** that re-colonization does not take place economically **against the will of people for too long,** and not really through the use of military power. **they made a huge error in afghanistan.** it is thought that the war in iraq was for iraqi oil. **now they are negotiating with the** the oil was never denied. the war in iraq was **people fighting against them which** essentially a question of asserting the empire's **they have been doing privately behind** hegemony and a short across the chinese. **the scene for years that they have to get out** that was the big development of the 21st century

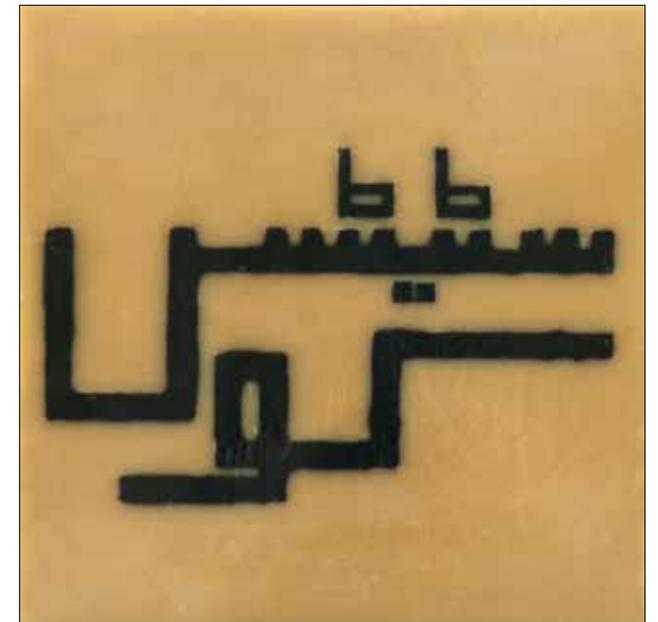


Encaustic installations

The small encaustic tiles: *It Is a Mark of the Time, They Are Not Transparent Enough, History Begins With Us, What Has Gone Wrong, Where Do We Go From Here, The Conquest of the Earth, Layer Upon Dark Layer, A Coin Toss for Your Soul, It Is Not War, It Is Murder* and *A Different Destiny* lay ahead trace neocolonial history, the effects of war, global dominance and cultural interference in ceramics and architectural elements. These direct and open text selections replace historical text and are symbolic of the cultural invasion experienced in colonized countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The texts *Baynami* – Pakistani slang for money laundering and *Muk Muka* – Pakistani slang for under handed deal between the two political parties comment on the money laundering, electoral rigging allegations and ongoing political corruption.

The use of tile has been an integral part of South-Asian art and architectural tradition. In Central Asia, the golden age of Persian tile work is marked with the Timurid Empire. The early decorations in mosques and mausoleums were made in glazed bricks ranging in colour from yellow to turquoise to dark red. The Mughal rulers of the 16th to 18th centuries took the same tradition to India and used tiles to decorate religious and secular buildings.



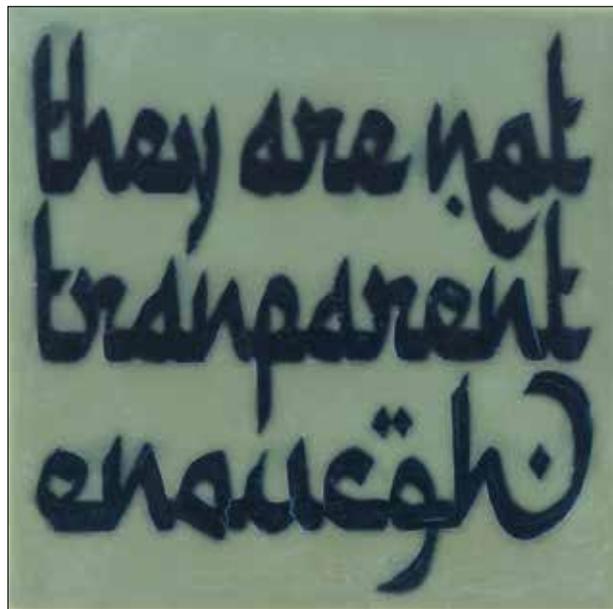
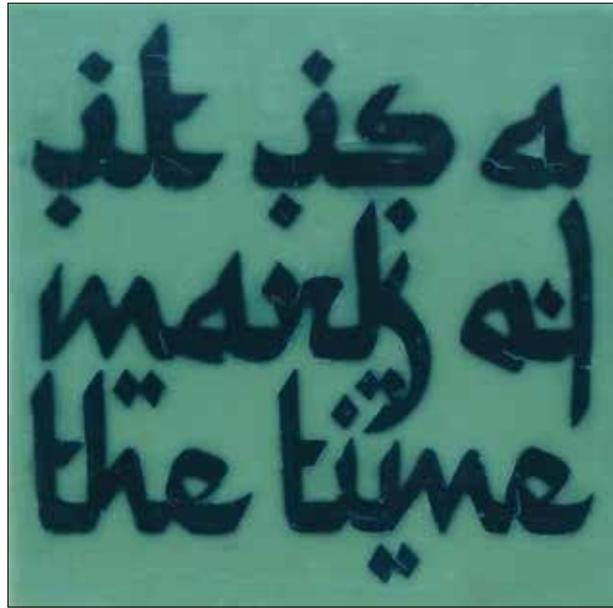
←

Muk Muka (Pakistani slang for electoral rigging) – 2015
Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm

→

Baynami (Pakistani slang for money laundering) – 2015
Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm

Status quo – 2015
Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm



←
It is a Mark of the Time – 2014
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm

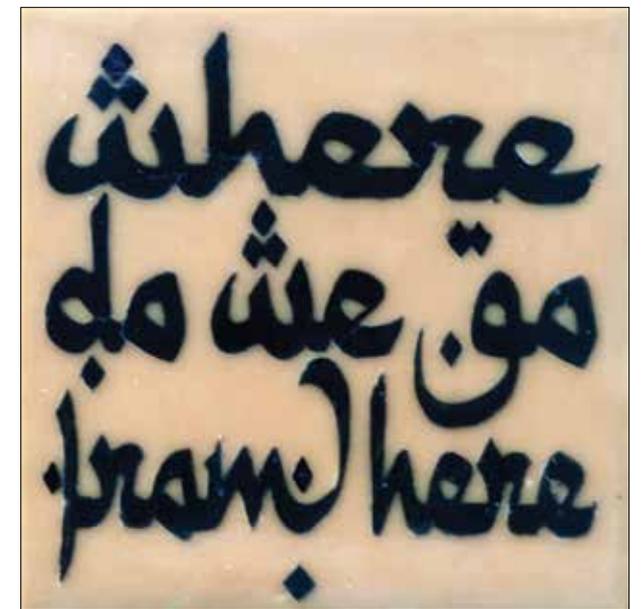
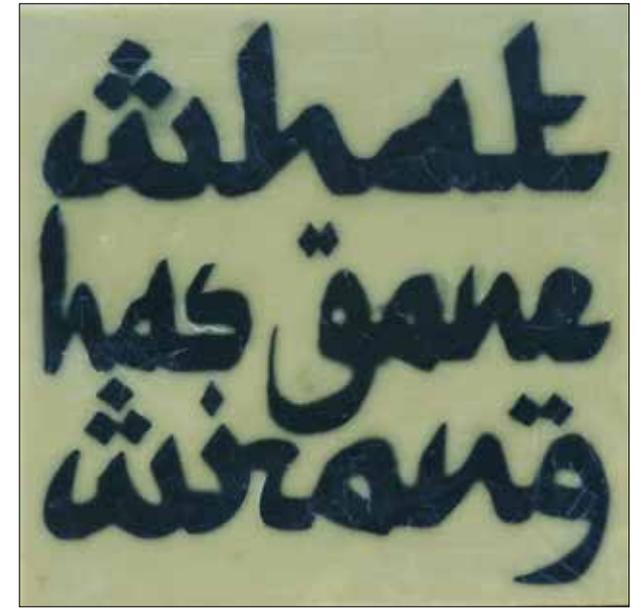
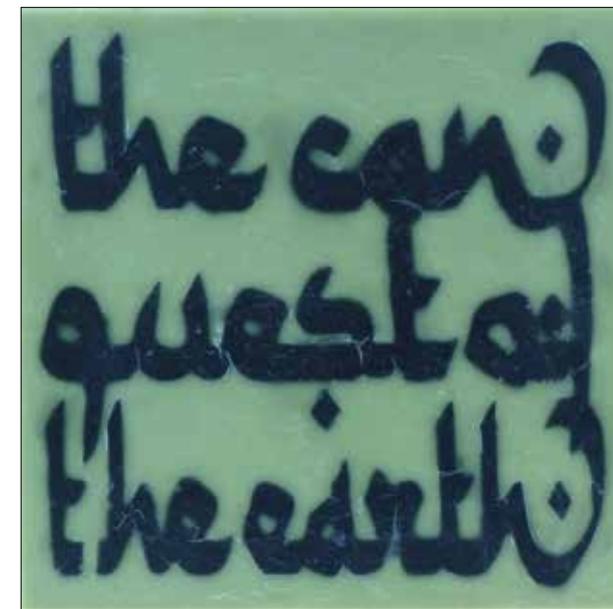
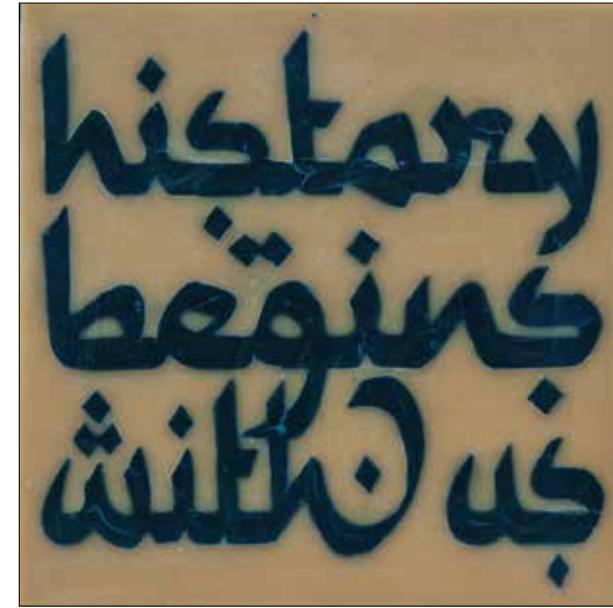
They Are Not Transparent Enough – 2014
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm

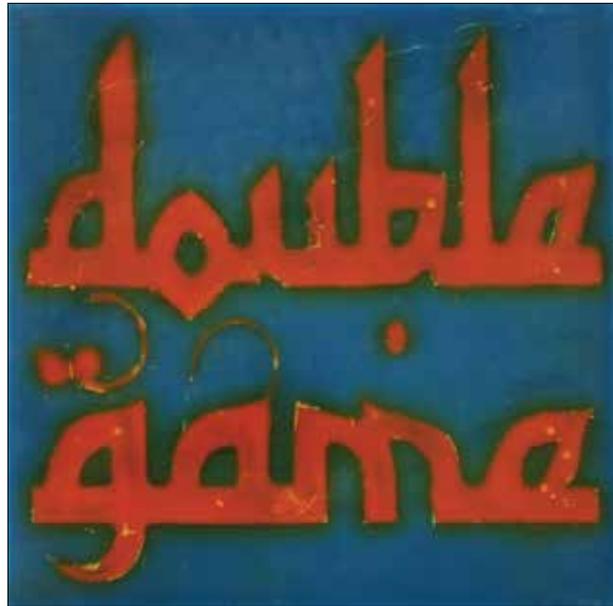
→
History Begins With Us – 2014
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm

What Has Gone Wrong – 2014
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm

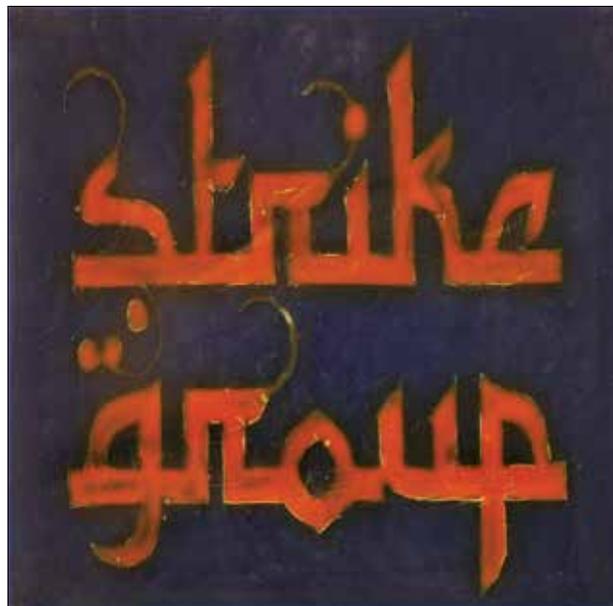
The Conquest of the Earth – 2014
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm
 Joseph Conrad's quote. Mooers, Colin Peter. 2006.
The New Imperialists: Ideologies of Empire.
 Oxford: Oneworld. 47

Where Do We Go From Here – 2014
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm





←
Double Game – 2012
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm



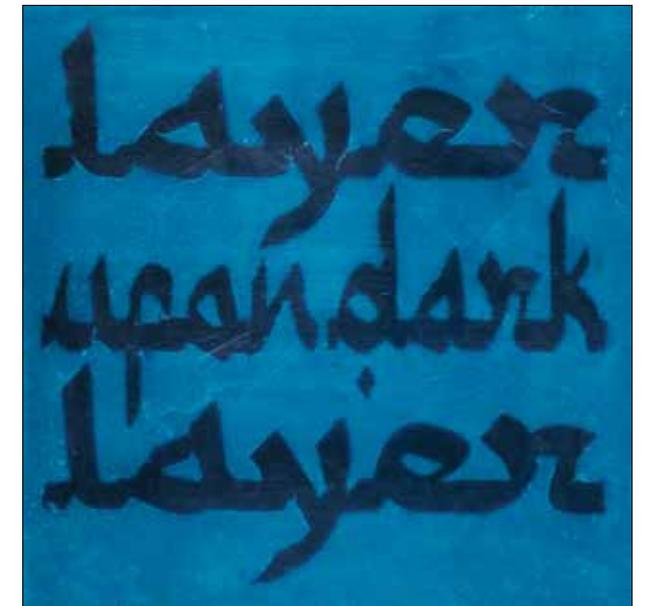
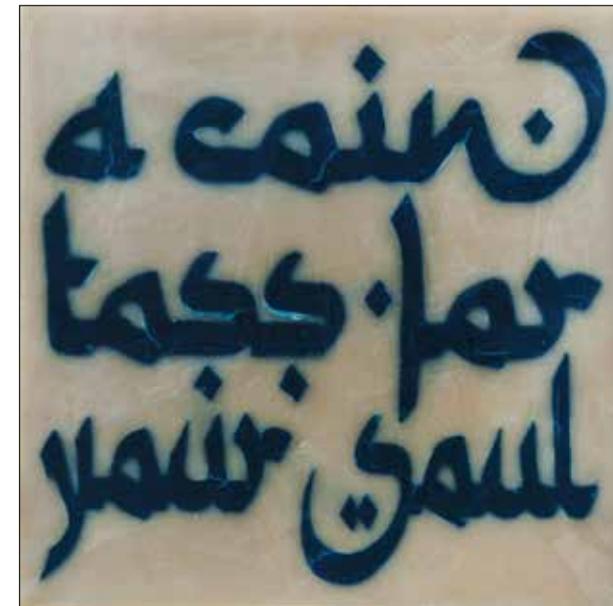
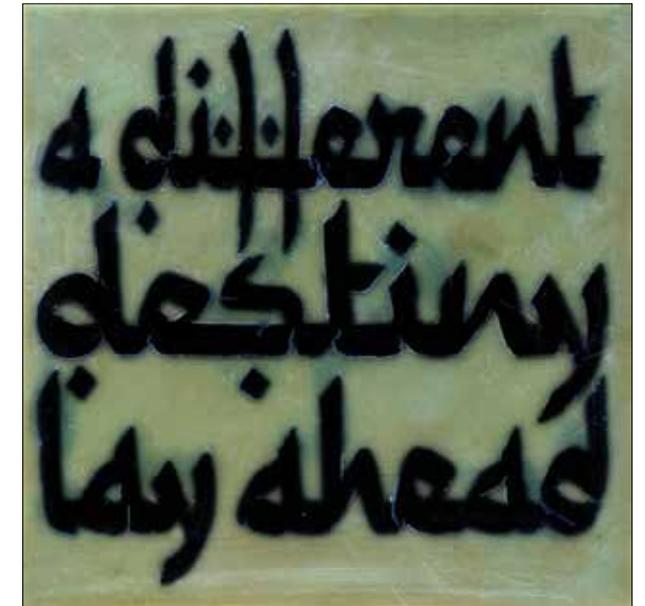
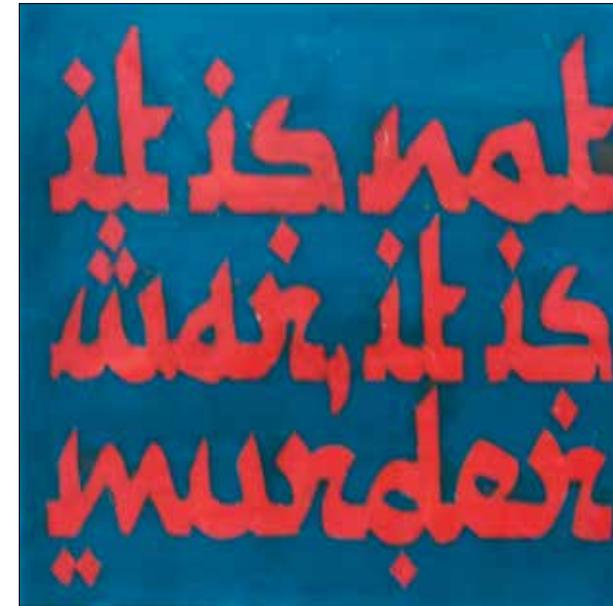
→
Strike Group – 2012
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm

→
A Different Destiny Lay Ahead – 2014
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm

→
It Is Not War, It Is Murder – 2014
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm
 Noam Chomsky's quote,
 John Glaser, Antiwar blog. November 18, 2012
<http://antiwar.com/blog/2012/11/18/it-is-not-a-war-it-is-murder/> Accessed: November 1, 2014

→
A Coin Toss For Your Soul – 2014
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm
 Jalal al-Din Rumi, Daniel James Ladinsky,
 and Nancy Owen Barton. 2012.
The purity of desire: 100 poems of Rumi.
 New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books. 14

→
Layer Upon Dark Layer – 2014
 Encaustic on board, 25 cm x 25 cm





Shekel installations

Mixed-media texts *Shekels*, the coins from Palermo, Palestine to Lahore depict anguish statements: *You Are History, Wayward Wisdom, We Are the Walking Dead, Speak Up From Your Grave* and *who Knows*. In Muqadimah, Ibn Khaldun explains the importance of *Wayward Wisdom* and *Forgotten Lore* to serve the justice in a universal society. The denial of justice weakens the communities and societies. *We Are the Walking Dead* furthers this idea of injustice, prejudice and double-dealing.



←

What Freedom Entails – 2014
Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter

→

recto: *Between Past and Future* – 2014
Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter
Tariq Ali, *New Left Review* 80, March–April 2013,
<http://newleftreview.org/11/80/tariq-ali-between-past-and-future>
Accessed: November 1, 2014

verso: *It Is Not Over Yet* – 2014
Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter



recto: *Forgotten Lore* – 2014
Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter
Ali, Tariq: 2013. *Between Past and Future*,
New Left Review 80, March–April 2013,
<http://newleftreview.org/11/80/tariq-ali-between-past-and-future>
Accessed: November 1, 2014



verso: *Wayward Wisdom* – 2014
Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter
Ali, Tariq: 2013. *Between Past and Future*,
New Left Review 80, March–April 2013,
<http://newleftreview.org/11/80/tariq-ali-between-past-and-future>
Accessed: November 1, 2014



recto: *Great Games* – 2013
Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter

verso: *This Is Going to End Nowhere* – 2013
Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter

recto: *Who Knows* – 2014
Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter

verso: *What I Am* – 2014
Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter





←
 recto: *Speak Up From Your Grave* – 2014
 Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter
 Amrita Pritam poem, Ali, Tariq. 2008.
The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power.
 New York: Scribner. 39

verso: *We Are the Walking Dead* – 2014
 Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter
We Are the Walking Dead, Human Rights Watch. June 30, 2014
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/06/29/we-are-walking-dead>
 Accessed: November 1, 2014



→
 recto: *Flip the Coin #1* – 2014
 Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter

verso: *Flip the Coin #2* – 2014
 Mixed media on board, 25.4 cm diameter

→
 recto: *This Is Not Who We Are* – 2014
 Mixed media on board, 32 cm diameter
 Excerpt from Angus King statement,
Torture Is Who We Are. The Atlantic, December 11, 2014
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/12/torture-is-who-we-are-cia-report/383670/>

verso: *We Are Better Than This* – 2014
 Mixed media on board, 32 cm diameter
 Excerpt from John Yarmuth statement,
Torture Is Who We Are, The Atlantic, December 11, 2014
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/12/torture-is-who-we-are-cia-report/383670/>





HISTORY BEGINS WITH US

Neon installations

The neon works, *History Begins With Us*, *Extreme Centre* and *Who Knows What I Am*, invite soft activism, quiet consideration and meditation. The work *Extreme Centre* plays with an idea, in Tariq Ali's opinion that when Centre extends Centre Left, Centre Right and this Centre then becomes Extreme Centre.



EXTREME CENTRE

←

History Begins With Us – 2014

Neon Installation, 25 x 190 x 17 cm

Mooers, Colin Peter. 2006.

The New Imperialists: Ideologies of Empire.

Oxford: Oneworld. 47q, 1967

→

Extreme Centre – 2014

Neon Installation, 25 x 138 x 17 cm

Tariq Ali, <http://tariqali.org/archives/2819>

Accessed: November 1, 2014

Who Knows What I Am – 2014

Neon Installation, 25 x 190 x 17 cm

Bullah Shah poem, Ali, Tariq. 2008.

The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power.

New York: Scribner. 17



WHO KNOWS WHAT I AM



←
Final Hours – 2012
Neon with white glass, 76 cm x 76 cm

→
A Is For Allah, A Is For America – 2011
Neon with cobalt blue glass, 152 cm x 46 cm

God Is on Our Side, Allah Is on Your Side – 2011
Neon with cobalt blue glass, 152 cm x 46 cm



Writers' biographies

Dr. Murtaza Jafri is a Pakistani painter, draftsman, sculptor and art educator. He has been principal/Vice Chancellor of the National College of Arts, Lahore, since August 2013. Dr. Jafri has taught art since 1987, including at the National College of Arts. He has also supervised PhD candidates at leading universities in Pakistan and abroad. Dr. Jafri also served as director at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, Islamabad, from 1989 to 1990. Jafri has also studied at various universities, including the National College of Arts (Pakistan), Chelsea College of Arts (England), University of Brighton (England), Concordia University (Canada), Université de Montréal (Canada) and Algonquin College (Canada). Jafri has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, a Master of Arts degree, and a PhD in Fine Art.

Amra Ali is an independent curator, art critic and researcher based in Karachi. She is a co-founder and Senior Editor of Pakistan's first international art publication, NUKTA ART, initiated in 2005. She has edited the book, *Rasheed Araeen, Homecoming* (2014).

The focus of her writings since 1990 has been on locating the critical issues and context of contemporary art in Pakistan and its interface with post colonial societies, with an emphasis on issue-based writing on art. She has contributed to local and international publications.

Aasim Akhtar is an independent artist, art critic and curator. His writing is published in magazines, catalogues and books both nationally and internationally, and his art work has been widely exhibited, most recently at Whitechapel Gallery, London as part of commemorative show entitled, *Where Three Dreams Cross: 150 years of Photography in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (2010). He was a curator-in-residence at

the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in Japan in 2002. He is also the author of two published books, *Regards Croisés* (Alliance Française, Islamabad, 1996) and *The Distant Steppe* (Alliance Française, Islamabad, 1997), and has just finished writing his third, *Dialogues with Threads – Traditions of Embroidery in Hazara*, to be published in 2015. He teaches Art Appreciation and painting at The National College of Arts, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Ken Giles is an essayist and photographic artist with a B.A.A. from Ryerson University, an M.F.A. from the University of Michigan, and a Ph.D. from the University of Kent at Canterbury, UK. His photographic work has been exhibited in England, Germany, Belgium, France, the USA and across Canada, with works shown in 2012 in Hong Kong, Ann Arbor and Detroit, Michigan. In 2013 and 2014 a current photographic project, *49 Degrees parallel*, that utilizes GPS positioning along the 49th parallel, was initially shown at Work•Detroit Gallery at University of Michigan Center, Detroit. A current 2014 work, *Bootfair Camera*, was recently exhibited at the Jean Paul Slusser Gallery at the University of Michigan.

Past writings include an essay for Iain Baxter, entitled *Lived Experience: Baxter & Walking – A Contemplative Time Frame*, 2013 (http://archives.library.yorku.ca/iain_baxterand_raisonne/) and several catalogue works for Amin Rehman entitled *I Reiterate: A is For... A is For...*, 2013, at Artcite Inc. and McIntosh Gallery, London, as well as his inaugural Rehman essay *Palimpsest: a messy state of affairs*, 2011, for the Art Gallery of Mississauga. Further writing was a commission for a community group-art-initiative catalogue by the Green Corridor project, *Open Corridor*, 2010, and a sculpture *vade mecum* for *Shift*, 2009, by Dan Bernyk, for the Thames Art Gallery, Chatham.

Salima Hashmi is the Dean at the School of Visual Art and Design at Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. She taught at the National College of Arts, Lahore, for thirty-one years. She was also the Principal of the College for four years and held the post of Professor of Fine Arts. She is a painter of repute whose works have been exhibited in Pakistan and in international exhibitions.

Daughter of the celebrated Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Professor Hashmi has written extensively on the arts and has curated exhibitions of contemporary art and traditional textile, within Pakistan as well as abroad. Her publications include *Unveiling the Visible – Lives and Works of Women Artists of Pakistan* (2002), *Travels Mundane and Surreal: The Art of Esther Rahim* co-authored with Sikander Rahim and Naazish Ata-Ullah, published by Sang-e-Meel, Lahore (2006), *Memories, Myths, Mutations – Contemporary Art of India and Pakistan* (2006) co-authored with Yashodhara Dalmia for Oxford University Press, India. She is currently editing *The Eye Still Seeks – Pakistani Contemporary Art* for Penguin Books, India. Other publications include: *Two Loves – Faiz's Letters from Jail*, as co-editor, published by Sang.e.Meel, Lahore (Feb. 2011), and *A Song for this Day (Aaj Ké Naam)* which includes her own illustrations (Feb 2010). She curated a major exhibition of contemporary Pakistani art for the Asia Society Museum in New York (July 2009), titled *Hanging Fire*, accompanied by an extensive catalogue.

Salima Hashmi was the co-founder of the Rohtas Gallery in Islamabad, established in 1981, and she established Rohtas-2 in Lahore in 2001. She is a council member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

Maureen Korp (PhD, University of Ottawa) is a lecturer, writer, independent critic, and curator of contemporary art. Her publications and awards are numerous (more than ninety articles and three books) and include contributions to television, radio, and film documentaries on environmental art and the nature of artistic vision.

Dr. Korp has lectured at universities throughout North America, as well as eastern Europe (1995-2006) and Pakistan (2008–2010) on the intertwined histories of art and religions, and has received a number of important international post-doctoral awards. She lives in Ottawa.



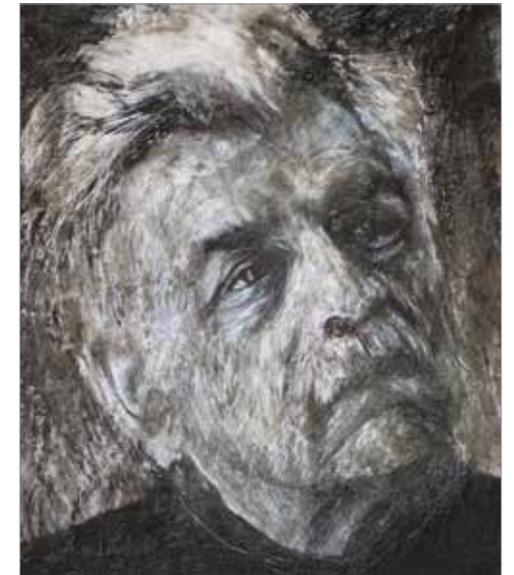
Autoportrait – 2014

Amin Rehman

Amin Rehman is a multidisciplinary visual artist who has been working since the 1980s. Originally from Pakistan, he studied at the National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan, the University of Punjab, Lahore, the University of Manchester, UK, and the University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada. He has exhibited extensively in a number of exhibitions and festivals across Canada and abroad, notably *Hope*, Art Gallery of Regina, Saskatchewan (2014); *A is for...*, McIntosh Gallery, University of Western Ontario, Canada (2012); *White Wash*, Art Gallery of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada (2011); *Erasing Borders*, Queens Museum of Art, New York, USA (2009); *Fourth Biennial of Islamic Contemporary Painting*, Tehran, Iran (2006); *Hart House Juried show*, J M Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto (2006); *Contemporary Miniatures and New Art Forms*, Commonwealth Games Cultural Festival Exhibition, Melbourne, Australia (2006); *Creative Insecurity* at Harbourfront, Toronto (2004); and *From Images to Images*, Idée Gallery, Toronto (1992). He received a British Council Fellowship to study in the History of Art Department, University of Manchester, England in 1988; a Smithsonian Internship in Washington D.C. in 1988; a Chalmers Fellowship Award, Ontario Arts Council, Canada in 2008; Ontario Arts Council Mid-Career Artist grants in 2009 and 2012; Toronto Arts Council Visual Artist grant in 2008, 2010 and 2013; and 'Artist of the year award for 2005' by South Asian Visual Arts Collective, Toronto, Canada. Rehman's interests and issues are primarily drawn from his experience of living in Pakistan and Canada. His work engages and comments on the current effects of neo-colonialism and globalization and also encompasses a number of artist practices such as installation, painting, video and neon. Rehman currently resides in Toronto. Website: www.aminrehman.com.

Tariq Ali

Writer, journalist, historian, playwright and film-maker Tariq Ali was born in Lahore in 1943. He was educated at Oxford University, where he became involved in radical politics, in particular with the movement against the war in Vietnam. He visited wartime North Vietnam in 1966–1967 on behalf of the Bertrand Russell International War Crimes Tribunal. On his return he led the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign and became one of the leading figures of the global uprisings in 1968. He owned his own independent television production company, Bandung, which produced programmes for Channel 4 in the U.K. from 1984–1998. He writes regularly for the *London Review of Books* and is a longstanding editor of the *New Left Review*. He is also the editorial director of Verso Books. His fiction includes the *Islam Quintet* published in nearly two dozen languages. This is a series of historical novels about the clashes between Islamic civilization and western Christendom: *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* (1992), *The Book of Saladin* (1998), *The Stone Woman* (2000), *A Sultan in Palermo* (2002) and *The Night of The Golden Butterfly* (2005). His non-fiction includes *1968: Marching in the Streets* (1998), a social history of the 1960s. A book of essays, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*, was published in 2002. Tariq Ali's latest works include *Conversations with Edward Said* (2005); *Rough Music: Blair, Bombs, Baghdad, London, Terror* (2005); and *Speaking of Empire and Resistance* (2005), which takes the form of a series of conversations with the author. His latest book is *The Extreme Centre: A Warning* (2015), a fierce critique of mainstream politics. His TV lectures and interviews for *Telesur* (English) can be accessed from tariqaliv.com. Website: tariqali.org.



Tariq Ali portrait — Amin Rehman, 2013