

Profile

Hamra Abbas (Pakistani, b. 1976, Kuwait) received her BFA and MA in Visual Arts from the National College of Arts, Lahore in 1999 and 2002 respectively before attending Universitaet der Kuenste in Berlin where she did the Meisterschueler in 2004.

She has exhibited internationally with recent solo exhibitions including: Frieze Seoul with Lawrie Shabibi, Focus Asia sector, Seoul, South Korea (2023); COLOR | GARDEN, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2022; Color Wheel, Canvas gallery, Karachi, 2021; Every Colour is a Shade of Black, COMO Museum of Art, Lahore, 2020; Open Cube, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2019; Gardens in Which Rivers Flow: Plastic Flowers and Everyday Miracles, Art Dubai with Canvas Gallery, Dubai, 2019; Color, Canvas gallery, Karachi, 2017; Bodies, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2016; But Can You Show this in Pakistan? PILOT, Istanbul, 2015; and, Kaaba Picture as a Misprint, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2014.

Her work has been exhibited as part of numerous group shows including, most recently: Highlights, Ithra Museum, King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, Dhahran, KSA, 2023; Beyond the Page: South Asian Miniature Painting and Britain, 1600 to Now, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, UK, 2023; Brand New Ancients, Misk Art Institute, Riyadh, KSA, 2023; STILL, LIFE! MOURNING, MEANING, MENDING, 21c Museum Hotel in Bentonville, Arkansas, USA, 2023; Flowers: Gardens of Paradise 2, Art Mill Museum, Al Najada Heritage House #15, Doha, Qatar, 2022; Ornamenting Relation, Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto, Mississauga, Canada, 2022; Art Dubai Contemporary, with Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2022; Precaution, ARTER, Istanbul, Turkey, 2021; Tonight No Poetry Will Serve, Barefoot Gallery, Colombo, 2021; Under Construction, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2021; Art Dubai Contemporary, with Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2021; Gateway: Fragments, Yesterday and Today, Abu Dhabi Art Fair, Abu Dhabi, 2019; Second Karachi Biennale, Bagh Ibn e Qasim, Karachi, 2019; She Persists, Palazzo Benzon, Venice (2019); Art Dubai Contemporary, with Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, 2018; Lahore Biennale, Lahore, 2018; Global Control and Censorship, Galeria Arsenal, Bialystok, 2017; Karachi Biennale, Karachi, 2017; Sanctuary, FOR-SITE Foundation, San Francisco, 2017; Insights, Art Basel Hong Kong, with Lawrie Shabibi, 2017.

Abbas is an Honoree of the Asia Arts Game Changer Awards 2021. She is the recipient of the Jury prize at Sharjah Biennial 9, the Abraaj Capital Art Prize in 2011.

In 2021, Abbas presented Garden (2021) - a large-scale public art intervention commissioned under the Expo 2020 Dubai Public Art Programme, and intended to remain on site as part of the future city of District 2020.

Her work is part of significant collections, including: the British Museum, London, UK; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas, USA; 21c Museum Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky, USA; Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio, USA; Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, USA; USA Art In Embassies Collection, USA; Burger Collection, Hong Kong; Koç Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey; Borusan Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey; Kadist Collection, Paris, France; Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels, Belgium; Devi Art Foundation, Guragon, India; Kiran Nader Museum of Art, New Delhi, India; King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), Saudi Arabia; Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, UAE; Art Jameel Collection, Dubai, UAE; Zayed National Museum, UAE; Qatar Museums, Doha, Qatar; Dubai Collection, Dubai, UAE; EXPO 2020, Dubai, UAE.

Abbas currently lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan

Artist statement

Hamra Abbas received formal training in sculpture and Indo-Persian style of miniature painting at the National College of Arts in Lahore. Departing from this traditional background, Abbas integrates contemporary mediums like digital art, installation and performance into her art. Throughout her artistic journey, she delves into the physical manifestations of faith, ritual, and tradition.

The artist's pluri-disciplinary practice initially encapsulates the delicate interplay of vulnerability and fragility within her work. Her approach first draws inspiration from the various locations she has resided in, including Berlin and Boston. As an immigrant, she embodies a fleeting state reflected in the ephemeral, weightless quality of her work, reminiscent of paper or live performances. This quality not only renders her creations easily transportable but also underscores their fleeting existence. In 2015, upon returning to Pakistan, her homeland, a profound shift occurred. Her art evolved from this transient phase to embrace a more permanent production, mirroring her journey back to her roots. Her return to Pakistan inspired her to incorporate marble inlay, drawn from the local context of marble factories, adding a new dimension to her artistic expression. This transition signifies a pivotal moment where the impermanence gave way to permanence, invoking a sense of stability and belonging inherent to her home and heritage.

Today, her artistic practice draws inspiration from the concept of a garden—an emblem of ecology, environment, and a metaphorical allusion to the garden of paradise. This evolution reflects a deeper connection to her surroundings, entwining her art with themes of nature and the environment. Her new body of work blossoms with cascading waterfalls, towering trees, and intricate depiction of flowers, each element a part of her garden, whether standing individually or interwoven in larger, harmonious compositions. These patterns—reminiscent of Mughal gardens and the vibrant colors emblematic of the region's rich culture—adorn the marble inlays, evoking a sense of serenity and wonder. As part of her research and practice, Hamra has been documenting the northern regions of Pakistan, which include a recent journey to the base camp of K2, a nod to South Asia's majestic landscapes. At the heart of it all lies something deeply intimate and autobiographical, where every creation springs forth from a personal narrative, inviting viewers into the artist's inner world.

EDUCATION

- 2004 Meisterschüler, Universitaet der Kuenste, Berlin, Germany
2002 MA, Visual Arts, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan
1999 BFA (Sculpture), National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Frieze Seoul 2023, Focus Asia with Lawrie Shabibi, Seoul, South Korea
2022 COLOR | GARDEN, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE
2020 Every Colour is a Shade of Black, COMO Art Museum, Lahore
2019 Open Cube, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE
Gardens in Which Rivers Flow: Plastic Flowers and Everyday Miracles, Art Dubai with Canvas Gallery, Dubai, UAE
2017 Colour, Canvas, Karachi, Pakistan
2016 Bodies, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE
2015 But Can You Show this in Pakistan?, PILOT, Istanbul, Turkey
2014 Kaaba Picture as a Misprint, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE
2013 Hamra Abbas: Wall Hanging, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
2012 City and the Everyday, PILOT, Istanbul, Turkey Idols, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, India Idols, Canvas, Karachi, Pakistan
2011 Cities, Green Cardamom, London, UK
2010 Cityscapes, OUTLET, Istanbul, Turkey
2009 Video Art by Hamra Abbas, Babusch Project Space, Berlin, Germany
2008 Adventures of the Woman in Black, Green Cardamom, London, UK
New works by Hamra Abbas, NCA Gallery, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
God Grows on Trees, Schultz Contemporary, Berlin, Germany
Hamra Abbas, Zahoor-al-Akhlaq Gallery, NCA, Lahore, Pakistan
2006 Hamra Abbas, Dorothea Konwiarz Stiftung Galerie, Berlin, Germany
Lessons on Love, Rohtas 2, Lahore, Pakistan

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale, JAX District in Diriyah, KSA
2023 Highlights, Ithra Museum, King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, Dhahran, KSA
Beyond the Page: South Asian Miniature Painting and Britain, 1600 to Now, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, UK
Brand New Ancients, Misk Art Institute, Riyadh, KSA
STILL, LIFE! MOURNING, MEANING, MENDING, 21c Museum Hotel in Bentonville, Arkansas, USA
2022 Art Mill Museum 2030, Al Najada Heritage House #15, Doha, Qatar.
2021 Public Art Programme, EXPO 2020, Dubai, UAE
Precaution, ARTER, Istanbul, Turkey
Tonight No Poetry Will Serve, Barefoot Gallery, Colombo
2020 We Do Not Dream Alone, Asia Society Triennial, New York, NY, USA
Miniature 2.0, Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey
2019 Gateway: Fragments, Yesterday and Today, Abu Dhabi Art Fair, Abu Dhabi, UAE
2nd Karachi Biennale, Bagh Ibn e Qasim, Karachi, Pakistan
She Persists, Palazzo Benzon, Venice, Italy
MATERIALIZED, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE
2018 Art Dubai Contemporary, with Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE
1st Lahore Biennale, Lahore, Pakistan
Global Control and Censorship, Galeria Arsenal, Bialystok, Poland
2017 Witness, 1st Karachi Biennale, Karachi, Pakistan
Sanctuary, FOR-SITE Foundation, San Francisco, USA
Insights, Art Basel Hong Kong, with Lawrie Shabibi, Hong Kong
The Making of an Institution, NTU CCA, Singapore
2016 Text Edit, Manhattan Bridge Anchorage, Brooklyn, New York, USA
Accademia di Brera, Milan, Italy
do-it, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
2015 And Nothing but the Truth: Parrhesia II, KOEL Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
Art Dubai Contemporary, with Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE
Istanbul. Passion, Joy, Fury, MAXXI, Rome, Italy
Globale: Global Control And Censorship, ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe, Germany
ALL ABOUT THESE... LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, Gallery on the move, Cologne, Germany
What is Home? Pump House Gallery, London, UK
The Body And Other Small Tales, Thessaloniki Centre of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, Greece
2014 Whorled Explorations, Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi Island, India
UNTITLED Art Fair, with Lawrie Shabibi and Copperfield gallery, Miami Beach, Florida, USA
Abu Dhabi Art, with Lawrie Shabibi, Abu Dhabi, UAE
The Shade of the Moon, Changwon Sculpture Biennale, Changwon, South Korea
The Importance of Staying Quiet, Yallay Gallery, Hong Kong
Censorship, The 7th Move on Asia, Alternative Space Loop, Seoul, South Korea
ALL ABOUT THESE... LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, Soma Mexico DF, Mexico City, Mexico
2013 LIEBE / LOVE, Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen am Rhein, Germany
The 2013 DeCordova Biennial, DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, USA
Signs Taken in Wonder, Kunstverein Hanover, Hanover, Germany
ECHOES: Islamic Art and Contemporary Artists, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas, USA
Signs Taken in Wonder: Searching for Contemporary Istanbul, MAK, Vienna Austria
2012 The Collectors Show: Chimera, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
2011 Medi(t)ation – 2011 Asian Art Biennial, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan
Home Spun, Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon, India
Everyday Miracles (Extended), Walter and McBean Galleries, SFAI, San Francisco, California, USA
Sympathy for the Devil, Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels, Belgium
The Power of Doubt, PhotoEspaña 2011, Museo Colecciones ICO, Madrid, Spain
2010 Guangdong Times Museum, Guangzhou, China
The Rising Tide: New Directions in Art from Pakistan 1990-2010, Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi, Pakistan
UNERWARTET/UNEXPECTED, Kunst Museum, Bochum, Germany
ResembleReassemble, Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon, India
Beyond the Page: The Miniature as Attitude in Contemporary Art from Pakistan, Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, California, USA
2009 Aluminium, 4th International Biennial of Contemporary Art, Baku, Azerbaijan
2nd International Incheon Women Artists' Biennale, Incheon, South Korea
Everyday Miracles (Extended), Walter and McBean Galleries, SFAI, San Francisco, California, USA
Everyday Miracles (Extended), REDCAT, Los Angeles, California, USA
Hanging Fire, Asia Society Museum, New York, New York, USA
Read, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada
Mashq, Green Cardamom, London, UK
Jameel Prize, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK
International Artists' Workshop, PRAXIS: Art in Times of Uncertainty, 2nd Thessaloniki Biennale, Greece
Anomalies, Rossi & Rossi, London, UK
Starring the Artist, Indus Valley School Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
Provisions for the Future, 9th Sharjah Biennale, Sharjah, UAE
2008 Recently Seen and Admired, Galerie Kunstagenten, Berlin, Germany
The Audience and the Eavesdropper: New Art From India and Pakistan, Phillips dePury & Company, London, UK
Drawn From Life, Green Cardamom, London, UK
Buffaloes in Combat, Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, Toronto, Canada
Farewell to Post-Colonialism, 3rd Guangzhou Triennial, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China
Crossroads, Elementa Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE
2007 In-Situ, Shake Before Use, ARTIUM de Alava, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain
Not Only Possible But Also Necessary-Optimism In The Age Of Global War, 10th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey
Urban Myths and Modern Fables, UTS Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Inaugural show, National Art Gallery, Islamabad, Pakistan
Contemporary Art from Pakistan, Thomas Erben, New York, New York, USA
Politics of Fear, Albion Gallery, London, UK
2006 Zones of Contact, 15th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
Beyond the Page, Asia House, London and Manchester Art Gallery, UK
Open day, Vasl International Artists Workshop, Gadani, Pakistan
2005 Zeitsprünge Raumfolgen, ifa Galerie, Berlin, Stuttgart, Germany
Full House, Künstlerdorf Schöppingen, Schöppingen, Germany
Meisterschueler Prize Winners of UdK, Galerie Michael Schultz, Berlin, Germany
KOVIDEO, 1st Durban Video Festival, Mumbai, India
BEYOND BORDERS, Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, India
2004 Meisterschueler Prize Exhibition, Universitaet der Kuenste (UdK), Berlin, Germany
Aarpaar 3, Lahore and Karachi, Pakistan, Mumbai, India
Miniature from Pakistan, Fukuoka Museum of Asian Art, Fukuoka, Japan
Open Studios, Triangle Artists' Workshop, Brooklyn, New York, USA
8th Symposium Junge Kunst, Guetersloh, Germany
FreiRäume, A Project by FreiStil e.V., Berlin, Germany
Love It or Leave It, 5th Cetinje Biennial, Cetinje, Montenegro
Creative Insecurity, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, Canada
Meisterschueler Exhibition, Universitaet der Kuenste (UdK) Berlin, Germany
Along the X-Axis: Digital Art From India and Pakistan, New Delhi, India
Playing with a Loaded Gun, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany
2003 Junger Westen 2003, Kunsthalle Rechlinghausen, Rechlinghausen, Germany

PUBLIC ARTWORKS

- 2024 Every Color is a Shade of Black (2023), commissioned by Alserkal Avenue, Dubai, UAE
2021 Garden (2021), large-scale floor sculpture, commissioned by Expo 2020 Dubai Public Art Programme, Dubai, UAE

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Art Jameel Collection, Dubai, UAE
Borusan Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey
British Museum, London, UK
Burger Collection, Hong Kong
Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio, USA
Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, UAE
Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon, India
Dubai Collection, Dubai, UAE
EXPO 2020, Dubai, UAE
Farjam Collection, Dubai, UAE
Kadist Collection, Paris, France
King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), KSA
Kiran Nader Museum of Art, New Delhi, India
Koç Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey
21c Museum Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky, USA
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas, USA
Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, USA
Qatar Museums, Qatar
Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada
USA Art in Embassies Collection, USA
Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels, Belgium
Zayed National Museum, UAE

AWARDS

- 2021 Asia Arts Future, Asia Arts Game Changer Awards India
2019 Artist-in-Residence, Civitella Ranieri Foundation, Umbertide, Italy
2016 Artist-in-Residence, The Marble House Project, Dorset, Vermont, USA
2015 Nanyang Technological University CCA Singapore Residencies: Insights, Nanyang, Singapore
2011 Abraaj Capital Art Prize Winner, Dubai, UAE
2010 Triangle Artist Residency, Brooklyn, New York, USA
2009 Jury Prize, Sharjah Biennial 9, Sharjah, UAE
2006 Residencies at Gasworks, Victoria & Albert Museum and Green Cardamom, London, UK
2005 Scholarship, Dorothea Konwiarz Stiftung, Berlin, Germany
Residence scholarship, Kuenstlerdorf Schoeppingen, Germany
2004 Meisterschüler Prize, Universitaet der Kuenste (UdK) Berlin, Germany
Triangle Artists' Workshop, Brooklyn, New York, USA
8th Symposium Junge Kunst, Guetersloh, Germany
2003 Fellowship Award, artist-in-residence, Vermont Studio Center, Vermont, USA
DAAD Scholarship, Germany