

Foreign artist intends to break stereotypes about Pakistan

By our correspondent

Karachi

"My practice stems from my origins that are rooted in the Indian subcontinent and my migratory upbringing - born in Algeria raised in Canada and currently residing in New York. I want to break the stereotypes that have been created regarding the sub-continent, especially Pakistan, and my work tries to present a multi-coloured and vibrant picture of the region to Wes," said artist Mona Kamal while talking to The News at the opening ceremony of her exhibition titled "A Story of Place" at the VM Art Gallery on Monday.

"These pieces focus on issues dealing with being a woman of colour in the West, nationalism and how we identify ourselves through borders."

Along with presenting her artwork, the artist also screened two documentaries at the exhibition that she had recorded as separate projects. "I engage in video installation to create multimedia narratives about migration, journeys and identities," she said.

The first documentary was made in 2013 when Kamal had visited the Wahgah Border while the second one was shot in Karachi.

Through questioning religion, conflict and borders, Kamal intends to create stories that directly confront her personal experience and also the lives of people living in the many areas that she derives her identity from.

"This is done through gathering family stories, historical artefacts, reading contemporary texts and utilising my own personal experience," she said. "I continuously weave a story of migration, culture, nationalism and belonging."

The artist said her installations and sculptures were constructed structures, built from utilising materials such as bricks, plaster, wood and textiles.

"To complete the puzzle of my story of imagination I incorporate objects that originate from the places to which I lay claim to for my work. I have used grasses from Northern Ontario, sand from India and old family photographs."

According to Kamal, the core purpose of her artwork is to create a dialogue on contemporary issues involving migration, religious interpretation, media biases and cultural practices.

Pointing to an art piece at the gallery, a charpoy surrounded with barbed wires, she said the idea was to depict that how cultural conflicts could create a barrier between nations if not understood and resolved objectively.

The show will continue till January 11.

