

OUT OF FOCUS خارج التركيز الاتحاد /

**The Out of Focus / Union
March exhibition
at The Farjam
Foundation DIFC is,
for the very first time,
highlighting the works
of Chahine Khosravi,
Halim Al Karim,
Owais Husain,
Afshan Daneshvar,
Saad Qureshi and
Imran Channa.**

Khosravi reveals the *Chess Players*, a glimpse of her metaphysical world contrasting between blurred realities and perceptible dreams, while **Daneshvar's** *Nafas* explores the core idea of breath as a universal and infinite prayer, reminiscent of both life and silence with common roots in Arabic, Farsi and Urdu. **Al Karim** offers a meditative pause for reflection and catharsis with *Goddess of Beirut*, one of his signature photographs of women dressed in ritual clothes, the blurred projection elevating their status to that of a goddess. **Husain's** *Inventory of History* carries the idea of a memory storehouse and looking into the iconography and urban mythology of exile, migration, displacement, identity and the search for a homeland. With *Borrowed From The Shadows* and *Time | memory | landscape*, **Qureshi's** works represent the enduring fascination with memory, culture, time and its reinterpretation of places and landscapes, transforming them into hybrid places of recollection and fantasy, reminding us of the ineffability of past experience and its drive for invention, while **Channa** tweaks history from the *Memory* series exploring all corners of peaceful possibilities up to the point that there is nothing new left in it for us to experience.

The Farjam Foundation
– from March 2018

UNION

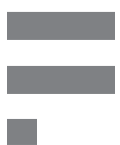
farjamcollection.org
#thefarjamfoundation

Tel: + 971 (0) 4 323 0303
Fax: + 971 (0) 4 323 0308
info@farjamfoundation.org

Opening hours
Sunday to Thursday
10am-8pm

The Farjam Foundation
DIFC Gate Village 4 / P.O. Box
62511 / Dubai, UAE

THE
FARJAM
FOUNDATION



Chahine Khosravi

← b. 1957 in Tehran, Iran
→ Lives and works
in Pré-Saint-Gervais, France

Born in Tehran, Iran, in 1957, Chahine Khosravi moved to Paris in 1978 with the intention of studying at the *Académie des Beaux Arts* but instead graduated with bachelor's and master's degrees in Urban Planning and Fine Arts, two emerging fields pioneered at University of Paris 8. For her master's in 2000, she researched and produced a thesis on the randomness in visual arts (*Le Hasard dans les Arts Plastiques*) under the direction of Professor Xavier Luccioni. Khosravi was part of the second wave of 20th Century artists' immigration to France in the 1980s, a period when international artists traditionally came to pursue a dynamic artistic life in France. A near death encounter made her withdraw from her art practice but heightened her life purpose and sense of being forever. In her own words, *"It's difficult to know what my work would be like if I had not experience death so closely and seen what reality looks like; it had an extremely positive influence on me and my work. I see art as the birth of something, meaningful or meaningless, the paintings come without thoughts, through improvisation, paintbrushes come through my being in a meditative state, I embrace mystery, express it as it comes, and once there, there is no longer mystery as its manifested in a pure form"*, she adds *"a painting is a hidden force, it has secrecy and its infinity is full of life by the sensation it provides"*.

Despite enjoying close friendships until their deaths with Leyli Matine-Daftariy, a prominent Iranian modernist painter, and Farrokh Ghaffary, former director of the Shiraz Festival of Arts, each of whom were members of a burgeoning circle of Iranian artists who remained in touch with the intellectual life of their homeland, Khosravi still preferred to remain in the shadow. Her growing reluctance was mainly due to her experimenting with introspection and by chance, as she states developed a *"self-erasing"* approach, improvised upon thousands of versions of this uncommon form, mirroring human vulnerabilities with eastern and western aesthetics. Khosravi lives and works in Pré-Saint Gervais, in the northeastern suburbs of Paris and teaches fine arts at the Centre D'Osny (Val D'Oise), adapting her teaching methods to suit different kinds of audiences at every stage of life. Her approach to art centers on randomness, improvisation and serendipity. Khosravi continuously advocates painting as a product of serendipity rather than a result of methodic research.

Her monochromatic canvases can be interpreted on several different levels. Khosravi's idiosyncratic technical approach of *clair-obscur*, using light effect and edge erasing techniques, oscillates with a kind of Renaissance *sfumato* technique.

Improvisation playing a key role, it is always an invitation to escape from pure utopia to dystopia and a testament to the incredible versatility and scope of her art. She explores the product of randomness through space, bringing-up close-up and/or far-fetched figurative details appearing on blurred landscapes and/or surfaces. *"What perception plays in our understanding of the world?"* Khosravi questions these visions and addresses them with supposed oppositions – in medium, scale, subject, and genre. As our gaze moves around these close-up images that are like abstract archives of the artist's questioning visions, it is up to us, as viewers, to constitute our own imaginary world based on these fragments. Khosravi explores the twofold, physical and metaphysical and dual properties of the images that surround us. They are taken from apolitical, asocial and unreligious contexts and endowed with a new coherence by the artist, who makes the most of their paradoxes. In all canvases, the real is dissolved evoking another way in which every day emerges. 'Self-effacement' and 'improvisation' are core to her life and her approach to art. In her own words, *"letting flow movements fluctuate, emerge and shout out ideation, letting things be, whatever they are"*. Her artworks are reminiscent of meditation, consciousness, acceptance and presence and echo the notions of being at one with the artwork, unaware of one's surrounding and losing one's self completely while being alert and here, using two states of being.



Chess Players V
Oil on canvas
150 x 120 cm
2012

"[...] the innocent state of mind and the knowledgeable state of mind. When they cooperate, you will find yourself in a pleasant Zen-like mood. A flow, where your hand will do the thinking." Chahine Khosravi, 2012.

Further representations of the randomness and improvisation themes of the 20th century

<p>Musical compositions of John Cage and Earl Brown</p> <p>Drip-style action paintings of Jackson Pollock</p> <p>Chinese calligraphy and its origins within Taoism</p> <p>Gustav Mahler's life and symphonies</p> <p>'Chindogdu' as a representation of the thoughts and actions of inventor, Kenji Kawakami</p> <p>Sri Lanka: The Island of serendipity in Persian narratives</p> <p><i>Serendipity</i>, Amir Khusrow Dehlavi, 14th century</p> <p><i>Hasht Bihsht</i>, 'The Eight Paradises', Amir Khusrow Dehlavi, 14th century</p> <p><i>Peregrinaggio</i>, C. Armeno, ed. Tramezino, 1557</p> <p><i>Das Wesen der Philosophie</i>, 'Introduction to the Human Sciences: An Attempt to Lay a Foundation for the Study of Society and History', Wilhelm Dilthey, 1907</p> <p><i>Gitanjali</i>, Rabindranath Tagore, 1910</p> <p><i>Sein und Zeit</i>, 'Being and Time', [concept of <i>Trieb</i>, <i>Der Trieb</i>], Martin Heidegger, 1931</p> <p><i>Horace Walpole's Correspondence</i> (Letter of 28 January 1754 to Horace Mann; Letter, of September 10, 1789 to Hannah More), Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis editions, 1937</p> <p><i>Serendipity</i>, Wallace Hamilton, 1965</p> <p><i>Social Theory and Social Structure</i>, Robert K. Merton, 1968</p> <p><i>The Last Voyage of Somebody The Sailor</i>, John Bart, 1991</p>	<p><i>Armadillo</i>, ['zemblanity' as the opposite of serendipity], William Boyd, 1999</p> <p><i>De la Sérénipité. Leçons de l'inattendu</i>, Pek Van Anel and Danièle Bourcier, 2008</p> <p><i>From Shamanism to Sufism: Woman, Islam, and Culture in Central Asia</i>, Dr. Razia Sultanova, 2011</p> <p><i>Concerning The Spiritual in Art</i> Wassily Kandinsky, 1912</p> <p><i>Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Thinking</i>, Alex Osbourn, 1953</p> <p><i>The Structure of Serendipity</i>, Mark de Rond, 2015</p> <p><i>The Psychology of Life Encounters and Life Paths</i>, Albert Bandura, 1982</p> <p><i>The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity</i>, A Study in the Sociological Semantics and the Sociology of Science, Robert K. Merton & Elinor Barber, 2004</p> <p><i>The Serendipity of the three Princes of Serendib</i>, <i>Arabic Tales in a Collection of Italian Renaissance Short Stories</i>, ed. Bragantini, 16th century</p> <p><i>Le Repertoire Narratif Arabe Medieval Transmission et Ouverture</i>, 'The Serendipity of The Three Princes of Serendib', Frederic Bauden, Renzo Bragantini, 16th century</p> <p><i>Le Hasard, c'est la Rencontre de Deux séries de cause Indépendantes</i>, Antoine-Augustin Cournot, 19th century</p> <p><i>Le Hasard et la Nécessité</i>, Jacques Monod, 1970</p> <p>[...]</p>
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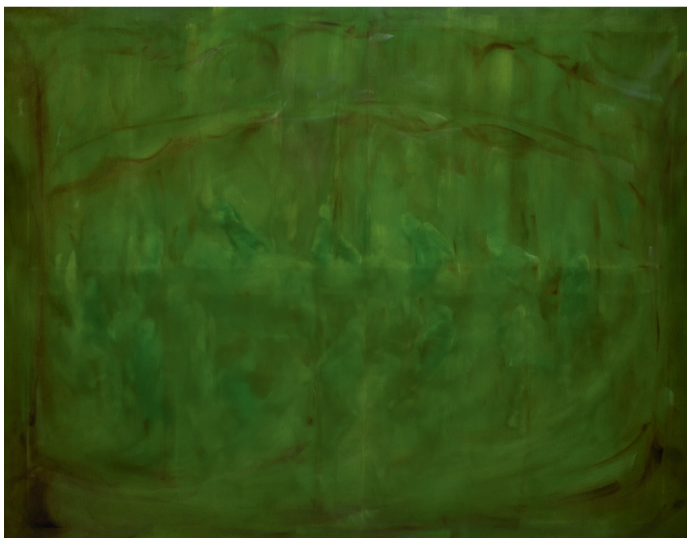


Chess Players I
Oil on canvas
150 x 120 cm
2014



Chess Players II
Oil on canvas
150 x 150 cm
2015

"[...] Shape without form, shade without color, paralysed force, gesture without motion [...]"
The Hallow Men, Thomas Stearns Eliot



Chess Players IV
Oil on canvas
160 x 130 cm
2010



Chess Players III
Oil on canvas
150 x 120 cm
2012



Imran Channa
Untitled I
Memories series
Graphite on paper
102 x 244 cm
2011

Born and educated in Shikarpur, Sindh, Imran Channa moved to Hyderabad where he was taught under the inspiring tutelage of Fatah Halepoto. Channa went on to graduate with a bachelor's and a master's degree in Fine Arts at the National College of Art in Lahore. Channa works in multiple media, including installation, drawing, painting, digital, moving image and sculpture. He draws attention to the components required for the process of historical documentation, highlighting how history is recorded, framed and manufactured via photography, archeology and literature. He is interested in the role played by these modes in the perversion of knowledge and the construction of consciousness. Imran Channa lives and works between Lahore, Pakistan where he has been an Assistant Professor in the Department of Fine Arts at the National College of Arts since 2007, and the Netherlands where he completed his residence at the *Jan van Eyck Academie*, Maastricht, and is a Guest Teacher at HKU – *Beeldende Kunst*, Utrecht.

Channa has exhibited his work internationally, with solo exhibitions in Pakistan, Dubai, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. In March 2018, he will participate in Harvard University's South Asian Visiting Artist Programme.



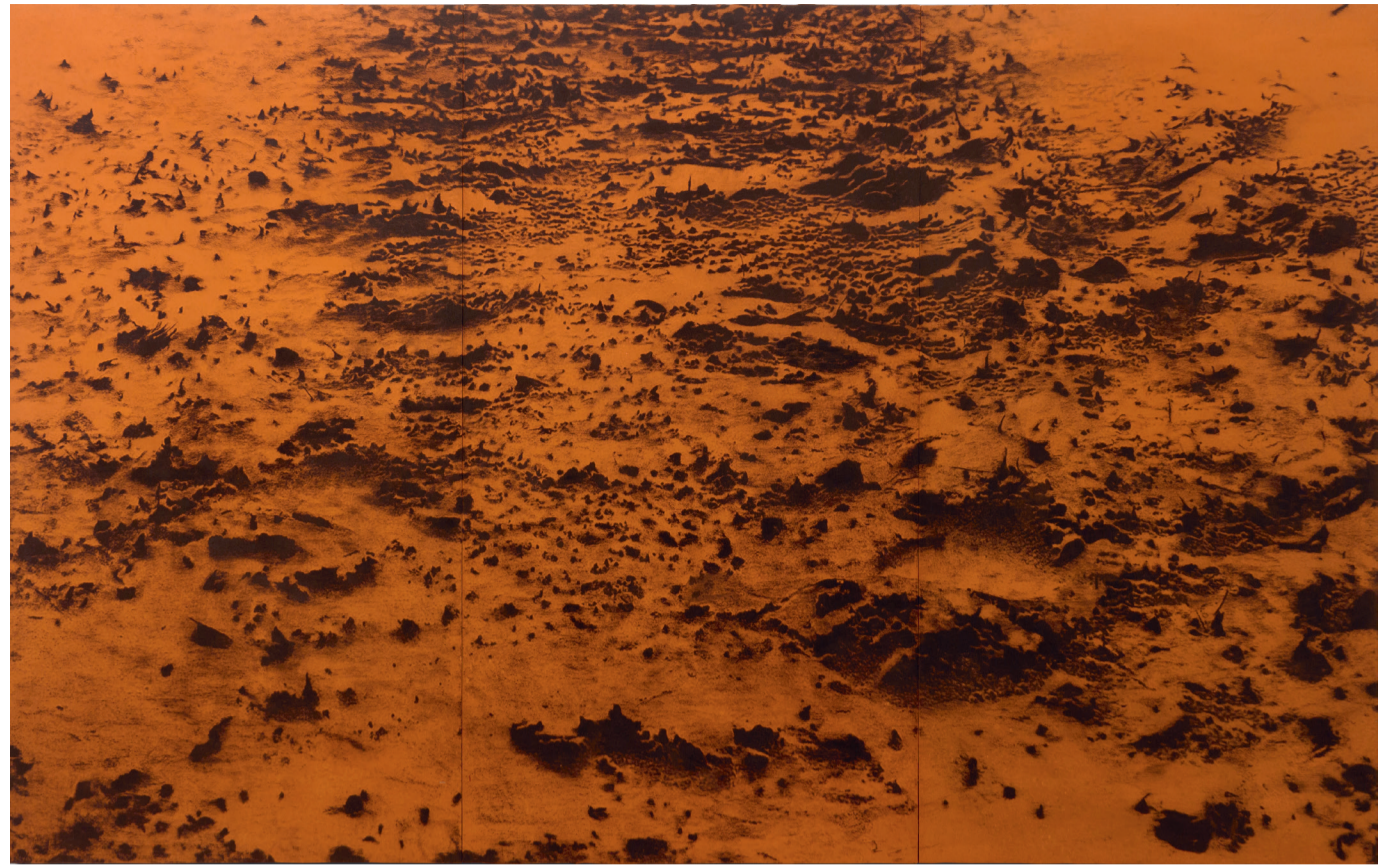
Imran Channa
I Will Meet You There
Installation
Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht,
Netherlands
2016

Imran Channa

← b. 1981 in Shikarpur,
Pakistan
→ Lives and works in Lahore,
Pakistan



Saad Qureshi
 Studio view, *Time | memory | landscape*
 Commissioned project a place for
 Nova, Victoria, London
 Mixed media
 2016-2017



Saad Qureshi
Time | memory | landscape
 Mixed media including brick-dust,
 charcoal, ink on wood
 Triptych 228 x 365 cm
 2016-2017

Saad Qureshi

← b. 1986 in Bradford,
 United Kingdom
 → Lives and works
 in London and Oxford, UK



Saad Qureshi
Borrowed From The Shadows
 Fabric, cotton, wool, steel wool
 2010

Born in Bradford, United Kingdom, Qureshi discovered his passion for art early on in his life. He was awarded the Spellman Walker Art Prize which led to a scholarship at Oxford Brookes University. He graduated from Oxford Brookes in 2006, and in the same year was invited to participate in the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, London. Through his various disciplines of sculpture, installation and drawing, in his own words, *"...my work probes issues of cultural belonging and separation – as well as universals that unite us beyond culture. I am fascinated by memory and time, and how they affect landscapes – both internal and external. I often create large, multi-vocal objects that have resonances to differing faiths or cultures, and thus I examine how relevant religion and ethnicity are in the contemporary world. Rather than didactic, I see my work as poetic and intangible; a bridge of communication. I seek to deconstruct stereotypes and subvert narrow notions of belonging to only one locality or to one culture. While this forms the basis for my ideas, those ideas are fundamentally a springboard for aesthetic concerns – colour, space, form and texture. My work is drawn from the deeply rooted traditions of hand-craft, with a focus on the use of natural materials. I am inspired by those perennial artistic motifs: worlds within a world, literal and metaphorical compartments, the scales of monumental and miniature and their relation to the viewer."*

Qureshi has participated in many group and solo exhibitions in London, Rome and Basel. Over the years he has been awarded prizes for his outstanding achievements, including The Red Mansion Foundation Prize (2008), The Royal Society of British Sculptors Bursary Award (2011) and a research award from the Arts Council, England (2014). He has been shortlisted for the Celeste Prize, Rome (2012) and Lecturis Award, Amsterdam (2009).

"Every inhalation of the breath prolongs life and every expiration of it gladdens our nature; wherefore every breath confers two benefits (blessings) and for every benefit (ni'mat, blessing) gratitude is due."
Saadi Shirazi - Golestan, 13th century

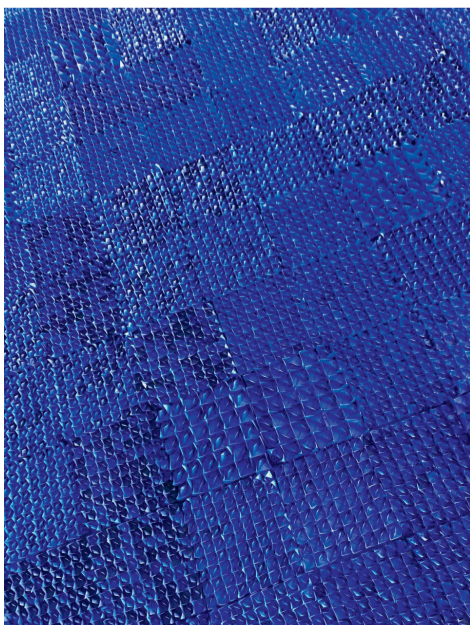
Afshan Daneshvar

← b. 1972 in Tehran, Iran
→ Lives and works in Dubai, UAE

Born in Tehran, Iran, Daneshvar graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in multimedia from Iran Broadcasting University. From a young age, Daneshvar was mentored in Persian calligraphy by her father and was deeply inspired by this in her art. Her meditative works are inspired by *Siah Mashgh*, in other words Persian calligraphy drills. Words and letters are repeated regardless of meaning for the sake of achieving perfection. There is a direct dialogue between content and form throughout Daneshvar's work. Repetition is a focal point in her work. Through reiteration she binds past and future. The present is constantly reinforced. She writes, re-writes, and repeats each word and phrase until she loses herself in the beauty of the incessant process. Daneshvar singles out the beauty of a simple recurrence; there is no beginning and no end. The echoes throughout her works are introspective in their creation, subsequently encouraging the observer to reflect and contemplate. To slow down the pace of everyday life... to look patiently...to observe calmly...to step a little closer. "Nafas (breath)", featuring in this exhibition, is a white canvas covered with tiny pieces of white tracing paper that move ever so softly when you blow on them. "I have tried to create a visual representation of breathing. In today's world people are so immersed in technology and the virtual space that they have stopped using their senses to enjoy the beauty of the real world around us. I began the 'Breath' series to show people, especially the younger generation that we should pay attention to these senses. I focused on breath because we breathe in and out about 25,000 times a day without even being conscious of it," she says. With reminiscence of both silence and life, Daneshvar deals with the single universal attributes of Breath (Nafas in Arabic, Persian and Urdu) as life force, pulse, pervading everything else in humanity. Without this transmitted capability of being – through Breath – as a simple vibrational pulse, life as external ether and thence to the eye does not exist. The philosophical context is conveyed with simplicity with an infinite contemplating form. Daneshvar participated in *Thirty Years of Solitude* a group exhibition in London, and in galleries in Dubai and Tehran.



Afshan Daneshvar
Nafas I
Nafas series (Breath series)
Embossed writing on paper
1600 x 21 cm
2011-2015



Afshan Daneshvar
Nafas I
Nafas series (Breath series)
Embossed writing on paper
1600 x 21 cm (629.9 x 8.2)
2011-2015

Halim Al Karim spent his childhood in Beirut, Lebanon. At an early age, he took a keen interest in photography. When he subsequently returned to Iraq, he studied ceramics amongst other subjects, at the Baghdad Institute of Fine Arts. His family suffered persecution because of their opposition to the Iraqi regime, and when Al Karim fled to escape military service he lived for almost three years in a hole in the ground in the Southern Iraq desert, surviving only through the assistance of a Bedouin woman who also taught him about gypsy customs and mysticism. Al-Karim has since emigrated to America; however, these events were to have a profound effect on his life and his art. His work indirectly bears testimony to the existential experiences of the artist. In his own words, *"When dreams are your only means of escape, they become part of your being and consciousness"*. Primarily through the medium of photography he de-familiarises his motifs. Blurring and other methods of obscurity and distortion are metaphors for his perception of the world. Subsequently, realities and wishful thinking overlap, always with the eye as the central feature of the work.

Halim Al Karim's works dwell on the evolving mentality of urban society. Having himself witnessed in Iraq violence manifest in urban society, Halim challenges the political issues that remain unsolved in areas of prolonged conflict. Educated about mythological goddesses from an early age, the artist believes they mortally exist in every city. He began the *Goddess* series in 1985 in homage to those who provided him protection during times of violent upheaval, starting with the *Goddess of Beirut*. Through his works he tries to visualize an urban society free of violence. The out of focus images imply an uncertainty of context, time and place. These techniques, which have become the hallmark of his work, are means to overcome the effects of politics of deception and, in turn, transform him and the camera into a single entity, seeking a greater truth.

Al Karim was nominated for the 2010 Sovereign Art Prize and was awarded the jury prize in the International Cairo Biennale in Egypt. He is one of the six artists whose work was featured in the Iraqi Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale – the first Iraqi Pavilion in 36 years. His work is in the collections of museums including the Arab Museum of Contemporary Art in Doha, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the Saatchi Collection in London, Darat Al Funun in Amman, L'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, Artron Art Museum in China and Yinchaun MoCA in China.



Halim Al Karim
Goddess of Beirut
Goddesses
Lambda print on aluminium
201 x 109 cm
1985



Exhibition view
Unveiled: New Art From the Middle East, Saatchi Gallery, London
2009

Halim Al Karim

← b. 1967 in Najaf, Iraq
→ Lives and works
in Colorado, USA

Born in Mumbai, India, Owais Husain graduated with a Fine Arts degree from Sir J. J. School of Art in 1990. Under apprenticeships with Indian visual artist Jagdish Swaminathan in Bhopal, and Robert Blackburn at the Printmaking Workshop in New York, Husain developed a rich mixed-media practice early on in his career. While his practice is primarily based in painting, the vibrant cinema culture of southern India led to Husain's experimentation with film and sound in the 1990's. He has since directed and produced several feature length experimental Hindi films from 2000 to 2007, and an alternative sound track for the Abu Dhabi *Festival of Thinkers* in 2009.

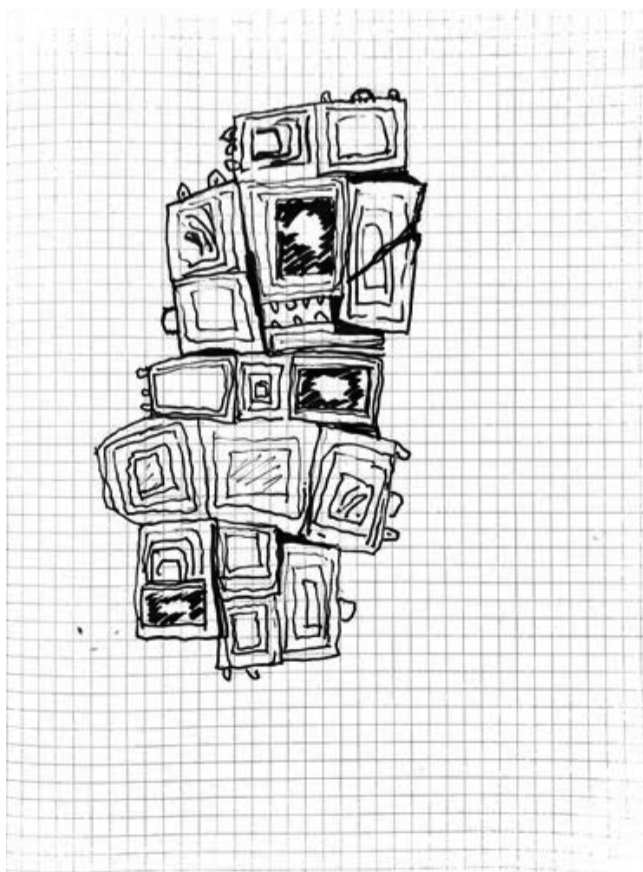
Husain's multidisciplinary work explores identity, iconography and urban mythology and its evolution from one generation to the next, illustrating his relationship with/ and abstraction of a more traditional Indian aesthetic. Husain uses steel traveling trunks as both physical and metaphorical vehicles to explore his narratives on memory and loss. Both installations use video projection, referencing the artist's extensive experience with cinema and photography. He has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions throughout galleries and museums in India and internationally in London, New York, Seoul, Dubai and Singapore. His films have been screened at the London International Film Festival (2000), the Berlin Film Biennale (2001), the Cannes Film Festival and Melbourne International Film Festival (2004), the Tribeca International Film Festival, Doha (2010), and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2014).

Owais Husain

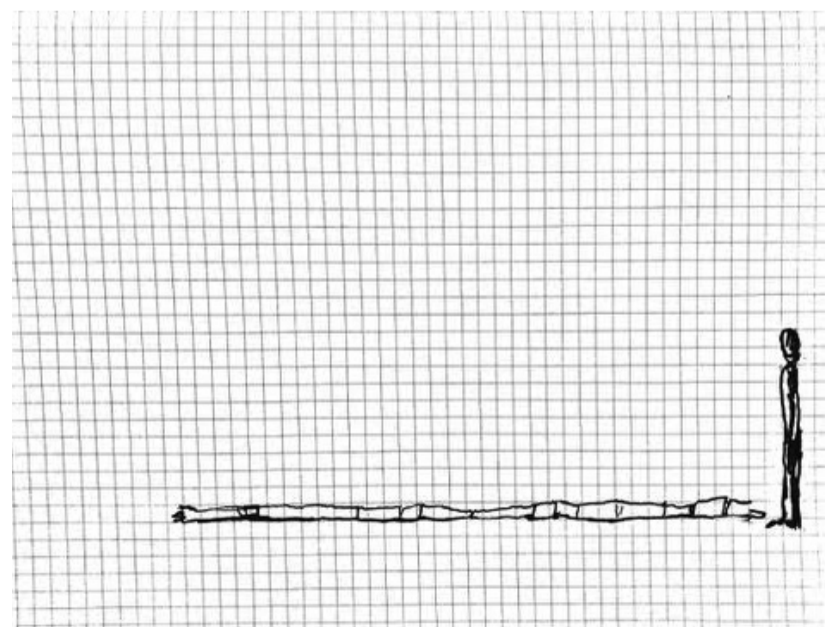
← b. 1967 in
Mumbai, India
→ Lives and works
in Dubai, UAE



Owais Husain
You Are Forever
Installation view
2016



Owais Husain
A sketch on Inventory of History
2018



Owais Husain
*Memory As The Crucible of the Self,
Inventory of History*
Mixed media
H 22 x L 48 cm
2018