

Rasheed Araeen

Recent Works

Aicon Gallery Exhibition: April 12 – May 12, 2018

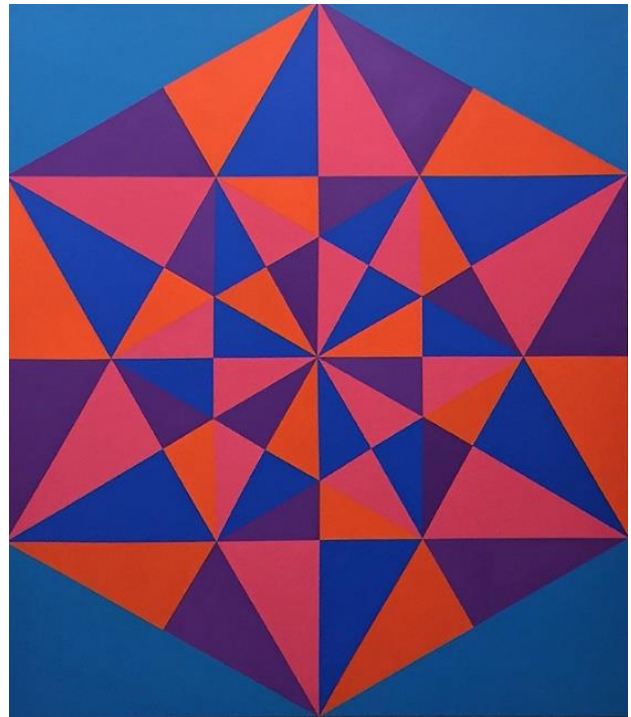
Press Preview & Opening Reception: Thursday, April 12, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones St., New York NY 10012

Aicon Gallery New York is proud to announce *Rasheed Araeen – Recent Works*, a major exhibition of the artist's recent works that constitute his third solo exhibition with Aicon Gallery.

A pioneering artist and voice for alternative and Non-Western interpretations of Minimalist and Conceptual art in the 1960s and 70s, outside of the typically referenced canon, Araeen's work in this exhibition brings together a series of paintings and structures that form the core of the artist's visual vocabulary.

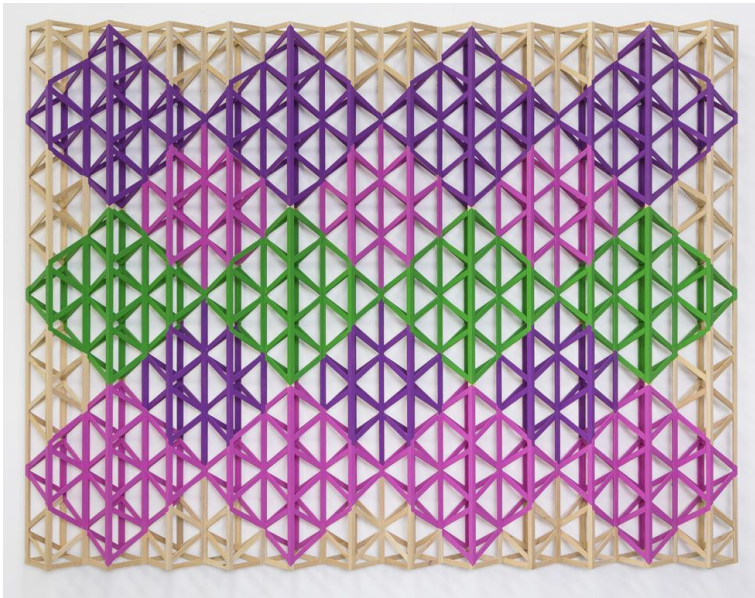
Born in Karachi, Araeen was steered towards his groundbreaking interpretations for Minimalist and Conceptual works through academic undertakings as a civil engineer. He came to realize the profession could not cater to his artistic ideals, as he explained, "the nature of its professional practice seemed to be opposed to what was offered by art: a freedom of expression." He would later concede that his engineering background would prove pivotal to his vision and creativity as an artist without formal training.



Rasheed Araeen, *Opus HB 1, 2017*, acrylic on canvas, 63 x 55 in.

The result was what he termed his 'structures'—works made in open modular form that theoretically could be re-positioned by the viewer. Araeen introduced a lattice structure into the oeuvre of Minimalism, a visual language that had come independently to Araeen at the same time as it was taking root in New York; although, in Araeen's case, it was linked back to his background in structural engineering. This form was first articulated in the seminal *Hyderabad Windcatcher Series* that will also form part of this exhibition. Inspired by the shape of windcatchers – a Persian architectural element that Araeen encountered in Hyderabad, Sind – the series forms his first reflections on the diamond and the rectangle using a minimalist trope. Art critic Jean Fisher noted the key differences between Araeen's articulation of Minimalism and that of the New Yorkers: "There are, however, important distinctions to be made between the Minimalist cube and Araeen's Structures, which to my mind resides in the difference between an instrumental, abstract-logical regulation of the world and an organic one." This approach of creating stable but open structures by finding inspiration in nature and the classical elements – earth, fire, air and water – is at the centre of Araeen's innovative practice.

In 2017, Araeen contributed to **documenta 14** in Athens by presenting *Shamiyaana – Food for Thought: Thought for Change*. The project, inspired by the shamiyaana, a traditional Pakistani wedding tent, situated itself as a functioning restaurant aimed at fostering equality and fellowship between participants. The vibrant canopies are traditionally distilled to a few colors and geometric patterns, two features that seamlessly incorporate themselves into Araeen's artistic practice and influenced his subsequent series of paintings titled *Opus*. In this collection of paintings, Araeen deviates from his open, modular sculptures and



Rasheed Araeen, *Bahar Ay Khushiyaan Laye II*, 2016, acrylic on wood, 64 x 84 x 7 in.

uses symmetry – a central theme in of his work – to represent greater conceptual ideas that are otherwise invisible. Each painting consists of a grid tipped on the diagonal and while the colors of the central patterns vary considerably, the compositional rules remained fixed. The series of work exemplifies the shift in Araeen’s latest work that delves into his ideas of Islamic art in relation to the notions of twentieth-century abstraction.

Araeen has recently enjoyed significant institutional support, receiving overdue attention for his international career. A major retrospective took place at the **Van Abbemuseum** in the Netherlands in 2017, and in the same year Araeen participated in the **57th Venice Biennale** and **documenta 14** –

Universe in Universe, staged in Kassel and Athens respectively. This year, A Retrospective is being exhibited at the **Musée d’art modern et contemporain (MAMCO)**, Geneva in Switzerland, and **BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art**, Gateshead, UK. Araeen has had solo shows at institutional spaces such as the Ikon Gallery (1987), the South London Gallery (1994) and the Serpentine Gallery (1996). In all, mainstream critical discussion of the early part of his career up until the early 1970s was less prevalent, until 2007 when the Tate London purchased and displayed his works from the late 1960s. In 2010, Aicon Gallery, London hosted the first major retrospective of Araeen’s work in over a decade, paving the way for a new string of exhibitions and critical attention. In 2014, Araeen’s work was a prominent feature in the exhibition *Other Primary Structures* at the **Jewish Museum** in New York, a long-overdue exploration of Minimalism outside its art-historical canonically Western context. His work is also included in the collections of the **Metropolitan Museum of Art** and **Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation**. Challenging the roots of ethnic barriers, neo-colonialism and imperialist attitudes, Araeen’s work and texts are as relevant today as they were when first scribed.

Please contact Aicon Gallery (jana@aicongallery.com) for more information.