



Impressions through Ages: An Analysis of Conventional and Modern Techniques
Employed by Eminent Pakistani Printmakers

Ms Shumaila Khan*

Muhammad Shahid Anjum

Visiting Lecturer, College of Art and Design, University of the Punjab.

Email: Shumail.artistog@gmail.com

Assistant Professor, Government College University, Faisalabad

Email: mshahidanjum@gcuf.edu.pk

Abstract

This paper discusses how the art of Printmaking has, over the years, gone through a complete process of transformation in Pakistan. From the use of conventional techniques such as woodcut, etching, and lithography to modern methods like digital printmaking, photogravure, and mixed-media approaches, the Pakistani printmakers have come a long way. The contemporary Pakistani artists, while employing both the techniques, have very successfully incorporated them in their works in quite an effective and masterful manner. This study compares the traditional and contemporary techniques employed by the artists in Pakistan, analyzing their artistic innovation, technical know how, and conceptual implications. By examining and critiquing their works, this paper highlights how modern technological advancements have influenced printmaking while preserving the core of traditional craftsmanship. The study juxtaposes both the techniques, while emphasizing their respective significance in shaping and evolving the works of selected Pakistani printmakers, demonstrating the usability and incorporation of both the techniques in contemporary art practices.

Keywords: printmaking, techniques, modern techniques, woodcut, lithography, etching, digital printmaking, photogravure

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Corresponding Authors*:

Introduction

For centuries, Printmaking has been a significantly potent vehicle for artistic expression, using woodcuts, etchings, and lithographs, to its current form of digital and experimental processes. Printmaking has a fine tradition in Pakistan. Artists adeptly assimilate the established methods with the new ones which is a very progressive move in the changing panorama of art. Noted Pakistani printmakers have helped to sustain traditional techniques, and at the same time, they are in fact using new technological processes with passion and zeal. This progression from manual, time-consuming processes to digital and hybrid modes echoes general worldwide trends in print practice (Hussain, 2020). In both cases these developments give rise to serious questions with respect to the consequences of the technological progress on craftsmanship and the preservation of traditional printmaking. This paper attempts to investigate the strategies of the contemporary art practitioners revealing their approach in incorporating new technologies, while trying to keep the print medium intact with the help of its materiality that forms a distinctive visual language. By examining the specific artwork of individual artists (and their full visual array) the paper explores different technical methods and thematic constellations of highly innovative procedures. The paper is an attempt to examine the transformation from the traditional to the modern printmaking in Pakistan and it analyzes few case studies as well. The relationship between conventional and contemporary printmaking technique is essential to understanding the development of the medium within the context of Pakistani art. This study is part of more general reflections on the way technology influences artistic practices and stresses the importance of traditional modalities. It offers practical solutions and creative avenues for artists, art-historians and students concerned with the interaction of past and present. Additionally, it situates Pakistani printmakers in world art and underscores the value of their impact on current printmaking practices (Ahmed, 2018). Tying these bygone and contemporary methods together, this paper tends to highlight the symbiotic relationship that tradition and modernity continue to play in the printmaker's craft today.

A Parallel between the Conventional and Modern Printmaking Techniques

It is important to highlight the similarities and differences between the traditional and contemporary process of Printmaking. Traditional techniques such as woodcut, etching

and lithography have always been at the heart of printmaking. On the other hand modern methods like digital printing and photogravure provide space to artistic innovation (Hussain, 2020). Instead of outright replacing traditional techniques, modern technologies typically exist to augment, facilitate and extend them. This synergy permits (even) more creativity (Ahmed, 2018) and efficiency (Ahmed, 2018) underlines the dynamic medium.

Effective Integration of Both Approaches by Pakistani Printmakers

Focusing on the selected print works of well known Pakistani printmakers, this research seeks to investigate how the artists effectively incorporate and integrate traditional and modern techniques within their art making processes. They are artists who seamlessly blend historical techniques and materials with contemporary processes to create mementos that speak about past traditions while raising essential questions and comments on current stories (Rashid, 2017). This research also examines the technical and ethical choices the practitioners must confront, to create for themselves an artistic space where tradition and modernity can thrive side by side.

The Importance of Modern Printmaking Techniques

The current work illustrates how some contemporary innovations in printmaking, notably digital and hybrid practices, have expanded the possibilities of creative output, as well as making techniques **and access** (Khan, 2019). Technology has not only made great levels of precision and efficiency possible, but has also enabled artists to open entirely new vistas of rendering imagery. These developments are reimagining the potential of the medium, yet they remain grounded in its history and tradition (Ali, 2021).

This study explores the technical and stylistic differences between traditional and contemporary print making processes, as employed by prominent Pakistani print makers. It introduces traditional printmaking tools, materials and processes (and compares these to modern methods such as digital printmaking, photogravure and mixed media applications).

There are also manual versus digital, material and speed differences. Yet characteristics of both require meticulous attention to craft, repetition, and layering thus providing an underlying connection between the two. This comparison provides a point of departure for evaluating how the printing processes contribute to the aesthetic and conceptual evolution of the medium in Pakistan.

The Fusion of Techniques: Balancing Tradition and Innovation

In this context the Pakistani artists exhibit the importance of creative and technical decisions taken by them in successfully combining traditional and modern printmaking. The extended representation of Islamic culture by Pakistan artists through printmaking technique in selected works has generated a significant debate about the amalgamation of these processes as a celebration. There are many artists who have used traditional methods in harmony with digital techniques, mix materials, or have selected different methods depending on themes and visual effects.

In this way, they have invoked the nature of the classic print process, whilst expanding those boundaries through experimentation. This integration has led to cost effectiveness, shorter production times, and a flexibility in the work of art. It has also provided an avenue for more experimentation, variety of narratives and cultural resonance in the context of contemporary art from Pakistan. The research also concludes that contemporary methods do not exclude the traditional, but have paved the way for tradition to be enriched, enabling expanded opportunity for creative expression.

Traditional Printmaking as the Foundation of the Discipline

Traditional methods of printmaking have traditionally been the foundation of so much print based art. Methods such as woodcut, etching, aquatint, and lithography required skillful craftsmanship, labor, and material understanding. These approaches are based in manual labour and engagement with tools and substrates as Hussain (2020) points out, therefore have the potential to give each print a sense of its own unique identity.

In Pakistan, artists including Anwar Saeed, Afshar Malik and Mahreen Afroz have utilized these traditional modes of expression to convey various themes such as identity, historical memory, and cultural imagery (Rashid, 2017). The touchable and tactile elements that come along with traditional prints provide a unique aesthetic, which to this day are still highly sought after by art collectors.

The comparative exploration of Modern Printmaking

Due to the development of technology, the world of printmaking has been expanded with modern “prints” using new mediums, like aquatic and digital prints. These techniques have advantages in speed, versatility and accuracy. As Khan (Khan, 2019) states that digital

technology has transformed image-making, and specifically the possibilities for layering, manipulating color, and scaling.

These experiments have been adopted by newer generations of Pakistani artists like Nazish Atta Ullah, Atif Khan and Hassnain Awais (Ahmed, 2018) to seek new visual idioms in their response to the world in the 21st century. Contemporary printmaking has also been touted as more sustainable because it doesn't rely on expensive, hazardous materials or extremely labor-intensive practice, and can therefore be accessed by a wider group of artists.

Hybrid Printmaking: Bridging the Past and Present

The combination of traditional and digital media, or “hybrid” or “mixed-media” print, is an increasingly popular practice of the contemporary artist-printmaker. This method marries the tactile lushness and historical depth of analogue printing techniques to the precision and flexibility of the digital era.

Hybrid Processes of Printing Ali (2021) sees hybrid printmaking as a junction between traditional craft and contemporary technology. This practice has most notably emerged in Pakistan, which allows artists to be culturally rooted at the same time that they develop dialogues with global contemporary art. Hybrid approaches allow artists to build new creative vocabularies alongside tradition, and to inherently display the evergreen potential of print.

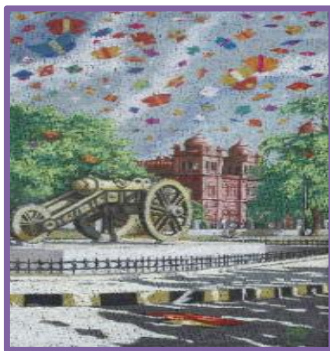
The Role of Pakistani Printmakers in Shaping Artistic Narratives

Pakistani printmakers have been at the forefront in shaping the visual arts side of this equation through such spirited blending of tradition and innovation. Printmaking began to be formalized in Pakistan during the mid-20th century, with educational institutions such as the National College of Arts (NCA) and Lahore 's University of the Punjab College of Art and Design (PUCAD) and Karachi 's Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Such institutions have shaped generations of printmakers who are still reconfiguring what the medium can be.

Pioneers and Traditionalists in Pakistani Printmaking

Mahboob Ali, fourth A highly influential figure in Pakistani printmaking history, Mahboob Ali is widely regarded as the father of woodcut printmaking in Pakistan. Recipient of Pride of Performance (Pakistan), Mahboob Ali was instrumental in popularising and establishing wood cut as a fine form of art in Pakistan. His works paved the way for

generations of future artists to find relief printing as a vital tool to tell their visual stories. Ali did not only sensitize him with his narrative outlook even though he has introduced a number of artists to the medium but has also turned woodcut from a craft to a valued medium in the Pakistani context..



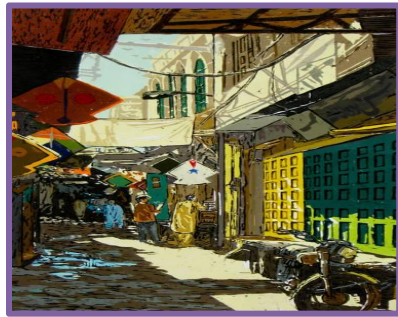
“I was born in Lahore and am a part of the first batch of BFA students from NCA,” says Mahboob Ali (Ali24). Later on, he develops his role as a teacher (his own alma mater) developing a tough commitment to craftsmanship, combining the traditional woodcut principles with local themes, folkloric imagery and sociopolitical content. His prints are distinguished by their strong lines, contrasting tones and fine cutting, suggestive both of technical control and of the cultural depth of his subject matter.



“His work literally showcases the life of the ordinary people, farmers, workers, women and their lived realities painstakingly and with pride.” (quote by Ali) Ali’s work profusely represents the life of ordinary, poor people, farmers, workers, women. This profound connection to native culture and commitment to craft has won him the Pride of Performance, among the highest civilian awards in Pakistan, that honored his enduring contribution to the arts.

His legacy is seen through his prints and his students, few of whom went on to become well-established artists of Pakistan. What the shop (mention what u r referring to as shop)

offers is a way to gauge just how right the legacy is for Mahboob Ali, the acknowledged father of woodcut printmaking in Pakistan, an artisan who is able to bridge the past with the present.



Old Lahore in Hundred Colors: A Masterpiece by Mahboob Ali

Mahboob Ali's *Old Lahore in a Hundred Colors*: A Landmark in Pakistani Woodblock Printmaking

Mahboob Ali's superfine print, known as *Old Lahore in a Hundred Colors*, is widely acclaimed as a great event in Pakistan's history of woodblock printing for its technical intricacy and artistic brilliance at the same time. The work is a testament to the artist's remarkable command of classical woodcut methods, as well as the depth of his emotional and cultural association with Lahore, a city rich with historical significance.

In this piece, Mahboob Ali pays tribute to the spirit of Lahore, once the cultural capital of India. His portrayal of the Walled City brings to life the maze of narrow lanes, crowded bazaars, Mughal architecture and the rhythms of the ordinary lives led there. With detailed layering and masterful precision, he brings this ancient city's history to life, and its contemporary culture to light with an exuberant visual poetry that is at once timeless and deeply personal.

Habitually calling Lahore "the heart of Pakistan," Mahboob Ali takes us there not only through great monuments. Instead, he conjures the spirit of the city through its small accretions: the crumbling surfaces of old havelis, the spiretips of ancient minarets, the senses that all cities cultivate, of sound, of colour, of memory. His work is an act of conservation, photographing some of Lahore's history that is fading from its changing urban landscape.

"A Hundred Colors, A Hundred Blocks": A Technical Triumph

What distinguishes Old Lahore in a Hundred Colors is its stunning technical implementation. The print was made by carving one woodblock for each of one hundred colors. One of the most difficult to practice processes in traditional printmaking, multi-block color printing, is this technique. The technique demands excellent accuracy on carving, inking and registration (alignment) of each individual block, for colors to layer properly and get together perfectly.

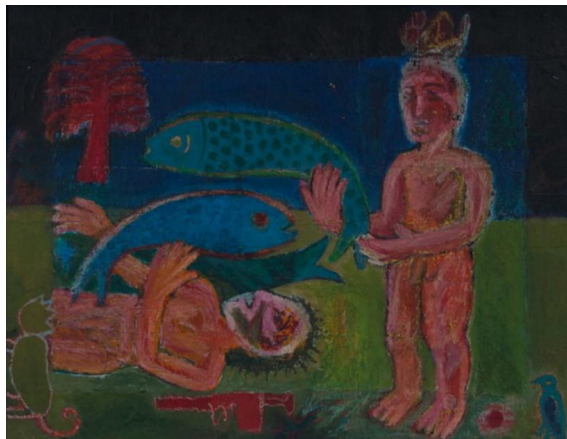
For Pakistani printmaking, a woodcut so intricate, printed bright is extremely rare. The very boldness with which Mahboob Ali has employed this device is indeed an act of rare craftsmanship, and, considered in terms of the medium in this country, almost an instance of creative precociousness. His work fleshed out what was possible with the woodcut in Pakistan and established a new standard for printmakers to follow.

Good or bad, this influential print was to set a precedent in the history of print making in Pakistan. It has often been cited in the academic and art world as a moment in the medium when it began to be regarded as a serious medium for fine art. The high national profile that it acquired - with Mahboob Ali being awarded the Pride of Performance - cemented his status as the father of woodcut print-making in Pakistan and a leading light of art innovation.

Anwar Saeed's Symbolism in Etching

Anwar Saeed (born 1955 in Lahore) is best known for his hands at intaglio and etching. With these traditional etching methods his art work manages to find issues of gender, desire and memory, giving them a rubbery, layered surface. Saeed's dedication to classical techniques, especially etching and drypoint. He remains a committed artist of traditional techniques, including etching and dry point, because he believes in the tactile power of manual practices. His densely printed and tightly composed prints contain deep psychological and cultural truths. Saeed's etching deploys mythic shapes and bodily contortions in the service of resistance to personal and political histories, the woven complex images with a history embedded in them, that come to the surface and print in relief the sense of history and time. Although Anwar Saeed's treatment of such themes as sexuality in printmaking in Pakistan mocks the evolution of the medium, the act is akin to the fledgling grounding itself, as the traditional mechanism of narrativization joins hands with modern psychology. Leveraging motifs, figurative formulas and allegorical elements

to articulate his personal and political visual languages, Saeed undermines social codes through the fusion of modernist forms with regional folklore in vibrant, emotionally-laden compositions.



This painting demonstrates Saeed's distinctive style as he fuses fantasy/symbolic emotion with figures of big and bright color. It depicts two standing figures and two large blue fish in reference to fertility, life, spiritual metamorphosis, dreams and cycles of life and death. The striking, strong colours, including lush reds, also contribute to the visual stimulus. The print impact is a surreal setting with a red tree and a small bird, evocative of a fantastical dreamscape. A red shape at the bottom, possibly a tool or weapon, adds tension. His style is biased by modernist and folk traditions, with simple, flattened forms and emotional truth, influenced by his printmaking training. His work explores themes of life, existence, sacrifice, and transformation through the relationship between figures and a fish. It combines experiences of personal and social myths, folklore and spiritual symbolism.



This print is prominent in Pakistani art, as it is symbolic of his explorations of identity, sexuality, memory, and socio-political conditions. It features symbolic imagery and a story style influenced by miniature painting and European modernism.

Description:

Two male figures are engaged in a form of wrestling or physical struggle. The figure on the left has a ghostly, skeletal appearance with greenish hues, symbolizing death, inner struggle, or perhaps affected trauma. The figure on the right is more naturalistic, muscular, and alive, wearing only blue shorts. To the left, a seated figure holds a mask, a direct reference to identity, cover-up, or self-awareness. To the right, an older woman (perhaps a maternal or religious figure) reads from an open book, possibly a religious text like the Quran.

Anwar Saeed's work features wrestling figures representing life, death, self, and morality, while a mask-wearing figure and reading woman symbolize societal expectations and personal struggles, with soft colors evoking miserable and unreality. Anwar Saeed's art merges traditional aesthetics with cultural norms, incorporating figurative, symbolic acts, and modern moral behavior themes to explore hidden fears and societal rules.

Anwar Saeed's untitled print discovers psychological and observational conflicts between personal identity and societal expectations. Through wrestling figures and symbolic elements, Saeed explores morality, sexuality, and selfhood in a male-controlled context. His stylistic approach blends traditional visual expressions with modern symbolic language, creating powerful narratives that are deeply personal and resonant.

National College of Arts Archives or Saeed, Anwar. "Selected Works," NCA Publications, 2005.

Afshar Malik: Rare Feeling through Mixed Techniques

Afshar Malik, born 1955 in Bahawalpur Pakistan, Malik's work associations in traditional printmaking techniques with skillful drawing and text, often blending drawing, monoprinting, and digital combination, follow-on personal and socially philosophical pieces. His art themes belong to the memory of urban life and observational struggle. His mixed media printmaking practice, often natural and basic, challenges academic formality, showcasing an experimental and explanation approach.



He is known for his **socially involved, layered, and symbolically compact** artworks. In this print he has divided his composition into the main portion upper and lower. In the upper portion he has shown a figure in resting posture that looks almost pallid (death), suggesting physical or emotional decay. The lower section is filled or rather crowded with tiny figure buildings, objects and the scenes look like a massive cityscape while in the tones of browns and beiges (sepia) communicating an old, like memory quality. Tiny figures are shown occupied in various activities and chores of daily life representing control, or disorder. The borders are enhanced with architectural motifs and unreadable text, suggesting expected signs of growth, formal control, or societal systems.

He utilizes intaglio techniques and deeply detail to express contemporary realities, combining Mughal miniature tradition and utilizing mixed media techniques for the feel of collage effect.

Afshar Malik's work describe a general quarantine storytelling, weakness, and mortality through a lower potion box assembly and isolated figure, evaluating political structures, administration, violence, and societal domination through small scenes .Afshar Malik's intaglio print is the best example of systemic control in urban Pakistani society. He combines miniature style with modern political analysis, mixing traditional techniques and contemporary content.

[taseer-art-gallery](https://taseer-art-gallery.com)

Meher Afroz Accuracy and Cultural Description

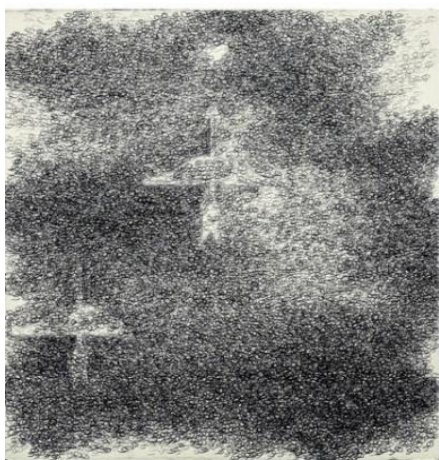
Meher Afroz was born in Lucknow India, has been practicing art since the early 1970s. She frequently uses the detail element of cultural and Islamic symbolic ornamentation in her

print. Mainly she focuses on craftsmanship and conceptual clarity in lithography and screen printing. Afroz's art explores spirituality, gender, and heritage through elegant compositions that combine traditional aesthetic systems with contemporary sensitivity.



In her series *Behesht i gumshuda* (The Lost Paradise) she uses a blue tint (colors of the ocean) and restless texture, turning over harshness and senseless violence into the sublime concept of a lost paradise to explore themes of nostalgia, desire, and loss of an ideal. The title suggests a reflection on virtue, harmony, or beauty that have been compromised or vanished over time.

In the context Meher Afroz invites viewers to consider what has been lost and what remains of, once experienced "paradise" to examining socio-cultural changes, environmental squalor, personal memories.



She is well known in Pakistani printmaking for her peculiar style of intensive black and white drawing and printmaking technique. In this image she uses pen and ink with

drypoint or etching to create bold, circular, or looped patterns for a texture surface. The visual of composition is filled with wound or circular characters, creating a misty atmosphere. Two symbols, floating in darkness, suggest spiritual or existential presence. The marks are thoughtfully arranged to create light and shadow, creating a ghostly landscape. The piece features a pointillist texture, handwork as a conceptual theme, and a minimalist palette, emphasizing the emotional weight and spiritual abstraction of the work. The cross-like shapes in the print may symbolize sacrifice, suffering, or spiritual transcendence. The composition evokes an absence and presence, reflecting memory, loss, or spiritual seeking. The repeated marks may signify meditative labor or reflection. The non-figurative design symbolizes the inherent duality and paradox of life.

The New Conventional Labor of Print Making

The work of Mahar Afroze is a clear representation of the convergence of traditional manual practices and contemporary conceptualism. Her work, characterized by thick, repeated circular marks, is an image not only of something we can see but also of something we can do, a form of meditation. These marks simulate those of traditional printmaking techniques, such as etching and dry point, where the creation of texture is not only a physical but also a spiritual engagement. Her craft exceeds most art, transforming observational subjects into a meditation on memory, silence, and spiritual being. Importing symbolic forms, such as signs, underscores these themes, blending old-school methods with contemporary significance in a labor-intensive process. Modern Hybrid Techniques and Contemporary Printmakers.

Contemporary Printmakers and Modern Hybrid Techniques

Nazish Atta Ullah (b. 1950) is known for her contribution to feminist sermons in Pakistani art. A high-profile Pakistani artist and academic, she explores gender politics, identity, and the constraints of social conventions, primarily working in print, photography, and installation. Her etching and aquatint prints explore female experience, bodies, and resistance. Atta Ullah is a committed defender of authentic printmaking techniques, asserting the material strength and cultural purity of traditional practices.

Her commitment to manual print processes reflects a resistance against the decline of traditional forms in the digital age, while thematically, her work tackles modern socio-political realities faced by women.



Nazish Atta Ullah's work explores violence memory themes in black-and-white, and the women in occupied and male-dominated countries often experience similar suffering, such as silence or unfair treatment, leading to a common experience of pain and survival. The image of obscure women, blurry figures, and unidentified provokers represents the loss of individual identities and the universal suffering in conflict and social domination. The lower portion of her work analyses the systemic hiddenness of women and the conceptual strategies that apply silence through state violence and gender roles, using monochrome and abstraction to blend the past and the present.

Nazish Attaullah is a renowned contemporary artist who explores feminist themes in her art. Her work is a great example of understanding of feminist aesthetics in Pakistani contemporary art. She is studying the traditional expression of feminist ideas through the research of intentions.

These works are excellent examples of how modern techniques, such as photography, digital manipulation, and conceptual framing, are employed alongside traditional symbolism to explore complex gender and identity issues in Pakistan. Nazish Atta Ullah's work stands at the intersection of visual critique and feminist historiography, making her a critical figure in the discussion of modern printmaking in Pakistan.

Atta Ullah, Nazish. *Untitled*. Mixed media on paper, National College of Arts, Lahore.

Hybrid and Experimental Approaches

Several Pakistani artists are now working with hybrid techniques, combining digital and traditional methods. Another notable figure is **Muhammad Atif Khan** born in 1972, exemplifying the fusion of digital and traditional techniques. Muhammad Atif Khan, a graduate of the National College of Arts (NCA), Lahore, is a celebrated contemporary printmaker in Pakistan, such as Digital Fusion and Neo-Mughal Style. In more recent years,

as printmakers His work merges Mughal miniature painting traditions, digital manipulation, and modern printmaking techniques. His work explores themes such as nostalgia, identity, spirituality, and urban confusion, blending traditional aesthetics with new media tools. His creations challenge the boundaries between high and low art, craft and technology, and East and West. Using digital layering, screen printing, and photo manipulation with painting touch, and also illustration art in printmaking, he recreates South Asian miniature aesthetics with modern precision. His works are postmodern in nature, blending surreal, nostalgic, and fantastical elements that blur boundaries between time periods and media. His use of contemporary tools within a traditional visual language positions him at the forefront of hybrid printmaking in Pakistan.

Atif Khan practice aligns with the visual semiotics framework, where each image element serves as a symbol embedded with historical, political, and spiritual meanings. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. Atif khan work exemplifies the relationship between conventional and modern techniques in Pakistani printmaking, symbiotically creating history with technology and tradition with innovation.



Tree with Butterflies and Spiral Clouds

This print by Atif Khan presents a surreal, dreamlike tree composed of dense spiral clouds with butterflies fluttering around it. The cover is rich with repetitive, decorative motifs, hinting at traditional miniature painting. The butterflies symbolize transformation and fleetingness, while the swirling clouds suggest mystery or divine presence. The image blurs the line between natural growth and spiritual energy. The tree stands on fine, stylized trunks, grounding the fantastical in the real.

He uses digital media to reflect on bionetwork, cultural memory, and identity. The dense ornamentation is a homage to traditional Islamic and Mughal miniature art,

recontextualized in a digital contemporary form. The butterflies also echo themes of migration, freedom, and fragility in a politically volatile region like South Asia.



Rubber Stamp Installation

This work features a large rubber stamp etched with imagery of an oblique figure or a narrative scene, resting beside its printed impression. This piece critiques bureaucracy and state control while also nodding to printmaking's mechanized reproduction. The stamp turns the act of image creation into a gesture of authority. He divulges how identity, gender roles, and power are codified and repeated through official documentation or cultural figures. The scale shift from handheld tool to oversized object dramatizes how cultural narratives become institutionalized. It blurs the personal with the political.



Figures and Textile Motif Composition

This print contrasts two traditionally dressed female figures with a large textile like motif above them and a geometric pattern below. The textile resembles a woven craft, with borders hanging down like a curtain. The figures appear static or reflective, positioned as if shadowed by cultural artifacts.

This work explores heritage, femininity, and representation. The textile refers to local crafts,

such as Phulkari or woven shawls, symbolizing tradition and domesticity. By inserting the female figures in this stylized context, His questions how culture "drapes" identities, especially women, and questions the limits between reverence and restriction.

Khan, Atif. Tree with Butterflies, Rubber Stamp Installation, and Textile Motif Composition. Mixed Media/Digital Prints. Displayed at various exhibitions, Lahore, 2023.

Analysis of Prints by Atif Khan

Atif Khan, a pioneer in Pakistani printmaking, creates intricate digital and mixed-media works that combine elements of South Asian miniature painting, Mughal aesthetics, and contemporary visual narratives. His three selected prints, titled "The Swirling Forest with Butterflies," showcase his nuanced engagement with cultural memory, symbolism, and layered visual storytelling. The Swirling Forest features a vibrant, digitally-constructed forest filled with butterflies and floral patterns, echoing traditional miniature painting techniques but with a modern reimagining of natural motifs. The work challenges the viewer's sense of nature as a static or passive background. His installation in the form of large size stamp carved with a veiled women design with vertical lines which reflecting the control over identity and bureaucracy specific regarding women in our societies

The "Figures beneath a Woven Textile Motif" juxtaposes two traditionally dressed female figures with a large, textile-like geometric pattern dominating the upper half of the composition, suggesting a disjunction between cultural heritage and contemporary displacement. The textile serves as both literal cover and symbolic erasure, possibly implying how modernity can preserve and obscure traditional identities.

Khan, Atif. Untitled Prints. Exhibited works. Accessed 2025.

Work: Khan's Landscape of the Heart IV showcases his signature style of integrating Mughal-era figures within mandala-like landscapes. [Instagram+1](#)[Twelve Gates Arts+1](#)

Hussain Awais: Emerging Voice with Experimental Techniques

Hussain Awais Multidisciplinary artist represents the emerging generation of Pakistani artists who explore non-traditional formats. currently based in Lahore, Pakistan. Earned a BFA in Visual Arts from the National College of Arts (NCA), Lahore, graduating in 2005 with honors in printmaking, specialized in printmaking, later expanded into mixed-media and oil painting. Served as faculty for printmaking at NCA Lahore and Punjab University's Department of Art & Design His bodies of work often blend collagraphy, lithography,

watercolors, digital prints, and pencil, reflecting a wide and experimental printmaking practice. His work often includes digital collage, screen printing, kitchen- lithography with different washes and installation-based print forms, suggesting a move toward cross-disciplinary practice. He deals with subjects like archives and memory, sometimes by visually interpreting old letters, documents, or the mundane ephemera of the everyday, giving them emotional heft and poetic resonance. Awais pushes the medium to be more than just creating a printed image, but a conceptual one, by addressing contemporary issues including media saturation, identity manipulation, and globalism. he also regularly run a fashion photography and an art direction studio, Gadrang Designs Solo exhibition Dastan Kissa Kahani (2022) at Satrang Gallery, Islamabad – focused on archival preservation & nostalgia through print arts Earlier solo shows like The Other Side at Paint Bucket Gallery, Lahore (2015), working on collagraph prints exploring human–animal hybridity Group shows at major galleries and art fairs such as Sarang, Taseer Art Gallery, Khass Gallery, Artchowk, Artszene, Ejaz Art Gallery (Lahore & Islamabad), New York Art Fair, and Basement Art Gallery in Dubai (Hasnain 2025) The News noted his love for storytelling, memory, ornamentation and tactile prints, calling his work “philosophical poetry” and hailing his mastery across print media



This nostalgic print by Hassnain Awais is characteristic of the sort of collage of archival memory, cultural motifs, and surreal symbolism that he is known for, with it's overlayed imagery and mixed media, digital processes.

The piece features a glass bowl filled with dead fish, surrounded by a delicate octopus adorned with faint red flowers. The composition is surrounded by a richly patterned floral border, reminiscent of Mughal miniature paintings or Persian illuminated manuscripts. The faded paper, torn corners, and aged texture reinforce the sense of decay, history, and preserved beauty. The fish bowl evokes suffocation, excess, or entrapment, possibly

alluding to emotional, political, or environmental concerns. The octopus, a recurring motif in Hassnain Awais's work, could represent hidden forces, memory tendrils, or psychological complexity. The floral border reflects heritage, ornamentation, and classical Indo-Persian aesthetics, suggesting reverence for beauty and history. The image can be perceived in dual meaning as a personal or journal feeling, where you go in the imagination without thinking about emotions or truths.

Awais' blends his photography with traditional technique in aesthetics, showcasing themes of unconsciousness or consciousness, memory, and cultural preservation.



The artwork, "Evolve If I Must," is a symbolized and poetic exploration of hybridity, transformation, and identity, utilizing mixed media and printmaking. The artwork by Hassnain Awais, "Evolve If I Must" in this images he creating a surreal hybrid form, depicts a flower with a green stem and large leaves, transformed into an octopus, and a damaged, parchment-like (animal skin) background, resembling antique manuscripts or decaying botanical illustrations. The octopus, symbolizing complication and flexibility, appears burnt or gold-leafed in the upper right corner, suggesting a transformation from natural beauty to an evolved, almost alien form. The flower symbolizes growth and femininity, while the octopus symbolizes camouflage and regeneration. The title "Evolve If I Must" implies a determined transformation under emotional, social, or political influences, conflicting the traditional flower symbol.

Hasnain merges drawing, digital layering, and printmaking, with influences from miniature painting, naturalist illustration, and contemporary collage. The use of distressed textures and the aged background surface adds to the archival, timeless feeling of the piece. Conceptual themes include transformation and hybridity, survival through edition, conflict between tradition and evolution, and the fusion of nature with the unknown.



This print is a strong example of his signature style, blending nostalgia, archival aesthetics, and symbolism through a contemporary printmaking lens. The print depicts an old, weathered envelope with a vintage letter partially pulled out, containing two detailed fish illustrations that blend drawing and digital layering. The envelope also features a mandala-like ornamental design and a postal stamp, reinforcing the feel of a historic or personal archive. Behind the letter is a faint image of an octopus, adding mystery or emotional depth.

The use of an envelope and letter evokes personal history, handwritten memories, and the tangible nature of communication before the digital age. Fish are often symbolic of depth, dreams, emotion, and life's flow, and may represent hidden thoughts or the subconscious surfacing through written words. In South Asian cultures, fish also symbolize fertility, good fortune, or mysticism. This frequently draws from old documents, stamps, and textures to create visually layered narratives, giving the illusion of a timeworn object. This print combines digital collage, drawing, and textural printing techniques, suggesting a dialogue between past and present. The artwork aims to archive emotions, not just documents, and revives the ordinary object of a letter into a deeply poetic vessel, loaded with layered meanings.

Hassanin Awais is a visionary printmaker and mixed-media artist who bridges the gap between archives and artistic expression. His work is deeply rooted in memory, culture, and emotional resonance, and his impact extends beyond his artworks through education and studio practice. He's a key figure in Pakistan's contemporary art scene.

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Pakistani printmakers, both past and present, illustrate the dynamic evolution of the medium. From traditional etching and woodcut to digital photogravure and mixed media, these artists continue to redefine printmaking's boundaries. Their work not only showcases technical mastery but also engages deeply with cultural, political, and social themes, demonstrating that the conversation between traditional and modern methods is not against each other but complementary.

Atta Ullah, Nazish. *Untitled [Photographic installation of veiled woman with mythical creature]*. n.d. Nazish Atta Ullah Studio, www.nazishattaullah.com. Accessed 10 May 2025.

Atta Ullah, Nazish. *Untitled [Photographic installation of red draped figure with turban]*. n.d. Nazish Atta Ullah Studio, www.nazishattaullah.com. Accessed 10 May 2025.

Malik, Afshar. *Untitled*. n.d. Rohtas Gallery, Lahore. Exhibition catalogue.

Saeed, Anwar. *Art and Sexuality*. 2009. Drawing/Painting. Private Collection. Featured in Zahra Malkani, "Queering the Contemporary Pakistani Art Narrative." *The Herald*, 15 July 2017.

Malkani, Zahra. "Queering the Contemporary Pakistani Art Narrative." *The Herald*, 15 July 2017, www.herald.dawn.com/news/1153902

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to explore and analyze the use of conventional, modern, and hybrid printmaking techniques by eminent Pakistani printmakers. The research is explanatory and analytical in nature, focusing on understanding the conceptual, technical, and historical contexts of the artists' works rather than measuring calculable data.

1. Qualitative Research Approach

The study is based on visual analysis, content analysis, and symbolic sign interpretation of selected artworks by Pakistani printmakers. Through a close examination of form, technique, and subject matter, the research explores how artists employ different printmaking methods and the impact of these choices on visual communication and expression. Primary sources include visual documentation of prints, artist interviews

(where available), exhibition catalogues, and artist statements. Secondary sources include books, journals, and scholarly articles on South Asian art and printmaking.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on artistic hybridity and media theory, particularly focusing on how traditional art forms interact with digital technologies in a postmodern context. Drawing on theorists like **Homi K. Bhabha**,

Homi K. Bhabha, a key figure in postcolonial theory, explores themes such as hybridity, the Third Space, mimicry, and ambivalence in literature, art, culture, and identity. Writers can analyze how artwork reflects cultural hybridity or challenges dominant narratives by occupying a "third space" between tradition and modernity or East and West. (Bhabha theory 4)

the concept of hybridity is used to understand how Pakistani printmakers blend old and new practices to create unique forms of cultural expression. Additionally, the research incorporates **Marshall McLuhan's media theory**, particularly the idea that "the medium is the message," to examine how the choice of technique influences the meaning and - reaction of the artwork.

3. Historiography

A historiographical approach is used to trace the development of printmaking in Pakistan, situating the current practices within a broader historical and cultural context. This includes examining the roots and evolution of printmaking in Pakistan, the influence of overseas and postcolonial art education, and the institutional role of art schools such as the University of the Punjab (PUCAD) National College of Arts (NCA) and Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. The study will also consider how political, technological, and social changes have shaped the thematic and technical direction of printmaking over time.

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Data Collection Tools and Sources

- **Visual analysis** of selected prints by prominent Pakistani
- **Literature review** from academic journals, art history books, and exhibition catalogues
- **Archival research** from art institutions, galleries, and universities
- **Interviews and artist statements** (where accessible) to gain insight into the artists' intentions and techniques

Discussion

The comparative exploration of conventional and modern printmaking techniques in Pakistan exposes a complex, evolving artistic landscape. Eminent Pakistani printmakers demonstrate a deep engagement with both tradition and innovation, often moving gracefully between historical methods and contemporary practices. This flexibility is not just technical it reflects deeper conceptual, cultural, and personal descriptions fixed in the artists' work.

The Relationship Between Technique and Expression

Traditional printmaking methods such as woodcut, etching, and lithography have long been valued for their tangible quality, craftsmanship, and historical continuity. Artists like **Mahbob Ali**, **Anwar saeed** and **Afshar malik** used these conventional techniques not only for aesthetic purposes but also to engage with themes of cultural identity, memory, and social critique. These methods require labor-intensive processes that, while time consuming, offer control, texture, and a sense of material presence that many artists continue to value (Hussain 45).

In contrast, modern printmaking, especially digital techniques offers speed, reproducibility, and a broader range of visual effects. Artists like **Atif Khan** and **Husnain Awais** influence these methods to address contemporary issues such as consumerism, urbanization, and globalization. Digital tools enable accuracy, layering, and manipulation that would be challenging with traditional methods alone. Importantly, the shift toward digital is not a rejection of the past but a reimagining of printmaking's possibilities in the digital age.

Successful Combination of Techniques

A notable trend in Pakistani printmaking is the integration of conventional and modern techniques, creating hybrid forms that bridge generational and technological gaps. This approach aligns with Homi Bhabha's theory of **cultural hybridity**, where the blending of different traditions leads to new, advanced expressions. Artists like Muhammad Atif khan and Hassnain Awais exemplify this blend combining miniature painting, digital imaging, and print techniques to produce layered, conceptually rich artworks that address issues of identity, power, and representation.

This hybrid technique does not reduce the value of traditional practices, slightly, it refreshes them. The printmakers' conscious use of old and new techniques often serves a

symbolic purpose, assigning their work to cultural heritage while accepting modernity. As McLuhan suggests, the **medium is the message**: the very act of combining media becomes a statement about the existence of past and present (Ali 76).

Cultural and Educational Contexts

The evolution of printmaking in Pakistan cannot be discussed without acknowledging the role of art institutions like the **Collage of Art and Design Punjab university**, **National College of Arts (NCA)**, **LCWU (Lahore college for women university)**, **Beaconhouse National University** and **Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture**. These institutions have historically promoted conventional techniques while gradually participating digital tools into their curricula. This has encouraged younger generations of artists to respect traditional methods while exploring digital possibilities.

Furthermore, the socio-political climate in Pakistan has influenced the themes and techniques adopted by printmakers. Printmaking is a powerful tool for artists to challenge authority, question societal norms, and highlight the issues like gender, class, and restriction, as its adaptability allows artists to respond meaningfully to their environment. Pakistani printmakers activate in a dynamic space where tradition and innovation match each other, blending conventional and modern techniques. Their work honors heritage while accepting transformation. This study highlights the importance of technique as a tool of creation, expression, identity, and resistance, highlighting its role in a broader cultural narrative.

Conclusion

The study examines the dynamic interaction between traditional and modern printmaking techniques in Pakistani printmakers' works. The individuals are representative a strong connection to tradition while actively incorporating modern tools and concepts. Traditional printmaking methods, such as woodcut, etching, and lithography, continue to hold cultural and aesthetic value, frequently communicating themes related to heritage, identity, and social issues. Modern techniques, such as digital printing, photogravure, and mixed media, The medium's technical and conceptual possibilities have been expanded, qualifying artists to explore new forms of expression and involve with the quick response, image-driven world.

Pakistani printmakers often use a hybrid approach, combining traditional techniques with modern technologies for heightened productivity and flexibility. Many Art institutions like the Collage of Art and Design Punjab university, National College of Arts, Beaconhouse National University, Indus Valley School and many more have played a central role in supporting and developing printmaking practices by providing artists with traditional knowledge and access to the modern tools. The study extended the research by highlighting the impact of media choice on artistic meaning and how tradition can be reimagined through contemporary perspectives.

Hence, the evolution of printmaking in Pakistan is a cooperative collaboration, showcasing artists' adaptability to cultural, technological, and political changes while respecting their artistic roots. The ongoing dialogue between traditional and modern techniques enhances printmaking and aids in comprehending Pakistani contemporary art.

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