

# Jalaluddin Ahmed given Lifetime Achievement Award at Art Dubai

ArtNow presented a series of Terrace Talks at Art Dubai, featuring the launch of the Lahore Biennale Foundation, the presentation of the 2nd Lifetime Achievement Award, and a conversation between art collector Rehana Saigol and Canvas Gallery owner Sameera Raja. The ArtNow Terrace Talks are part of the magazine's mission of promoting Pakistani artists and creative endeavours and to a broader international audience and encouraging critical discourse on Pakistani art.

The Lahore Biennale Foundation, invited by ArtNow, was launched as one of such multidisciplinary organizations



Rahat Jalal, Son of Jalaluddin Ahmed receiving the award from Fawzia Naqvi, Editor-in-chief, ArtNow for Mr Jalal as he could not travel.

committed to the reclaiming of "a place for the arts in Pakistan's national discourse" through public engagement. The Foundation, run by a team of prominent artists, art-lovers and curators, all of national or international repute, and hailing from diverse parts of the world, got the opportunity to discuss and share various ideas and goals.

Established in 2014, the foundation has been working towards the goal of a biennale in 2016, hosting workshops, residencies and research grants in the process. The panel at Art Dubai comprised of Rashid Rana, Mohsin Hamid, Qudsia Rahim and Fawzia Naqvi, with Faiza Butt as moderator. The overall larger group working





towards the materialization of the biennale itself includes the renowned names of Osman Khalid Waheed, Risham Syed, Huma Mulji, David Alesworth, Raza Ali Dada, Ali Naqvi, Shahzia Sikander and Rafay Alam amongst others.

As the presentation progressed, the foundation's character and various facets unfolded. The LBF, overall, functions through four interrelated cells – Project Grants, Workshops, Publication and the Biennale. Each cell supports varying projects, such as "My East Is Your West", Rashid Rana's and the Gujral Foundation's Venice Biennale Project, or Theertha's Performance Art Platform in Sri Lanka. An evident unifying goal between all these undertakings was the dissolution of the exclusivity of art via interventions in public spaces, through subtle ripples in larger narratives of the city. "My East Is Your West", for instance, proposed to very simply and beautifully break barriers across the globe by introducing an unexpected virtual yet physical communication portal between publics at the Venice Biennale and at Lahore Liberty Chowk. The simultaneity of these two separate/disparate spaces and realities, made apparent momentarily in a transporting medium, would decontextualize viewers and bring them back within minutes, thereby invoking a refreshed perspective of one's own mundane world and its specificities. Theertha's Performance Platform Workshop, on the other hand, brought together South Asian performance artists in Colombo, who then dispersed across the city to investigate the landscape in terms of lines, psychogeography, phenomenology, temporality of space and experiential borders. The resulting performances blended yet stood out in public spaces of the city, poking at unnoticed patterns or playing with the consciousness of surrounding viewers. "Borderlines" thus broke institutional confines and became more of an immediate discourse with the public and the continuity of public life.

The discussion was followed by a conversation on collecting with the art patron Rehana Saigol and gallerist Sameera Raja, who spoke about Ms. Saigol's extensive contemporary art collection and patronage of young artists. Rehana Saigol has over the span of years been a classical Indian dancer who performed for Queen Elizabeth, the Shah of Iran and Agatha Christie, amongst other notable names, a dramatist and a generous supporter of the arts. She was a pioneer in staging the works of avant-garde playwrights Jean Genet, Edward Albee and Peter Shaffer in Pakistani. Saigol grew up in an art and culture infused environment; the artist Ustad Allah Bux was invited to live in their home; the rooms he used have now been turned into an art gallery. She added that she does not see herself as a patron of the arts, but says that she merely "has an appetite for beautiful things".





The evening culminated in the presentation of the 2nd Lifetime Achievement award to Jalal Uddin Ahmed for his significant contributions towards the promotion and documentation of the arts of Pakistan and the Islamic world. The ArtNow Lifetime Achievement Award honours Pakistani individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the fine arts of Pakistan. The inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to the artist, critic and curator Rasheed Araeen at Art Dubai 2014, in recognition of his artistic and cultural achievements.

Jalal Uddin Ahmed, along with his wife Azra Jalal, is the founder of Arts in the Islamic World, the first English language journal on art from South Asia, the Middle East and the Muslim world. The magazine highlighted the importance of researching and preserving traditional Islamic arts, and examining and interpreting contemporary arts with a critical eye in order to understand and contextualise new ideas, expressions and movements in Muslim societies and cultures.

After representing Pakistan at the Third International Congress of Art Critics in 1951, Mr. Ahmed was responsible for affiliating Pakistan with the Unesco-sponsored International Association of Art Critics in Paris. In 1954, he published Art in Pakistan, a book that served as documentation of the contemporary art scene after Pakistan's independence. After retirement, he joined the FOMMA Trust, the objectives of which include the setting up of museums of modern and contemporary art and art libraries in Pakistan, and went on to publish a series of publications on prominent Pakistani artists. He also helped arrange the first ever exhibition of 'Art Books and Periodicals from Pakistan' in India, after which the books were donated to the library of the International India Centre in New Delhi as a reference resource on Pakistan art and artists.