

## Imran Channa



I feel we don't really have a single memory that always stays with us. Memories fade, overlap and mix overtime. I would call them bunches of memories attached to a certain time in life. If I recall my most highlighted memories I think they would be about archives and books. When I was in class 5, I read a lot, but I grew up in a very small village where there were no libraries or books.

There was this friend of mine at the time, he took me to this old abandoned place he knew of in his village. It was a big library owned by some Hindus from before partition and the owners had moved away to India. The people in the area didn't have much of a relationship with books so when the building started falling apart, they took away all the valuables but left the books there. So there was a huge pile of books over there and it was all in ruins.

So then I started going there every week, bringing back two to three hundred books. Eventually I built a collection of about 3000 books in my home. These were really old books, dating back

Caption 1

to the 50s, and all kinds, fiction, nonfiction, palmistry, old war documents, old magazines. So I realize that my interest in archives has probably come from there; my role became like that of a time traveler. The things being highlighted in my work like archives, future archaeologies, memories, those are all coming from there.

I still remember the landscapes of my village. I used to go out with my water colors and sheets – I used to be good at watercolors – and find a nice corner. I could be seen in some field or the other by the villagers. They still remember me that way, sitting somewhere in a field trying to capture time in watercolor. It was important to me to try and capture that time. Although I had no formal training or anything, nor did I have a mentor.

My environment at that time wasn't very healthy. I have a very religious background within my family and the surrounding people, so there were a lot of restrictions and pressure around the idea of haram and halal. And when I studied human anatomy and drew nude figures, people called it haram. In terms of creativity it wasn't a very supportive environment, didn't support my writing either. My parents were still cool and they gave me permission but my grandparents were very strict.

My father also knew how to draw well. My brother was also good at drawing, but he became an engineer, because in my family no one had any idea what art was. But my parents never stopped me from anything. They always believed in me. From childhood I always wanted to go into science and become a physicist, and they were like fine, go ahead. Then even before that when I was really



Caption 2



Caption 3



Caption 4

into books and history I wanted to become an archaeologist. But in Shikarpur no one knew what that even was, so that didn't go anywhere. But somehow both those things are now coming into my work in some way.

My brother had given these Intermediate drawing exams that we used to have in Sindh, so he had these watercolors from this company called Guitar, it was a very old company with very dry watercolors. I had this landscape of Murree with snow in it, and I took ice cubes and put my brother's colors in them and tried to make that with it. I was trying to copy but I couldn't figure out how to make white snow on white paper. So I thought about it for 3 hours. Then accidentally I put a light blue patch on it, and it began to look like snow. So then I realized there is some magic in this. There are some techniques that I need to learn. So that point was important for me.

My time at NCA has been most significant for me. NCA itself doesn't do anything. An educational institute provides you with an environment and creates a sense of competition in you. And the values they teach enable you to automatically develop a critical understanding; no one takes your hand and makes you do anything. A good teacher just lights a spark and allows

the student to think for himself. So the institution does nothing but provide an environment and facilities.

I don't believe in mentorship, though, I only believe in myself. Mentorship fixes you with one person, but I think inspirations keep changing and come from different sources. At one point it's your teachers, at another its foreign artists. There is no one person that holds your hand and helps you with everything. So I never had a mentor. I respected all my teachers, and I kept getting inspired from them and from my friends.

I'm always looking for some interesting archives from all over the world to drive my inspiration. Because I think archives are unlimited. I go to any library with a goal to look for certain archives relevant to my work. For the past 4-5 years my practice has developed in such a way that I don't go to a studio and sit and make work. My practice is no longer like that. It is more project based with an initial starting point – archives and endless persistence of images, duration of time and memory. I only start physical work when these few things are clear.

Living in Europe has really changed and matured my practice. The type of art being produced



Caption 5



Caption 6



over there and in Pakistan, it's very different. Over here we do more gallery oriented work because we do not have any other spaces for display. No museums, no contemporary art spaces, no project spaces. Abroad they have more alternative spaces and more funding. So there are fewer restrictions when producing work – and I took advantage of that. You have

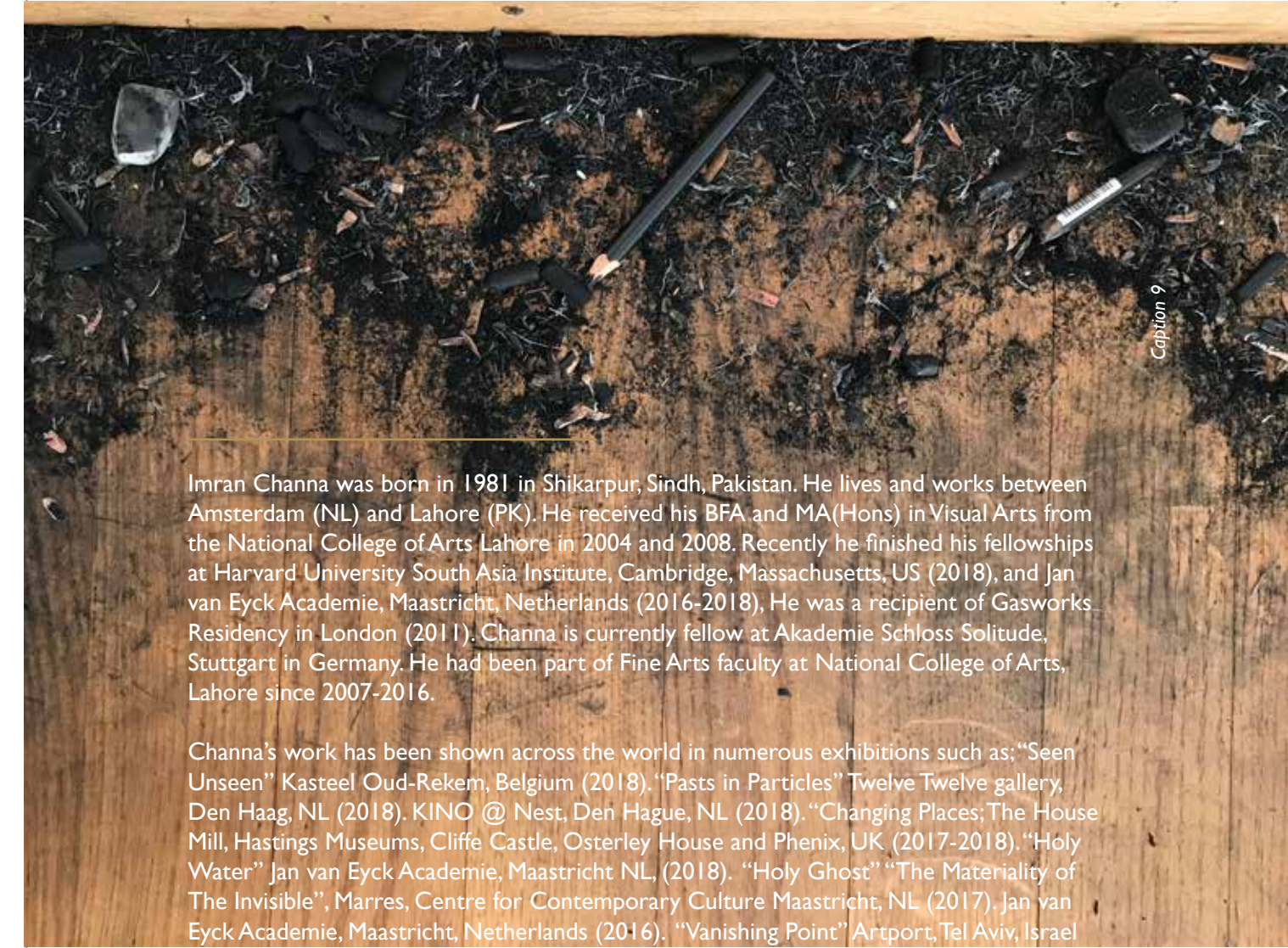
is considered critical work here is ordinary over there. So living abroad really broadens your mind and you start looking at things on a global level, as an outsider.

When I went to Harvard, for the South Asia Visiting Artist program, I only had 2 months but I used them to the max. They have an amazing library with a special collection that has some amazing archives and maps. They had 30 ancient maps of Sindh which no one else has in the world, from Muhammad Bin Qasim's time till the 1st century. So I studied the whole book and how the geography and mapping has changed over the years and what has forced that change. That's what I'm focused on in my recent work.

My medium is like a skin for my ideas. I've worked in many different mediums; video, installation, sound. There are some things I'm trying to learn now for my next works, some high tech mediums. I want to create a parallel between old ancient mythologies and new high tech mediums. So I'm learning how to use 3D animation softwares like Maya. My work is about subverting the time of a photograph and disturbing the continuity of film, and I work with still images and through that I try to create a new kind of continuity of my own. So I'm learning what possibilities this new 3D virtual medium has in this. So I can use phantoms of it, and make it a layer in my work. Or maybe I won't use it; it's not really up to me, it's about the demand of the work itself.



Caption 8



Imran Channa was born in 1981 in Shikarpur, Sindh, Pakistan. He lives and works between Amsterdam (NL) and Lahore (PK). He received his BFA and MA(Hons) in Visual Arts from the National College of Arts Lahore in 2004 and 2008. Recently he finished his fellowships at Harvard University South Asia Institute, Cambridge, Massachusetts, US (2018), and Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, Netherlands (2016-2018). He was a recipient of Gasworks Residency in London (2011). Channa is currently fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart in Germany. He had been part of Fine Arts faculty at National College of Arts, Lahore since 2007-2016.

Channa's work has been shown across the world in numerous exhibitions such as; "Seen Unseen" Kasteel Oud-Rekem, Belgium (2018). "Pasts in Particles" Twelve Twelve gallery, Den Haag, NL (2018). KINO @ Nest, Den Hague, NL (2018). "Changing Places; The House Mill, Hastings Museums, Cliffe Castle, Osterley House and Phenix, UK (2017-2018). "Holy Water" Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht NL, (2018). "Holy Ghost" "The Materiality of The Invisible", Marres, Centre for Contemporary Culture Maastricht, NL (2017). Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, Netherlands (2016). "Vanishing Point" Artport, Tel Aviv, Israel (2016). "Enclosure/Erasure", Koel Gallery Karachi, PK (2015) "Age of Mythology", Art Basel Hong Kong (2013). "Lik Likoti", Canvas Gallery Karachi, PK. "The Rising Tide" Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi, PK (2010). "The Return" 3rd International Festival of Contemporary Art, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Algeria (2011) "The Memory is The Message" XVA gallery Dubai, UAE (2011). 2010-"Badshahnama", Tmproject Gallery Geneva, Switzerland (2010).

He has been awarded with the "Award of Excellence" by Artists Association of Punjab at Alhamra Art Council, Lahore, PK (2013).