

CONVERSATION WITH HAJAB ZAINAB



Hajab Zainab is a visual artist from Pakistan now residing in West Yorkshire, UK. Painting has always been a major medium of her practice, which includes murals, gouache, traditional miniature paintings, and oil paintings. In addition to traditional and contemporary paintings, the subjects of Zainab's artwork include drapery, figures, and portraits.

In Pakistan, her work was exhibited in three different shows, such as the Islamabad Art Festival 2019, Nomad Art Gallery, and the Convention Center Islamabad. The artist has been selected for the London Art Biennale 2023, the Graduate Art Show in London, Sunny Bank Mills Art Gallery 2024, Chinwe Russell contemporary live auctions in the USA, and Chalkwell auctions in the UK in 2024. Moreover, she was selected for the annual group exhibition at Chelsea Art Society and the "Let Us See You" show at the Aireplace Studio, Leeds.

Zainab's recent work, 'مینوگرگد' is a painting series. It depicts the figure draped in a vibrant floral fabric. For these series, she worked on a variety of surfaces, including cardboard, wasli paper, and MDF cut-outs. Some of them are of life sizes.

"With a keen eye for texture and pattern, reflecting my personal admiration for the vast tapestry of art history and cultural legacies, I compose immersive encounters that seamlessly blend the essence of tradition with contemporary expression."

"Through this fusion, I aim to ignite discussions on themes of identity, heritage, and the ever-shifting boundaries of artistic interpretation. In my exploration, pixels emerge as more than mere digital artifacts; they symbolize the evolution of artistic language and deliberately challenge perceptions of what art can be. The marriage of historic culture and modern technology in pixels showcases my vision of using the vast tapestry of art history and cultural legacies that inform my practice."

Through her work, she seeks to dissolve the boundaries separating different artistic disciplines, sparking discussions on the interconnectedness of identity, heritage, and the advancement of the modern era. By infusing elements of her own cultural heritage, Zainab creates a dialogue to transcend geographical borders and invite viewers to question their assumptions about art and its significance in their lives.

On their journey to arts

My journey to the arts began at a young age, where I was exposed to a diverse range of artistic expressions that shaped my perspective on creativity and expressing emotions. I had a fascination with painting portraits and features at first. I've created numerous portraits using a variety of artistic mediums. I also enjoy experimenting and exploring new surfaces. It has been a continuous exploration of different techniques and styles, allowing me to grow and evolve as an artist. I've been changing mediums and themes constantly to keep challenging myself and pushing my creative boundaries. For instance, I wrote a research paper "Wander in the Mind", where I interpreted my hallucinations through conceptual miniature painting. Painting draperies blending with pixels was the next step after sketching features and emotions. I have found that trying new things and stepping out of my comfort

zone have been incredibly rewarding and fulfilling. I find joy in pushing the boundaries of traditional art forms and challenging myself to create something unique and thought-provoking. I never would have discovered this passion for creativity and self-expression if I had stayed within my comfort zone.

This early exposure fueled my passion for exploring the intersections between tradition and innovation, leading me to pursue a career in art that is deeply rooted in my personal experiences and global influences.



On personal education, and creative education viewed locally and globally

I completed my intermediate in fine arts at Pakistan and then went on to pursue my fine arts undergraduate degree. Additionally, I completed an MA in contemporary fine arts at the Huddersfield School of Art and Design, UK. This formal education has provided me with a strong foundation in art theory, history, and technique, allowing

me to further develop my artistic practice and explore new creative avenues. The diverse experiences and perspectives gained from studying in both Pakistan and the UK have greatly enriched my artistic vision and approach. I'm currently working on developing a unique style that reflects my diverse influences.

I believe that creative education is essential in fostering innovation and critical thinking skills, regardless of the country. It allows individuals to express themselves and explore new ideas, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant and dynamic society. However, there is always room for improvement in ensuring that creative education is accessible to all and continues to evolve with the changing needs of the world. It provides individuals with the tools and knowledge needed to push boundaries, challenge norms, and contribute to the cultural landscape in meaningful ways.



Messaging with art

I am interested in exploring themes of displacement, emotions, and the intersection of traditional practices with contemporary art. These topics allow me to delve into complex narratives that challenge perceptions and encourage critical thinking about the world we live in today. I explore themes of identity, heritage, and the impact of technology on society in my art. My goal is to challenge viewers to think critically about the intersection of these concepts and how they shape our understanding of the world around us. Moreover, the changes in art from the classic era to the modern era always make me curious whether technology has enhanced or hindered the creative process. My biggest inspiration is the old masters who used to paint figures and draperies, such as John Singer Sargent and many more. Their attention to detail

and mastery of technique are truly awe-inspiring for me. I've also been working on topics including mental health and self-discovery, which have allowed me to explore new emotions and perspectives in my art. Exploring these themes in my artwork has helped me connect with my audience on a deeper level, sparking meaningful conversations and connections. Overall, I believe that art has the power to transcend boundaries and communicate universal truths that resonate with people from all walks of life.



On Art as a representation of reality or escape from it

Well, I believe art has the ability to transcend time and place, allowing for a diverse range of perspectives and interpretations. Contemporary art can serve as a mirror for the current societal issues, aspirations, and imperfections of the world we live in today. However, art also has the power to exist outside of temporal constraints, offering timeless insights and inspiration that resonate across generations. Art also has the potential to challenge

existing norms and push boundaries, sparking dialogue and change in society. Ultimately, whether art is bound by the limitations of today or not, its impact and significance remain undeniable in shaping culture and influencing human experiences. Art's ability to provoke thought, evoke emotion, and inspire action transcends any temporal or spatial boundaries, making it a powerful force for connecting people across time and place.

Online galleries and marketing artwork online

I haven't exhibited any work in an online gallery except for two auctions. These were living artists contemporary auctions in Doncaster, UK, and USA. Participating in these auctions allowed me to reach a wider audience and connect with art enthusiasts from different parts of the world. The online platform provided a unique opportunity to showcase my work and engage with potential buyers in a virtual setting.

Indeed, I do sell my art online. I've completed a lot of projects and commissioned portraits. I have also sold my work online. Additionally, I have an artist profile

on the Curatorspace and Saachi Art websites.

Some suggestions include utilizing social media, creating a personal website, and participating in virtual art fairs. Another way to improve online representation is by collaborating with online galleries and art platforms that have a strong following. These platforms can help artists reach a wider audience and potentially increase sales. Additionally, artists can consider offering virtual studio tours or live demonstrations to engage with potential buyers and showcase their creative process.

