

## **AIPS Fellowship Final Report**

**Project Title:** Karachi Modern: Situating Rasheed Araeen's Early Works in the Urban Field

**Author's Name:** Kylie Gilchrist

**Email Address:** [kylie.gilchrist@aku.edu](mailto:kylie.gilchrist@aku.edu)

**Dates for Project:** February 1 2024–June 15 2024

**Location:** Karachi, Pakistan

### **Significance to Pakistan Studies**

This project contributes an original study of artist Rasheed Araeen's early practice in 1950–60s Karachi, situating his self-taught artistic work alongside his engineering studies and architectural experiments in the context of intensive urbanization, postcolonial nation-state formation, and Cold War geopolitics. This research demonstrates that the artistic, architectural, and socio-political developments in Karachi during the city's pivotal early years of post-colonial independence were fundamental to Araeen's artistic trajectory and contributions, which are now widely recognized for their impact on artistic developments in the UK and internationally since the 1960s. In doing so, it challenges the prevailing art historical tendency to focus primarily or exclusively on Araeen's work in London after he emigrated to the city in 1964, and by extension disrupts Eurocentric historiographies of modern and avant-garde art by foregrounding Karachi and Pakistan as a significant locus in Araeen's transnational artistic trajectory. Within the field of Pakistan studies, this project presents a micro-history of the early post-independence years that links together the processes of nation-state formation, urbanization, economic and political development, and Cold War geopolitics. It enriches existing scholarship on art and cultural history in Karachi and Pakistan more widely, in particular by demonstrating how Araeen's artistic innovations were strongly linked to the unique climate of multi-class intellectual life and public culture in 1950–60s Karachi.

## **Key Outcomes and Deliverables**

The AIPS Pre-Doctoral Fellowship enabled me to conduct original research on the early practice of Karachi-born, London-based artist Rasheed Araeen by spending a semester in Karachi hosted by the Aga Khan University's Faculty of Arts & Sciences. Project outcomes included significant new archival discoveries in institutional, community, and personal archives, the most significant finding being blueprints to both houses that Araeen architected in Karachi in the 1950–60s; extended discussions with Araeen's family and viewing access to important early artworks held in his home; oral history consultations with individuals connected to Araeen at various stages of his career such as artistic peers and fellow alumni of Araeen's alma mater N.E.D. University; and strong ties with Karachi academic, art, and heritage institutions leading to, among other professional opportunities, a semester-long visiting lectureship at the Faculty of Arts & Sciences, Aga Khan University (FAS AKU) in the autumn 2024 semester. These professional connections have both directly and substantially enriched my project research and have created notable opportunities to pursue future research on modern and contemporary art in Pakistan as well as collaborations with the country's art and academic institutions. Project deliverables include the completion of essential and original research that forms the basis of one chapter in my in-progress book manuscript on Rasheed Araeen's practice between 1950s Karachi and 1970s London; and multiple opportunities to share research with wider publics, including lectures at the FAS AKU, the +921 Heritage Talks series presented by the Pakistan Chowk Community Centre, and a lecture at a Rasheed Araeen Study Day hosted by the University of Bristol, all in June 2024, as well as an invitation to speak at the Karachi Biennial in October 2024.