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**Archaeological Sites along Old Course of the River Beas:  
A Study of Pre-Historic Pottery**

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**Abstract:**

River Beas is one of the major tributaries of the mighty Indus. During the Early Harappan Era, when process of habitation started in the fertile plains of the Indus Domain with thrust, catchments of the Beas were also selected by the people for their dwellings. From early phases of the Kot Dijian to the Late Harappan Period this area remained populated. Due to its central location many shades of activity can, therefore, be observed in this zone which can facilitate to understand Indus Civilization in its total perspective. According to our present state of knowledge, twenty sites are located along the dry bed of river Beas in the jurisdiction of Sahiwal, Khanewal, Multan, Vehari and Lodhran Districts. Obviously pottery is the main material of antiquity that can be observed even in case of surface study of the cultural mounds. It facilitates the researchers to form, more or less, definite opinions with regard to its association with various time spans of the Indus Civilization. In the following pages timeline of the Beas Settlements is discussed in the light of pottery found from Beas Settlements.

Pakistan, especially area included in southern portion of the Punjab, represents cultural and archaeological wealth in almost unparalleled manner. Right from inception of human settlements on permanent basis in the alluvial plains of mighty Indus and its tributaries this ideally located environment offered everything required for habitation and activities related to this process.

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shown that the application of the Gestalt principle in both creativity and perception of art can be extended to include intellectual and emotional domains of mind. The principles go beyond visual perception and operate as necessary features of general perception. This represents a new way of seeing and understanding art as a vehicle for non-verbal communication. Whether the artists are aware of it or not, the use of Gestalt principles in contemporary Pakistani art works has contributed to a deeper and powerful communication. The study can be helpful in further inquiry into the questions such as how a greater awareness of these principles can help artists to design their compositions.

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itself carries a dichotomy; the splattered blood upon closer observation reveals feathers, wings and flowers, which denote life instead of death. Imran Qureshi himself said, “These forms stem from the effects of violence...they are mingled with the color of blood, but, at the same time, this is where a dialogue with life, with new beginnings and fresh hope starts”.<sup>9</sup> Another contrast is the scale for an art work which uses conventions of miniature painting. It is through these orders of Juxtapositioning and contrast that emergence, reification and multistability help the viewer to understand the meaning. Moreover, the principal of invariance can also be observed; the wings, feathers and flowers retain their delicacy and positive connotation even though represented as splashes of blood.

### **Conclusion**

In the wake of globalization, the young Pakistani artists are dealing with a wider viewership. The diversity of ideas and an enhanced exposure to various expressions of ideologies and sensibilities is a reality that exists both for the artist and the viewer. The difference is that an artist is one step ahead for he senses the growing dualities and contrasts of experience and then projects them using a non-verbal language. The contemporary art works are powerful visual statements with strong emotional undertones. The dynamism that cultural life has acquired with globalization is transforming identities at many levels. We are questioning our conditioning as in the form of other cultures, there are multiple examples of different conditioning in our site. In this dynamism where ideas are multiplying and new ways and means of expressing them are being discovered and invented, the artistic expression is transforming. Both the creation of art and its perception are going through a qualitative change. The conceptual domain is growing at a tremendous rate and so are the ways to express the complexity. This study has been an attempt to circumscribe the developing mode of artistic communication by highlighting principles involved in perception and creation. The principles such as emergence, reification and multistability are the most frequently deployed. Those works that add an element of surprise achieve this by altering the natural course of these principles. The paper has



Figure 8. Detail

Displayed on the rooftop of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the work is a bold response to global violence and the artist's yearning for peace in the advent of war and man-made disasters. Qureshi splattered red acrylic paint resembling blood into patterns of foliage, feathers and wings across the 8,000-square-foot canvas. Ken Jhonson from The New York Time commented:

The 8,000-square-foot terrace is splattered with paint the color of dried blood. At first glance it looks like a crime scene or the site of a ritual slaughter. But upon closer inspection the viewer finds the spillage has been delicately altered. With deft white and red brush strokes, the Pakistani artist Imran Qureshi has worked into the messy, raw paint a pattern suggestive of leafy shrubbery, bird feathers and angels' wings — pictorial and ornamental motifs used in Indian and Persian miniature painting.<sup>8</sup>

The work puts together extremes on various accounts. First of all, the rooftop of the museum is an unusual space for displaying such work. The rooftop provides a view of the skyline of the city and a picturesque view of gardens. Qureshi's work, in first impression seems to be a crime scene. This contrast adds into the meaning of the work as one is drawn to unravel the unusual. The work within

intellectually challenging. Juxtapositioning, interestingly deploys emergence as it gives clue to a new meaning, it invokes reification as a new pattern becomes detectable upon contemplation, and then it also uses multistability since the work from a distance and on closer observation reveals two opposing realities. A pertinent example in this regard is ‘And How Many Rains Must Fall before the Stains Are Washed Clean’, by Imran Qureshi.



Figure 7. Imran Qureshi, And How Many Rains Must Fall before the Stains Are Washed Clean, installation view, acrylic, 2013



Figure 6. Detail

Rashid's work is a peculiar case, where a principle that the mind uses to organize experience is used as a compositional device; the work itself is a multistable composition. The technique is quite useful in the contemporary duality of indigenous culture and globalization. The duality reflects in our identity where we are someone else but appear otherwise. The whole idea of his composition is that the whole is more than the parts. The element of surprise that the viewer experiences on a closer look exists due to the very facts that the work defies the natural mode of perception, which is based on emergence. From a distance, we observe an outline and sense it as a whole regardless of recognizing the parts. However, on closer observation we are surprised by the fact that the little images that constitute the bigger picture represent a reality that is diametrically opposite.

Juxtapositioning is another contemporary method that Pakistani artists deploy in their art works. This strategy creates an element of surprise by defying the natural mode of perception. An artist places the principal object or character of the composition in a context or setting that renders the object or character unusual. The strategy is rewarding since the modern mind responds to something that is unconventional, surprising, interesting and

He has used a peculiar technique in which the distance of the viewer from the image plays a crucial role in his or her perception of the art work. His *Red Carpet* turns hundreds of graphic slaughterhouse snapshots into an aesthetically exquisite Persian rug. The viewer at once can see two images presenting entirely different realities. The slaughterhouses represent a work ethic that is brutal, while the rug is known for its elaborate and subtle design patterns that are created through meticulous labour of months. He manages to show the contrast from butchery to intricacy. The viewer experiences the multistability and as a result compares the two realities presented before him in one unit.



Figure 5. Rashid Rana, Red Carpet-3, C print + DIASEC, 2007



that in reality a buffalo cannot climb a pylon. The fourth idea is that it is an art work and therefore it has a deeper and implied meaning.



Figure 4. Huma Mulji, Heavenly Heights, taxidermied buffalo, metal rods, powder coated steel, cotton, 2008

Our mind is likely to construct a narrative in which we sense an incompatibility of two cultures and then a forceful attempt of one culture to adjust into another to an effect of manifest awkwardness. The law of Pragnanz also seems to contribute in building our perception, through proximity and similarity, the buffalo and electricity pylon acquire a meaning from our cultural specifics. We can now see that the Eastern identity cannot turn into Western through haphazard means. In the non-verbal domain we reconstruct idea that such cultural fusion will not work. The sheer contrast of buffalo and electricity pylon enables us to relate to the difference between the developed and developing countries. We are made to recall the identity crisis that results from the futile attempts of Westernizing an Eastern culture in a lop-sided and grotesque way. A moment of self-reflection follows; we discover a triangle from pac-men placed in a circle.

Rashid Rana, a renowned contemporary artist from Pakistan uses the principle of multistability in his works which express duality.

The two shadows, distinct in shape, point out two different interpretations of the same act. For the US, the war on terror is an attempt to restore peace. For the local inhabitants, drone strikes are acts of sheer violence. The work can be seen as involving reification as a principal method since we realize a dynamic situation; an act that has an intent and then consequences. The work communicates a complex idea through subtle cues. There is no direct reference to drone strikes but we are able to build a whole narrative out of dollar bills stapled in a bird like appearance. The shadows depicting two different interpretations is also a realization that we build from our knowledge of the war on terror and the social and political critique of the approach to restore peace through violence. The most interesting aspect of this work that instantly engages the mind to arrive at the complex narrative is the positioning of the flying rug over the head. The mind consults memory for a meaning and then relates the object to a bird. The dollar bill further qualifies the conclusion and this time our intellectual response identifies the object as drone. The title 'Flying Rug' adds a satirical tone since as legend goes, the flying rug is known for its magical abilities. The drone, which is an unmanned aircraft, locates and destroys targets, in a way that is not understandable for the ordinary inhabitant of tribal areas.

The principle of reification is also clearly manifest in Huma Mulji's *Heavenly Heights*. The installation shows a buffalo that has climbed to the top of a steel electricity pylon. In an awkward posture, the buffalo has somehow managed to hold on and is looking downwards. The spectacle is dynamic and represents a situation, wherein, something is happening, therefore, the viewer is engaged to detect a pattern. Buffalo and steel pylon cannot be classified in one unit; there is neither proximity nor similarity, we also do not find any clue for good continuation or closure. The relationship between the buffalo and pylon is simply odd. Our mind is given four distinct types of ideas to construct a narrative. One idea is 'buffalo', which in our cultural setting is something associated to pastoral culture or rural life. The second idea is 'electricity pylon' which we associate to industry, development, and urban life. The third visually perceivable idea is 'the awkwardness' manifest in the posture of buffalo and in the fact

where there are numerous human rights violations. This is where multistability comes in. We select one visual idea over the other on the basis of our subjective experience and the intent that we are looking at an art work. Our mind is inclined to find a deeper meaning. The artist herself remarked, since childhood, family elders, through concealed remarks, give girls the impression that they are a ‘burden’ that should be packed off in marriage as soon as possible.”<sup>7</sup>

The work of Abdullah Syed entitled ‘Flying Rug’ is also an interesting example depicting the principles of Gestalt perception. The fleet of papers is created using dollar bills which are folded and stapled to appear like a piece of oriental carpet. With corners lifted in a way that it appears like a bird. The fleet is hanged in the air and under spot lights casts two shadows on the Eastern and Western walls of exhibition space. Due to the angle of light the shadows appear different. The dollar bills, a bird like object flying over the spectator engage the mind to infer a meaning. The mind through emergence and reification draws a meaning that is more than the sum of the parts. The bird like appearance is a reference to drone, the dollar bills signify the US intervention in Pakistan.

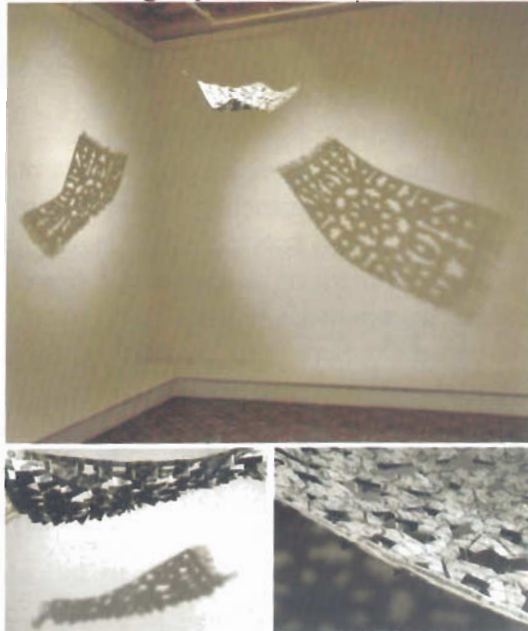


Figure 3. Abdullah Syed, Flying Rug, Printed paper, 2008.

emotional engagement of viewer's mind. The following analysis of different art works by contemporary Pakistani artists evinces this position and shows how Gestalt factor is at work in the domain of what can be called 'Non-Verbal Ideas'.

#### The Gestalt Principles in Contemporary Pakistani Art Works

The first principle discussed above is emergence, which, in essence means suggesting an outline. Once an outline is perceived, our mind in the light of previous experiences perceives the idea as a whole regardless of our recognition of the parts. A sculpture entitled '*Belonging*' created by Nausheen Saeed depicts the use of this principle. The main theme that is perceived as an outline of this work consists of two ideas, namely, 'woman' and 'luggage'. The cultural history of patriarchal society, our own experience from infancy to adulthood, the literature written on the idea 'woman', the news we learn about domestic violence, and our observations regarding appeals for the rights of women enable us to connect 'woman' with 'luggage'. We understand the idea 'luggage', which has many connotations such as responsibility, burden, etc. We also know that luggage is in a sense necessary, but it can be shifted, changed, or cut down. We do not treat luggage on the basis that luggage has sentiments or an identity, we use it and shape it according to our needs.



Figure 2. Nausheen Saeed, *Belonging*, Fiber Glass, Fabric and Leather, 2011

Nausheen represents two distinct ideas within one form. You can call the sculptures as 'luggage shaped like woman' or you can see them as 'woman shown as luggage'. Our minds prefer the second interpretation since it is more meaningful in our cultural context,

In a non-visual context, the mind will follow the same principles of perception. For instance, we sense the direction of an argument without the exact connotation of each word being used. Our minds detect an outline or an emergence on the basis of the experience of similar encounters in the past. Similarly, we use reification when we encounter a situation and project outcomes, we sense how things will turn out to be. Multistability can be explained in our ability to sense diagonal motion. Diagonal motion is a kind of motion that advances in two dimensions at the same time, i.e. x-axis and y-axis. We are capable of perceiving irony of an idea or statement on the basis of multistability. Invariance is also something that we use on daily basis. For instance, we sense ‘sugar coating’ of an idea, the verbal form of idea may be distorted but we still sense the meaning it implies. The law of Pragnanz also holds true in the verbal domain as we sense the meaning of a sentence uttered by a child by proximity to exact pronunciation. This means that the model of perception that Gestalt theorists suggest is not limited to visual perception, it can be seen as a generalized model of perception.

In light of above, it can be stated that the perception of meaning in art can be seen in terms of Gestalt theory. In fact, as we shall see, in various art works produced by contemporary artists of Pakistan, the Gestalt factor, which means engaging the viewer’s mind through emergence, reification, multistability and invariance, seems to be at work. It cannot be said that each such artist is aware of Gestalt psychology and has consciously used principles in order to communicate his or her message. It is suggested that the presence of Gestalt properties in an art work is a logical outcome of the process of creating an art work. This has to be the case since an artist, while producing an art work, also perceives it and uses the same principles of perception. Moreover, since the contemporary artist is dealing with a complex reality due to an onslaught of ideas through Web based exposure and is experimenting with approaches of art representation; the use of Gestalt principles is more pronounced. The complexity of ideas that a contemporary Pakistani artist is dealing with has made him to use techniques and methods of representation that are particularly suggestive and invite a deeper intellectual and