The Pakistani museum of no fixed abode

At Hong Kong's Asia Society and elsewhere across the city, contemporary art from Pakistan is making a showing.

Shahzia Sikander's solo show *Apparatus of Power* is supported by the AAN Foundation, and includes an important work from the collection amassed by Ali and Amna Naqvi — a 15-minute video entitled "Parallax" (2013), set to music by the Shanghai-born composer Du Yun. A satellite exhibition is also on view at Hong Kong's Maritime Museum, featuring the same artist, and focusing on the city's global trade heritage.

The AAN Collection is one of the world's largest holdings of contemporary art from Pakistan and beyond, with 800-plus pieces by more than 100 artists, ranging from sculpture to paintings and video installations.

After two decades of collecting, the Naqvis are obliged to hold most of the collection in storage. The rest is split between their bases in Lahore and Hong Kong, with the balance on loan. They do not often get to see the largest pieces: Rashid Rana's "Desperately Seeking Paradise", a steel cube measuring 3 metres on each side, lives in 19 crates, shuttling between storage and the various museums that ask to borrow it. The work has been shown at exhibitions in Paris, Taiwan and Dubai.

Given the scale of the collection, there has been talk of a museum, but the Naqvis are reluctant to commit themselves to a bricks-and-mortar showcase. Nor do they wish to restrict themselves to the traditional, "static" concept of a museum. "The idea is to do multi-faceted things — because there is so much to be done — and not get fixated on only one thing which doesn't give you the flexibility," says Ali Naqvi.

Among the works on display in their Hong Kong home, a selection by Imran Qureshi is particularly striking. Based on the Mughal miniature form, "Moderate Enlightenment" (2009) is a twist on the conventional: the figure depicted bears a modern umbrella. On the floor nearby rests a sculpture, Naiza Khan's "Armour-Lingerie", a galvanised steel breastplate.

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As part of the Naqvis' efforts to bring the collection to a wider audience, they can be seen online, and last year a collaboration with the Google Cultural Institute produced a virtual exhibition of 22 works from the AAN Collection. Looking ahead, there are plans in train for Lahore's biennale in 2017.

Amna Naqvi posits that it is precisely the absence of ambition to "put our names on a building" that has given them the freedom to collect works that they love, such as early videos by Basir Mahmood, rather than those with popular currency. "We only buy what we like," she says. "If I don't love a work, I won't buy it."

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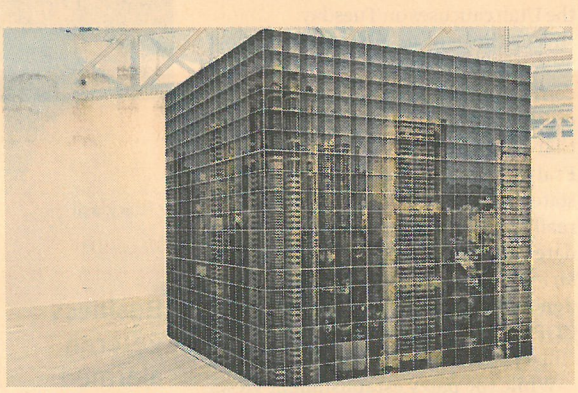

Rashid Rana's 'Desperately Seeking Paradise' — AAN Collection