

Pouring Concrete Curing Mountains

Murree Museum
Artist Residency 2019



Pouring Concrete, Curing Mountains

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Designed by Aziza Ahmad & Saba Khan

Edited by Zohreen Murtaza

POURING CONCRETE, CURING MOUNTAINS

A Project of
Murree Museum
Artist Residency 2019

Founded and curated
by Saba Khan

In memory of our dear friend,
Madiha Aijaz

transformation of a hill town into an urbanized labyrinth
endless production of concrete structures
hopeless degeneration of habitats and forests

a continuation of last year's resident artist Madiha Aijaz's project, who was
interested in illegal grey structures encroaching upon the forests.

THE FADING HILL STATION/ MURREE

My earliest memories of Murree are of 1969/70. The mall was the place to be on the hill station. My cousins and me had a fun and carefree summer holiday.

My present stay was a jolt to my past. They were just too many people and the old facade was crumbling to give rise to various shops and numerous hotels. It was commercialism and its elevation on most of the land which was barren in the past. The landscape is flooded with all sorts of consumer goods. The locals mostly reside in the villages. The present Murree I feel reflects the initial ebb and flow of a metropolis in the making.

ARIF MAHMOOD/ August 2019



ARIF MAHMOOD started photography in 1985, areas of interest being photojournalism,

portraiture and fashion. Five years later he was contributing editorial work to all major

publications of Pakistan. International publications include Newsweek, Khaleej Times, Gulf

News, Arabian Women and Private Magazine. He participated in 56 group shows in various



cities of the country and abroad, including “Hanging Fire” a show at the Asia Society Museum

New York in 2009 and “Where Three Dreams Cross” at the White Chapel Gallery London in 2010.

His photographs are also in the permanent collection of the museum of Fine Arts Houston USA.

Presently Arif is working as the Chief Operating Officer at White Star Photo Private Limited



and as a photo consultant for the Herald Monthly Magazine of the Dawn Media Group based in

Karachi, Pakistan.

the initial ebb
and flow of a



metropolis in
the making







HIRA NABI is a filmmaker and a multimedia artist. Her practice moves across research and visual production interrogating the relationship between memory and histories, witnessing and testimonies through image and narrative. She earned an MA in cinema and media studies from The New School, and a BA in film and postcolonial studies from Hampshire College. She lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan.



Circular Walk, Governor's House, Kashmir Point, Murree, 2019



All day long we alternate between mist and rain. Mist that slopes in stealthily, cloaking and shrouding trees, vistas, edges of the hills, and the neighboring houses. The clothes remain hanging on clotheslines tempting a weak sun, car headlights lose their brilliance in it, and we lose our sense of time and space. Then, rain that slashes against the hills, loud, heavy, splattering mud everywhere, soaking the narrow trails called pugdandis, so that we slip and slide in the keechar if we attempt to climb up or down the hilly terrain.

We wait out the rain. I spent long afternoons staring into trees, their green is alive and still in the moment, washed by the rain. Such moments are tranquil, they lengthen and unfold, I turn my attention back to the leaves - they are stirring softly, rippling in the slight breeze. I hear the strains of the ice cream vendor, and idly wonder on the merits of a chocolate ice-cream.

Here is a list of books that I have brought with me to Murree:

A Lover's Discourse — Roland Barthes (in English)

The God of Small Things — Arundhati Roy (to read again for thinking through the love laws) (in English)

A book of poems by Pablo Neruda in Spanish with English translations

A book of poems by Majaz (in Urdu)

Other reading materials joined in along the way:

All Quiet in Vikaspuri — Sarnath Banerjee

The Mushroom at the End of the World: on the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins — Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing

We teach a drawing class some mornings to children that arrive never on time, always early, clambering up the hills, pressing their noses against our window panes, chattering, shy and excited by turn. They draw apple trees, images of houses, cows, snails, a bus that will travel from Mirpur to Dunyapur. They trace out their hands, they make bold lines that eat up the entire sheet of paper. Some colour in their apple trees neatly and politely, the colours bright against the white of the paper. They call out “Api, api, yeh dekhain!” There is a set of siblings from an Afghan family, but most of the class participants are Gujjar children, here in Murree on an ancient route traced out by their nomadic ancestors, from Jhelum to Murree, and once upon a time, before Partition, up to Kashmir, but now their wanderings stop and settle in Murree for the summer, setting up jhuggis in the forest, using solar panels for basic electrical usage. All summer I was noticing these solar panels that had become ubiquitous from the south to the north of Punjab: in Multan, Muzaffargarh, and now Murree. This panel of varying size would convert the sun directly into electricity. They did not have batteries so they could not store power, making them cheaper to purchase but also superfluous when it rained. Which it did, often.

I hear crows, which are drowning out other birds like in other parts of the country, but then I also hear different variations of birdsong, and see the birds trilling and calling out to one another. We often hear people exchanging news and gossip: about the wild boars that ploughed up all the plants the night before, or the lifting of a construction ban permitting new construction in the area, or the arrival of a family member, or new neighbours, or inquiries and complaints about water and power outages.



When does a plantation become a forest?

Water is a precious commodity here. We walk to the tanks, and lament the low levels of water. It means less frequent showers, and engineering tactics of water harvesting. We hear stories of water theft. Murree has all kinds of intricate, odd, domestic stories, of intimacy with the neighbours, but also theft by your neighbours, of water mainly, and of land encroachment.

One afternoon, we sit and look out upon a tree that has dried up, it looks like it is dying. Someone observes that it could have been poisoned. Why? I ask horrified. You can only cut down diseased or very old trees, the person explains, you cannot cut down a healthy tree, in which case to obtain timber, people may sometimes poison a tree, and kill it, in order to legally chop it down. I recoil a little bit.

Is it possible to love a tree?

What are the different ways by which to practice this love?

Can a tree love a forest?

Over time, the plantation became a forest.

When does a plantation become a forest?

Murree was developed as a hill station in the mid-19th century. It was to be a site of repair for the British colonizers. A sanatorium was built for the soldiers of the empire to recover from fatigue caused by the scorch of the plains during summer. As it was to be used as a summer retreat, its population would considerably swell during the long Indian summer, and shrink as the weather in the plains cooled down, and the seasonal retreaters departed.

The hills in the region were afforested with fir and pine trees. The trees were not planted for commercial purposes. An attempt was made at creating a tea plantation, which was soon abandoned. All over the British empire, hill stations were developed as summer retreats to house the wealthy ruling classes as they fled the plains for cooler climes and higher altitudes. Murree was no different to Shimla, Darjeeling, Ooty, Dalhousie, Nuwariya, and others.



When is a forest not a forest?

Most forms of human intervention in forests leave behind traces. Human-disturbed forests have borne witness to the extraction and destruction that spreads unchecked, and with reckless abandon across woodlands, and forests. There is the rise of dumping sites of trash, illegal logging for timber, razing of forested area for building roads and housing settlements. There are high and low impact forms of human interventions into the forest taking the form of encroachment, alteration, and extraction. A low-impact form of human intrusion into the forest that I witnessed was children picking daisies to weave into wreaths sold all over Murree and the surrounding towns, Nathia Gali, Doonga Gali, Patriata. Their parents would go into the forest to collect branches, and firewood to light their stoves.

What does collaborative survival in human-disturbed forests look like? How can it be coaxed into a resilient practice? I would crane my neck up, looking up at the skies framed by the entwined branches and crowns of trees, their canopy extending in all directions. Lines of dark in shades of green would be silhouetted against the layers of cloud and sky. Patterns would emerge out of light and mist, like shadow play, screens created by the slight movements of leaves and branches. It was at once transportive, Murree would become a rainforest in that instant. Wherever I would walk, I would catch the rain on my head, in my hands. It was the mist condensing against the leaves, becoming water, gathering into tremulous droplets and falling onto the earth.

THINKING CONCRETE

What is the way back; this is not a relevant question. Everywhere is a way.
(Oula Valkeapää, Field Notes, Bio-art Society)

Thinking in terms of materials

Thinking in terms of colonial past

Thinking in terms of climate crisis and environment

Thinking in terms of profit, capitalism and tourism industry

Thinking in terms of other living beings

Thinking in terms of non-living beings (water/earth/air)

Vocabulary

Concrete thinking is literal **thinking** that is focused on the physical world. It is the opposite of abstract **thinking**.

Curing is the process of maintaining satisfactory moisture content and temperature in freshly cast concrete for a definite period of time immediately following placement.

A **gazebo** is a pavilion structure, sometimes octagonal or turret-shaped, often built in a park, garden or spacious public area.

Wilderness is an outside area in which plants are left to grow naturally or untidily.

Material is related to or concerned with physical rather than spiritual or intellectual things.

Weed is any undesirable or troublesome plant, especially one that grows profusely where it is not wanted.

POURING CONCRETE CURING MOUNTAINS, MURREE MUSEUM RESIDENCY: FIELD SESSIONS, 24-26 July, 2019

Location: Gazebo at Downhill from Governor House, Murree



I Didn't Allow 'Nature' to Enter into the Concrete, 29th, July 2019

Location: off the Murree Mall Road, near GPO, Murree

The abandoned concrete structure was supposed to be either a rest house or hotel now providing shelter to migrant labors, plants and weeds. Initially the inhabitants were reluctant to let me stay because they thought I might write or report about their occupation. However after talking they let me stay and also offered tea in the end. The wild plants were growing all over overtaking concrete, wood and fabric. This future wasn't planned for the site when designed, however I experienced a sense of resistance, fight for survival and adaptability together.



During our regular walks with other resident artists in Murree, we spotted a site which had all elements to create a temporary observatory to develop connection with both wild and human-intervened environment. The site had a Gazebo and benches to sit on and watch the forest. It was connected with a circular road which was basically only for walking around the Governor's house. However, the tourist train passed by a few times each day. Courtesy the Gazebo and the benches many tourists spent time there to rest, pray and sometimes picnic.

To develop a deeper connection with the site and to understand the surroundings better, I formulated a few exercises with the help of Bio Art Society's Field Note blogs. Other artists at the residency, Hira Nabi, Zohreen Murtaza and Faraz Aamer Khan also participated in the activities.

Day 1 (24/7/19): 2 hours
CRITICAL SENSING: WHAT IS TRASH?
SITE-CLEANING
IDENTIFICATION OF THE TRASH

The exercise of approximately 2 hours at the site dealt with the question of cleaning. What is trash? Could dried leaves, plants, other organic waste be considered as trash or only non-decomposable material (plastic/ paper / packaging material)? And what about the concrete, blocks, burnt pieces of coal, wood or human and animal waste?



Found object

The object a cement bag with grown weed all over which is made of plastic fiber was an engaging find in relation to thinking in terms of new forms of survival.

Day 2 (25/ 7/19):

The exercises on the 2nd day were organized on the concept of deep listening. The activity led me deep down in the forest where I found a downhill water path. There was no water but it looked like it was flowing.



Water path. Downhill. Governor House, Murree, 2019.

Day 3 (25/8/19):

The last day of the temporary observatory was focused on visual exploration. This led to the 1st and 2nd interventions in the designated site respectively: 'I only allow 'Nature' to enter' and 'I didn't allow 'Nature' to enter into the Concrete' (near GPO Murree).

These interventions were designed to develop further understanding of materials in two chosen sites in Murree. The focus was to study 'Concrete' and 'Nature'. How are we (humans) introducing concrete in a natural environment? Once we introduce it, how does it transform the space? I chose sites where I found a struggle of both existence and co-existence.



The questions Mary Maggic (artist) raised when she challenged the idea of nature as pure: She argues that first we need to define the standard of 'Purity' and 'what is natural?' in order to go back or achieve something or we might only romanticize these ideas.

While thinking from the perspective of our colonial past these trees were introduced to the landscape of Murree and in other parts of colonized land for multiple purposes (for railways/ domestic consumption/ furniture etc.). So it's already contradicting our ideas to preserve it as 'Natural'.



CONCLUSION

During the three weeks in Murree we focused on a residency on concrete (a human made material). From its production which causes excess amount of CO₂ to building of structures it is borne of commercial need. In case of Murree, it is a tourist destination and also a transit for tourists. The tourism economy requires infrastructure to accommodate a growing number of tourists. However, the concern here is in this process we might forget that the nonliving structure is erasing living and breathing trees which are a source of oxygen and also give strength to mountains to keep them intact. It also serves the habitat for non-human living beings including animals.

We cannot claim that the human intervention in the environment is only through artificial materials. This also intervened through introducing new species of plants and animals for their needs.

So we could look into all natural or artificial forms of interventions critically. However we could also look for a future in the form of co-habitation with natural or artificial materials together. But what we need is to focus on the possibilities for sustainable coexistence.

Through my drawing interventions I tried to emphasize on the fact that once we produced or introduced any material in any given environment it would interact with its environment and without our permission it would keep transforming itself on many different levels. And what happens with the abandoned or disposed materials? Do they go away or do they stay in different forms and travel through soil, air or water to resist its existence.

Nouveau Pouvre/Old Money or “Newly Poor”/Old Money in Murree

Names like Oakurst, Richbell and Morning side may ring like distant echoes today harkening back to a long forgotten colonial past of Murree that even some of its inhabitants have forgotten. For the widow of Khan Bahadur Sahb¹ though these names were not just a glimmer of a past but they were her lifeline. As real as yesterday.

“Khan Bahadur”, a title conferred upon her husband by the British was in honour of the services he had rendered for the British Raj. She liked being called by that title. Mrs. Khan Bahadur. They had been generously gifted additional land and allowed to expand their existing Estate which encompassed several cottages and a manor at the time. Yet for Mrs. Khan Bahadur it was the memories of her now decrepit home and property that consoled her and had deluded her into thinking that the crumbling mansion, tattered carpets, peeling walls and haunting silence of a bygone era were inconsequential. That she was barely surviving was inconsequential. Everything had to be kept “as it was”. Instead she talked of the banquets and parties where the British elite were wined and dined by liveried staff; bandstands with fancy dress parties and the scent of cigars in her Red Room and Salon pervaded her senses consoling her spirit. Here she was in command of her realm. This was her domain. And it was also her undoing. No one can slow down the march of time they say. Yet grandiose illusions of grandeur and nostalgia that have stultified over time can certainly plunge one into the most vicious wormhole of denial that no power on earth can alter.

“I will not sell” she had announced firmly and with barely contained anger. It had been set in stone as far as she was concerned. The thought was inconceivable. Blasphemous.



Even as the darkness began to set in, roofs were washed away by monsoon rains and the decay of time pervaded every inch of the ailing Manor in she did not relent. Nor did the march of time. A new world was beginning to emerge, one that did not care for the old orders and old hierarchies of class. It was a world that would soon no longer have a place for her. Malice, pettiness and greed had already crept in. Her children and then her grandchildren fought over the remaining estate. Land was sliced, diced, divided, subdivided, sub-letted, rented, snatched, grabbed and sold off. Only a fraction of her ramshackle “estate” remained now. Encroachments began to appear in the form of hastily constructed building blocks in a pastiche of styles that were at odds with their surroundings. Words like land mafia and timber mafia were bandied about. Men in shiny Prados dressed to the nines in atrociously coloured suits

and is interested in delving into memory and history, text and image where she shifts

and gold chains came to make offers. Mrs. Bahadur did not relent. A makeshift structure of a “khokha”² crept up to the unkempt backyards. Brickwork began to disappear. The din of trucks mingled with the scent of polluted air, leaking gas lines and sewage became a permanent fixture. Mrs. Bahadur or *Lady Sahiba* as the servants still called her, did not relent. She continued to bask in the golden light that filtered through her bay windows in the Green Room, waxing eloquent about a time when Society consisted of “a cultivated class”. What she failed to notice as she gazed outwards lost in her reveries was the ugly concrete frame of a multistorey building emerging from a “khuud”³ right in front of her. Bushes and green undergrowth had taken over and made its imposing malevolence seem benign. Yet it was only a matter of time before it would emerge as an imposing structure, swallowing and transforming life as she once knew it around her.

¹ Equivalent to “mister”. Used as a form of address.

² Neighbourhood shop selling cigarettes etc.

³ Informal vernacular term for a valley or indentation usually with muddy soil



between everyday reality and imaginary/invented worlds. Murtaza also writes on art and is a

Murree Mall Road's “Secret

Garden”: Random Musings atop Rooftop Uncle's Floral Oasis

“Plantain Lilies, Lily of the Nile, Hydrangeas, Montbretia, Lilium, Begonias, Hydrangeas, Snake plant, Passion Fruit plant, Touch-Me-Not, pepino plant, I have them all!” he proclaimed with pride in his crusty and commanding voice.

“Here!- taste!- Sugar plant!” Even as we were promptly handed out samples of the sweet tasting leaf (which it turns out is supposedly an essential component of two of the most famous carbonated drinks in the world) it was the environment that encompassed us: The rooftop of a seedy, dinghy multi-storey hotel building on the Mall Road had been transformed into a private springtime oasis by its eccentric owner; it contained every kind of exotic flora and plants conceivable in the Murree monsoon season. Were we in Paradise?

Even more intriguing was the peculiar and daunting persona of Haji sahb who came to be known as “Rooftop Garden Uncle” in our many later musings about his crotchety personality. Haji Sahb had greeted us with a certain amount of trepidation when we landed in his office and appeared rather disgruntled at our intrusion in his workplace.

Insisting he show us his “Secret” Hanging Garden we were reluctantly led up the grungy stairs and emerged in the midst of a room full of rows of potted plants, a workshop full of gardening tools and hanging plants that lined the sides of what must once have been a very spacious banquet hall.

Surreal as it was to enter a grimy room of concrete lined with wedding chairs drenched in the scent of wet earth and potted plants, our disorientation coupled with wonder was complete as we stepped out through the door into Haji Sahb's floral Paradise: To be suffused in colour and drenched in the many hues of glistening green was not an exaggeration. The crisp air and cool light added to the

regular contributor to various publications.



atmosphere as we gingerly followed Haji sahb with bees buzzing about our heads and conscious of the touch and texture of each plant as it brushed against our hands. I also felt a sense of subtle irony set in: here we were in a hill station supposedly once famous for its scents and beauty but it was in the midst of Murree Mall Road's greasy and questionable food smells, sewage, flies, bare concrete walkways and heat that we got our sensory slice of what we urban city dwellers had perceived would have been "natural" in a hill station- the scent of flowers. And to boot one had to climb several storeys of concrete stairs for it. Rooftop Garden Uncle had sought refuge in and tucked away his slice of nature in the most commercial area of Murree yet wasn't it these concrete hotel and apartment structures that were one of the many factors responsible

for robbing us of the experience of being in a supposedly "pristine" and "natural" landscape?

But here is the lacuna when attempting to answer this: how do we define what is "pristine" and "natural" in Murree though? Perhaps the argument and our conscience needs to be realigned and reprimanded. Most of the flora and plants in this man-made greenhouse were not native to Murree. By the same token one could then argue that we have forgotten that Deodars (cedars) are also one of the many species of trees and plants that are not native to the hill station and were planted by the British (Khan 2013, 403)¹; ergo that our perception of nature today then is infact also a cultural construct and a skewed one at that because it does not even acknowledge Murree's layered historical past or the complex politics of identity that have defined it. Can our forefathers even recall that for the British elite Murree itself was also a fantasy, a mirage even where wild parties, picnics, fancy dress balls sat side by side with class distinction and colonial bias? (Ibid., p. 188,194-195,227,245) Or that the original inhabitants whose descendants now dot the "khuud" with their ramshackle nomadic homes were paid off the most ridiculous fee by the British for their land? (Ibid., p. 83) Colonization may have bludgeoned our history and resources but for the naïve yet greedy tourist who is akin to a consumer and arrives with expectations not dissimilar to ours, Murree exists without a past. The nature of his temporary occupation is no different from his former colonizer: The consumer/tourist arrives to wrest his share from Murree, complains and leaves without a conscience. The production of a perceived idea of nature is therefore inextricably linked to a denial of the past and this vast hole is being plugged by the mass of concrete and filth that dominates Murree.

As Cronon puts it:

"There is nothing natural about the concept of wilderness. It is entirely a creation of the culture that holds it dear, a

product of the very history it seeks to deny” (Cronon 1995, 10)

As city dwellers/ tourists had we become so vapid and insensitive that we fantasize about natural landscapes as being untouched, diesel-and-pollution-free utopias devoid of history, identity or conflict because “for many of us, our food comes from the supermarket or restaurant instead of a field”? (Ibid., p. 11) At the cost of our nine-to five cycle of urban existence has our link to trees and plants as being part of our habitat been irrevocably severed? (Ibid., p. 11)

This morass of filth and human presence that characterizes Murree irked the urban tourist within us. Yet much like our colonizers who “looked down” both literally and metaphorically on the natives who were sequestered and hidden in the Lower Mall so that their presence would not besmirch the dominance of the colonial cityscape here we were also in denial on the historical Mall Road “looking down” but perched atop a mountain made of concrete in a floral sanitarium (Khan 2013, 79), the insult to our delicate senses finally being expunged by the illusion of a makeshift artificial greenhouse full of garden exoticism. Is that why Murree’s collective amnesia manifests itself in parks full of fiberglass molds of animals and unsightly PHA sponsored brown carts full of potted petunias rather than say investment in a more ecologically friendly waste management system? Is there any sense of ownership anywhere?

Perhaps we have yet to recover from being victims of what Eugenia Herbert calls “Garden Imperialism” (Flora’s Empire, 2011) She elaborates by saying that gardens in India created by the British were a mixture of not-quite English and not-quite Indian sensibility: much like the flora and plant life of the rooftop garden. Instead of looking for authenticity and searching for our perceived notion of the pristine we have yet to acknowledge these complexities without guilt, anger or emotional outbursts.

“Rooftop Garden Uncle” truly earned his epithet at this point with sartorial choices that perhaps came to embody the contradictions of Murree and our latent colonial hangover:

Prayer beads in hand, dressed in a crisp shalwar kameez and waistcoat, Rooftop Garden Uncle looked very grandfatherly indeed but it was the imported and immaculately placed cravat and neatly trimmed moustache typical of government servants that gave him the air of a colonial “babu”². He cooed and devoted himself to tending to his blooming chrysanthemums and gladiolus in our presence but was loathe to giving us “civvies”³ any more of his precious time.

¹ Dr. Farakh A. Khan obtained this information from the “Rawalpindi Gazetteer” published in 1907

² Historically a term of respect for a native Indian clerk. Today it refers to civil servants but in a rather derogatory or sarcastic manner

³ A slang or short form of civilian used by the military

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The Displaced Ghosts of Chinar Hotel

The ghosts of Chinar Hotel were livid. In a nutshell it was because they did not belong there: having been unilaterally kicked out and displaced they were homeless refugees.

To add insult to injury not only had their original place of residence, a row of unsightly daak bungalows¹ (Bhandari 2012, 7) been “renovated and redecorated” but all traces of the original furniture and objects housed in them had been sold off piecemeal. That is how the owner of Chinar Hotel came to possess a rusting, colonial style weighing machine as red as a fire truck. Apparently it was thought that it would add character and restore “a sense of history” to the place for after all his hotel was located on the historic Mall Road of Murree. The weighing machine now adorned the hotel entrance. With it came attached a host of disgruntled spirits who attempted to make their displeasure and anger obvious in light of the unjust treatment meted out to them. They had stepped out after over a 100 years after all and felt utterly disoriented and disturbed. However their ghostly shenanigans and midnight strolls as all spirits are wont to do apparently did not seem to have the desired effect on the tourists.

“They’re too noisy, too loud and they can’t get off their phones long enough to notice us!” proclaimed Colonel Hutchings². (Kincaid 2011, 87-93) As a spirit who had spent a good portion of his early ghostly existence in solitude at the cemetery that seemed like a natural reaction but his views were mirrored by the others spirits. They had gathered on the rooftop to discuss their plight but the spirit

¹ Buildings set up by the British to relay the post in stages but they also functioned as rest houses for British officials

² The main character featured in a ghost story set during the Raj. Colonel Hutchings commanded his regiment in the 1820s and came out to sit on his tomb in the cemetery.

of Sammy Hoof continued to gaze with longing at what was once Sam’s restaurant; (Khan, 2013, 191,439) Sammy had built it from ground up but no remnant of the original structure remained. It was now called “The Red Onion”.

No more evening dances and tea he said with profound sadness. As if to assuage the pain of his loss, Strickland’s dog Tietjens³ (Kipling 2011, 27-40) howled but the sound of his anguish vanished in the din and noise of the streets below.

Major Joey “Deane” and Banden Powell⁴ (Khan, 2013, 433) famous for attending and hosting fancy dress parties (Ibid., p. 151,227.) began to reminisce about “the good times” and recalled their scandalous geisha costumes they had worn to ballrooms that no longer existed (Ibid., p. 231.) while General L Dunsterville (Ibid., p. 195.) wondered where the site of the Gharial Derby had vanished (Ibid., p. 196.). The Holmens, Housdens, Hopkins, Powells⁵ (Ibid., p. 269.) were shell shocked by the presence of “natives” insulting the art of promenading (Ibid., p. 201.) with their inappropriate attire and their unsightly complexions. Wogs!⁶ How dare they challenge us. Where pray tell was the order and might of the Empire they grumbled.

The Murree Junior Club members (Ibid., p. 189.) complained it was beneath them to play billiard in these seedy hotel rooms while John Burke⁷ (Ibid., p. 231.) fell into a mournful silence as he gazed at the concrete structures

³ Tietjens is a dog in a ghost story set during the Raj and belongs to Strickland of the Police

⁴ A socialite and artist who was known for dressing up and throwing flamboyant fancy dress parties

⁵ The major estate owning families of Murree in the 1860s

⁶ Derogatory term for non white people

⁷ A photographer who captured much of Murree during his time. His house has been converted into a resthouse while the garden has been wiped out.

that had replaced the garden of his Kinturk House. What had happened to the Murree he had captured with his camera?

They could no longer smell the scent of trees or hear the birds as much. Viewforth Hotel (Ibid., p. 189.) was a horrid pastiche of its former self while the pretty churches were rendered invisible by the presence of corrugated iron sheets, as if they were a blight on the landscape. The flies irked them while the trash, refuse and the mass of humanity descending upon the Mall Road made them feel faint. The ghosts of Chinar hotel were inconsolable. An epoch had ended. Their Incorporeal forms wavered in the heat. Their presence was lost in the multitude of neon signs that flashed and outshone their luminescent presence. They could no longer romp in the environs of Murree for this was a Murree without a past (Khan, 2013). Yet only one unspoken question unsettled them; it hung in the air and in their hearts:

“Why does the memory of a city that does not exist haunt us so then?” (Shinkai, 2016)

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Your Name. Directed by Makoto Shinkai. Japan: CoMix Wave Films, 2016.



sound based installations to name a few among a wide range of mediums. He has exhibited in major cities in Pakistan and his work is enjoyed by collectors of both national and international acclaim. — FARAZ AAMER KHAN is a visual artist who graduated with a BFA from the National College of Arts, Lahore in 2016. His practice involves critical thinking through his choice of visual aesthetics, site specific and



Within
Frames

Faraz Aamer Khan



HOW

CAN

THIS

BE

FRAMED

FOR

MY

BENEFIT

?

You can wax poetic about what is being saved and what we stand to lose. The politics of words and languages rests in the arms of the powers far beyond the reach of those protesting on the pavement. Built structures that surround and suffocate what little life there is to be found in these hills, these structures. These greyed foundations and walls are entirely dependent on visitors that do not care beyond what they draw in their own circle.

There is nothing to command and everything to see. There is nothing to command and nowhere left untouched by us.

Nothing, no roots, no trees, no quarry or feeble rocks that stutter will be left under the forward march of capitalism. The planet is not dying. The planet is far from it. We're only making sure we get ours before the next guy comes along for their share. It is unsustainable but they wouldn't call it hindsight if it had any chance of being used before it was too late.

There are roots in these hills that go far deeper than centuries of colonial rule. There is concrete that hasn't been made yet but its fate lies on cut up squares of imaginary boundaries that are guarded viciously by cut throat businessmen and shrewd folk out to make a quick buck. By the time it took to color the squares you see, everything humanly possible was being conceived all over the world.

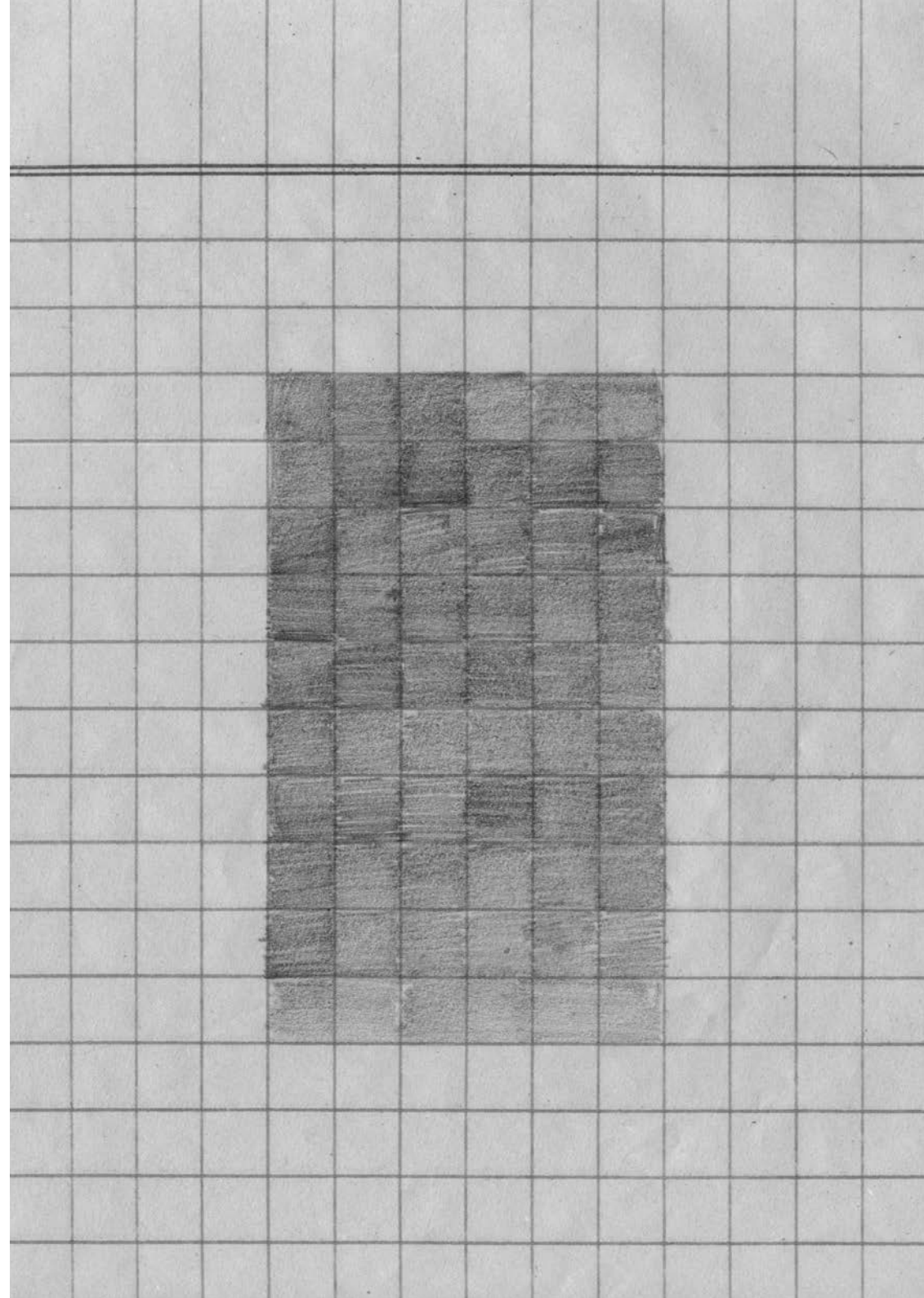
Including the eventual fate of all the concrete not yet in use.

The planet will survive.

We wont.

Maybe the hills will perish with us. After all, we made these hills, why should it fare better than the rest of us?....

"To Go Beyond"
Graphite on Paper
2019





Theres a thought experiment. You know the one, about the tree and whether it makes a sound if it falls in a forest and theres no one around to hear it?

Mirrors work in the same way, they ask similar questions.

At one cursory glance, it's established that there are no more truths beyond this. At once there is both the forest, the image of the forest and the reflection of all that is.

The mirror's reflecting the universe on its surface, there's just too much in the way for us to observe.

Just like the trees,

the trees are falling,

whether we notice or not.

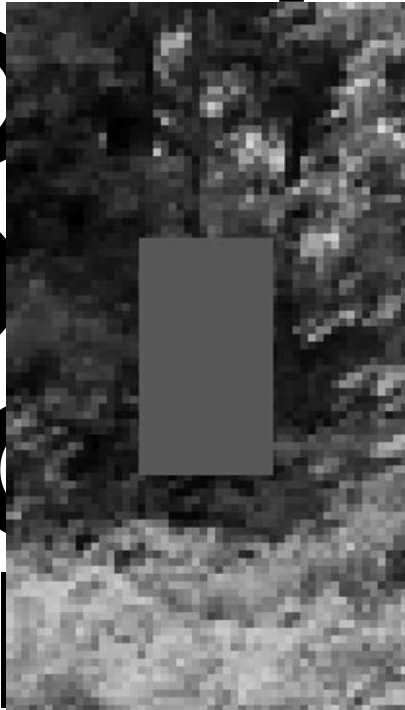
Metaphysics aside, everything is falling. Everything exists whether you like it or not.

"Within Frames"

Mirror, Glue & Wood Installation

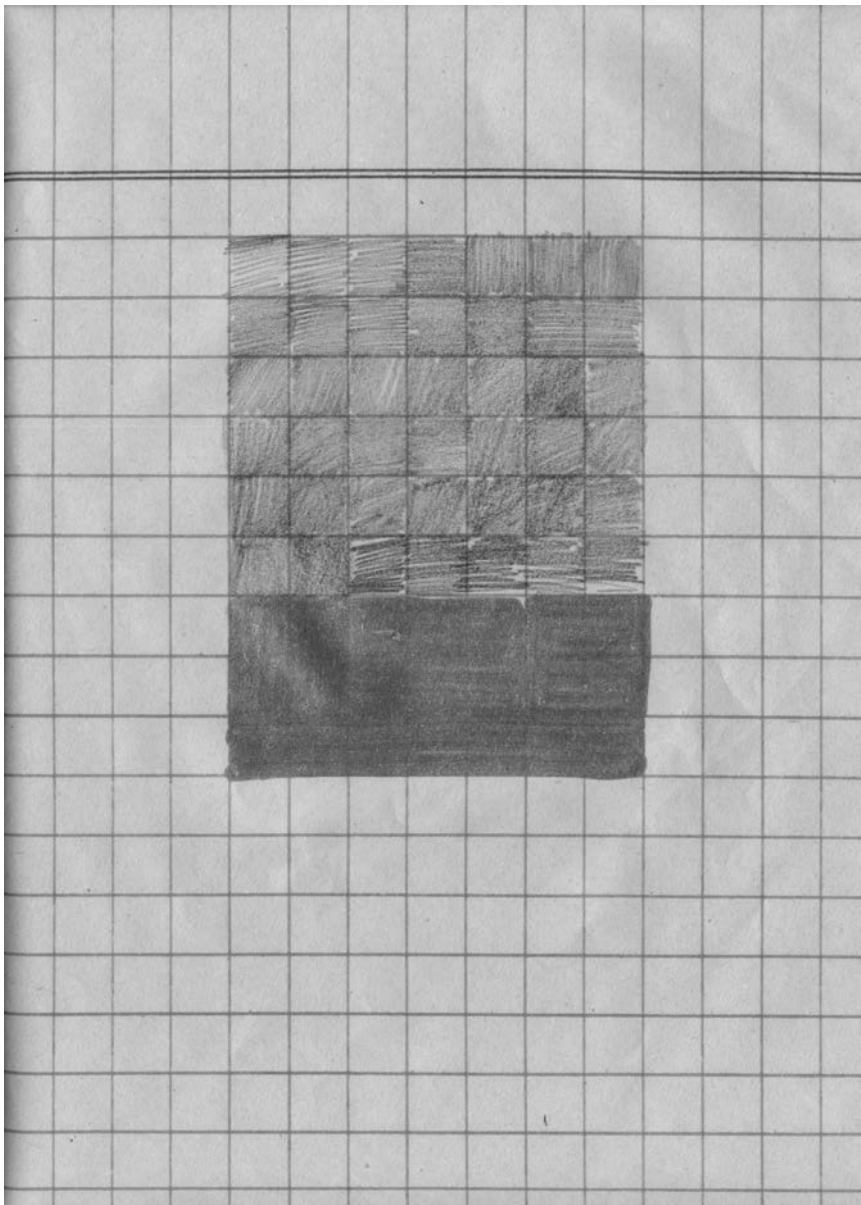
2019

**HOW
THEN,
DO
YOU
STOP
BE
YOU**



**HOW
THEN,
DO
DU
OP
NG
HUMAN**





“Ecstasy is All That’s Left”
Graphite & Gold on Paper
2019

About the Residency

The Murree Residency Artist Residency was established in 2014. Named after its location which is a British hill-station with entrenched colonial history, the Murree Residency is concerned with artistic practices that pertain to representation and marginalization in a postcolonial landscape. Its contemporaneity is informed by a revisiting of local histories in an attempt to reconcile with the region's troubled and complex colonial past. The aim of the Murree Residency is to explore and imagine alternative ideas of social integration, collaboration, religious tolerance and freedom. Artists are encouraged to reach out to the local community through art workshops conducted with nomadic tribe's children residing in the town and through exhibitions in local public spaces.

POETRY

Arif Mahmood
Faraz Aamer Khan
Hira Nabi
Noor us Sabah Saeed
Zohreen Murtaza

CRACK

CRACK

MOLIN

fai

Foundation for Arts
Initiatives



MURREE
MUSEUM
ARTIST
RESIDENCY
FOUNDATION