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Abstract

“Colonization” is by far the most sophisticated word for the attempts made to make a society financially broke and culturally orphaned. My work is a product of thoughts that occur in the midst of cultural and linguistic existential crises left by the *white man’s burden*¹. My focus on Pakistani society goes beyond its relevance as the culture I call home; my focus is intended to provide a microscopic view of how culture, traditions, and norms often work in concert to dictate the course of history and the future of nations. In my work I have used western philosophy to explain eastern phenomena, which not only symbolizes the essences of colonialism but also gives me a platform to decipher the thoughts of my native philosophers as I am unable to understand them due to my estrangement from my native language. Taking Deleuze’s idea of rhizomes as my blueprint, I attempt to combine storytelling, qualitative research and narratives to unpack themes of identity, politics, conflict, and artifactual history situated within my artwork. These themes are explored in two ways: first via metaphysics and then by personal narrative. The two are not distant and help navigate one another, like a path through a maze. My work is an attempt to re-evaluate certain activities which are embedded so deeply in my society that they do not strike one as odd. These activities are captured in their daily habitat and displayed in an isolated environment, away from the cultural and social norms which normalize them in the hopes that isolating them may help to reveal the multiple deep-rooted causes that have helped these activities to achieve a normalized status in the Pakistani society. Being labeled as a developing nation, Pakistan offers a striking contrast of the same processes at work in more developed nations. This contrast helps audiences to examine how so many similar social, political, and gender issues develop, exist, and are sustained even beyond their own borders.

¹In February 1899, British novelist and poet Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem entitled “The White Man’s Burden: The United States and The Philippine Islands.” In this poem, Kipling urged the U.S. to take up the “burden” of empire, as had Britain and other European nations. (Bender, Brown, & Rosenzweig, 1999)

COHERENCE OF DYSFUNCTIONS

by

Ayesha Rumi

B.F.A, Beaconhouse National University, 2016

Thesis

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Studio Arts.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Beginning.....	1
Chapter 2: Same Yet Different	4
Chapter 3: Percepts and Affects.....	7
Chapter 4: Back to Basics	14
Chapter 5: A Discourse with my History	19
Chapter 6: The Reveal	24
Conclusion/Future Endeavors	25
Bibliography.....	27
Vita.....	29

Chapter 1: Beginning

“*Sub bachay baith jaaen* (Everyone sit down)!,” Ms. Asma chimed as she dragged the rickety old TV trolley, as old as herself, into the classroom. My six-year-old heart was bursting with excitement, as it normally did at the start of each video period. I crossed my legs and stared gleefully into the flickering television screen. This joy was short-lived, however, as soon as I recognized an episode of *Scooby Doo* instead of the familiar MGM lion that would announce *Tom & Jerry*. My fluttering heart sank. I did not want to see some children and their dog bickering amongst themselves in an alien language! *Tom & Jerry* was simple. *Tom & Jerry* was familiar. *Tom & Jerry* made sense – this did not.

Throughout my formative years, the education system in Pakistan was as fractured as the social classes it served, split between the two languages English and Urdu. Although I was enrolled in a school where the primary medium of instruction was English, I was hardly, if ever, at ease. I was forced to speak in English at school, while at home I was conversing in Urdu. اور (*Aur*) was “and,” یا (*Yah*) was “or,” and such phonetics were more than adequate to befuddle my brain as I struggled to come to grips with the tricks and trades of bilingualism. Naturally, I was always struggling with reading and articulating passages in English; first constructing a thought in Urdu, then trying to translate it into English on the go, and consequently losing sense during a process which to me seemed more painstaking than translating hieroglyphics. These complications would arise further when I would converse with my grandparents, who would only speak Punjabi – another native tongue. And then to make matters even more convoluted, I was forced to learn Arabic in the most unorthodox way. In the evenings, the local cleric would come to our house and told me to recite the Quran, which is composed entirely in ancient Arabic. He taught me how to join all the alphabets to pronounce the words but I had no idea what I was reading, nor what any of these

(what seemed to me then) runes actually meant. As Arabic used almost the same alphabet and word construction as Urdu, reading it was still manageable, but comprehending it was another story because the grammar, vocabulary, and linguistics of Arabic are far different from Urdu and English.

Being forced to speak and to be taught in English at school and Urdu at home, and unable to fully express myself in either, I began (as I came to realize much later) to bottle up my emotions inside – leading to an inevitable communication gap with my family. I started feeling isolated within my own home as English and Arabic, being alien languages with no cultural significance to the norms and customs of my land, left me feeling estranged.

I lost the ability to give structure to my own voice, and as a consequence retreated into an anti-social cocoon of my own creation. I started to develop a vocabulary of my own in my mind which would help me to decipher and make sense of the world around me - my “Vocabulary of Visuals.” This was my inspiration behind creating the work *کر (Kar)* (Figure 1), where I examine the relationship of the image to the language—questioning the complex notion of their entanglement such that one might not exist without the other.

In *Kar* *کر*, I attempted to isolate a single letter from the Urdu writing; deconstruction is approached to the point where its recognition depends on the signifier². The ensuing process indicates not only the meaning indicated by the signifier, but also tests whether the signified³ has merit to evolve and morph meanings autonomously via its physical metamorphosis. I formally attempted to isolate, yet at the same time went beneath the subtext of language. The more the layers unravel, the more obscure and bewildering the signified is expected to be. This randomness is akin to the entropy⁴ observed at the molecular level of all

² A signifier is defined as a symbol, sound, or image (such as a word) that represents an underlying concept or meaning.

³ To be signified is a concept or meaning as distinguished from the sign through which it is communicated

⁴ Entropy, the measure of a system’s thermal energy per unit temperature that is unavailable for doing useful work. Because work is obtained from ordered molecular motion, the amount of entropy is also a measure of the molecular disorder, or randomness, of a system. The concept of entropy provides deep insight into the direction of spontaneous change for many everyday phenomena.

matter. All matter has a definitive shape that is always observable within certain boundaries. This illusion is shattered as we delve deeper into the fundamentals of what is being observed, be it matter or language.

Hence, the relationship between the signified and the signifier becomes part of a multifaceted paradigm where meaning, image (signified) and language (signifier), while sharing a discourse, nevertheless work to generate their own separate discourses simultaneously. To illustrate this concept, I will use a smoothie as an example. It has a very distinct taste from its constituent fruits and other ingredients which combine to give its unique taste, however this doesn't negate the fact that each ingredient already had its own unique taste and texture prior to be blended into a smoothie. Likewise in this artwork, the same phenomenon at work renders our capabilities of deciphering the ultimate or "true" meaning of image or language obsolete. Moreover, it is not out of place to infer that each mind that apprehends it has a distinct, although often related, visual association with a given word or concept. This association can be observed even when language, the most significant tool of communication, is shared between two minds.



Figure 1: Three different magnification prints of the work *کار* (*Kar*)

Chapter 2: Same Yet Different

Pakistan is rich with philosophers who were concerned with understanding the self's existence in this world in relation to its contingency. Shah Hussain, Bulleh Shah and Khwaja Ghulam Farid, to name a few, have done exceptional work in metaphysics, mysticism, and philosophy. Their philosophy, whether in poetry or stories, was an attempt to construct a coherent and comprehensive system that accords with the religious exigencies of Muslim culture. However, after the British colonization of Subcontinent, their works were marginalized, as the dominant language of study became English. Their works were originally written in Punjabi and Siraiki, the two native languages which are now of secondary or even lesser importance. However, the crux of their works was revisited in western philosophy by Heidegger, Deleuze, and Nietzsche, amongst many others.

I observed this linguistic isolation from a more distinct angle when I started to teach middle school students after my graduation. As explained earlier, something so similar and familiar can be interpreted very differently – even something as supposedly trivial as native language use between two individuals. While it was reassuring that I was not alone in the struggle, the quest for understanding it raged fiercer than ever. The children were struggling as much in Urdu, their mother tongue, as they were in English. While they were able to understand concepts easily enough in Urdu, they found it rather strenuous to articulate them properly in writing. Conversely, their comprehension skills in English were nonexistent, yet they could read and write in it well. It appeared that their minds were so preoccupied in grasping the structure of the alien language that it made it difficult for them to express themselves. While they could mimic the language in writing and speaking, deconstructing it to understand the logic and meaning behind complete sentences was another thing entirely.

In order to see if the linguistic isolation could be overcome by visuals or whether this had rendered their creative skills mute, I decided to conduct an experiment. In every class, I taught my students the same basic information on how to capture light and shadows in drawing. After a few basic exercises that everyone completed in almost the same manner, I started to paint a drapery in front of them and told them to try to capture it as they pleased. They were given so much freedom, yet they were very reluctant to exercise it. This was my first insight into how their creative faculties had been trampled over by the way their studies were structured in a very totalitarian manner – so terribly insistent that it allowed no space for personal opinion. On top of this, constraints in language made it impossible for these young souls to express their thoughts freely, thus rendering them terrified of the uncharted territory.

I consequently resolved to change my approach. I told the students to follow my strokes as I drew. On completion I took all their works and placed them side by side. Then I showed them why no two works looked the same, even though they had all been copied from the same source, line by line. Each unique stroke was a testimony to their individual capabilities for seeing the world and the objects within it. I assured them that all their perspectives were correct and that each perspective should also be different, encouraging them to apply the same methodology in their writings and readings as well. I taught them to learn and to own their learning, to articulate things by looking and then to use words to express what they have articulated rather than the other way around.

This was my primary motivation behind creating the work *Torch in the Dark* (Figure 2), where the viewer becomes part of the discourse and is therefore a subject, blending in and becoming part of the process where a narrative is constructed, as opposed to viewing a conceived narrative from the isolated perspective of a typical viewer. The spectators, just like my students, were encouraged to weave in their own perspectives or stories as they walked through the work.

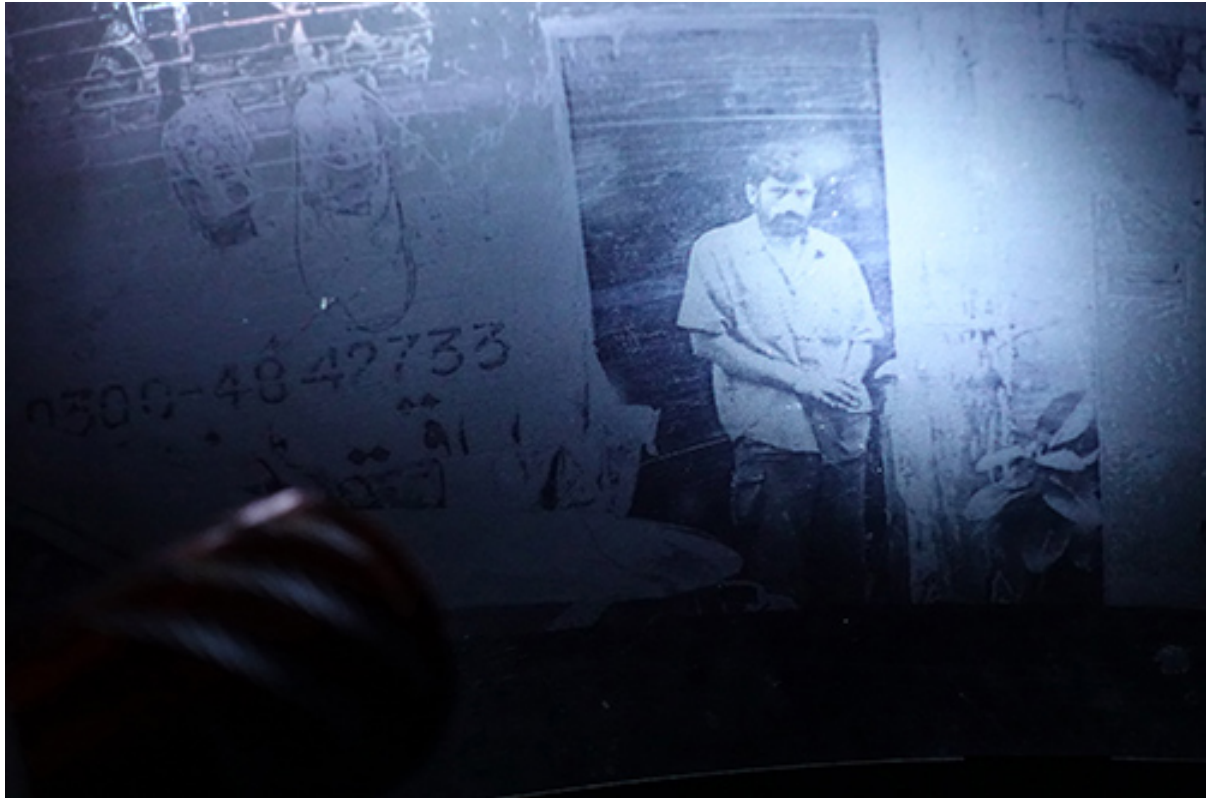


Figure 2: *Torch in the Dark*

Images were illuminated when the viewer shined the portable light at his or her discretion. This action of illuminating reflected back on the self as context. This viewing of the images from the viewer's standpoint illustrated a narrative that had not been deciphered and would be established by the viewer's own context projecting itself into the discourse⁵ of the images. The premise behind this work was to investigate the importance of sequential discourse⁶ to an individual's identity and how it influences the construction of social relationships, the interpretation of psychological processes, and the creation of meaning.

The work also acts as a strong metaphor of how individuals gain knowledge by the action of shining a light source on parts of images and then constructing their own narrative,

⁵ Discourse is defined as a mode of organizing knowledge, ideas, or experience that is rooted in language and its concrete contexts (such as history or institutions)

⁶ Discourse, as defined by Foucault, refers to: ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern. (Pitsoe & Letseka, 2013)

as touched upon by the principles of Gestalt Psychology⁷. Understandably, this gives rise to ‘single stories’⁸ as we look at the work from a single, narrow perspective, symbolic of the light source in the hands of the viewer.

Torch in the Dark defies the conventional relationships that the artist and the viewer have with the work. Here the viewer plays a key role in the development of discourse, where I do not want to restrict or bias the viewer by providing them with a preconceived narrative. Just like the work of my middle school students, where each unique stroke was a testimony to their unique capabilities of seeing the world and the objects within it, similarly there aren’t any wrong or right ways to see the work. What intrigues me is the different and unique perspectives that are generated by the percept and affect. ‘Percepts’ and ‘Affects’ are discourses that exist as independent structures as well as blending together and becoming part of the processes where narratives are constructed.

⁷ Gestalt Principles are principles/laws of human perception that describe how humans group similar elements, recognize patterns and simplify complex images when we perceive objects. Gestalt theory explores the dynamic relationships that connect the various elements of reality. We do not all perceive reality, in the same way, we have our own vision. Each one structures the information they receive according to their previous experiences. Our mental representations do not correspond completely with those that exist in reality, we construct them ourselves. We are also able to adapt our mental processes and contents as new situations arise. (Salazar, 2020)

⁸ Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses the phrase “single stories” to describe the overly simplistic and sometimes false perceptions we form about individuals, groups, or countries. She states, “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” (Brown, 2013)

Chapter 3: Percepts and Affects

I believe that art needs to grow beyond its orientation in society. I also believe that it needs to evolve, which is the motivation behind my choice not to restrict my work either in words, or by medium – it evolves with time and thus builds on its meaning, while exploring new realms of our consciousness. Like our consciousness, I want my work to be in flux – as our understanding improves, so does our way of looking at art. As a result, while specific definitions might apply to the present paradigm, they halt the evolution of dialogue from evolving further. Science, mathematics, linguistics, or any major discipline for that matter, are all present in their current state after passing through rigorous changes – over human history, our consciousness increased and our take on these disciplines consequently matured. So how can Art, which is such an inexhaustible and substantial realm, be subjected to a single statement coming from an ephemeral entity? In our consciousness, the emergence of a “truth” is considered to be the eternal one, that is, until the time the next “truth” is revealed. This perfectly summarizes my battle with the prevalent consciousness – we live and think in the limited consciousness of our minds and do not strive to look beyond the facade of reality.

Percept and affect are two entities that do not ground and restrict our consciousness to go beyond the realm of our perceived reality. However, discourse that evolves autonomously from the intentions of the artist and the perceptions of the viewer is formed when the work of art goes beyond the percept of the artist and the affect of the viewer.

“Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself.”
(Deleuze & Guattari, 1994)

One way that Art has the ability to go beyond the percept and affect is in its ability to exist in a metaphysical state. For instance, according to Deleuze, as our thoughts are materialized in our brain as sensations, they are made up of three constituent elements – affects, percepts, and concepts. These three constituents of sensation correspond to three fundamental principles – art, science and philosophy. Art achieves its metaphysical status by existing in an ontological dimension: the thought-brain. Art is perceived and processed in the cerebral plane of the brain (the thought-brain). Hence, Art exists in a virtual space, just like the thoughts inside the brain. On the other hand, it also exists in actual space because of the manifestation of real things (sculpture, paintings, etc.) that cause those thoughts to happen.

This phenomenon is what I intend to depict in my work *Rhizomatic Rupture 0.1* (Figure 3), which is a video of virtual organisms evolving in petri dishes, a hybrid world, consisting of virtual and actual entities having their own characteristics, and autonomously evolving at its own pace. I've constructed virtual organisms in such a way that the presence of one virtual entity results in the formulation and death of other virtual entities. This process of beginning and ending leads to the consequential replacement of the old with the new. The ruptures that exist in between these transitions are symbolic to Deleuze's rhizomes which are neither subjects nor objects but rather consist of magnitude and dimensions which cannot change in number without completely changing their nature. This condition reciprocates the percept, affect and concept, which exists on the periphery of a metaphysical state; yet the ripples of these entities shape, define and help us to analyze our physical world.

In my work *Rhizomatic Rupture 1.1* (Figure 4), the discourse between the metaphysical and the physical world is further visualized. A rectangular shape, with its sharp edges and structure, acts like a black hole. While the black hole emanates its elements in the outside environment, the outside environment still has not managed to penetrate it; hence, what lies in the black hole is still untainted and undiscovered by the outside environment.

Therein lies my motivation behind discussing narratives and subjects, which exist in the interstices between the known and the unknown, developing narratives along the way that talk about things beyond our physical limitations.



Figure 3: Stills of video progression of work *Rhizomatic Rupture 0.1* from the first petri dish on the top left to the last petri dish on the bottom right

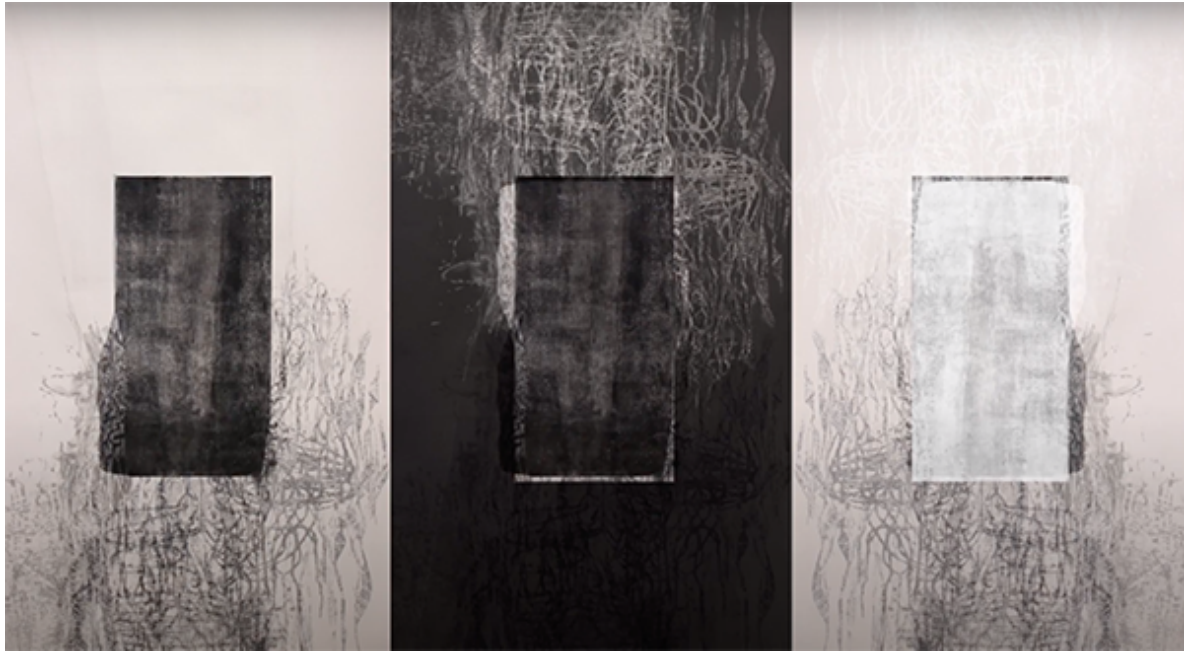


Figure 4: *Rhizomatic Rupture 1.1*

Interpreting everyday experience to reveal its latent meaning and structure is the epicenter of my work. Consequently, Heidegger inquiring into the “Nature of Being”⁹ is vitally important to me because the question of being implicitly subtends all other lines of intellectual inquiry, such as those of the physical and social sciences. Because those sciences are always concerned with beings of one kind or another, we can conduct inquiries only on the implicit basis of our understanding. This leads to an intellectualized way of understanding things, without any deep comprehension of their nature. So it is only natural to assume that the world, while evolving, would be giving birth to arbitrary chaotic convulsions of destruction – indeed, it is likely because underneath it all, our world isn’t guided by any thoughtful understanding of the nature of our existence. For instance, people are often mystified by the fact that our technological world, which aims at increasing human happiness, has also given birth to phenomena such as the specter of nuclear annihilation, technologically engineered genocide, and our ongoing destruction of the natural environment.

⁹ Nature of Being: Heidegger’s attempted to access being (Sein) by means of phenomenological analysis of human existence (Dasein) in respect to its temporal and historical character. (Karpowicz, 1995)

This is the premise behind my work *The Arbitrary Banality of Reason*, (Figure 5) where two opposing entities try to build a utopia and dystopia simultaneously as one cannot exist without the other. While the two entities may reveal their percept and affect, there is still an untainted force on top of the work depicted by an engraved circular pattern, like the black hole in *Rhizomatic Rupture 1.1* (Figure 4), which is still left impenetrable yet it drives the two entities.

Trying to find a clear-cut solution for the existence of black holes or to untangle what operates within this rhizomatic structure (in *Rhizomatic Rupture 0.1*, Figure 3) is neither one-dimensional nor easy – when a rhizome is broken off at any point, it always regrows again, and even more complex in nature due to the autonomous mutation, hence generating even more complex realities. However, human nature has an overzealous devotion to reason and clear-cut answers, which often leads to the development of “single stories”, or a very narrow view. In this process, we often unwittingly dismiss ideas and narratives when their opposites bask in what might be an arbitrary status of narrow legitimation.

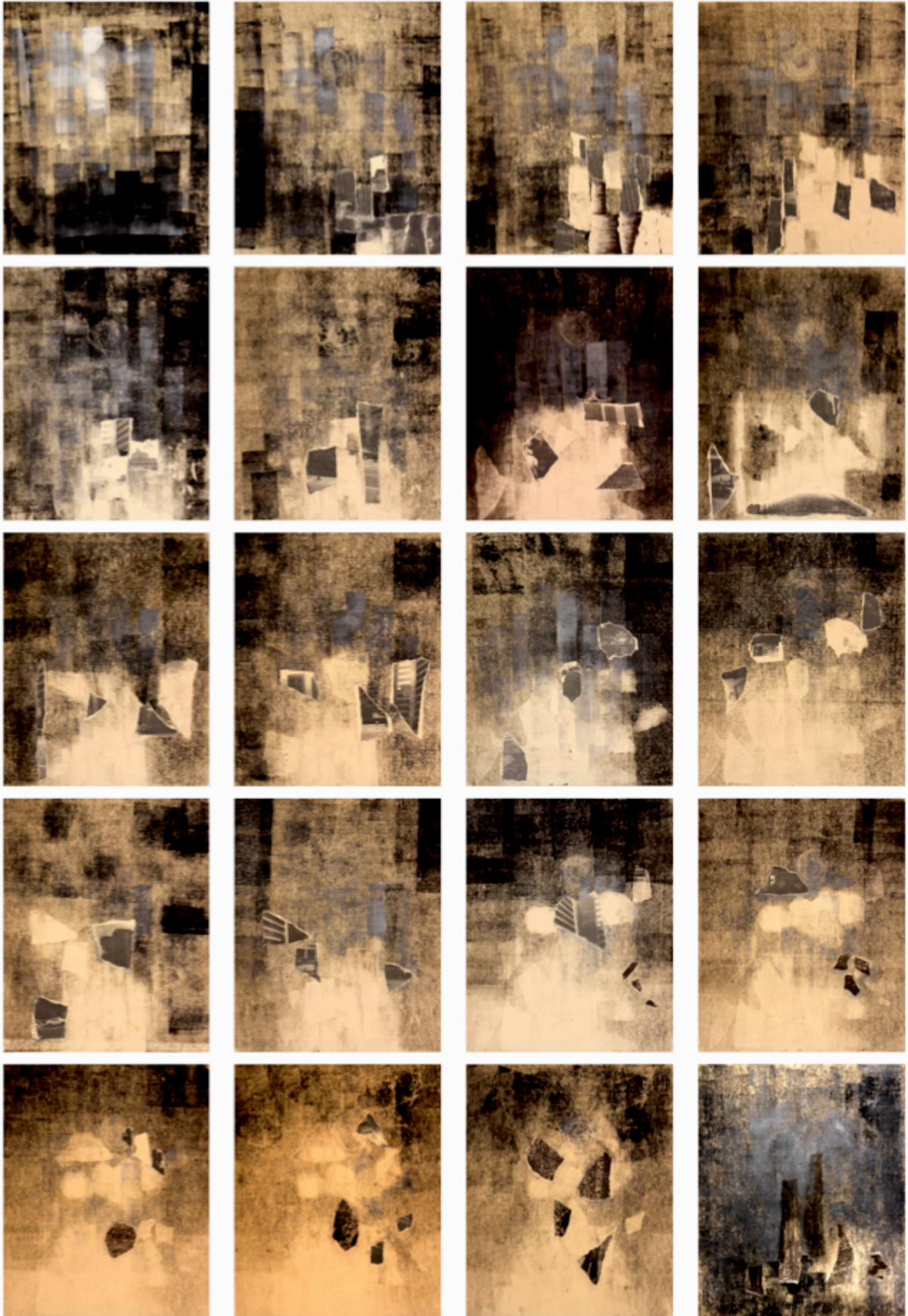


Figure 5: Prints and video stills of the work *The Arbitrary Banality of Reason*

Chapter 4: Back to Basics

The Rhizome can also be seen as a labyrinth, which is always open and can be entered at any point. Language for me is governed by a similar concept – laden with so many cultural and social contexts. This makes the deconstruction of language almost impossible, much like a labyrinth, as you simply never know where to start. Therefore in deciphering the rhizomatic structure one has to see it like a process, as opposed to an entity. The focus correspondingly shifts from what was and what is, to what can become of it. This element of rootlessness helps us envision how we might oppose what is considered the rational approach to knowledge. According to Rosalind Krauss, the way that we acquire knowledge is deeply rooted in our biases, which are established by social and cultural norms, religious beliefs, and our socialization through the means of education, media, and family institutions.

“History, as we normally use it, implies the connection of events through time, a sense of inevitable change as we move from one event to the next, and the cumulative effect of change which is itself qualitative, so that we tend to view history as developmental. Etiology is not developmental. It is rather an investigation into the conditions for one specific change—the acquisition of disease—to take place. In that sense etiology is more like looking into the background of a chemical experiment, asking when and how a given group of elements came together to affect a new compound or to precipitate something out of a liquid. For the etiology of neuroses, we may take a “history” of the individual, to explore what went into the formation of the neurotic structure; but once the neurosis is formed, we are specifically enjoined from thinking in terms of “development,” and instead we speak of repetition.”
(Krauss 1986, p 22)

Hence the subjectivities instilled via institutions mentioned above halt “*development*” and propagate “*repetition*”. To analyze this theory practically, I look at Pakistan, in particular the practice of class segregation – not with respect to the elements constituted in its existence but why is it still prevalent, and how it will manifest in the future.

Class segregation has divided human society into different segments in Pakistan. When I refer to class segregation, I am not only referencing class division¹⁰ as pointed out by Marx but also the segregation that has taken place due to the education system. In middle school, it always struck me as odd that a foreign author was used for our history book “The History and Culture of Pakistan by Nigel Kelly” and Islamiyat (Islamic studies) by David Thomas. While our teachers were local and there were no foreign students in my school, nonetheless the medium of instruction was English. I failed to understand why our history and our religion was not being taught and graded by our people, why a foreigner was narrating our history when he did not originate from here, and why he was teaching us about a religion that was not even his. Additionally, I did not understand why our Ordinary (O’ level) and Advanced (A’ level) exams went outside of Pakistan to be checked and legitimized by a foreigner.

However, matters get even worse when two other education systems called Madrassa and Urdu medium were created to counter such prejudices, but in the process created a very biased and restrictive form of subjectivities that considered any other decorum and thought besides its own as the enemy/*haram*/immoral. This split in ideologies created a clash between social structures, resulting in chaos about moral values and confusion between the new and the old. This pushed certain traditions, cultures, value systems and languages under threat from the extremist mindset. In such a society, people are not only living under the red line of poverty but also under the line of cultural extinction and moral loss.

This was the precedent behind creating the work *Archaeological Dilettante: Deconstructing Vernaculars* (Figure 6), which highlights the importance of language and its role in transforming our thinking and rationalizing our preliminary ideas into a structured form. Language is not only a medium of communication, it’s also a harbinger of knowledge

¹⁰ In Marxist theory, the capitalist stage of production consists of two main classes: the bourgeoisie, the capitalists who own the means of production, and the much larger proletariat (or ‘working class’) who must sell their own labor power. (Sociology 250,1999)

acquired via history. However in many colonies, such as Pakistan, the advent of colonization has led to the understanding of its different cultures from one perspective. Edouard Glissant in his book *Poetics of Relation* develops his notions of “transparency”¹¹ and “opacity”¹² via a critique of the main ways that “the West” has historically come to understand its “others” (Glissant & Wing, 1997). The idea of understanding the new is only achieved by the means of it being exposed to an individual or a group of individuals who can comprehend it based on their own perspectives or means of measurement, what Glissant calls “the ideal scale”—in order to render it knowable. Hence in the work *Archaeological Dilettante: Deconstructing Vernaculars*, I am trying to decipher the unique objects via my own interpretation, ignoring the fact that these created fossils stem from wood. Instead of understanding the origin, I try to translate what the white and black objects are on the basis of their surface value. In other words, I am making a fictional narrative that satisfies and justifies its existence to the viewer.

Thus the work is also symbolic of the similar methodology that happens in educational systems, especially in Pakistan. Whether English, Urdu or madrassas, each works according to the “banking education”¹³ approach to pedagogy where students are considered to be empty containers and the task of teacher is to fill students by making deposits of information considered to be vital knowledge.

“The more students work as storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of the world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them.” (Freire, 2005, p 73).

¹¹ According to Glissant, an imperative for transparency has been the primary condition for making people or things understandable in the West: “If we examine the process of ‘understanding’ people and ideas from the perspective of Western thought,” Glissant writes, “we discover that its basis is [a] requirement for transparency. (Glissant & Wing, 1997)

¹² Glissant defines opacity as an alterity that is unquantifiable, a diversity that exceeds categories of identifiable difference. Opacity, therefore, exposes the limits of schemas of visibility, representation, and identity that prevent sufficient understanding of multiple perspectives of the world and its peoples. (Glissant & Wing, 1997)

¹³ Paulo Freire is considered the founder of the Critical Pedagogy movement in the field of education. Freire (2005) offers two distinct visions of education: banking education and problem-posing education.

Moreover, within each educational system there is a lot of epistemic violence¹⁴, as explained by Gayatri Spivak, which halts the development of counter-radicalization discourses. Spivak considers epistemic violence as an inherent feature of the Western colonial project. It undermines local Pakistani knowledge systems and ways of knowing by imposing Western epistemologies on the local and by claiming that the Western knowledge is the truth (Bartels et al. 2019). Thus, English medium educational systems have been reduced to learning “technique” to attempt the CIE¹⁵ paper, and how subjects that can potentially offer critical insights on contemporary social and political issues are being marginalized in elite school systems. Schools do not hire proper subject specialists for Social Science courses like Pak Studies or Islamiyat. Any individual who had a good grip on the English language was considered to be capable of teaching these courses, regardless of their area of expertise. The time allocated to these courses is also less, compared to other courses. These are marginalized subjects which no one pays much attention to. Teachers are under a lot of pressure to cover a big course in short time, hence active learning is not possible in this scenario as the teaching of thinking takes time. Even though madrassas and Urdu medium schools are vastly different in the medium and curriculum, they follow the same banking education methodology identified by Freire. For instances, madrassas focus on learning to memorize the Quran word to word without understanding its meaning or message. There is no attempt at learning Arabic because the sole focus is getting the title of ‘*Hafiz*’¹⁶. Similarly to English medium schools, Urdu medium education systems are also grade-oriented rather than learning-oriented, as students are taught techniques for how to write papers that will get good grades.

¹⁴ The notion refers to the violent knowledge production of the imperial West about their subjects that defines and constitutes the character of the subjects, that claims to speak for the subjects, but does not allow them to speak for themselves.

¹⁵ Cambridge International Examinations

¹⁶ Hafiz, literally meaning "guardian" or "memorizer", depending on the context, is a term used by Muslims for someone who has completely memorized the Quran.

This is what Krauss mentioned earlier, what the institutions label as of “*development*,” and instead they reinforce “*repetition*”. This repetition only serves the imperialist capitalist structure, where like-minded passive people graduate year after year, keeping the status quo consistent.



Figure 6: Installation shot of *Archaeological Dilettante: Deconstructing Vernaculars*

Chapter 5: A Discourse with My Own History

Ultimately, the reason why I found the metaphysical state fascinating is because it resonated with me and where I was coming from. For instance, my early childhood disassociation from and confusion vis-à-vis my language and culture didn't stem from a few factors but resulted from a multitude of them which, like the rhizomatic structure, could not be pinned down: every time such an effort was made to get an answer, it became even more convoluted.

My research into the metaphysical state helped me reevaluate and decontextualize my own dark recesses, which have existed in my subconscious yet have influenced all of my conscious decisions. Therefore, my work had become an extension of my subconscious mind which – like the black hole in *Rhizomatic Rupture 1.1* (Figure 4) or the circular entity in *Arbitrary Banalities* (Figure 5) – was always present and, yet, an uncharted territory. However, understanding “*percepts*” and “*affects*” helped me go beyond perceived emotions, laws, and my own consciousness to realize the existence of these entities and eventually explore them little by little, akin to possibly untangling a complicated knot.

I started looking into three diverging issues that surrounded me: educational levels, child labor and domestic violence (acid attacks, honor killings etc.) (Figure 7). A deeper investigation revealed that geographic areas characterized by higher literacy rate, where these issues should not have been prevalent, were actually harboring more of these incidents. This illustrated that the education system in the country was responsible for propagating or at least not condemning these issues. The current education system, in addition to the general family traditions, which focus on training boys to be the future sole earners of the family, as it is considered to be their duty. It is a norm for men to be patriarchal figureheads and it is their obligation by the divine commandment. As a result, education for women is not given much

priority and therefore limits them to domestic labor, which is their traditional gender role as assigned by society. This continues on to the next generation. Since the aforementioned boys grow up with this sense of entitlement and undue importance associated simply with their birth and being male, they have a tendency to bend and even break certain other civil norms and rules unabashedly, namely by committing domestic violence and honor killings. Since these acts are carried out by men deluded with a twisted sense of right and wrong, reflected in and by society, they are celebrated instead of being condemned.

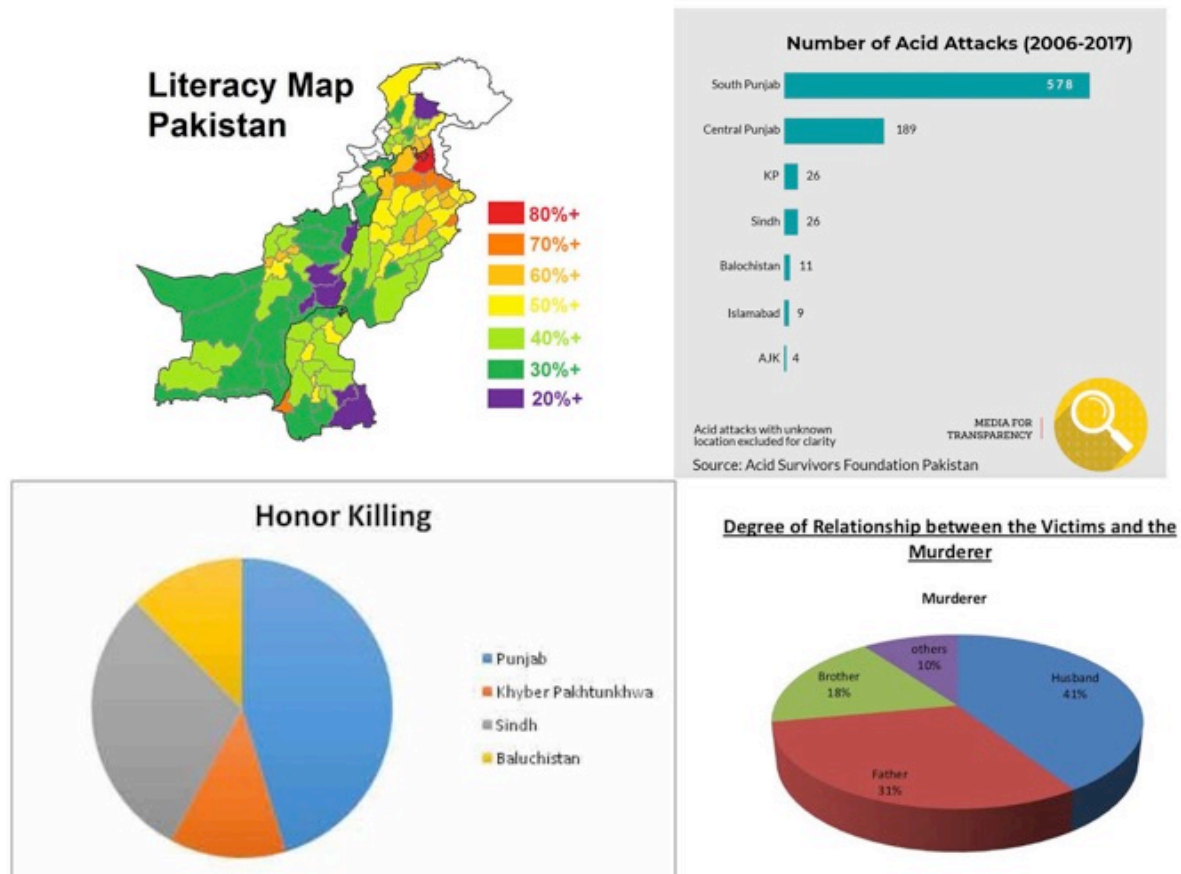


Figure 7: Compilation of education and domestic violence statistics

I wanted to create a work, therefore, that showed the overlap between the aforementioned issues around me and their causes rooted in the system. In other words, I wanted to explore and expose how systematic problems can result in devolving problems on

many different levels. Much like the keys in an atlas, I assigned red, blue and yellow (three primary colors) with domestic violence, education and child labor, respectively. I applied these colors on a map of the province of Punjab in accordance with the data I had gathered on these three topics (Figure 7) and the result was that they all merged to create secondary and tertiary colors (Figure 8). In a way, they depicted rhizomes and their development into intricate structures and also how these three issues in Punjab culminate in the creation of problems that are far more complex than the original three I investigated, which are significant in themselves. In fact, these problems are so complex that in order to get to their roots is seemingly impossible.

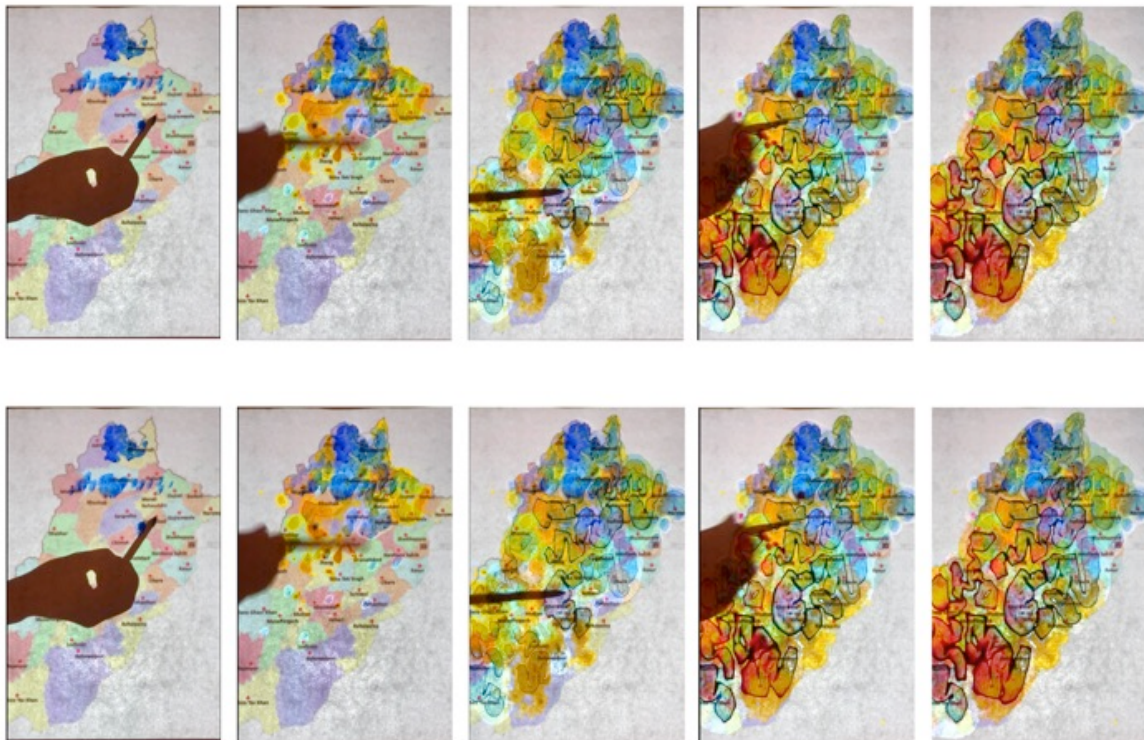


Figure 8: Video stills

I took this concept further by inducting photographs taken by a local indigenous social documentary photographer and projected them on three foot paintings constituting expressions that reflected Urdu, Arabic and English scripture and Pakistani newspapers

blurbs regarding the above mentioned three issues (Figures 9-12). Each image was positioned according to color and, therefore, the issue that color represented. When taken against the backdrop, it displays consequential issues stemming from the base three issues on which they are premised.



Figure 9: Backdrop



Figure 10: With projection

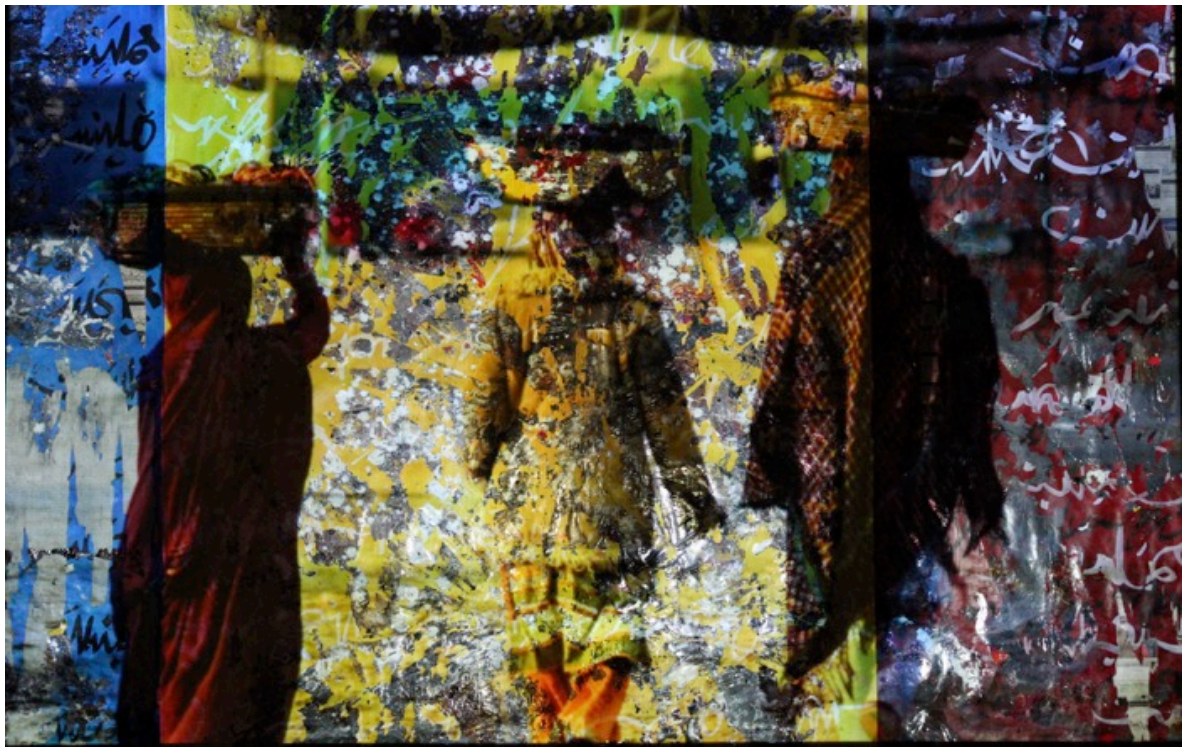


Figure 11: Projection



Figure 12: Projection

Chapter 6: The Reveal

Working with the same metaphor, I wanted to enrich the experience of the viewer and, therefore, decided to do it in a way where the moving image was a testament to the issue I wanted to highlight but at the same time represented the root ignorance. In the installation piece, the *'Ice Seller'* (Fig. 13), an atmosphere is created where there is actual ice being melted and the water is collected in buckets. On it, a video is projected of a small boy who is selling ice. The melting is synonymous with his time being wasted away which could be better spent in acquiring education. The purpose of collecting water instead of letting it flow away serves as an open-ended question: will it be used to make ice again, hence preserving the cycle of child labor, or will the cycle be broken by utilizing the water somewhere more productive?



Figure 13: Ice Seller Installation

Conclusion/Future Endeavors

I aspire to make my future projects not only interactive with the audience, conceptually and physically, but also self-evolving and clearly derivative of social alphabets. Another future aspiration regarding my work is to break away from the world and principles of art galleries so that conceptual art can exist and thrive among the masses. I believe that everyone, not only gallery- and museum-goers, needs to see these alarming results and then endeavor to correct them. Change from above is termed authoritarian and has negative connotations, whereas change from below is termed revolutionary and has positive connotations. This twofold work of branching out of the gallery and bringing social and thought provoking work to the masses will help me in bridging the knowledge gaps in some of my conceptions and aid me in nourishing novel ideas and perspectives. Succeeding might unite art with everyday people – as it is something they commonly consider a recreational activity for the upper echelons of society -- given that the topics in my work focus so much on revitalizing and re-contextualizing certain norms. However, if this falls through, my work will open new portals of investigation for myself. The mode or subject matter of my work is not final before the experimentation. The latter helps me evaluate and aids in naturally evolving the work, as well as the subject matter, side by side. As the work evolves, it is bound to reveal the parallel contentions that exist but are concealed under the façade of the given or perceived reality. This is the beauty of working with the Rhizomatic Philosophy – it often inadvertently leads the artist to the development of a concept that was not initially intended by the artist.

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