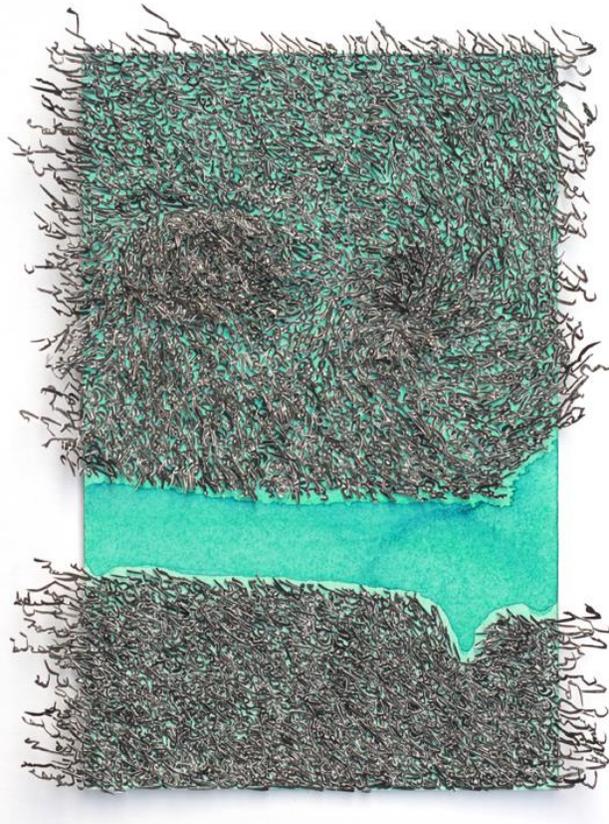


Ghulam Mohammad *Gunjaan*

Exhibition: August 8 – September 14, 2019

Press Preview & V.I.P. Reception: Thursday, August 8, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones St., New York NY 10012



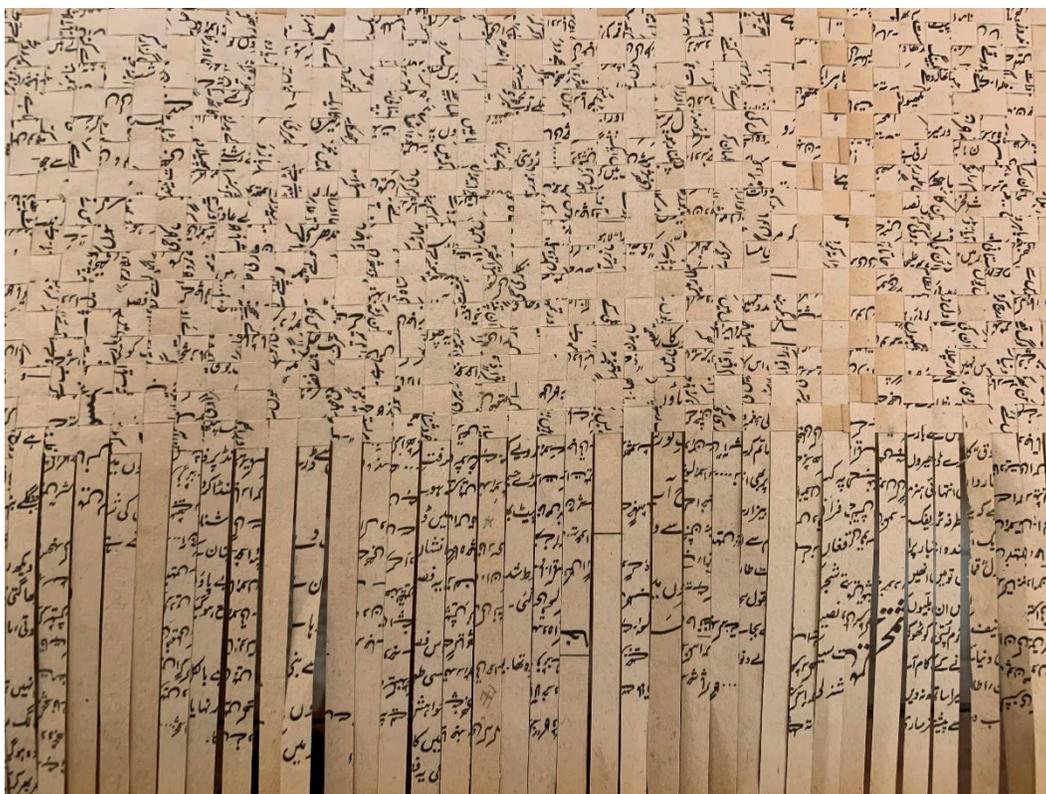
Ghulam Mohammad, Rabt I (Contacted), 2019
Iranian ink and paper collage on Wasli paper, 5.5 x 4.5 inches

We are delighted to present *Gunjaan*, Aicon Art's debut solo exhibition of Lahore-based artist **Ghulam Mohammad**.

The inspiration for Ghulam Mohammad's creations - intricate collages of hundreds of individually cut out Urdu alphabet letters pasted upon handcrafted wasli paper – derives from his realization that language has the power to both unite and divide people. His own experiences of struggling to acquaint himself with Urdu after growing up in Balochistan, where combinations, pronunciation and meanings of basic letters were so different, seemed to make the cultural gap between himself and the society to which he was trying to adjust that much more difficult to bridge.

Mohammad's 'unpicking' of the fabric of words is a strenuous, Herculean process. The words slowly disintegrate into delicate, migratory components, which no longer retain their previous authority. The artist works with the vulnerability of text, together with its tenderness and its fragility. These tiny visual installations are a bewildering forest of ciphers. There are deeper meanings here, the shadowy disappearance of text altogether raises questions about absence and erasure.

Significant among the works on display are two hand-woven 'carpets' that stem from some of Mohammad's earliest experiments with paper collage. The larger work spans 13 ft and weaves together second-hand texts from the various languages used in Pakistan – bound together through their use of Arabic script. This amalgamation, while obfuscating the meaning of each individual text, is turned into a functional object, thumbed by many and connecting all. In the words of distinguished artist and arts-educator Salima Hashmi, 'The sifting of these frail, graceful ingredients by Ghulam Mohammad is deft and subtle. He is sensitive to their precarious lives – lost creatures, searching for a place to anchor themselves. Paper as a medium



DETAIL: Ghulam Mohammad, *Tana Bana (Fidget)*, 2019, paper woven carpet, 36 x 156 inches

reinforces the idea of history embedded in the manuscript – the mystery of language transferred into the mystery of the mark. The words or letters are compressed in ways reminiscent of ‘daastans’ or epic stories which are never-ending.’

To this end, the works in the current exhibition bear titles that are inspired not only by lines of Urdu poetry but their resonance in the artist’s lived experience. They provide a prism from which the viewer might glean meaning. For instance, in *Gunjaan (Jam-Packed)*, 2019, the exhibition’s title work, the artist recalls the various signs that point to road congestion, when entering any metropolis. This barrage of text and densely-packed citiscape inform the profusion of collaged text in this work. The artist’s use of negative space to recall text (where there is none) is a connecting theme within his oeuvre, as also seen in *Saraab I (Mirage)*, where letters from the pages of a childrens book have been removed. While the pages continue to be legible, they lose a sense of function, evoking nostalgia and speaking directly to the artist’s early negotiation of the Urdu language.

Ghulam Mohammad (b. 1979) is a visual artist, born in Kachi in Baluchistan Pakistan. He graduated on Scholarship of UMISA in B. FA from the Beacon House National University Lahore with a distinction in 2013. During his student days, he was selected for Inspire Trip to University of Central Lancashire (student exchange program under British Council). He has had several group and solo exhibitions to his credit. In his work he has tried to explore the relationship between language and identity in a cultural, historical & contemporary context. Currently he is teaching as a senior lecturer of Fine Arts at BNU Lahore and has done an artist residency in a UAE Art Hub and Sanat Karachi Pakistan. In 2015 he won the Young Emerging Artist Prize from Lahore Literary Festival. He is the first Pakistani artist to win the ‘Jameel Art Prize 4’ awarded by the Victoria and Albert Museum London (2016).

Please contact Aicon Art (dheeya@aicongallery.com) for more information.