

Art on the Move:

Pakistani Truck Art and its Shift onto Modern Artefacts

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## **Abstract**

Truck art has a significant history in Pakistan, dating back to pre-partition period. It is part of an ongoing tradition that embodies the experiences, feelings and beliefs of the truck drivers and has had an enormous cultural impact on the community.

In the last decade, Pakistani artisans have been interested in transferring the images and symbols seen on traditional Pakistani trucks to contemporary artefacts. This study explores the motivations of truck art artisans of Pakistani descent who have shifted images and symbols from traditional Pakistani truck art to contemporary artefacts. Furthermore, this research investigates if the recent shift, in artisans' views, has affected the meaning of images and symbols on traditional Pakistani trucks now used in contemporary artefacts. The critical review of literature shows a lack of research on the recent shift and what motivated practicing artisans to make the shift.

Data was gathered from both primary and secondary data sources. For the former, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with artisans of Pakistani descent involved in the transition of this art form. For the latter, the researcher collected online interviews with artisans available on the public domain together with relevant blogs, YouTube videos, websites, and magazine articles.

Analysis of the findings identified multiple themes derived from the various motivational factors that were most and least influential in this evolution of this magnificent art form. The findings of the study also provide insight into if the symbols and images employed have evolved as canvases have changed, and how the choice of these symbols is influenced by a variety of factors.

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Date: June 2022



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“A single conversation with a wise man is better than ten years of study”

- Chinese Proverb.

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## **Ethics Approval**

Ethical approval to conduct this research was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics committee (AUTECH) on (reference number 21/325 2nd September 2021, for this research project with minor modifications. Another application was made to AUTECH after the modification, and this was approved on 29th October 2021.

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

I was born and raised in Pakistan, where the elaborately decorated trucks have captured people's attention for years. They are a common sight, in fact a part of our everyday life. Since childhood, I have seen these vehicles but have never had the chance to travel in them. The bright colours just attracted me from a distance. Being from an artistic background, I have always been drawn to colours, and Pakistani trucks were at the top of my list. In 2017, when I was promoted to lead the art department in the primary school where I was teaching (Foundation Public School, Karachi, Pakistan), the question that arose was what I wanted to teach my curious young students. Perhaps – the first thing that came to mind was our cultural art. And so, the first topic I chose was Pakistani truck art. Time passed and we moved to New Zealand in 2018. My venture into studying abroad was an unexpected one. After 12 years, I decided to continue my studies in New Zealand and my journey began. In 2019, when I decided to shift my postgraduate diploma to a Master of Communication Studies and attended the Research Methodology class, the time came to choose a topic for research. Research was a very new domain for me, so after the class on the way to catch the lift and having a casual chat with my lecturer, she advised 'choose a topic close to your heart'. And without thinking much, I felt a deep desire to explore Pakistani truck art. I never thought that I would be researching Pakistani Truck art while living abroad. Like many unexpected ventures in my life my new venture encompassed my old desire to study a topic that had been subconsciously present.

Now as a postgraduate researcher, I want to explore the evolution of this art form and give it the expression it deserves. I am interested in artisans' drive to be involved in the shift of this magnificent art form. This research study, therefore, investigates the

motivation of artisans who have shifted images and symbols from traditional Pakistani heavy vehicles to modern artefacts.

Truck art is a popular culture in Pakistan which embodies an assortment of experiences, feelings, and beliefs and has an enormous impact on the community (Sheikh, 2018). This art form has evolved over the last decade into an inspirational source for artisans and designers, locally and internationally. In order to conserve this magnificent art and move it off the streets and into our daily lives, this research study intends to provide a credible contribution to the topic and look deeper into its evolution and the motivations of the artisans who shifted it to contemporary artefacts.

## **1.2 Pakistani Truck art**

The literature on Pakistani truck art delves into the various elements of truck art and their meanings. Jamal Elias<sup>1</sup> and Durriya Kazi<sup>2</sup> have done substantial research on the history of Pakistani truck art, art that emerged on heavy vehicles. Other studies include a journal article by Anna Schmid (2000), “Truck Art as Arena of Contest”, Alain Lefebvre (1989) on semiotics of Pakistani truck art, Marie-Benedicte Dutreux’s PhD dissertation (1978) on truck art decoration, and recently a master’s thesis by Farah Ali (2021) on the evolution of portraiture in Pakistani truck painting. However, there has been little investigation into how and why this art style has evolved, in terms of not only the images on traditional Pakistani trucks but also the shift of mediums, that is, from traditional to modern canvases.

This research project aims to explore artisans’ motivations for the shift and if, in their view, the shift may affect the meaning of images and symbols used in this art form. The

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jamal Elias Professor of Religious/South Asian Studies University of Pennsylvania

<sup>2</sup> Professor Durriya Kazi, Chair department of Visual Arts University of Karachi

research aims to fill the gap in the literature on the motivations behind the phenomenon of shifting Pakistani truck art's images to modern artefacts in contemporary truck art practice.

Before delving into the motivation of Pakistani artisans to shift this art form onto other artefacts, it is important to present the different aspects of the practice, as well as the people engaged and the elements that drive them. This section provides a brief overview of the context of Pakistani truck art.

Truck art is a prominent type of art in Pakistan, one that is primarily considered ornamental artwork on heavy vehicles in visual form such as painting (Zahra & Abdullah, 2020). Decorating vehicles is a popular practice in many countries. Elias (2003) elaborates that throughout the world, this practice is limited to minimal decorations, while a few countries, such as Indonesia, the Philippines and countries in Central and South America, go to great lengths to ornately decorate their vehicles. It is a distinctive art form that integrates art and craft in the form of heavy truck adornments and embellishments (Sheikh, 2018). These elaborately adorned and painted trucks are a prominent feature of Pakistani culture (Schmid, 2000).

This art form is known all over the world for its appeal and distinct sense of creative taste. The loud colours, flashy ornaments and “blingy” presentation not only appeal to our aesthetic sense but have also spread Pakistan's culture beyond borders. All over Pakistan, one sees men working on these elaborately ornamented trucks to a background noise of traffic and blaring music. These highly skilled truck artisans continue the tradition of decorating enormous trucks with a dazzling kaleidoscope of folk art.

In Pakistan, truck art is defined as the art of decorating and personalising heavy vehicles such as trucks, rickshaws and lorries. It is the craft of storytelling, the trucker's way to

express themselves using vibrant patterns and visuals. Lefebvre (1989) explains that these vehicles act as a communicative tool, and its owner can be identified by a variety of visible or hidden signs that have meaning. Truck art showcases a spectrum of colour with simple geometrical and floral patterns, and poetic calligraphy. These vehicles are not only functional, but they bring along a kaleidoscopic array of colour and vivid patterns against Pakistan's harsh backdrop.

It is also essential to understand why these trucks are adorned in the first place. For the driver, a truck is like a home; most of these drivers do not return home for days. In these conditions, the truck becomes the driver's companion, which he decorates and proudly displays as if it is his house (Madan, 2018).

In the midst of a growing cloud of black smoke and coughing traffic, Pakistan's brightly coloured buses and trucks resemble sparkling exotic flowers. These vehicles display unique and highly imaginative craftwork. We frequently run across these ornate trucks while travelling in Asia, which are utilised to transport different kinds of goods. Sheikh, (2018) mentions that how impressive it is to see how artfully these trucks are designed and decorated.

Elias (2005) states that though vehicle embellishment is popular in other regions of the world as well, what distinguishes Pakistani truck art is its uniqueness and scale, as nearly every inch of the trucks and buses is lavishly adorned with hand crafted paintings and decorations such as mirror work, dangling chains, pendants, decorative wood carvings and reflectors as shown in Figures 1.1 and 1.2.

## Figure 1.1

*Decorative Pakistani truck on road*



Note. Baharwassan (2017). Decorative Pakistani truck on road [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/e5/Truck\\_in\\_farthest\\_sands\\_of\\_Tharparkar.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/e5/Truck_in_farthest_sands_of_Tharparkar.jpg)).CC -BY 2.0

## Figure 1.2

*A Decorated Rickshaw*



Note. J LOG. (2018). A decorated Rickshaw [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rickshaw\\_at\\_Lahore\\_Fort.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rickshaw_at_Lahore_Fort.jpg)).CC BY-SA 4.0

No two trucks are the same, since the decoration differs depending on the aesthetic preferences of the truck owner and the choice of the truck artisan. Truck art was the poor man's dreamworld, which grew into an entity of its own and became the most widely

expressed form of visual heritage and culture in Pakistan (see Figures 1.3 and 1.4).

**Figure 1.3**

*Front of a Pakistani Truck*



Note. Amir Taj. (2008). Pakistani Truck [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pakistani\\_Trucks.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pakistani_Trucks.jpg)).CC BY 2.0

**Figure 1.4**

*Pakistani Truck Art on a bus*



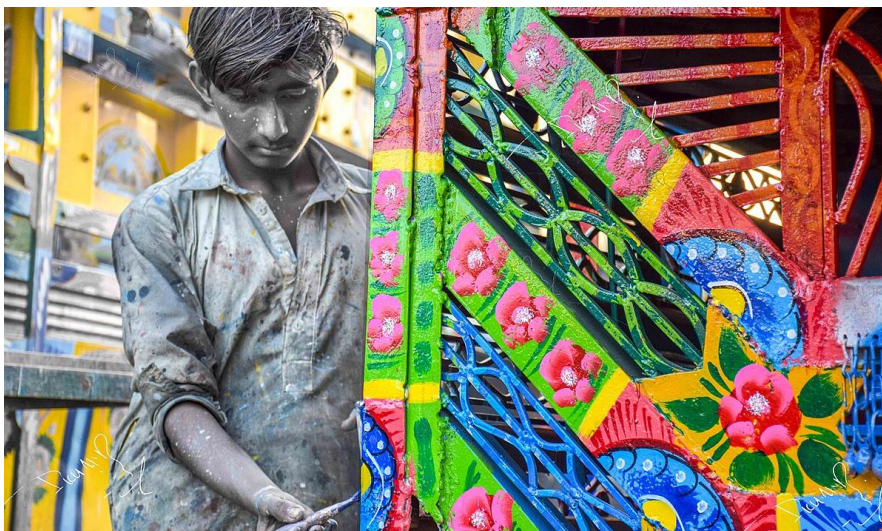
Note. A.Savinj. (2020). Truck art on Pakistani bus [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PK\\_Karachi\\_asv2020-02\\_img85\\_bus.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PK_Karachi_asv2020-02_img85_bus.jpg)).CC BY 2.0



Elias (2005) states that creativity, superb craftsmanship, aesthetic abilities, and cultural knowledge are all part of Pakistani truck artistry. He further elaborates that truck craftsmanship is a traditionally male-dominated trade that has been passed down for generations. Truck artisans do not have any formal schooling and belong to the lower social classes. As seen in Figure 1.5 they apprentice at a very young age to local truck decoration workshops, learning painting and embellishment methods (Elias, 2003).

**Figure 1.5**

*A young boy paints the body of the truck in Karachi*



Note. Akhtar Hassan Khan. (2019). A young boy paints the body of the truck in Karachi [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Truck\\_art\\_Pakistan.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Truck_art_Pakistan.jpg)).CC BY-SA 4.0

Over the last decade, due to its vibrant colour palette Pakistani truck art has emerged as one of the most eye-catching visual components of the country's national identity, leading to an interest among artisans to move the elements used on Pakistani heavy vehicles to contemporary artefacts. The impact of emerging technology is evident as many components of truck art that were originally hand painted have become digitalised. Moreover, they have been replaced by easy peel and paste stickers supplied from China and Japan, which is a less time-consuming process. Artisans are no longer restricted to painting on trucks only, shipping containers, public and private walls, and even

aeroplanes are among some of the new surfaces that truck artisans are painting on. (Ali, F., 2021)

This research project explores the important contemporary shift of images and symbols from traditional Pakistani heavy vehicles to modern artefacts by focusing on the motivations of Pakistani artisans who have been part of this shift. I will be analysing this topic by assessing articles and past interviews as well as my own interviews with artisans who have been inspired by Pakistani truck art.

### **1.3 Objectives and Research Questions**

This study endeavours to explore the motivations of the artisans to shift the truck art form from its traditional canvas to new objects. This research project explores why they chose to do so and what elements of traditional truck art they have chosen for this shift. Further consideration is given to the motivation that has influenced them to create artefacts influenced by truck art.

The central research question of this study is:

- What are the motivations of artisans to shift Pakistani truck art from heavy vehicles onto modern artefacts?

In the course of researching the central question, I also engaged with this sub-question:

- How does this shift, in the artisans' view, affect the meaning of symbols and images used in Pakistani truck art? <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In this project, the term 'motivations' is used interchangeably with motives.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

In the last two decades, truck art has evolved to symbolise Pakistan's colourful culture and to repair the country's tarnished international reputation. The excessively garnished trucks in Pakistan were once seen as flamboyant and overly sentimental by critics, but they are now widely regarded as modern popular art (Ali, F., 2021).

Although we do find some online non-scholarly materials in the public domain such as YouTube videos, blogs, websites, on Pakistani Truck Art, its recent shift has not yet been investigated and researched. This research project intends to contribute to further knowledge about Pakistani truck art and fundamentally to knowledge on the shift itself. Along the way, this project also looks at the evolution and commercialisation of Pakistani truck art in Pakistan with some references to truck art in other countries over the past decade. Furthermore, this project wishes to contribute to the practice of truck art and its transition from the exterior to interior, from heavy vehicles to modern artefacts, in order to raise the awareness of younger generations in Pakistan. In this way, this distinctive art may be kept alive as a part of their rich culture in changing times.

#### **1.5 Scope and limitations of the study**

Pakistani Trucks are a vital aspect of roadways and popular culture in Pakistan. Pakistani truck art silently (or with deafening horns) negotiates meanings that are accessible to Pakistani people every day—which is reason enough to examine the technique more closely. This research emphasises how the artisans were motivated to shift this traditional truck art to modern artefacts and if the meaning of images and symbols changed with the shift of canvas.

Only a few books and scholarly articles have discussed the history of this practice, as well as the aesthetics and cultural significance of truck art in Pakistan. However, several

bloggers, especially foreigners, have analysed the sudden cultural shift on their web blogs.

Due to the limitation of resources and time, as well COVID-19 travel restrictions, this research was carried out primarily online outside of Pakistan, based solely on what was available online on public platforms along with online interviews of artisans. Multiple lockdowns all around the world impacted the research process, as the workload for some artisans did not allow them to take time for interviews, while some of them were travelling once the lockdowns restrictions were lifted. As these interviews had to be conducted online, there was a time difference constraint which also had to be dealt with, keeping in mind the ease for the participants. Though Pakistan is a technologically advanced country, some technology barriers were faced. This was especially so when interviewing the truck artisans, as email is not a common way for them to communicate.

## **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is comprised of six chapters. These are outlined below.

**Chapter 1** Introduction. The chapter herein provided a brief background to how this research was initiated. It also gives a concise introduction of Pakistani truck art, (which will be further elaborated in the literature review) along with research objectives, and research questions. Additionally, it clarifies the study's significance and briefly discusses the study's scope and constraints.

**Chapter 2**, Literature Review. This reviews the literature on the first research stage, a contextual review of existing knowledge on truck art and practice in the field. This literature review draws attention to available studies that have primarily focused on the truck art in Pakistan which are mainly historical studies, the visual elements, examples of art around the world inspired by truck art. The review suggests that there are probably

very few studies that have paid attention to the recent shift of truck art from Pakistani's heavy vehicles to modern artefacts. This chapter also briefly refers to relevant art theories such as Csikszentmihalyi's systems view of creativity and Marcel Duchamp's theory of art.

**Chapter 3, Methodology.** This chapter presents the design and methodology for this qualitative research project. Qualitative methods for data collection and analysis are explained and the rationale for the different methods used for data collection is presented. The qualitative approach is primarily used an interpretive paradigm, focusing on the influences and motivation of artisans when they shift Pakistani truck art onto modern artefacts. Semi-structured interviews were implemented to engage with these artisans and their work, including discovering who they are, their motivations, what has influenced them in this shift of mediums, and how this shift affects the significance of symbols and images used. The data from secondary sources are examined using the overall research design overviewed in this Methodology chapter. The data collection method and sampling approach are discussed. The stages of data analysis method are described, including transcription, coding, and the usage of NVivo. Ethical concerns are also addressed.

**Chapter 4, Findings.** Findings are presented from across all data sources. A quick analysis is first provided based on the demographics and profiles of the participant artisans then a list of the interview questions designed by the researcher as well as those collected from past interviews. This chapter fundamentally reports the key themes regarding motivations that emerged from analysing data in relation to the central research question and the sub-question.

**Chapter 5 Discussion.** The discussion interprets and describes the significance of the findings on the shift of Pakistani truck art through the perspectives of the artisans involved

in this process. The chapter begins by discussing the demographics of the research participants, discovered through the findings to better understand their motivation. The overall aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the data analysis resulted in new understanding or insights. The findings are analysed in depth with regard to the research questions and objectives.

There is a variety of intriguing findings, some of which are similar to existing literature in some respects but different in others. The chapter also explains and evaluates the findings, formulates a deeper understanding of the research and acts as a reference in support of the conclusion.

**Chapter 6, Conclusion.** This appraises the main argument, highlights the research methodologies used and synthesizes the key findings of this thesis. The relevance of the research is also reviewed along with brief suggestions of future research agendas. It provides suggestions for future research on the topic as well as well identifies the study limitations.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature on Pakistani truck art in relation to the key concerns of this research. In the scholarship on Pakistani truck art and artisans, there are two books, published in the early 1990s, that are considered as the first documentation of this art genre. The first, *Automobile Kunst in Pakistan* by German cultural scientist Jürgen Grothues (1990), was structured as a photo book and mainly served as visual documentation of the time period in which the images were taken. and the second, *Art on Wheels* by Renata von Oppen (1992), concentrated on the artistic splendour of Pakistani trucks, amidst other smaller vehicles like carts and buses.

From the early 2000s, comparatively there are more scholarly studies on Pakistani truck art, mostly interested in analysing the visual semiotics—what the visual elements and symbols used on Pakistani trucks may mean and their significance. Existing literature shows a lot of interest in writing about the historical origins of this exquisite art form.

The book *On Wings of Diesel: Trucks, Identity and Culture in Pakistan* by Jamal J. Elias (2003) presents systematic research on truck art and discusses the dynamic aspects of Pakistani truck art, recognising a truck as “moving art”.

Even though Pakistani truck art is well-known, there are probably not many scholarly studies that have referred to the shift from heavy trucks to modern artefacts. How does this shift change the purpose of the truck art as it was originally existed and practiced? What are artisans’ motivations for the shift? And do the meanings of images and symbols change in the course of the shift to another medium?

A few journal articles have referred to the shift, and blogs are mostly where we find some writings about the shift of truck art from Pakistani trucks to various canvases. The review of related knowledge on Pakistani truck art in this project indicates that there are probably very few research-based studies that have paid attention to the recent shift of truck art from Pakistani's heavy vehicles to modern artefacts. This is the area of focus for this research project, which is based on engaging with the artisans who have experimented with the shift in their artwork.

This chapter is organised mainly into four sections. It commences with reviewing the literature that attends to the historical context of Pakistani truck art and its practice-in-Pakistan to provide background and contextual information for this project. The second section draws attention on studies that have explored the visual aesthetics of Pakistani Truck art, while the third spotlights studies that focus on art inspired by Pakistani truck art. And the last section addresses related art theory concepts.

## **2.2 Historical context of Pakistani truck art**

This section provides a historical overview of the origin of truck art in Pakistan, and how this art has evolved over time. Zahraa and Abdullah, (2020) state in their journal article, "Vehicular Art Themes: Five Indian Subcontinental Art Forms that Inspire Pakistani Truck Visuals", that to better understand Pakistani truck art, it is helpful to first focus on its origin. They also add that Pakistan's arts stem from a diverse heritage, and one aspect of Pakistani truck art are the images that appear on these moving vehicles. Vehicle decorating, including chariots, carts, and carriages, dates back to 1900 BC in Mesopotamia (Tarr, 1969). The journal article, "Copper Vehicle-Models in the Indus Civilization" by Piggott (1970) confirms that excavation uncovered models of two-wheeled vehicles, including covered carriages pulled by two horses, from the Indus valley



civilisation's Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro sites, which are located in present-day Pakistan's Punjab and Sindh provinces as shown in Figure 2.1.

## Figure 2.1

### *Mesopotamian Chariot painting*



Note. U-M Library Digital Collections (c.2001) Chariot Race. *Tamil and Vedas*, LeastCommonAncestor, CC BY-SA 3.0.2014 ([https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/Standard\\_of\\_Ur\\_-\\_War\\_-\\_Detail\\_Bottom\\_Left.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/Standard_of_Ur_-_War_-_Detail_Bottom_Left.jpg))

The idea of truck art is associated with decoration of the moving vehicles. According to Gupta (2016), in the 1920s the idea of truck decoration was derived from the old cart decoration, which can be traced back to the 1900s to replace older types of transportation/carriages. These vehicles in the 1920s were not embellished with visual patterns as seen on royal carts belonging to the 17th century, as the core purpose of these chariots was to quickly deliver new warriors to key battlegrounds (Tarr, Laszlo 1969).

Rich and Khan (1980) in "Bedford Painting in Pakistan", explained that trucking began to grow and compete with train transportation on an occasional basis in the mid-1930s. However, large-scale importation of Bedford chassis to Pindi began in 1938-39 (before the partition of Pakistan). Until the early 1950s, trucks were mostly painted to preserve the truck's surface, with basic information such as the company's name and address, and usually a salutation placed above the cabin with a humorous phrase at the tailgate of the truck. As the basic skills required to do so were the ability to do lettering, this work of art

was done by accomplished calligraphers of that time rather than truck artisans (Rich & Khan 1980).

Ali (2021) mentions in her thesis *The Bold and the Beautiful: Portraiture in Pakistani Truck Art*, that since the late 1980s, truck art in Pakistan has received a lot of attention and has been extensively covered in the local media, but scholarly work on the fascinating subject is limited. She adds that Durriya Kazi and Jamal Elias are the only two researchers who have investigated history of Pakistani truck art in depth, but these two scholars appear to have a divided opinion regarding the origin of truck art. There is also a discussion among art historians regarding whether truck art has been influenced by any other arts or craft trends.

Durriya Kazi,(1998) an eminent Pakistani painter, is one of the first artisans to acknowledge that truck art dates back to the Mughal era and that truck art's cultural visual expression converges with miniature paintings. She also emphasises that the dangling chains and jingles, as well as the mirror work, are heavily influenced by the exquisite interiors of Pakistan's Mughal Sheesh Mahal<sup>4</sup>.

Elias (2005) disagrees that truck art extends back to the British era in the 1920s since the motifs on animal carts and temples bear no resemblance to the patterns on truck art. He also claims that truck art did not emerge from pre-Mughal miniature paintings either because the style is so distinct. He proposes that vehicular ornamentation arose from the 1960s' economic success and transportation development in Pakistan; the truckers

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<sup>4</sup> Mughal architecture is known for its grandeur and magnanimity, and Sheesh Mahal is a perfect example of this. Sheesh Mahal, which means "Palace of Mirrors," is a hall found in some of India's and Pakistan's most beautiful Mughal palaces.

eventually received a boost of income in the 1970s and 1980s, which they spent on beautifying their trucks in order to entice passengers.

Qureshi and Ata-Ullah,<sup>5</sup> validates Elias' statement in her textual and visual essay that truck ornamentation began in the 1960s to lure passengers and to give the truck owners a sense of pride. However, as showed in the fascinating piece, "The Semiotics of The Nation's Icons; The Art of Truck and Miniature Painting", (Qureshi and Ata-Ullah, 2009, as cited in Zaidi, 2009) relate truck art with miniature artisans of the Mughal period.

Elias (2003) emphasises that the formal study of truck decoration originally concentrated in Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> In the early 1970s, scholars were enticed by the cultural and political significance of the practice in the region, among which is also Marie Benedict Dutreux doctoral dissertation on truck art in Afghanistan in 1978. Her research was inspired by her field research in Kabul. Elias (2003) further notes that after the Soviet invasion and subsequent civil strife in Afghanistan, academic interest in truck decoration shifted from Afghanistan to Pakistan in the 1980s.

Whereas Kazi's (1998) article, "Decorated Trucks of Pakistan" suggests that some of the artisans who previously worked as painters in the royal Mughal and Rajasthani courts were unemployed after the British assumed control of the sub-continent in 1857. As most of these artisans were Muslims, with the end of the British regime and the subsequent independence of Pakistan in 1947, they migrated to Pakistan and started to paint on trucks instead.

Elias (2003) explained in his book *On Wings of Diesel* that there has been a progression from quite simple decoration in the 1960s to the intricate and prevalent phenomena that

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<sup>5</sup> A notable artisan and former principal of Pakistan's National College of Arts

is modern Pakistani truck art. Although techniques and motifs have changed over time, certain design and fundamentals have stayed constant.

## **Figure 2.2**

### *Hand painted Pakistani trucks*



Note. Murtaza Imran Ali. (2007). Hand painted Pakistani trucks [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reaching\\_to\\_the\\_limits\\_\(1016641498\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reaching_to_the_limits_(1016641498).jpg))CC BY-SA 4.0

As shown in Figure 2.2, the vastly decorated and beautifully painted trucks have been a prominent feature of Pakistani culture (Schmid, 2000). Truck art is one of Pakistan's most prominent, vibrant, and popular art forms, with a rich artistic and cultural history that has enlivened Pakistan's roadways (Zahraa & Abdullah, 2020).

Ali (2021) believes that while the art of beautifying automobiles has evolved over time, the desire to do so has remained consistent. It can be stated that this custom of adorning public transportation has persisted despite advancement in materials and techniques used in truck art painting.

### **2.3 Visual aesthetics of Pakistani truck art**

Truck art is a common example of a vibrant art form found in Pakistan. The ornateness with which these vehicles are decked, with numerous decorative features and painted motifs, is astounding.

In their journal article, “Bedford Painting in Pakistan: The Aesthetics and Organization of an Artisan Trade,” Rich and Khan (1980) stated that Pakistan is a country with a wide spectrum of colours and cultural influences, with Bedford trucks gracing every congested city. They further claimed that while these trucks may be a frequent sight for native Pakistanis, they appear as a strange curiosity for foreign visitors.

Zahraa and Abdullah (2020) emphasise in their journal article, “Vehicular Art Themes” that truck art is a prevalent style of art in Pakistan that can be seen all across the country. These trucks are decorated with diverse themes, ornamented with wood carvings, and other fluorescent materials that add elegance to its beauty. They further argue that as the Indo Pak subcontinent's cultural practices are analogous due to the same geographical location, we can also witness some of the Indian patterns and themes used to decorate varied surfaces and visuals on Pakistani trucks, which mostly include the phulkari pattern, phool buta (floral designs), and peacock images.

According to the reviewed literature, each visual feature of truck art communicates the feelings of both the truck owner and the artisan, which is examined further in this section. The motifs and themes on Pakistani trucks are attempts to depict elements of the cultural and emotional beliefs of those who work in the trucking business, rather than just aesthetic considerations. Scholars have pointed out that since trucks are a common mode of cargo transportation throughout Pakistan, truck decoration is the society's major form of representational art (Elias, 2005, as cited in Vine, 2008).

Before proceeding further, it is vital to clarify which parts of the trucks are typically selected for embellishments and decorations. Zahra and Abdullah (2020) explain that the trucks/heavy vehicles are categorised into three parts: Taj, rear, and sides, which are further divided into small geometrical (square or rectangular) shaped panels used for ornamentation. They further elaborate that the religious motifs on the front of the truck are primarily concerned with expressing the owner's connection and love for his religion, which is Islam. These motifs are usually painted on the taj or "crown," also known as the truck's front rim. Usually, each geometric panel on the truck's sides is painted with a different motif. Elias (2003) emphasises that portraits of favourite political leaders, national heroes, celebrities, and even the vehicle owner's self-portrait are commonly found on the back of trucks, thus express the vehicle owner's interest.

According to Elias (2003), Pakistani truck art decoration integrates a variety of materials, patterns, and themes to form a magnificent piece of art. As illustrated in Figure 2.3, nearly every inch of the vehicles is extensively decorated with ornaments and paintings, including hanging chains and pendants, mirror work, and reflecting material. The overview of literature on truck art that follows emphasises the studies that have concentrated on visual aesthetics of truck art. These mainly discuss different elements such as the patterns, poetry, calligraphy, colour, and truck language used in Pakistani truck art.

Malik (2018) focusing on truck art in Pakistan, states that a pattern, is a recurring theme, often referred to as a collection of elements that are replicated predictably, which can visibly be seen on these trucks. She further elaborates that truck artisans began to adorn their vehicles with Islamic geometrical designs and patterns of the national flag to show their patriotism.

Beautifully painted cargo trucks are a typical sight on Pakistani roadways which have a high level of detail and bright colours. Vine (2008) states that colours used on these trucks are always bright, with intricately designed reflectors in a myriad of neon shades, all over the body, and especially on the crown, which makes these vehicles the focus of attention. Sheikh (2018) suggests that bold and bright colours used in the cabin have a psychological impact on the mood of the truck drivers, making them happy and energetic; they feel comfortable in a colourful atmosphere.

### **Figure 2.3**

*Decorative Pakistani Truck*



Note. Jafri, A. (2016). *Decorated Pakistani Truck* [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons.

(<https://www.pexels.com/photo/low-angle-shot-of-a-truck-art-in-pakistan-11405929/>).CC BY-SA 4.0



## Figure 2.4

### *Colourful Pakistani Trucks*



Note. Syed M.Rafiq. (2012). *Colourful Pakistani Trucks* [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pakistani\\_Truck\\_Art.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pakistani_Truck_Art.jpg)) CC BY-SA 4.0

Figure 2.4 is an example of what Elias (2003) mentions as being commonly used in truck art. It shows an abundance of contrasting colours, basic geometrical and floral motifs with poetic calligraphy.

Sheikh (2018), in her article “Impact of Truck Art, as Popular Culture on Pakistani Society”, mentions that the truck artisans exhibit a range of scenes, including tranquil landscapes showing hills, lakes, bright sky, flora, twisting roads, birds, and animals in both local and foreign style as shown in Figure 2. 5. These landscapes, she says, allow one to enjoy the painters' never-ending imagination. She also notes that some of the popular countryside scenes include the hunting of lions and deer, hunting lodges, and mountain cottages, which are inspired by Mughal miniature paintings can also be seen on these vehicles.



**Figure 2.5**

*Paintings on Colourful Pakistani Trucks*



Note. Ibnazhar. (2014). *Paintings on Colourful Pakistani Trucks* [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%27By\\_@ibneAzhar%27-Heritage\\_Museum\\_-\\_Islamabad-Pakistan\\_\(52\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%27By_@ibneAzhar%27-Heritage_Museum_-_Islamabad-Pakistan_(52).JPG)) CC BY-SA 3.0

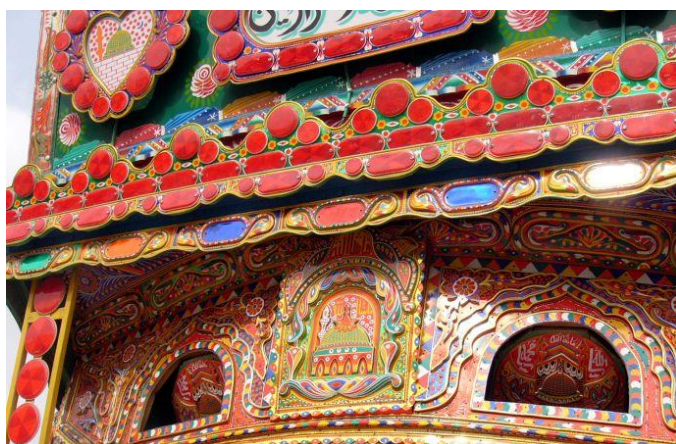
Ali (2021) in her thesis *The Bold and the Beautiful: Portraiture in Pakistani Truck Art*, examines in depth this facet of Pakistani truck art and how portraiture shows the different influences that Pakistani truck art has absorbed over the years. She further classifies portraiture into five different styles: religious, political, celebrity, advertisement and personal. In this study, I am interested in exploring how the meaning and use of these pictures and symbols change as the canvas shifts from trucks to modern artefacts.

The following is a review of Farah Ali's study, focusing on the five styles of truck portraiture as well as some other studies that have addressed the many forms of portrait painting in truck art. It is worth noting that the next section concentrates on the influences truck art portrait painting have exerted over the last decade. To better comprehend the

goal of this study, which is to expound on the artisan's motivation for the shift of canvases, it is necessary to analyse previous studies that have focused on this evolution of portrait painting in truck art. The goal of this research is also to shed light on how images and symbols have shifted from vehicles to modern items and how their meaning has changed accordingly.

### **Figure 2.6**

*Truck adorned with religious images*



*Note.* Murtaza Imran Ali. (2007). *Colourful Pakistani Trucks* [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beautiful\\_details\\_\(1016659998\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beautiful_details_(1016659998).jpg)) CC BY-SA 2.0

Religion plays a significant role in forming a country's culture. Elias (2005) wrote an insightful article about how the religious views of Pakistanis may be understood by looking at their colourfully decorated trucks. He argues that vehicle decoration represents the Islamic faith's changing role in Pakistan. Farah (2021) states that truck artisans were first inspired by Sufi portraiture, a tradition that continues to this day as shown in Figure 2.7. Paintings of the Kaaba, mosques, and sacred sites can be found on many trucks, with Allah and Muhammad carved into the topmost part of the truck's crown (Elias, 2005).

**Figure 2.7**

*Dancing Sufi Saint painted on a truck*



*Note.* Dancing Sufi Saint painted on a truck. Copyright 2016 by Haider Ali

Above the truck's windshield, religious invocations, Quran verses, and Prophet Muhammad's sayings are commonly inscribed. According to Elias (2005), the painted vehicles reflect Islamic significance and show love to Muhammad (p.b.u.h). Lefebvre (1989) mentions in his article, "The Decorative Truck as a Communicative Device", that "decoration is important for the truck driver as he must decorate to capture public's attention at first but also has an intention to prevent the crew's and cargo's misfortune during the journey." Figure 2.8 shows the back of the Pakistani trucks, which are often adorned with paintings and murals depicting the Buraq<sup>7</sup>, a heavenly winged horse that took Muhammad (p.b.u.h) to the sky (Elias, 2005). Durre S Ahmed (2019) discusses the link between the Buraq and Jhuley Lal, the patron saint of travellers and voyage in her

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<sup>7</sup> Buraq which is a supernatural winged horse that carried Prophet Muhammad to the heavens.

article “The Journey.” She further explains that the images of Buraq and Jhuley Lal are strongly connected to the journey symbol that can be seen on these heavy vehicles. They are used with the dual intent of exhibiting decorative craftsmanship while also acting as protective charms on dangerous journeys (Ahmed, 2019).

**Figure 2.8**

*Buraq/winged horse motif*



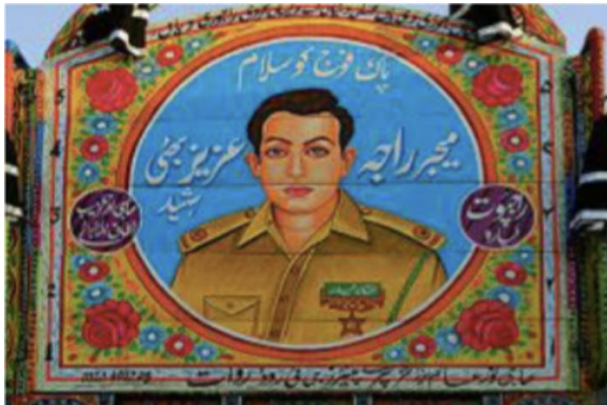
*Note.* Buraq/winged horse motif. Copyright 2016 by Ali

Another type of portraiture that emerged in the 1960s, mentioned in Farah Ali’s research (2021), included movie stars and celebrities and was influenced by commercialisation. As seen in the images below (Figure 2.9 to 2.13), these trucks had images of Pakistani celebrities, athletes, political figures, and national heroes (Vine, 2008). These contemporary portraiture on Pakistani truck art are intricately connected with cinema billboard painting. According to Frembgen (2006), cinema billboards were hand painted by street painters who excelled at commercial portrait and figurative painting from the 1950s until the mid-2000s.



**Figure 2.9**

*National hero picture on Trucks*



*Note.* National hero picture on Trucks. Copyright 2016 by Ali

These painters were commissioned by film distributors largely from Lahore, a city in Pakistan, and were more skilled painters than truck artisans of that time (Gull, 2021). Hence, truck artisans would frequently invite them to paint commissioned portraits on trucks. These cinema painters would either occasionally help the truck artisans or train them to paint portraits (Ali, 2021). The loudness of cinema celebrity portraits was thus unavoidable and found its way into mainstream truck painting (Ali, 2021).

**Figure 2.10**

*Princess Diana's picture painted on the back of a truck*



*Note.* Princess Diana. Copyright 2018 by Ali

**Figure 2.11**

*Painted picture of film celebrity*



*Note.* Painted picture of film celebrity. Copyright 2016 by Ali

**Figure 2.12**

*Painted picture of Bruce Lee on a truck*



*Note.* Ali, H. (c. 2018). *Picture of Bruce Lee.* Copyright 2015 by Ali

**Figure 2.13**

*A portrait of cricket star Imran Khan*



*Note.* A portrait of cricket star Imran Khan. Copyright 2015 by Ali

When Pakistan won the 1995 Cricket World Cup, portraits of Imran Khan, a former captain of the Pakistani cricket team, became very common. Similarly, Saddam Hussein's image was frequently seen on the backs of vehicles during the Gulf War (Ally, 2015).

According to Ali (2021) in the mid-1960s, a third type of truck portraiture was introduced—political portraits—which immediately gained popularity. She further mentions that as part of a political campaign, General Ayub Khan very intelligently used his own images and slogans to be painted on trucks, as shown in Figure 2.14.



**Figure 2.14**

*Picture of General Ayub Khan painted on a truck*



*Note.* Picture of General Ayub Khan painted on a truck. Copyright 2016 by Ali

He was the first Pakistani political leader to recognise the growing significance of truck culture as a way of communication, and cleverly used it for his advantage (Paracha, 2016). Vine (2008) mentions in her research that portraits of other political figures, such as Zia al-Haq, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Bajwa, have been painted to reflect truckers' interest in politics and national affairs, or to pay tribute to their leaders. Battlefields, army symbols, and soldiers brandishing weapons are among the most popular patriotic images, all of which reflect truckers' affection for their homeland (Sheikh, 2018).

A kind of truck portraiture that stands out is the advertisement, conveying a social message which is a very recent addition to this art form. Farah Ali (2021) talks about, how in 2018, UNESCO used the popularity of truck art to campaign for girls' education in Pakistan's most conservative areas, such as Peshawar, as a part of the UNESCO "Girl's Right to Education Programme" (see Figure 2.15).



**Figure 2.15**

*Girls' Right to Education Programme in Pakistan*



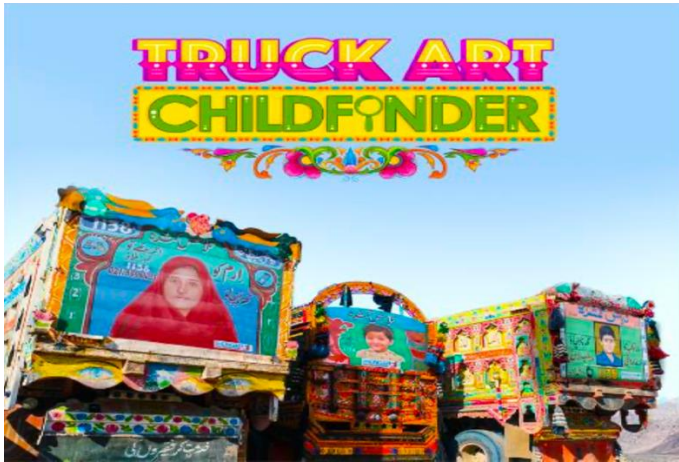
*Note.* (2018). *Girls' Right to Education Programme in Pakistan* [Photograph].

<https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/190405eng.pdf>.CC BY 2.0

In the #TruckArtChildfinder campaign, more than 20 trucks were painted with images of local schoolgirls, which were culturally sensitive yet empowering and widely accepted by the local people of the area (Ali, 2021). The campaign, which began in 2019, is yet another example of social welfare advertisements through truck portraiture, as depicted in Figure 2.16. Berger Paints, NGO Roshni Helpline, and Batten, Barton, Durstine, and Osborn (BBDO Pakistan, a worldwide advertising/marketing agency founded in New York in 1891) collaborated on this project. Ali (2021) further elaborates that the aim of this effort was to find missing children in Pakistan by painting their photographs, names, and a phone number on the backs of trucks. This was a very successful campaign, and several missing children were found.

**Figure 2.16**

*A campaign to find missing children using truck art in Pakistan*



*Note.* Ravi Balakrishna (c.2019). BBDO and Berger create a campaign to find missing children using truck art in Pakistan. <https://www.mumbrella.asia/>

Figure 2.17 shows a rare example of Pakistani truck art where the images are portraits of truck drivers' or truck owners' family members were painted.

**Figure 2.17**

*Picture of a young boy painted on a truck*



*Note.* Picture of a young boy being painted on a truck. Copyright 2021 by Haider Ali

In the mid-2000s, truck owners began commissioning photographs of their family members, with photos of their young sons becoming more popular on trucks than portraits of the truck driver's mother, which are generally quite uncommon (Ali, 2021).

## Figure 2.18

### *Peacock motif used on Truck*



*Note. The figure shows how peacock motif is used in truck art. Copyright 2015 by Muzaffar Bukhari.*

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mbukhari/5153399225>

Other than portraiture interpretations, these trucks frequently exhibit other visual elements as shown in Figure 2.18. Flora and fauna are very popular subjects in truck art, with fish and peacocks being the most prominent (Sheikh,2018).

Vine (2008) points out that the most frequently painted birds include peacocks, roses, eagles, and sparrows. Birds in Pakistani landscapes can be seen in paintings as well as in metal reliefs that have been painted or adorned with decorative elements. The peacock motif used on these trucks is symbolic of Paradise, spiritual immortality, and rebirth.

Zahra and Abdullah (2020) explain how truck art pays tribute to its heritage by presenting the famous peacock as a symbol of grandeur. They further point out that this bird has a rich historical and mythological history in the Indian subcontinent. The audience is drawn to applaud its enchanting presence because of the aesthetic appeal of its form and composition. Since trucks are considered an open and public display because they drive around public spaces, the audience is not confined to a particular age or gender, and anyone can appreciate the visuals (Zahra & Abdullah, 2020).

As shown in Figure 2.19, the fish motif is believed to shield the truck from harm and bringing good luck (Kazi, 1998). Ahmed (2019) highlights the importance of the fish image seen on several Pakistani trucks in her article in the book, *Mazaar Bazaar Design and Visual Culture of Pakistan*. She further elaborates that Palla is the local name of a fish that lives in the Indus River and looks like a salmon. It swims against the current and is often depicted as the saint's (Jhuley Lal) vehicle, thus associating it with religious beliefs (Ahmed, 2019). According to Vine (2008), fish depicted on Pakistani trucks are an important part of aquatic life and are a symbol of fertility and the birth cycle.

**Figure 2.19**

*The fish is a symbol of strength and success on the roads*



*Note. Fish symbol used to decorate trucks. Copyright 2018 by Ali*

Elias (2003) mentions, images of eyes are also used on Pakistani trucks to shield against the evil eye, but the eyes painted on these trucks are particularly feminine, acting not only as a symbol of beauty but also as effective elements in giving the truck a feminine character as shown in Figure 2.20. These are considered talismanic by truckers, who believe they protect the truck from evil. (Elias, 2003).



## Figure 2.20

*Female eye image painted on a Pakistani truck*



*Note. Picture of a female eye symbol used on trucks. Copyright 2018 by Ali*

When the adorned trucks hit the road, hanging chains in various shapes with bells create a delightful jingling sound as can be seen in Figure 2.21. The jingling sounds of chains on rugged roads have a calming effect on truckers' minds, allowing them to focus more intently on their driving. (Sheikh, 2018). She claims that the sound of these bells and chains keeps the driver alert and awake when driving long distances.

## Figure 2.21

*Hanging chains on trucks*



*Note. Hanging chains on a truck. Copyright 2018 by Ali*

In addition to illustrations, trucks are often adorned with different forms of epigraphy, both religious and non-religious, such as poetry verses, humorous phrases, quotations,

saints' sayings, a few lines of a song, life lessons of the driver and words of wisdom, which not only entertain but also transmit knowledge to the readers (Zahraa & Abdullah, 2020). Figure 2.22 exemplifies the usage of poetry on trucks to convey messages of peace, friendship, and affection, and the truck owners are aware of the social impact this has on society (Sheikh, 2018). The calligraphy on these vehicles, according to Elias (2003), is considered high art poetry by the drivers.

**Figure 2.22**

*Truck Art Poetry*



*Note.* Obaid Raza. (2014). *Truck Art Poetry* [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Truck\\_Art\\_02.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Truck_Art_02.jpg)).CC BY- 2.0

Figure 2.23 shows that stanzas used in truck art are from the famous collection of Pashto, Punjabi and Urdu verses - the three most frequently used languages by Pakistani truck owners (Elias, 2003). Hasan et al. (2020), states in his research in this field that, usually, such calligraphies are portrayed in the local languages of the truck owner's home area. They could, therefore, be written in Urdu, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, or Punjabi.

**Figure 2.23**

*Truck Art of Pakistan*



*Note.* Obaid Raza. (2014). *Truck Art Poetry* [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Truck-art-01.jpg>).CC BY- 3.0

The interiors of Pakistani trucks are often painted to match the truck's exterior theme and sometimes more ornate than the exterior. Figure 2.24 shows that not only are the exterior surfaces of trucks adorned, but the interior spaces of the trucks are often completely decorated as well. According to Sheikh (2018) the weather may affect the exterior of these trucks but the ornamentation in the driver's cabin lasts longer.

## Figure 2.24

### *Interior of a Pakistani Truck*



*Note.* Interior of a Pakistani Truck. Copyright 2018 by Ahmed

Following this discussion of the visual components of Pakistani truck art, we must also consider the materials employed in this art form, as well as certain decorative styles. These trucks are decked up with varied materials, leaving no area unadorned. (Zahraa & Abdullah, 2020). Seats are adorned with appliqué motifs made of plastic. Patterns are cut with a cutter that uses a stencil to draw patterns. According to Sheikh, (2018) these designs are then secured with a variety of adhesives and nails. The interior of these trucks is often studded with mirror work and flashing lights that brighten up the buses or trucks on the dark and dreary highways (Sheikh,2018). She further mentions that despite the fact that coloured glass can be used to create a mosaic effect, acrylic is increasingly popular due to its ease of use and low cost. (Sheikh, 2018). According to Kazi (1998), the dangling chains and jingles, as well as the mirror work, are heavily influenced by the exquisite interiors of the Mughal Sheesh Mahal, although lacking the complexity of geometric Mughal motifs. Sheikh (2018) mentions that to make these Pakistani trucks resemble Shish Mahal (an architectural piece of art with beautiful mirror work), intricate mirror work is done.

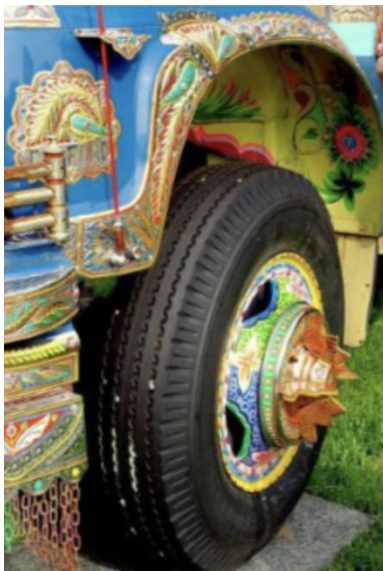


Muiz (2021) points out that Mughal architecture is known for its grandeur and magnitude, and Sheesh Mahal is a perfect example of this. Even after hundreds of years, Mughal's great and monumental work, Shish Mahal, still stands like a jewel. This monument is famous for its exquisite workmanship and meticulous attention to detail (Muiz, 2021). He further elaborates that the dazzling effects and enhanced sparkling sensation of mirror work are designed to catch everyone's attention. Expensive stones, including rubies, lapis lazuli, sapphires, and emeralds, are extensively used as they enhance the mirror work by adding hues (Muiz, 2021).

Mirror work and Chamak Patti<sup>8</sup> are often used to adorn Pakistani trucks, as can be seen in Figure 2.25. Chamak Patti is local terminology for coloured sticking reflectors cut in a range of patterns and illustrations to accessorise these vehicles (Ali, 2021).

### **Figure 2.25**

*Painted Wheel of a Pakistani truck*



*Note.* Interior of a Pakistani Truck. Copyright 2018 by Ali Adnan

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<sup>8</sup> Chamak Patti (Chamak means shining and Patti means stickers) is a type of glow-in-the-dark art created with reflective tape.

Sheikh (2018) claims that when the light from other cars falls on these reflectors, they shine brightly in the dark of night. She further emphasises that the reflective material not only makes trucks glow in the dark and stylises them, but also protects them from accidents. Chamak Patti border design includes floral/Phūl Patti design, birds, peacocks, and fish in a variety of colours such as red, blue, green, yellow, and orange. (Sheikh, 2018). As shown in Figure 2.26, along with a variety of decorating materials, woodwork is used in the adornment of the ‘taj,’ which is the vehicle's highest point and can be seen distinctly from afar (Sheikh, 2018). Wood carving and inlay is frequently used in the front part and doors of trucks. These wooden doors are adorned with intricate carving of floral motifs as if the doors are entrances to the heavens. All such decoration has a great impact on the psyche of the truckers who drive these heavy vehicles for long hours and develop a unique bonding with their vehicles (Sheikh, 2018).

### **Figure 2.26**

*Woodwork on Pakistani Trucks*



*Note.* Murtaza Imran Ali. (2007). *Woodwork on Pakistani Trucks* [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Such\\_beauty\\_\(1015799377\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Such_beauty_(1015799377).jpg)).CC BY- 2.0

Ali (2021) mentions in her master’s thesis, that many components of truck art that were originally hand painted have now become digitalised as they are less time-consuming.

She also adds that hand painted motifs have been replaced by easy peel and paste stickers supplied from China and Japan. Not only have the materials used on these trucks changed, but also the canvas has shifted; artisans are no longer limited to painting on trucks, choosing very innovative surfaces instead.

**Figure 2.27**

*Digital stickers used on trucks*



*Note.* Murtaza Imran Ali. (2007). *Digital stickers used on trucks* [Photograph]. From Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_details\\_of\\_art\\_\(1015803457\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_details_of_art_(1015803457).jpg)).CC BY- 2.0

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that truck art has evolved over the last two decades to reflect the culture of Pakistan; it has turned into an inspiring source for local and international artisans (Malik, 2018). According to Madan (2018), the decoration on these trucks is not the sole decision of the driver; in fact, it is the combined opinion of the owner, the driver of the truck, and the artisan working on the truck. What was once the art for the illiterate masses only, has now been accepted in society by Pakistan's aristocratic elite and commercialised through artistic products by numerous brands. Since Pakistani truck art has gained in popularity, the public's perception of truck art has shifted, and they have begun to value it as a distinct indigenous Pakistani art form. However, less has been written about the shift itself and the motivation of the art

practitioners/artisans/artists to transform this art form into various artefacts, which is the aim of this study.

#### **2.4 Art inspired by Pakistani truck art**

Pakistani truck art has been an inspiring source for artists and artisans all over the world. Both Pakistani and artisans from around the globe have engaged with the visual elements and images used in Pakistani truck art in their artwork. Figures 2.28-2.29 display examples of how truck art has inspired art around the world, employing various mediums to creatively display the artisan's expression. Yet less scholarly attention has been paid to exploring the motivation of this transition to new canvases.

Because this transition is so new, scholarly research on it is scarce; hence, it is necessary to draw on information gleaned from blogs and publicly available sources. Several blogs have been written about the shift of Pakistani truck art. In her blog, Karaitiana (2022) describes how the Pakistani truck art exhibition is promoting the rich legacy of Pakistan and uniting communities in New Zealand by exhibiting contemporary artefacts inspired by famous truck art of Pakistan. Sheikh's (2015) blog discusses Dolce and Gabbana, a popular fashion brand that visited Milan's streets with their "beauty on the go" rickshaws. These were decorated and inspired by Pakistani truck art motifs to showcase the brand's latest cosmetic range.



**Figure 2.28**

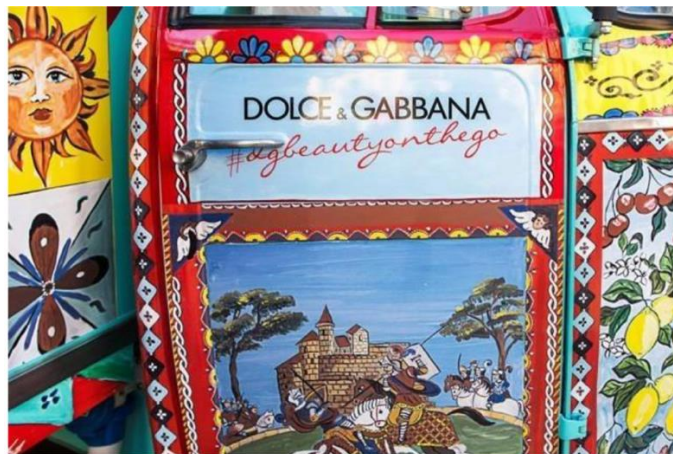
*Pakistani truck art inspired beauty cart in Milan*



*Note.* Pakistani truck art inspired beauty cart in Milan Copyright 2015 by Adnan Sheikh

**Figure 2.29**

*Closeup of beauty on the go beauty cart in Milan*



*Note.* Closeup of beauty on the go beauty cart in Milan Copyright 2015 by Adnan Sheikh

Khan (2017), a blogger, mentions a Lego truck created by Danish artisan Adam Grabowski, who was inspired by Pakistani truck art. His Lego Truck trended on the internet and generated a lot of interest (see Figure 2.30). This form of cultural encouragement provides a forum for the socio-economic deprived truck artisan to display their skills to the world.

**Figure 2.30**

*Adam Grabowski's Lego Pakistani Truck*



*Note.* Adam Grabowski's Lego Pakistani Truck. Milan Copyright 2014 by Baber K. Khan

Rasul's (2012) blog reports on Asheer Akram, a young American artisan whose vision was to highlight the visual appeal of Pakistani trucks and their use. He set out to blend modern American culture with traditional South Asian values. His intention was to create a cargo truck that combined elements of both Pakistani truck art and the American Midwest, in turn producing a vehicle with a new function.

Several studies have considered the historical background and meaning of visual elements used in Pakistani truck art. The artisans' motivations and the transition of visual elements to mediums other than truck are yet to be explored in depth. The next section discusses concepts that can help in exploring artisan's motivations, which is the primary focus of this study.

In some parts of the world, decorated trucks are a psychedelic exhibit of fascinating slogans, colours, and goods and carry a plethora of cryptic symbols. They are used to create a three-dimensional canvas which reflects various religious and cultures beliefs. Vehicles that have been painted can be found in a variety of countries; however, there are

differences between them in terms of the diversity of their painting methods and the scope and variety of the motifs depicted. The way these trucks are adorned is something they all have in common.

Madan (2018) explains in her research paper, *Visual Semiotics of Truck Art in India: From Art on Trucks to a Digital Art Style*, how, in India, truck painting and decoration has blossomed as a lively type of folk art that is more practical than just attractive. She also emphasises that unlike Pakistani trucks, which are virtually always different and elaborately ornamented, Indian trucks have a “corporate kitsch” appearance in that they all have the same set of features (Madan, 2018).

Another photographic project, “Trucks of Morocco,” is mentioned in the first 2020 issue of the journal *Issues in Science and Technology*. The photographer, Stefan Ruiz, was mesmerised by the appearance of Moroccan trucks. He described these trucks as a form of functional art.

Katrin Schulze’s (2012) article entitled “Mosques, Palm Trees and Swords: Religious Symbolism in Northern Nigerian Lorry Decorations” describes how the intricate designs that adorned the backs of the lorries appeared to be particularly significant. Their motifs seemed inspired by a range of local practices to reflect Northern Nigerian social and religious spaces (Schulze, 2012). This art form on Nigerian lorries resembles Pakistani truck art, as the images used are mostly religious, such as the mosque and the al-buraq.

A study by Cohen (2013), “Bus paintings in Thailand: A Post-Modern Urban Art Form in Comparative Perspective,” discusses how bus paintings are created by a hybridised process that includes both artwork and computerisation; they are thus a post-modern art form that does not fit well into any of the modernist categories of art, craft, or decoration.

Notably, the artwork on these decorated Thai buses contrasts with those in other nations; it does not convey any religious or political messages (Cohen, 2013).

## **2.5 Related art theory concepts**

### *Csikszentmihalyi's model of creativity*

The concept of truck art artisans can be considered in relation to the concept of the “individual” in Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) model of creativity. In his widely accepted notion of social cultural creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (1999, p.314) proposed that, “Creativity is a process that can be observed only at the intersection where individuals, domains, and fields intersect”.

According to Saunders and Gero (2001), Csikszentmihalyi shifted his focus away from the question “What is creativity?” when he established his systems approach to creativity and concentrated on the challenges raised by the question “Where is creativity?” Csikszentmihalyi also questioned the “mentalist premise” that creative processes can only be observed in the mind of the creative person. Instead, he argued that processes necessary to creativity, whether personally or socio-culturally defined, can be discovered in interactions between people and the society in which they live (Saunders & Gero, 2001). In light of this, the truck art artisans’ motivations to create contemporary art forms inspired by the traditional Pakistani truck art can be considered in the individuals’ purposes as well as their links to the contemporary contexts of art practice whether a customer-oriented entity or for exhibitions and other domains.

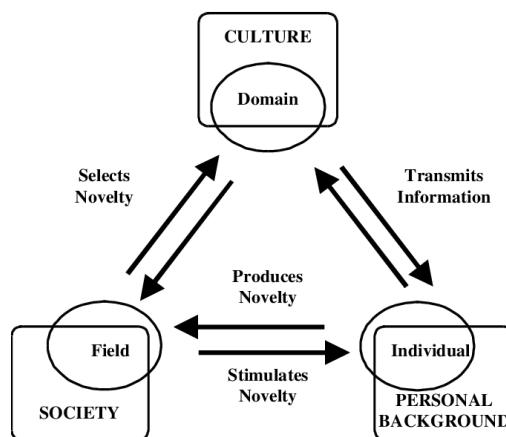
Csikszentmihalyi emphasised that creativity is something that can only occur within a specific realm. Domain specialists serve as gatekeepers, determining whether or not an artefact is creative. This creativity is more than just a state of mind for the creative individual; it is a multifaceted process involving many social and cultural factors.



Csikszentmihalyi proposed three key creative concepts: domain, field, and individual (Saunders & Gero, 2001). Each component is essential for creativity, but it isn't enough to create novelty by itself (McIntyre, 2008). Figure 2.31 depicts a map of the systems view of creativity. This model is significant because it appropriately depicts the work that a creative person does in the art industry. First the creative person produces a creative piece of art for a specific reason, and then this specific solution must be accepted within the field to be included in the domain to ultimately target the audience for whom the art form was produced in the first place.

**Figure 2.31**

*Csikszentmihalyi's systems view of creativity*



Note. [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Csikszentmihalyis-systems-view-of-creativity-after-Csikszentmihalyi-1999\\_fig4\\_243785691](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Csikszentmihalyis-systems-view-of-creativity-after-Csikszentmihalyi-1999_fig4_243785691)

In the case of truck art, this project explores the artisans derives and motivations to create this art form whether more related to them existing inside a cultural domain and utilising the various forms of social and cultural capital from the cultural domain. By absorbing the culture, which is traditional truck art, they then create the contemporary truck art on various artefacts, which is widely accepted by the society and eventually becomes part of the culture. This concept will be expanded upon in the discussion, chapter four, to

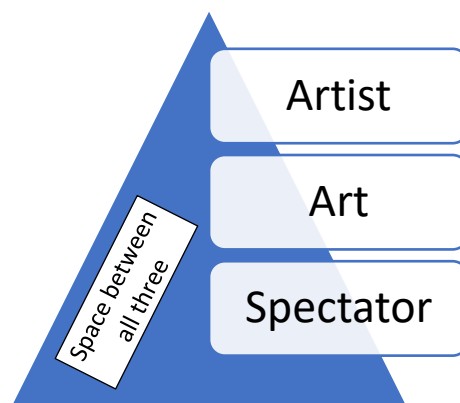
demonstrate how the artisan's motivation is aligned with Csikszentmihalyi's model of creativity.

### *Marcel Duchamp's theory of art*

Another concept that seems relevant to my research is Duchamp's theory of art (see Figure 2.32). It holds that, "The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act" (Duchamp as cited in Sullivan, G. 2002, 291-292).

**Figure 2.32**

### *Marcel Duchamp theory of art*



*Note.* Adapted from Marcel Duchamp's theory

<https://www.slideshare.net/laurajane/11va-theory-marcel-duchamp>

Marcel Duchamp' recognises that the creative process is completed not only by the artisan but also by the artisan's audience, as it is a two-way discussion that does not end with the artisan/author but ends with the observer (as cited in Buskirk et al., 1996). Three agents are engaged in this realm of establishing relationships between the art, the maker, and the viewer. The three agents in the creative process is reflected in the dialogue that can happen between the contemporary truck artisan, the art and the audience, through the truck art's images and symbols. Duchamp emphasises that the audience becomes

conscious of the artisan's work, and with time their participation enriches society and culture. The truck art's images originally appeared on the trucks has inspired contemporary artisans and motivated them to shift them to modern objects. In a sense, if the shift of traditional truck art to contemporary artefacts affects the meaning of symbols and images used in Pakistani truck art is shaped by the viewer's participation and its impact on the art itself. Thus, the modern artefacts produced and presented are heavily dependent on the engagement of the viewer. The artisan proposes the first design and the audience ultimately decide the outcome based on their likes and dislikes.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

While we can find some literature on the origin of truck art in Pakistan and what the visual elements used on these trucks depict, limited research has been carried out on the motivations of artisans who have worked on the shift of truck art from the heavy vehicle to a new medium. Apart from interviews in blogs, websites and YouTube videos, there is no official data available on this newly discovered aspect of truck art. To keep this art form alive, such an important transition should be explored, and the idea of bringing truck art off the roads and into everyday life, especially for young generations, should be emphasised.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design and the methodology of this research project. Having an appropriate methodology is important, as it strengthens conclusions that can be made based on the research findings. For this chapter, I use Crotty's (1998) framework to discuss the methodological grounds, the terminology employed and how my knowledge has evolved throughout the research project (see Figure 3.1), below. A description of the interpretive approach is presented, as well as its key principles. Following that, the chapter discusses the methods of data collection and analysis used in this project, as well as the actions performed to ensure rigour.

**Figure 3.1**

*Crotty's Design*



*Note.* Elements of this thesis adapted from Crotty (1998) [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/A-research-ecology-adapted-from-Crotty-1998-p-4-The-relationship-presented-in\\_fig2\\_230580845](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/A-research-ecology-adapted-from-Crotty-1998-p-4-The-relationship-presented-in_fig2_230580845)

An appropriate approach is essential for successful and accurate research. This project is based on a qualitative research approach. The objective of this research project is to investigate the factors that influence artisans' motivations to move Pakistani truck art from its traditional canvas to new artefacts. It also examines how this transition has affected

the meaning and use of symbols and images used in this art form. The research project's objectives were established to contribute to the existing knowledge in the literature by exploring the central question:

What are the motivations of artisans to shift Pakistani truck art from heavy vehicles onto modern artefacts?

Considering the central question above, I also explored this sub-question:

How does this shift, in the artisans' view, may affect the meaning of symbols and images used in Pakistani truck art?

The project primarily explored the artisans' motivations to shift this magnificent Pakistani art form from heavy trucks to contemporary canvases. The project also wondered if the meaning of these images, in the truck artisans' view, may change in the course of the shift. Here, the key was to gather experiences and perspectives of Pakistani truck artisans who were part of this transition.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

The interpretive paradigm was chosen as the research paradigm for this project. According to Chinn and Jacobs (1987), a paradigm is a philosophical viewpoint in which research is constrained by a set of ideas and knowledge that the researchers employ to make sense of how they build their research questions, methodology, and methods in the design and implementation of a study. Researchers use conceptual models or reference frameworks for reasoning and observation. These frameworks, or theories, are referred to as paradigms by Bryman (2012). Furthermore, a paradigm also emphasises the researcher's general perspective on reality, which helps to strengthen the researcher's understanding, methodology, and value system. (Creswell & Mertens, 2012). According

to Gray (2018), research paradigms are divided into four categories: positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, and critical enquiry. Both positivism and post-positivism, according to Park et al. (2020), are founded on an objective epistemological perspective and the ontological viewpoint of “being,” which implies a belief that the universe will not change and that truths are eternal. Positivism has two attributes. First, it claims that knowledge can only be gained via experience, and that experience is contingent on the knowledge that is supplied directly. Second, the objective of scientific activity is to establish a unified science by applying logical analysis to empirical materials (Halfpenny, 2015). The interpretivist paradigm was selected for this study, as by nature this project is in the field of art and communications studies and not science. The interpretivist paradigm helps to frame research questions, explore the research objectives and analyse the findings.

The paradigms of interpretivism and critical enquiry, on the other hand, are founded on a subjective epistemological viewpoint and are based on the belief that things are always changing (Kekeya, 2019). Interpretivist research generates information that is linked to the participants and the researcher's background, implying that the subjects of interpretivist research are situated in a particular context, so the research does not result in generalisable theories or principles but in knowledge based on the rich understandings of the situated subjects (McChesney & Aldridge, 2019).

Interpretivism is the theoretical stance taken to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the motivations of the Pakistani Truck artisans. When a community exhibits specific norms through their social participation, an interpretive study is valuable (Goldkuhl, 2012). Therefore, interpretive research indicates the motivations and beliefs that drive a group or community's actions (Summer & Tribe, 2008).

Thorne's "epistemological foundations" (2008, p. 74) of interpretive description relies on a number of crucial elements:

1. People's subjective and experiential understanding of the subject under examination is critical for gaining insight.
2. There is interest in both the similarities and differences in people's experiences of the phenomenon.
3. Time and context should be considered, as well as how they influence perceptions and experiences. It is assumed that both psychosocial and biological factors influence an individual's experience. These form some of the context that underpins a person's experience.
4. Knowledge is socially produced, and there may be numerous realities to a phenomenon's experience. These may be in conflict with one another.
5. Both the researcher and the participant construct knowledge. They do this individually through their interpretation of a situation, and together through the interview process.
6. Findings must be based on evidence, taking into account their context, and consider the multiple realities that exist. As a result, a priori coding is not recommended for interpretive description research (Thorne, 2008; Thorne, et al., 2004).

Interpretivism's philosophical base is idealism, and it asserts that the human experience of the universe consists of active interpretation and understanding rather than passive observation and acceptance of the physical world (Scotland, 2012). An interpretivist investigates and comprehends the social environment using a culturally oriented paradigm called interpretivism (Crotty, 1998; Lehman, 2011). Through involvement, inclusion, and communication, the interpretivist acquires first-hand information

(Creswell, 2011). As a result, participants in interpretivist research are considered research subjects, and they engage in interactive discourse with the researcher (Decrop, 2006). The goal of interpretivist research is to develop various interpretations and understandings of the social reality from the perspectives of various human groups (Saunders et al., 2019). Because humans and human groups are diverse, they belong to a variety of cultural backgrounds, and no objective fact remains constant (Ilgar, 2019). This study aims to determine the elements that motivate artisans to transition Pakistani truck art away from heavy vehicles and towards modern objects. The interpretive paradigm is suitable for this research topic since it can assist the researcher to comprehend and interpret multiple motivations that Pakistani truck artisans have regarding this transition.

### **3.3 Qualitative Research approach**

Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research are three key research approaches (Denzin, 2005). It is important that the research approach adopted is that which can best help to answer the research questions (Bryman, 2012). Quantitative research usually entails gathering data and translating it into digital data so that calculations and conclusions can be made (Bryman, 2012). Observation, experiments, and statistics are frequently employed to test a theory or investigate social phenomena (Bengtsson, 2016). Qualitative research, on the other hand, is a broad field of study that uses data collection methods including survey, observation, interviews, and documentation to find hidden meanings in people's understanding of the world (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004).

As previously indicated, interpretivism as a research paradigm is linked to qualitative techniques. A qualitative analysis that is in-depth can assist a researcher in gaining conceptual insights (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Qualitative research captures sentiments and emotions that cannot be measured using variables (Nite & Singer, 2012). In qualitative research, the frequency of a particular answer/response is not a primary



concern; instead, all contributions are valid if they provide insights into the research problem.

This research project used a qualitative research approach, as it aims to expand upon the influences and motivations of Pakistani descent artisans when they shift traditional truck art onto modern artefacts. “Motivation Research,” according to Kothari (2004), is an important kind of qualitative research since it strives to identify underlying motivations through in-depth interviews. Thus, qualitative research is suitable for this research project, as it allows the researcher to analyse the various motivational factors that drove artisans of Pakistani descent to shift this traditional art form to contemporary artefacts.

#### **3.4 Data collection methods and data sources**

According to Crotty (1998), the tools used to acquire data are known as research methods. In a qualitative research project, conducting surveys, observations, focus groups, interviews, and secondary research are the most typical data gathering methods (Beerli-Palacio & Martín-Santana, 2019). The main objective of this section is to describe the choices of methods of collecting data to answer this study's research questions. In this project, I collected both primary data and data from secondary sources and used the primary ‘interviews’ and data from secondary sources as the key methods of data collection (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Primary data are those gathered directly through interviews, inquiries, surveys, measurements, and other methods, and are used to solve the identified problems (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Data from secondary sources is information gathered by someone other than the primary researcher, and it usually consists of information that may be retained indefinitely or for a lengthy period (Pienta et al., 2011). This research project acquired data from both primary and secondary sources. Data from secondary sources already

existed in the public domain and included past interviews with some Pakistani truck artisans. These were obtained from documents in the form of online blogs, magazines, websites, and YouTube videos. For data from secondary sources, I collected 15 interviews of 15 different artisans and designers from the public domain.

For primary data, I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with 10 artisans of Pakistani origin who have transferred this art form onto different mediums other than trucks itself. The purpose was to explore how Pakistani truck art has influenced these artisans' work as well as ponder upon their reasons and motivations for this shift.

### **3.4.1 Primary data**

Due to their adaptability and flexibility, interviews are one of the most commonly utilised data gathering procedures by researchers (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). There are three key types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured. According to Adam's (2015) study, structured interviews are performed with a pre-set and carefully controlled script designed by the interviewer, whereas unstructured interviews allow the interviewee to guide the conversation. The semi-structured interview allows some freedom for the participants to delve further into the subject in ways that the researcher may not have anticipated, and this is accomplished by posing a series of open-ended questions. In my research, the semi-structured interview was suitable as the method of data collection as it would provide valuable insights. The semi-structured interview, by its very nature, respects the participant's distinct narrative style, as the interviewer gently guides participants to answer the research questions (Gill et al., 2008).

For this research project, individual interviews were the primary mode of data collection, and a total number of 10 interviews were conducted via Zoom. Interviewing artisans for this research was an emotionally rewarding experience for me, as it allowed me to both

connect more intimately with the artisans behind this art form and delve deeper and investigate the reasons for this art form's transformation, which has long piqued my interest. The goal of these interviews was to engage with artisans and their work to better understand and document the transition of Pakistani truck art from traditional to modern artefacts. Furthermore, this primary data also provided more insight into the artisans' goals, motivations, feelings, and thoughts. Detailed information about these artisans will be discussed in Section 3.5.2.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted online through Zoom (research instruments). Interviews were done at the convenience of the participants, taking into account the time difference. Participants were asked to complete and return a signed copy of the consent form, which was sent to them with the additional information before the interview.

A set of open-ended questions was created to provide the interviewees with the freedom to "construct the possibilities for replying" (Creswell, 2008, p. 225). To elaborate, the questions were framed in a way that helped the research participants to share their experiences while also allowing me to seek additional clarification during the interviews. The focus of interviews for this project was based on the research concerns and research questions such as aspects of their motivation or reason for the shift.

The interviews were one-hour long and were recorded as audio/video files (via Zoom) with the consent of the participants. I was able to focus on the conversations with artisans during the interview because of the Zoom recording set-up and then later listen to the dialogues again and again to obtain a better comprehension of the interview. I endeavoured to follow the advice on conducting interview as mentioned in Gill et al.'s

(2008) study, suggesting that the interviewer should gently guides participants to discuss and answer the questions.

The popular truck artisans identified to participate in interviews for this project were at the time working in Pakistan, travelling abroad, or residing overseas. I also found some interviews on public domain on the internet. Then I further investigated and found examples of their artwork, information about their exhibitions and details of companies where they have worked or to which they are affiliated. I collected the available public interviews as secondary data because they provided background information and showed the scarcity of knowledge about the shift of Pakistani truck art to modern artefacts in the public domain.

### **3.4.2 Data from secondary sources**

Data from secondary sources was gathered from online platforms, which also helped in the drafting of interview questions to collect the primary data.

Fifteen interviews with artisans were collected as data from secondary sources found in the public domain and were analysed to enrich and better understand the primary data. Information from secondary sources can be collected through the internet, library resources, published materials, articles, journals, newspaper, and magazines, and results in saving time and money (Johnston, 2017). Data collected from secondary sources for this project were obtained from the following:

Websites and blogs: written blogs, news and short articles were collected. These were useful in providing background information on numerous icons and symbols, including their cultural context, and also assisted in obtaining artisan perspectives on the transition of Pakistani truck art to other artefacts.

YouTube video interviews: These were an essential part of the data from secondary sources, as they helped to construct and conduct better primary data interviews by providing background information.

### **3.5 Sampling and setting**

In this project, purposive sampling was used to select research participants for interviews. Purposive sampling, also known as judgement sampling, is a non-random selection of samples with a specific goal in mind (Tongco, 2007). The data collection approach used had a clear sampling strategy, and the participant selection processes made sure that the research participants met the eligibility criteria. This study investigated the motivations of artisans who have transferred Pakistani truck art to other canvases and whether the meaning of symbols used changed with the change in canvas. This section describes how the participants were selected and recruited and provides a brief profile of each.

#### **3.5.1 Selection and recruitment process**

The participants in this study were chosen because they were artisans of Pakistani descent who had shifted Pakistani truck art away from traditional trucks towards other contemporary artefacts. The study's inclusion criteria were threefold:

- a) artisans of Pakistani origin
- b) artisans based in Pakistan or living abroad (Pakistani-based means residing in Pakistan and also travelling overseas for work)
- c) artisans who have experimented the shift or were part of the shift of traditional Pakistani Truck art to other canvases

As the research was conducted online, those who met the criteria were mainly searched on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Some initial barriers such as the holiday season and waiting for interested persons to contact me slowed down the

recruitment process. To overcome these challenges, a combination of different means of communication were used to make contact: email, WhatsApp, telephone, and Facebook messenger.

The procedure of recruiting artisans began by sending an invitation via private Facebook messenger. Simultaneously, the researcher contacted the participants through Instagram and WhatsApp numbers available on online platforms. When a research participant responded, the researcher thanked them and sent them the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form to review. The participants were given a two-week time slot within which to reaffirm their participation in the study. After one week, a follow-up email was sent as a gentle reminder. Meanwhile, upon receiving confirmation, the researcher organised a semi-structured online Zoom interview with the participant at a time that was convenient to them. The date and time of the interviews were determined by the participant's availability. To provide the flexibility required by some of the participants, interviews were conducted on a WhatsApp call, and this was recorded.

### **3.5.2 Research participants**

I aimed for a diverse group of participants, including Pakistani truck artisans who have been part of the truck art painting industry and artisans belonging to different fields of art who have used truck art in their artwork. My intention was to capture a variety of viewpoints and gain deeper insights into their motivations and reasons behind the shift. Ten artisans responded to my invitation and participated in the interview. The interviews were conducted over eight weeks. Initially, I had contacted 15 artisans but did not get a response from all those who fitted the criteria. Hence, I conducted interviews with 10 research participants. The following is a brief description of each of the participants involved in the primary data interview.

### Figure 3.2

*Haider Ali with his magnificent art pieces*



*Note.* Haider Ali with his magnificent art pieces. Copyright 2022 by Haider Ali

- *Haider Ali* – A famous Pakistani truck artisan, residing in Pakistan, who is well recognised around the world for his painted murals, artefacts, and trucks in the Pakistani truck art style.

### Figure 3.3

*Iqbal Sanam at work*



*Note.* Iqbal Sanam painting another masterpiece. Copyright 2022 by Sanam Iqbal

- *Iqbal Sanam* - A prominent figure in the realm of truck art. He is a Pakistani truck artisan who is well-known for his mural paintings all around the world.



### Figure 3.4

*Painting Project with German Consulate Karachi*



*Note.* Ali Salman with his collaboration with German Consulate, Karachi. Copyright 2022 by Ali Salman

- *Ali Salman Anchan* – Founder and creative director of Phool Patti, a well-known brand in Pakistan and worldwide for its creative ventures inspired by Pakistani truck art.

### Figure 3.5

*Picture of young entrepreneur, Ambreen Nouman*



*Note.* Picture of young entrepreneur, Ambreen Nouman. Copyright 2022 by Ambreen Nouman

- *Ambreen Nouman*- A young Pakistani entrepreneur, inspired by Pakistani Truck art associated with the textile industry and based in New Zealand.
- *Anjum Rana* (Tribal Truck Art) – A well-known Pakistan-based artisan/designer who not only promotes but also creates the indigenous Pakistani truck art form.
- *Mariem Syed* – A talented Scottish-Pakistani weaver of Pakistani descent, based in Glasgow and known for her innovative fusion textile products.
- *Quratullain*– One of the owners (residing in Pakistan) of the brand Urban Truck Art, known for its truck-art-styled hand painted products in Pakistan.
- *Bina Ali* – Owner of the brand Artel in Pakistan, which is noted for its terracotta hand crafted products, some of which are inspired by truck art.
- *Ali Gul* – Proud owner of Gul Khan Art in Pakistan, known for their creative truck art inspired products.
- *Varah* – The creative crafting queen and vision behind the brand Firefly, known for its whimsical designs based in Pakistan.

### **3.6 Methods of Data Analysis**

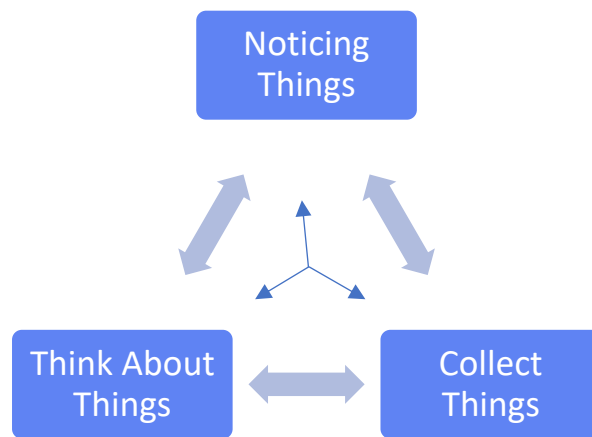
One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that it extends beyond the amount of information available on essential qualities. Data investigation, comparison and contrast, and interpretation and judgement are common steps in qualitative data analysis and special traits, themes, and concepts can be exposed through what is a non-linear approach (Holsti, 1968). Using the method of inductive analysis, patterns and themes emerge from the data instead of being imposed, even before the data collection process (Patton, 1980). Having this in mind, this research project followed Seidel's (1998) processes for qualitative data analysis (QDA) to examine the transcripts derived from both primary and secondary data. Because the data was obtained through semi-structured interviews, this method was used for this study, which comprised gathering the interview data,

categorising it, and looking for themes and patterns. This method necessitated a recursive and progressive analysis, with each step traceable back to the preceding one.

According to Seidel (1998), qualitative data analysis is a three-part process that can be compared to a three-movement symphony. He stressed that the foundation of qualitative data analysis is essentially straightforward, but the method of conducting qualitative data analysis might be complicated (Seidel, 1998; see also Dye, et al., 2000).

### Figure 3.6

*The Qualitative Data Analysis Process*



*Note:* The Qualitative Data Analysis Process adopted from Seidel

(1998) [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Data-Analysis-Process-Seidel-1998-3\\_fig3\\_230634844](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Data-Analysis-Process-Seidel-1998-3_fig3_230634844)

Figure 3.6 presents the three-part process of noticing, collecting, and reasoning. Observing the data is referred to as data noticing; in this study, this was accomplished via electronically capturing or recording the interviews. Breaking down interview findings into smaller sections and organising these is part of the data collection process. The data is next analysed for themes and patterns, which is where the thinking phase of the process begins. The process is iterative, linear, recurrent, and holographic; it is a continuous cycle, which means that each step can be traced back to the preceding phase, and each step in the cyclic process contains the complete process. Seidel (1998) elaborates that when

completing the QDA, one doesn't just notice, collect, and then think about writing a report; rather, the procedure has the following characteristics:

- *Iterative and Progressive:*

The cycle repeats itself as the process is continuous and progressive. When you're thinking about anything, for example, you'll notice new things in the data. You then gather and consider these fresh discoveries. In theory, the procedure is an endless loop.

- *Recursive:*

As one part can call you back to a previous part, the process is recursive. For example, when you're busy gathering items, you can notice new things to collect as well.

- *Holographic:*

Each phase in the process encompasses the complete process, making it holographic. When you first observe something, for example, you are already mentally processing and reflecting on it.

A similar idea is expressed in Freidson's (1975) *Doctoring Together* which demonstrates how the process switches back and forth between the noticing and collecting phases (see Figure 3.7).

## Figure 3.7

### *Friedson's 1975 Procedures*

Noticing:	...we had carried out some 200 separate interviews...and had them transcribed...Each interview was <i>read</i> , and sections of them which seemed to be distinct incidents, anecdotes, or stated opinions about discrete topics...were then typed on 5 x 7 McBee-Keysort cards on which were printed general topical categories to guide coding.
Collecting:	Buford Rhea then <i>read</i> all the cards and tentatively classified them into the simple content categories we had decided upon in advance.
Noticing:	He then <i>read</i> them again so as to test, revise, and refine the initial gross classification....
Collecting:	. . .all cards bearing on some general substantive topic such as "patient relations" were removed from the total set of cards and put together in a pack.
Noticing:	All the cards in that large pack of between 800 and 1,200 were then read one by one....
Collecting:	...as they were read, the cards were sorted into preliminary topical piles. (Freidson, 1975: 270-271).

Note: Freidson's (1975) *Doctoring Together* Seidel, J. (1998). <http://eer.engin.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/443/2019/08/Seidel-Qualitative-Data-Analysis.pdf>

Thus, by following Seidel's three-part data analysis process, sound and robust study results were able to be obtained.

### 3.6.1 Transcription

I transcribed the interviews that I conducted as primary data. Some of the data from secondary sources also included audio/video interviews obtained from YouTube that were transcribed as well. As soon as I had finished the interview, I wanted to transcribe it while the whole interview was still fresh in my mind. Not only did I immerse myself in the transcribed texts, but also in the recollections that they conjured up. Throughout the process, I listened to each interview several times, which led to data coding and analysis. According to Davidson (2009, pp. 37-38), "transcription encompasses what is represented in the transcript (e.g., talk, time, nonverbal actions, speaker/hearer relationships, physical orientation, multiple languages, translations); who is representing whom, in what ways, for what purpose, and with what outcome; and how analysts position themselves and their participants in their representations of form, content, and action". This project did not aim to analyse the body language of participants or their pauses and feelings at the time of the

interview. Rather, the focus was on the content of interviews—the participants' descriptions of their experiences, motivations, and perspectives in relation to both Pakistani truck art and their artwork.

### **3.6.2 Coding**

A code is a term that symbolises characteristics of data or captures the essence of data in qualitative research. According to Charmaz (2016), coding is the transitory procedure that connects data gathering to data analysis. As stated by Clark and Veale (2018), in the transcription from the coded data, patterns are employed to identify categories that are recurring; those categories are further analysed to generate common themes in the data. The outcomes of coding and sorting operations are designated as themes. The keywords, patterns, and themes revealed through coding were critical to accurately represent this study's participant interviews.

Following the transcription of the interviews, the next step was to review all 10 transcripts to ensure that the information was correctly comprehended. To get a better understanding of the data, coding and thematic analysis was employed, which required creating codes and themes from the acquired data.

### **3.6.3 Use of NVivo in Interview Data Analysis**

The interview data in this study was coded using NVivo 8 (QSR, 2011) specialised software. NVivo assists not only in data interrogation but also in the identification of the interview data's deep structures (Bazeley, 2007; Richards, 1999; Welsh, 2002). In qualitative research studies, NVivo is a widely used tool that allows many researchers to gain a thorough knowledge of the data. The analysis of the interview transcripts was supported by NVivo, as it was effective in supporting the thinking process (see Seidel, 1998) to reveal the underlying hidden data structures, patterns, and themes.

NVivo was used to organise the primary data collected. The general outcomes of the interviews were reviewed at first, then analysed thematically, using NVivo to confirm that all of the themes had been discovered and that no information had been missed. In the process of analysis, I was very aware that NVivo is merely a data management tool and is not a substitute for the researcher's thought process throughout the actual analytic process.

### **3.7 Analysis of data from secondary sources**

Secondary data analysis (SDA) refers to studies in which data acquired for a previous study is examined—either by the same researcher(s) or by a different researcher(s)—to answer new questions or utilise different analytical approaches not used in the first analysis (Szabo & Strang, 1997). It utilises the same straightforward research principles that are applied to primary data collection. Hinds et al. (1997) stresses that it is an established, popular, and cost-effective strategy to maximise the utility of collecting data. Creswell (2009) states that most research starts with finding out what is already known and what needs to be learnt about a topic, usually by exploring relevant and supporting literature. SDA supports rather than replaces the primary data. Many scholars have claimed that SDA helps answer new research questions while also increasing sample sizes and statistical power (Perrino et al., 2013). However, regardless of the medium used to obtain secondary data, there are some primary concerns regarding ethics and rigour (Ruggiano, & Perry, 2019).

In addition to the responses from the 10 research participants in the interviews, online documents, which included interviews of 15 artisans found in online blogs, articles, YouTube videos and on websites, were also examined in order to improve and enrich the primary data by structuring the interview questions.



### **3.8 Ethics**

Ethics is a fundamental component of any research project. The researcher's primary concern during data collecting is to respect participants and gain trust. (Creswell, 2009). The participants should always be protected by the researcher by avoiding risks like misbehaviour or ingenuity (Dickert & Sugarman, 2005). Throughout the research period, the researcher followed the AUT research policy and guidelines, which required her to act appropriately, responsibly, and ethically with her research participants. Before the recruitment process for this research project, the researcher applied for ethical approval for conducting data collection. Throughout the research process, the researcher's behaviour was consistent with the ethical guidelines established and authorised by the AUT Ethics Committee (AUTECH). The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH) approved the researcher's Application for Ethics Approval (EA1 form). An ethics application was initially approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH) (reference number 21/325, 2 September 2021) for this research project with minor modifications. Another application was made to AUTECH after the modification and was approved.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the project's research philosophy, approach, and methods. The interpretive paradigm and qualitative approach utilised in this study were explained. Furthermore, qualitative methods for data collection and Seidel's (1998) qualitative data analysis were presented. This research project aimed to discover the motivations of artisans to shift Pakistani truck art from heavy vehicles onto modern artefacts. To achieve this, I analysed primary and secondary data to investigate art practitioner experiences and motivations. The chapter also demonstrated how the methodology used was appropriate

for the research questions. The findings of the investigation are presented in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4 Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest, reporting the findings in a qualitative research project is a way of “data display [...] and narrative text [e.g., verbatim quotes from the interviews] has been the most frequent form of display for qualitative data” (p. 209). This chapter describes the qualitative primary data I collected and analysed for this research—a total of 10 semi-structured interviews with 10 artisans of Pakistani origin who, at the time, were currently in art practice and have been using traditional Pakistani truck art images in their artwork.

Qualitative research involves multiple sources of data; “rather than [relying] on a single data source [...] the researchers review all of the data, make sense of it, and organise it into codes and themes that cut across all of the data sources” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181). Thus, the data from secondary sources also presented herein, included YouTube videos, blogs, and online magazines, from which I collected and analysed publicly available interviews with Pakistani truck artisans. These interviews are in the form of text, audio, and audio-visual materials.

This chapter reports on the main themes that arose from and “cut through all data sources” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181). These themes were extrapolated from the primary and secondary data to identify the artisans’ motivations for using contemporary mediums for this art form rather than the traditional trucks. Further, the themes give an indication of how the meaning and use of images have changed with this shift.

The first part of the chapter explores the motivation behind the shift of Pakistani traditional art to contemporary mediums and focuses on the central research question:

What are the motivations of artisans to shift Pakistani truck art from heavy vehicles onto modern artefacts?

The second part of the chapter calls attention towards the research sub-question:

How does this shift, in the artisan's view, affect the meaning of symbols and images used in Pakistani truck art?

The chapter begins by providing a brief information and overview on the demographics and basic profile of the research participants and is followed by qualitative data analysis (TDA) of the research findings, that is Seidel's (1998) method of "noticing, collecting and thinking."

The chapter further examines the themes that derive from the data collection and qualitative data analysis.

The focus of the analysis was to identify various themes in the qualitative data and understand the latent correlations between the two sets of data (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). Seidel's QDA was employed to explore the findings to answer the research questions. Interviews helped to develop themes and strengthen the linkages between the art and the artisan. The data collection process for the semi-structured interviews was conducted iteratively, as it helped to restructure the process of data collection for the newly organised semi-structured interviews. The method of data collection can be fluid, according to Schensul et al. (1999), with the researcher reacting to the interview questions in real-time. The researcher modified the questions so that they elicited more "why" responses rather than "yes" or "no" responses.

The main goal of the data gathering was to highlight the artisan community as the crusaders of the community and explore their various motivations to experiment with this

shift, and also note if this shift has affected the meaning of images used in contemporary truck art artefacts.

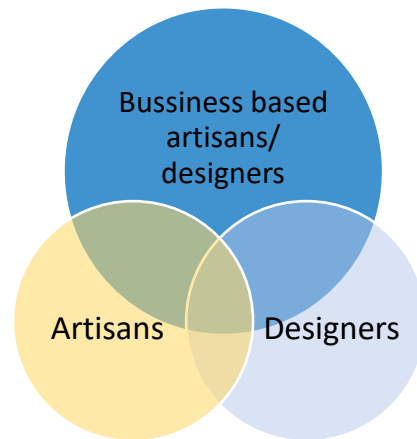
## **4.2 Demographics of Research Participants**

This section presents some preliminary information on the demographics and basic profile of the Pakistani truck artisans. This information is presented as part of the findings here, as it helps in understanding the themes and data presented in the subsequent sections. The artisan's profile is organised according to the variation of artisans, location, art background and gender.

Figure 4.1 depicts a significant disparity between business-based artisans, designers, and artisans who carried out this contemporary shift. "Business-based artisans" refers to those who made the shift but were not designers or artisans; rather, they ran a business or company and approached truck artisans to create artefacts for them. Among the other participants were designers and artisans in the truck art painting industry who had successfully transitioned Pakistani truck art to other mediums. The figure shows that the majority of research participants were business-based artisans who made this transition but were not the ones to make it happen; rather they inspired the artisans to create the artefact.

**Figure 4.1**

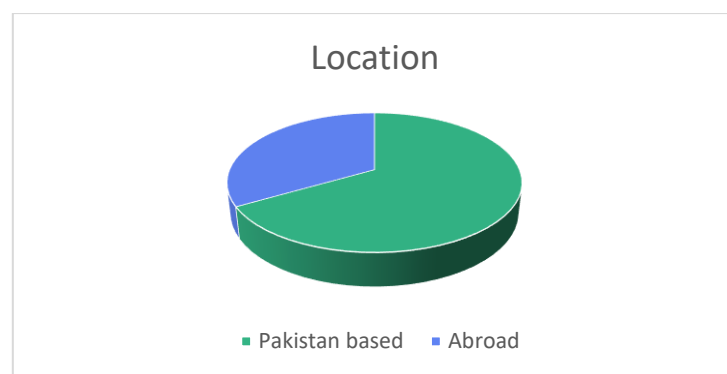
*Variation of artisans*



As shown in Figure 4.2, a minority of the research participants who have experienced the shift are of Pakistani descent but based overseas at the time, while a majority of the research participants I interviewed were based in Pakistan. Themes that emerged from the data illustrate how the artisan's motivations were influenced by their geographical location.

**Figure 4.2**

*Location of artisans*

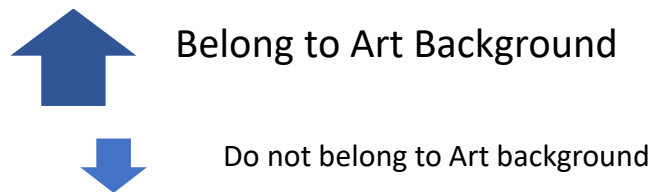


In terms of their art backgrounds, Figure 4.3 displays the ratio of artisans who have adapted traditional truck art to a new canvas. The majority of those who have experienced

the shift have an artistic background; a handful of them had no previous art-related background, but were currently practising art.

**Figure 4.3**

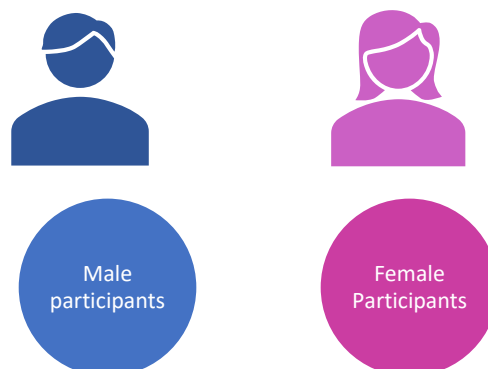
*Background of artisans*



The data from findings demonstrates that both male and female artisans were equally involved in the current shift of Pakistani truck art to modern artefacts, but in the past, the truck painting profession was not thought to be a place for women. Ali (2021) notes in her thesis, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, that with the exception of a few women, traditional Pakistani truck art was and still is a male-dominated business. She also mentions Rozina Naz as the first female truck artisan to be recognised and praised for her talents in an industry that was previously dominated by men.

**Figure 4.4**

*Male vs female artisans*



### 4.3 Interview Questions for the Primary data

A substantial chunk of the information gathered came from the interviews I conducted with artisans of Pakistani heritage who have transitioned Pakistani truck art to other mediums. Ten interviews with artisans were analysed to gain an understanding of the motivations underlying the transition and to find out whether in their view the usage of images and symbols on these artefacts had altered as a result of the shift. The semi-structured interviews consisted of the following questions, which were designed to answer the main question and sub-question in this research project:

1. Tell me about yourself, what you do? Individual or a team?
2. Where are you based?
3. Do you have some background in art?
4. How did you start working on this art form and how long have you been in this profession?
5. Why did you choose traditional Pakistani truck art in your artwork?
6. How and to which canvas have you shifted this Pakistani Truck art?
7. Why did you choose to shift to this medium?
8. What are your motivations in shifting a traditional art into a modern object?
9. What about your design process?
10. Has the shift helped you to achieve that motivation or reason?
11. While doing this shift how do you choose which elements of Pakistani Truck art to use while conducting the shift?
12. Why did you choose that specific element?
13. What is the purpose behind creating this visually elaborate truck art inspired piece?
14. What is the audience response to your work?



15. What is your vision for this project of shift?

#### **4.4 Interview Questions in Secondary sources**

The selection of the secondary data for this section kept in mind the interview eligibility criterion of artisans who have made the shift of this art form. These interviews were collected from publicly accessible YouTube videos, blogs, and online articles. To analyse the data, previously conducted interviews with artisan participants of Pakistani origin were considered. These past interviews helped gain in-depth knowledge of the motivation behind the shift of Pakistani truck art. As both the primary and secondary interview data have not yet been the subject of academic attention, they supported this research project to create scholarly material on this subject and fill in the gap.

Below are examples of the questions in the past interviews that I collected from the secondary sources: YouTube videos, blogs, and online articles. These questions helped to better structure the questions for the primary semi-structured interviews linked to this project's research concerns.

- Why are you interested in truck art?
- What's the link between truck art and drones for you? Why did you choose specifically truck art design for painting drone figurines?
- Where do you derive your inspiration from?
- What do you hope is the audience response to your work?
- How has living and working in Scotland influenced you as a maker?
- Can you tell us a little bit about the Pakistani Cargo Truck Initiative and your collaborators in this project?

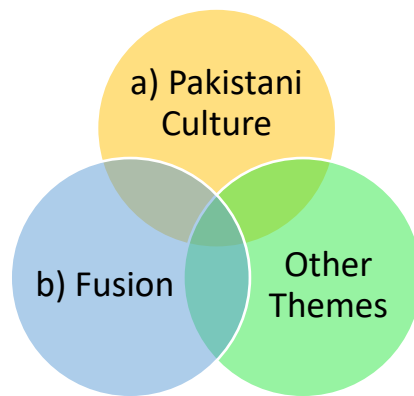
- Last year you explained to the Kansas City Start that the inspiration for this project came during your 2010 visit to Pakistan. Was there a particular moment when the idea came to you?
- What is the significance of decorated trucks in Pakistan? And what kind of themes and imagery do they generally portray?
- What's the purpose behind creating this visually elaborate truck in the U.S.?
- What motivation drives you?
- How did you get here and how long have you been in this profession?
- Further in our conversation, we talked about truck art masters in Pakistan. Who inspired them for the venture?
- Gul Khan is an amazing concept according to me! Do you think he is able to survive in the Pakistan fashion market?
- At the end of our conversation, finally, I asked, what is the biggest dream of Gul Khan?
- Do you have some background about the history of truck art?

#### **4.5 Key themes – the Central Research Question**

The following are the key themes that emerged from analysing the interviews. They highlight the artisans' responses to the research project's central question, which elaborates on their motivation for making this transition from truck art to contemporary artefacts. As depicted in Figure 4.5 the major themes that emerged from data after conducting a thematic analysis using Seidel's (1998) QDA procedure are:

**Figure 4.5**

*Major Themes*



### **a) Pakistani Culture**

Pakistani culture was one of the major themes that emerged from the research findings. Most participants stated that promoting Pakistani culture was their main motivation for shifting Pakistani traditional truck art to other mediums. Mehwish Chisty, an artisan/designer living in the US, stated in her interview (derived from secondary sources) that,

It's this politically intense border which has a cultural exchange that I think is interesting and is the reason why I think I am combining the two together to give this larger dialogue about culture and people and traditions.

Asheer Akram, also an artisan/designer based in the US, explained that,

The truck will be displayed as a piece of fine art and used as a tool for social and cultural enrichment. We intend for this truck to travel from one coast to the other, bringing a visual aesthetic not seen by the majority of the population, to teach sculpture workshops and raise awareness of the importance of cultural enrichment and understanding.

The majority of research participants claimed that the shift of Pakistani Truck art form was primarily motivated by a desire to promote Pakistani culture and traditions. The data shows that promoting culture appears to be one of the key motivations for the shift for

many artisans who are based abroad. Ambreen Nouman a passionate new entrepreneur who settled in New Zealand, explained how she wishes to introduce Pakistani art to New Zealand's fashion world. In her interview she revealed that,

Art is getting admiration from all over the world, and it's quite famous in US and U.K, so I thought that I better give it a boost and introduce it in the New Zealand fashion industry, too.

Mariem Syed, a talented Pakistani-Scottish weaver, expressed her experience by stating that,

I am from Pakistan, I'd seen these trucks all my life, but they were always in the background like I wasn't really looking at them, they were just there and I didn't realise that they, you know, I mean, they were just such a big part of Pakistan for me, like they represented so much of Pakistan and that's something that I wanted to bring here, and that's something that I was so interested in.

There are many Pakistani artisans who want to showcase Pakistani culture to the world as can be seen in the statement of Saima Ali, owner of Gul Khan art in Pakistan:

We are patriotic and proud Pakistanis. We take absolute pride in our vibrant and colourful culture and tradition which unfortunately has been bedimmed by our so called "terrorist" image internationally, hence Gul Khan is a little effort on our part to represent true and happy colours of Pakistan around the globe.

Bina Ali also very interestingly explained the process of not only promoting but reviving our culture as well:

Means it's like a circle. You know, everything just goes round in that circle.

Yes. So, if you are working culturally, because my work is all about culture, it is about reviving cultures, it's about retaining our culture. Yes. And it basically goes back to truck art because truck art is again something that is evolved from the same culture.

Unaiza Sabir of Star Shine brand in Pakistan also included in her interview which was obtained from secondary sources that,

This was the time we realized and strongly felt that people are very attracted to this art form and appreciated their cultural look. Foreigners who really like to take back something as a souvenir that is representative of the culture and colours of Pakistan were very much attracted to these. From then onwards we decided, focused and planned our business.

Mariam Syed voiced her motivation to shift this art form as follows: “But I think for me, it was like, I’m also like promoting a softer image of Pakistan, something that is, something that really fascinated me.”

Quratulain shared her thought that, “we wanted to do something very specifically for our own people.” She expressed how the Truck artisans were struggling in current times, due to COVID and fewer travel opportunities, which led to less tourism eventually:

And, you know, there was no more decorations for the and there's this art was actually dying in Pakistan. So, that's how the idea originated, that, you know, we thought that why not, we also give a chance to these people to showcase their art through our brand.

An interview obtained from a secondary source, with Loos, an intensive care specialist based in Pakistan, tells the story of a unique Pakistani truck art that embarked on a long journey from Islamabad to Paris. This Foxy car was named “Foxy Shezadi” or “Beetle Princess,” and was restored to full health by Loos, who then engaged a Pakistani truck artisan to paint it in the local truck art style. He stated that, “The idea behind the 6,000-mile trip is to promote the ‘soft side’ of Pakistan...We want to show the world it’s not just about terrorism.”

Ali Salman Anchan, founder of Phool Patti (a non-profit organisation in Pakistan) appeared fascinated by the idea of promoting a local art form—truck art—around the

world: “That’s my main objective, you know, because when I choose, which is the best thing we can promote nicely about Pakistan, so truck art is the best way.”

In another interview drawn from a secondary source, Imran Aslam Khan, the chief operating officer at Sky Wings Flight Academy, had commissioned a painting of a two-seater Cessna aircraft with Pakistani truck art on it. He explained that,

We always wanted to build a softer image for the country and to promote the culture and the activities of Pakistan that wherever like name of Pakistan is taken in the international media it comes in somewhere or another some negative cells call it terrorism and all that, but we wanted to show the world that Pakistan is not all about issues or the terrorism and all that Pakistan is a very diverse country. Pakistan is a land of opportunity.

In relation to the value of Pakistani truck art and wanting to promote it, Ali Gul, co-founder of Gul-Khan Truck Art, spoke about his journey:

We thought that this art was always in a very dirty state on those trucks you know, how dirty they are? Sometimes the art was ruined by washes and dirt and things, and the art was not given its respect that it should have been.

Anjum Rana, an interior designer based in Pakistan, stated in an interview that her goal is to promote and mainstream this unique art style from Pakistan: “I thought that all the other arts are given a lot of attention and people are crazy about buying paintings and pay any amount but truck art, nobody considers that to be art.”

Anjum Rana also stated in the interview that her purpose was to get truck art off the roads and into her home in order to keep this art form alive and to give it its due attention: I love it, but I couldn't bring a truck home, so I thought, why not do it on smaller objects.

## **b) Fusion**

With changing trends, one common theme that emerges from the data is "Fusion," which encompasses the fusion of different cultures and in some cases also the fusion of traditional art with contemporary elements.

Varah, owner of the brand Firefly stated that she has taken truck art with a contemporary twist. She also explained her process: "I drew it, I illustrated it, and then I gave it colours and a sort of aesthetic that made it a little more modern or contemporary."

Quratulain, the brand owner of Urban Truck Art, a Truck Art Home Store in Pakistan, stated that, "We are giving a modern touch to truck art so that people can use these things in home decoration of today."

The artisans' desire to create something unique for a global audience emerged as a critical theme. Mariam Syed, a textile designer based in the UK mentioned multiple times in her interview that:

I enjoy reinventing traditional weaving techniques and exploring complex weave constructions to discover new designs for a contemporary audience. Currently I am working on the design intervention of a traditional Pakistani weaving technique called Sussi – which is a striped multi-coloured toothed fabric of rural Sindh, Pakistan.

She also very enthusiastically added that:

I love the vibrant coloured Pakistani trucks set against the magnificent pre-colonial British architecture in the old town of Karachi. I love the explosion of pattern and bold colours on the trucks and picking out pops of colour in the otherwise dull city buildings. I try to achieve the same boldness of colour in my woven designs and try to balance the vivid colours with 'beigey' neutral tones of the buildings.

So yes, it is sort of like an innovative way of promoting or working with truck art.

Bina Ali pointed out that people's love for colour motivated her to create artefacts inspired by traditional truck art: "People kept demanding colours. They wanted colours, so we started customising. By we, I mean Artel."

Anjum Rana also added that, "So, what inspired me really was basically the fact that I love the colours myself."

Bina Ali, the woman behind the Artel brand, was one of the participants in my semi-structured interviews. She stated that,

It's about the fusion of our culture, you know. So, I developed products, which were decorative only earlier and then I understood that the client doesn't just want to decorate anymore.

I always wanted to make a difference not just design products and sell them, but you know, there should be the meaning behind it.

Asheer Akram explained that,

The basis of our project is the visual aesthetic of the cargo trucks of Pakistan and the ideas that surround their use. We are building a cargo truck in the traditional Pakistani style with a Midwestern twist and a new function.

A few intriguing concepts arose from the data that were important to research problems yet fell inside the two primary themes mentioned above. These include

#### **4.6 Other Themes – the Central Research Question**

##### **Artisans' satisfaction**

According to a secondary source, the popularity of truck art has also influenced other artisans, such as the music group Mousiqar. Agha Haider Ali, lead vocalist of the band, talked about how he was so mesmerised with poetry written on Pakistani trucks that he used it in his songs. This demonstrates how Pakistani truck art has not only evolved into



contemporary artefacts but also into the modern music industry. Agha recalled the moment:

Outside or on the road there a lot of products which have some sketches or painting or something like that which is actually a nice to look like whenever I out on my bike or my car I used to read that poetry which is written behind on the trucks that makes me happy because the things that are written on the backside on the trucks of rickshaws are humorous.

### **Easy access for the Public**

In an interview from a secondary source, owner of Star Shine brand in Pakistan, Unaiza Sabir mentioned that,

Our buses, trucks and rickshaws are adorned with ‘truck art’ that has vibrant colours, cultural themed art, indigenous floral pattern and poetic calligraphy which drives everyone crazy and has become a recognition of Pakistan. The same drives me crazy and makes me pick the art that represents my culture as well as brings my passion to the next level where the definition of truck art (specifically done on buses, trucks and rickshaws) can be redefined on home decor items which can be used as souvenirs for tourists, for adding colour to your own house and to bring our culture anywhere around the world.

She added that, “Star Shine wants to make these products easily available by offering a range of products, different varieties of truck art themed work and customisation as per the desired need of the customers.”

### **Artisan’s Health constraints**

One of the secondary data themes also highlights the health concerns that the original truck artisans faced as a result of their age, which contributed to the art form's shift. Haji Habib, also known as “Ustaad” or a teacher in the field, is an artisan and has been part of the Pakistan truck-painting industry since he was a child. But, over time, he has expanded his art style to include home décor products. Physical health concerns have also pushed him down this route of change. In his interview, he explained that,

With time when I grew older it became more difficult for me to go up and down stairs and climb trucks. When I realized this, I thought it would be a good idea to introduce this art in household items. I began with a few items it was widely appreciated so I continued. I'm the first one to introduce truck art in this form. Habib hopes the art form will live on for generations to come whether it on trucks or trinkets. After all he says it is raw Pakistani original. No one knows the future and I can't say what will happen to this art form but if you look at its evolution it has come a long way and I hope it goes a long way.

### **Decrease in demand**

Iqbal Sanam, a well-known truck artisan who specialises in “phoolpatti” work explained his motivation to shift from traditional trucks to modern artefacts:

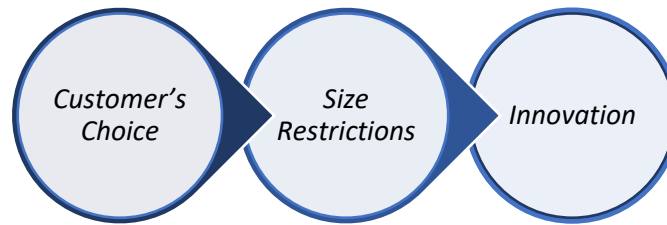
Then when work demand started to get low, then we changed our mind a bit, then we started some interior pieces, we started painting on terracotta pots, and we started this, but it was very much appreciated.

### **4.7 Key themes – Research sub-Question**

The sub-question of the study focuses on if, in the artisans' opinion, this transition has altered the meaning of symbols and images used in Pakistani truck art. Figure 4.6 depicts the key findings from the primary data, as these concepts did not appear in interviews in secondary sources. The themes discussed below highlight the artisans' responses to the second question of this research project, which asks if this shift, in the artisans' view, affected the significance of symbols and images used in Pakistani truck art.

**Figure 4.6**

*Themes for sub research question*



**a) Customer's Choice**

Quratulain mentioned that the choice of images or text on these artefacts also depends on what the client wants, as that sells the most.

We focus on providing customised products. So, our most popular items on our website are basically the ones that can be customised, like our nameplate that can be hung outside houses that can have your name, our leather handbags, our jewellery boxes. Anything that has a name on it is our most popular and most sold-out product on the website because people love customization and that's the niche we picked on and that's what we are working towards.

Ali Gul of Gul Kan Art agreed with this statement and further elaborated:

A huge truck made inside a mug or made inside a plate or rickshaw or a on a peacock, flowers motifs, like these things, they are in huge demand. People love these motifs more than any other thing and colours should be womanish, very pinkish, bluish, so the women are more attracted because women are the main buyers of our products.

Ali Gul, when asked why they shifted to functional artefacts, said that the response has changed significantly when they looked at the functional aspect of this art form; such a response was not there when they initially started this initiative.

The main buyer is women, and the women want to buy it but if a function is added to it, being a being a tray, being a truck or whatever, and even if men are buying it when a function is added to it, if they're gifting it to someone, they know that that person is going to use it. Now

when this started, when we started selling functional products in the starting, this response was not that big.

Haider Ali stressed that the end product or the artefact has to look beautiful, as that is what attracts people the most, so the choice of images and text should be in accordance with that.

But we try the most that we do the work that looks beautiful and is seen. So, while painting we keep in mind that we paint something that looks beautiful on it and attracts clients and people like it. That's why we keep on changing designs according to the trends or the price.

Anjum Rana discussed how the images, text, and the language used on these artefacts are largely affected by customers' religious beliefs.

We have less of poetry because since my objects go abroad a lot and there has been a lot of Islamophobia. They cannot make out the font with this Urdu or Arabic, and a lot of people don't want Arabic and to think it's something religious that's written over there. So, I try not to. And in fact, something here that happens in this part of the world is that many people don't want one birds or animals. So, we do just flowers for them. And there are those who don't mind anything.

## **b) Size Restrictions**

Size and shape of the canvas also plays an important role. Clearly there is huge difference between the artefact and the traditional truck, as both canvases vary significantly in size and shape.

Ali Salman shared his reasoning behind the use of images and colour on different canvases.

There are two things, one thing is where we go, we choose the element and second thing in surface we are designing. The surface or the object, tell us the story. What's suits on that? You know, for example, if you are designing a lady's purse, we have a space. So, we follow the space. If you're designing Khussa (shoe) space is there. If you are designing a bus to so you know we just measures the area. How we can fill the area

with colourful motifs. So main objective is how to fill the area in a good way.

Ali Gul relayed his unique experience about the process of shift in terms of how asking a traditional truck artisan to work on smaller objects can be a bit problematic at times as well.

If you are making three or four products at the back and then you come out with the final product, the main hindrance that would come is that when artist is working on a truck or a bus the motifs are really big like one motif is four by four ft or two by two ft. Now that you have to bring that motif from four feet by, four ft to say, six inches to six inches. So, here the problem comes then, and the artists usually don't have the guts and what would you say, the skills to bring them on a smaller thing when they bring it in the smaller proportion, the art usually changes. So, that really requires a lot of hard work and a lot of patience to bring that big motif on a smaller tray.

Haider Ali expanded on this issue:

Some design elements are chosen, like we have a flower motif according to the size of the teapot and we have added another colour on the other side. So, the detail of design is based on the price of the object, as price goes up, more detail work is done, weather it is truck or a teapot.

### **c) Innovation**

Both artisans who engaged with traditional truck art said that they wanted to pursue something new and create something different. Sanam Iqbal explained that,

I do not copy images from anywhere, I just picturise in my mind, for example, if I have to paint a peacock, I paint it in my style. I tell you that like if I have 10 different trays, so my thinking is that I design them all differently, I paint flowers on one, animals on one like when you work the design automatically come to my mind, I do not plan them. If I design 100 things, then you will see 100 different designs on them.

When asked about whether the images used on these artefacts were similar to the images painted on traditional Pakistani trucks, he answered that, “Yes, mostly related to trucks, the colours, birds, flowers but there are some things we add as well with new style.”

Haider Ali also expressed this view:

So, truck art has got a different status to be beautifully decorated among other vehicles. So, since childhood till now, these things surrounded me. So, to be different was my hobby, it has already been done but I enhanced it.

Bina Ali recalled how the imagery used in truck art has changed over the years; she said this is a natural process as with any other art form.

You know, from what I remember from my childhood that the buses were more colourful and we always saw these lions and these faces and this lion face with a woman. Lions body with the woman's face, how it used to be. But truck art itself also evolved over the years. The colours and yeah, it was much simpler, I think, before, like, I remember seeing them quite colourful, but probably before that it was much simpler. Yes, obviously, the art and craft go through an evolution process. You know, it's not like it stays like that forever.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The research findings indicated an intriguing mix of artisan motivations for making this shift, as well as how the shift has affected the usage of images and symbols as it moves from traditional Pakistani trucks to modern artefacts. Chapter Five will discuss the findings in conjunction with relevant literature.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter reported the findings and key themes derived from the data—the semi-structured interviews (primary source of data) and data from secondary sources. This chapter starts by discussing the demographics of the research participants as compared to artisans mentioned in previous studies. After outlining the significance of this research, the chapter identifies the key findings and interprets their meanings and implications in relation to the research questions and this project’s literature review. As instructed by many books on research methods and methodology including the seminal work of Creswell and Creswell (2018) in this area, this Discussion chapter takes a critical analysis and interpretive evaluation of the findings by comparing the themes discovered in the research findings (Chapter 4) with the literature review (Chapter 2). The research examined artisans' motivations to transit Pakistani truck art from heavy vehicles to modern artefacts, and also if this shift, in their view, has impacted the meaning of the symbols and imagery employed.

### **5.2 Understanding the Demographics of Participants**

I understand that qualitative research is not interested in numbers and demographics. Here understanding the demographics of participants helps understand their motivational factors involved in the contexts or domains they work. It is worthwhile examining the findings regarding research participant demographics in relation to information provided about them in the secondary sources. This helps us to better understand those artisans – as this research has identified – who are involved in the current transition of traditional truck art to contemporary artefacts. The findings suggest that these artisans (research participants) are a diverse group in terms of field of work, background, gender and country of residence.

This research showed that there are currently three types of artisans/designers who are involved in the shift of traditional truck art to modern artefacts. Most of those interviewed for this research were designers associated with commercial brands. This means that they do not transfer this art form themselves; rather, they act as a linkage or mediator between society and the actual artisans. The commercial brands that came into focus in the findings are briefly mentioned by Farah Ali (2021); she notes that these brands have promoted truck art-inspired artefacts due to high demand globally. Other than Farah Ali's study, no existing literature could be found that references these commercial brands that are now linked to truck art-influenced artefacts. This is not surprising given the shift of traditional truck art to these artefacts is very recent.

The second group of artisans involved were designers who had not originally painted on traditional Pakistani trucks but have been painting and creating artefacts with this shift. And the third type identified were original Pakistani truck artisans who had practised painting on trucks in Pakistan but have now become interested in the shift. These artisans revealed that they have been in the field for more than 40 years, and some of them even saw this art form in its original state when they were growing up. Haider Ali stated that,

I have seen trucks since childhood, seen art throughout childhood. Whenever we used to pass by a street or leave our house, we used to see trucks only, water tankers, all kinds of trucks, buses being painted and designed in workshops. So, we used to see those on our way back from school.

Previous studies by Nazish Ata-Ullah (2009) and Jamal Elias (2003) validate the research findings, as they show that Pakistani truck art has been practised in Pakistan by truck artisans since the 1960s, when trucks were embellished extensively to attract passengers. However, no scholarly material has been found on the recent shift of this art form in which Pakistani truck artisans have been actively taking part.



The majority of the research participants interviewed for this research had a strong art background and had practised art in the past; only a few participants had little art-related background or had never practised art previously. The artisans associated with commercial brands were those who did not have much art background but were part of the shift due to its rising popularity among consumers and also in the sense of staying connected to their culture.

Overall, it can be observed that that the artisans' background played a vital role in the shift of images to other artefacts, as their motivation hugely depended on customer demand rather than on an aesthetic sense of the artefact. It would be beneficial for the growth of traditional Pakistani truck art if more people with an art background were part of this shift, as this would enrich the process and, as a result, enhance the product.

According to Elias (2003), Pakistani truck art is predominantly a male-dominated industry and has been passed down from generation to generation through the male line. Because the transition of this art form is so recent, there is no existing literature confirming that it has become a field in which women can work. It was very interesting to find that since Pakistani truck art has shifted to new canvases, it seems a gender roles shift has taken place. Many female designers have been inspired to jump into this field, one which was previously male dominated. For instance, within the scale of this research project, of the 10 participants who responded to my call for interviews, six were females, which demonstrates the interest among women has grown compared with the past. This could also be related to some of the reasons why the art form has switched to artefacts linked to home décor or home utility items as they attract female customers.

Two of the three inclusion criteria for this study's research participants were that artisans be of Pakistani origin, be based in Pakistan or living abroad. More than half the

participants were based in Pakistan, with only a handful based overseas. The motivation of overseas artisans/designers to shift this art form was strongly influenced by their desire to stay connected to their culture and promote it internationally. This resultant exposure has given this Pakistani-based art form a global audience.

### **5.3 The significance of this research**

The goal of this study was to learn about the motivations of Pakistani truck artisans. The objectives are reiterated below.

- What are the motivations of artisans to shift Pakistani truck art from heavy vehicles onto modern artefacts?
- How does this shift, in the artisans' view, affect the meaning of symbols and images used in Pakistani truck art?

As highlighted by Zahraa and Abdullah (2020), lavishly decorated trucks are a central feature of Pakistan's roadways and reflect the country's colourful culture. Truck art is considered a passion in Pakistan and has evolved in the last two decades into its own genre. According to previous research by Vine (2008), truck art in Pakistan was considered as an unknown and inferior art style. But with the recent shift, it has become socially accepted in the form of trendy artefacts. The two major themes that emerged from this project's research findings gathered from primary data (10 interviews) and secondary sources (15 interviews) in response to the central research question are *Pakistani Culture* and *Fusion*. In addition, sub-themes of *Artisan's satisfaction*, *Easy access to Public*, *Artisan's health constraints*, and *Decrease in demand* also emerged. All these themes capture how the artisans' drive stems from either a desire to produce something new or a desire to promote and keep alive Pakistani culture through truck art. Other themes which

suggest the motivations of artisans to shift this art form from heavy vehicles into modern artefacts relate to aspects of religion, function, and customer preference.

The themes that came into focus for the research's sub-question were varied: *Customer choice, Size restrictions and Innovation*. These themes relate to if the transition of canvas has impacted the meaning of symbols and imagery employed in Pakistani truck art. The findings indicate the various reasons why these artisans made the shift and how the images and symbols during the shift changed primarily in response to what consumers demand. All the themes that were identified for the sub-question reflect how customer's attitudes have shifted. Pakistani truck art used to be exclusively based on what the truck drivers (and artisans) desired on their trucks. However, with the shift in canvas, from heavy vehicles to artefacts, the emphasis has switched to what clients, in this case the public, want. In the following sections, the key points and discussions are presented.

#### **5.4 Motivations of Pakistani artisans**

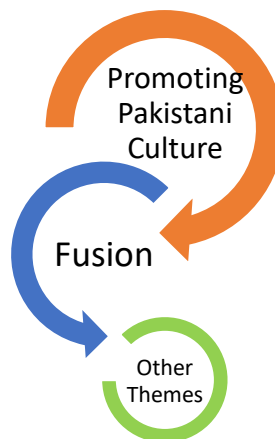
The first research question was designed to determine artisans' motivations to shift the truck art form to other canvases. Csikszentmihalyi (1999), in his seminal work on creativity and art practice, suggested that creativity is a process that can only be observed at the intersection of individuals, domains, and fields. As a result, while each component is necessary for creativity, it is not sufficient in and of itself to generate innovation (McIntyre, 2008). Based on the theoretical framework of Csikszentmihalyi, it can be proposed that the truck art artisans derive their motivations to produce this art form come from the existing cultural domains and utilising the various forms of social and cultural capital from that cultural domain. My research findings suggest that the artisan do not create artefacts in isolation; rather, their motivations are influenced by the factors existing in the cultural domain. The findings support the notion that creativity is the result of the interaction of several variables, particularly the interaction between the individual and the

environment in which they work and audiences they target. Furthermore, the findings reinforce Saunders and Gero's (2001) points as they argued that creativity is more than simply a state of mind for the creative person; it is a multifaceted process influenced by a variety of factors which motivate the artisans to shift this art form onto different artefacts.

According to the findings of the study, Figure 5.1 depicts the key motivations of artisans who shifted Pakistani truck art to contemporary artefacts. It depicts the motivations of artisans that influenced their decisions to shift this art form to other mediums in descending order of priority.

**Figure 5.1**

*Themes for Artisans' Motivation*



#### **5.4.1 Promoting Pakistani Culture**

*Promoting Pakistani culture* appeared to also have a significant influence on artisans' drives to incorporate this Pakistani art form into contemporary artefacts. Many artisans mentioned that the shift was their small attempt to reflect the authentic and bright hues of Pakistan around the world and showcase Pakistan's positive image. Pakistan is a country rich in culture and traditions; but due to negative media coverage, its tourism has declined

drastically. As Ali (2010) explains in his journal article, Pakistan's social and economic conditions have deteriorated since 9/11, and the “War on Terror” has had a significant negative impact on the country's tourism industry, considering the large Muslim population in Pakistan, and related human resources. Due to this negative impact, the artisans felt it was important to convey a softer image of Pakistan in order to reflect their rich culture and traditions and showcase their art and crafts to the rest of the globe. And one of the ways this could be achieved was through their art. Participants also emphasised that local people, heritage, and tradition are distinct cultural assets and that they can enhance tourist experiences and could only be promoted if the country is considered safe. The artisans went on to suggest that their humble efforts could improve global views and tourist experiences in Pakistan and illustrate that the country is rich in culture and opportunities.

Previous research has pointed out that the truck artisans used calligraphy on the trucks to showcase Pakistan’s national language and promote their own local languages. According to Hasan et al. (2020), Pakistani artisans were motivated by their culture to decorate the trucks.

This study validates the point that promoting their culture has motivated artisans to move this exquisite art style to modern products. Thus, promoting Pakistani culture was vital to artisans past and present, but now this motivation is utilised for the more recent transfer of canvases, that is, from heavy trucks to modern artefacts. Furthermore, Malik (2018) found that truck artisans adorned their vehicles with national elements, such as the national flag, to show their patriotism. This, too, is supported by the research project, as Saima Ali, owner of the brand Gul Khan art, explained that their brand, proudly patriotic, showcases Pakistani culture and traditions in its artefacts around the world.

The fact that traditional Pakistani truck art had not been given the respect and value it deserved was another major motivating factor for the artisans to shift this art form to contemporary artefacts. According to the artisans, Pakistani truck art was not valued compared to other art forms around the world, and this encouraged them to do something for this art form, to enliven and revitalise it. They wanted Pakistani truck art to be recognised and respected as much as other art forms. Shifting this traditional art form to modern artefacts has made it more visible; the art has not only shifted canvases, it has also moved from the exterior to the interior of our homes.

#### **5.4.2 Fusion**

The findings for the central research question of this study revealed that the artisans considered factors that can be defined under the term *Fusion*, as the most important motivational factor related to the shift of Pakistani truck art. Several research participants were inspired to combine traditional Pakistani truck art with their own creative ideas to produce something truly unique and innovative. The majority of these artisans/designers who were based abroad wanted to create something new that would not only connect them to their culture but also help them to showcase their own style in the form of this contemporary art form.

The research findings support Farah Ali's (2021) study to some extent, even though she did a visual analysis and showed how the five styles of portraiture on Pakistani truck art have evolved over the years. This research project aligns the UNESCO campaigns, such as the Girl's Right to Education in 1998 and The Lost Child Campaign in 2021, in which portraits on trucks played an important role in achieving the campaign's goal.

This research shows that, in many instances, the artisans also emphasised that they sought to produce something unique for today's audience, keeping in mind that clients are

looking for more than just adornment these days. As a result, a fusion of functional and aesthetic aspects can be seen in the recent shift.

A similar motivational factor has been identified in many other studies (Sheikh, 2018; Madan, 2018; Paracha, 2016). These studies corroborate the idea that the artisans' motivation for the transition is influenced by the functional component. They note that while the decoration on these trucks serves an aesthetic purpose, the reflective materials and jingling chains also safeguard the truck driver from accidents and keep them alert. The data in this study helps to identify that artisan motivation is influenced by the practicality of the artefact, as audiences and customers' expectations of this art form have shifted: they no longer just want it to be beautiful, but also to serve as a functional object that can be used in their daily lives.

#### **5.4.3 Other motivations**

Some personal factors related to artisans also motivated them to make this shift: *Artisans' satisfaction, decrease in demand of work, their love for colours* and in some cases *physical health constraints* have influenced their decision to make the shift. As they aged, original truck artisans found it became difficult to paint on high-rise trucks; as, it had become difficult for original truck artisans to paint on high-rise trucks; thus, shifting to smaller artefacts with the same level of creativity has given them satisfaction and a way to keep this art form alive.

With the trends changing, and new technology being introduced in all fields of life, truck art has also changed. The use of new digital stickers instead of hand painted work, and in some cases more untrained artisans in the field, has significantly decreased demand for the artisans who just painted on Pakistani trucks.

This research finding highlights the *decrease in demand of work* for the Pakistani truck artisans as a motivational factor similar to a study in 1998 by Kazi. The decrease in demand seems to be a historical factor that persisted over the years. Kazi noted that the Muslim artisans who worked as painters in the royal Mughal and Rajasthani courts (i.e., prior to Pakistan's partition) migrated to Pakistan and started painting on trucks instead due to unemployment. The shift that occurred at that time was also a shift of canvas but not of the same art form. This shift was from paintings on walls used on Mughal architecture to a completely new art form, that was Pakistani truck art, which was greatly influenced by the need for work. Together, the findings of the current study and previous literature suggest that a decrease in demand for artisans' work is a motivating factor that has led artisans to transition art forms. However, the findings from this research study suggest that decrease in demand is one of the artisans' motivations for shifting this art form from traditional Pakistani truck art to contemporary mediums, from one canvas to another, while maintaining its essence.

Some artisans also stated that the transition of this traditional art form to contemporary objects will make it easier for people to enjoy and incorporate this exquisite art form into their daily lives. Making this art accessible to the general public also functioned as a motivation for the artisans.

As the finding from this research project highlights, as mentioned before, some factors like *Artisans' satisfaction, decrease in demand of work, their love for colours* and in some cases *health constraints* motivated artisans to make this shift. This is important because there is a scarcity of literature at present about these motivations.



## **5.5 Shift and the meaning of images**

The research sub-question investigated if the transition or shift may have affected the significance of symbols and imagery used in Pakistani truck art, from the point of view of the artisan. According to Marcel Duchamp (1994), the creative process is completed not only by the artisan but also by the artisan's audiences; it is a two-way conversation that does not end with the artisan but with the audience. Thus, the transition from traditional truck art to contemporary artefacts has impacted the significance of symbols and imagery used, as it reflects the audience participation. The findings from this study show that artisans have shifted a selection of images and symbols to suit their artefact or medium. In this case, the artisans, unlike the truck artisans in the original trucks, are the first to play the role of the viewers of the original truck art. Duchamp's model highlights that viewer engagement is critical to the production and presentation of modern artefacts. In this sense, the responses from the artisans shape the use of images and symbols on these modern artefacts.

The broad response to the research sub-question, implies that the engagement of the audience is critical for the creation of modern artefacts and the viewer's choice affects the selection and meanings of these truck art symbols and images used.

The findings support the notion that the symbols and images used on these artefacts during the shift largely depend on the audiences' demand and acceptance. Most of the research participants suggested that the selection of symbols and images for these modern artefacts is based on what is in demand and on the customer's personal preference.

The study's findings are significant in many respects, as the various themes provide answers to the research sub-question. These themes play a critical role in understanding the significance of the images and symbols used in the shift of traditional Pakistani truck

art to contemporary artefacts. All the themes indicated were considered important by the participants and are examined in more detail below.

### **5.5.1 Customer Choice**

The results from the data indicated *Customer choice* as a crucial motivating reason for artisans in the recent shift. The choice of images and symbols used on these artefacts, they said, were in accord with the religious beliefs of the customers. As these truck art-inspired artefacts are quite popular in other countries, the images used must consider various religious aspects. For example, customers may prefer artefacts without animal images, especially if they come from a Muslim background, while customers who live overseas and practise religions other than Islam may prefer images without Arabic script. Both Elias (2005) and Lefebvre (1989) pointed out that the images and symbols used on Pakistani trucks have religious significance and reflect the truck artisan's views and love for their religion. They further elaborate that the embellishments on these trucks serve not only as a decorative element but also as a good luck charm preventing them from the evil eye. This study's findings, therefore, support those of earlier research: the religious beliefs of truck drivers, who are customers in traditional truck art, and the general public, who are customers in the recent transition, influence artisans' motivation to portray religious ideas of the customers.

As discussed in the literature review, Elias (2003) confirms that Pakistani trucks were lavishly decorated to attract passengers. The findings herein indicate the same. As Haider Ali stated in his interview, the objective for the artisan when decorating these truck art-inspired artefacts is to make the artefact look attractive; thus, he chooses motifs and symbols that look beautiful to entice clients.

Moreover, incorporating *functional aspects* into these artefacts is an effective way for them to be utilised in audiences' daily lives, rather than limiting them to decorative purposes only. People's thinking has altered over time, and this can be observed in the desire for these artefacts; the images and symbols utilised in these artefacts are in demand more for their functional aspect than their aesthetic or decorative aspects.

Some artisans also mentioned that customisation was an important factor to consider when choosing images and symbols to incorporate into the modern artefacts. The data from recent interviews indicate that, along with the shift in canvas, the audience for this art form has undoubtedly shifted. Women and the elite class around the world, who today value this art form, make up the majority of the customers of truck art on modern artefacts. These customers preferred items that they could relate to and be associated with their requests, such as personalised name plates that could be hung outside their home and show their love for truck art while also allowing the customer to connect with it. This reminds us of Elias's (2003) research, which stated that portraits of favourite political leaders, national heroes, and even celebrities were painted on these trucks to indicate the owner's interest, and customisation was done according to personal preferences. It can be stated that attention to customisation was frequent in this art form previously and is still common now, with the choice of pictures changing accordingly.

Some artisans also commented that these artefacts are largely used by women, therefore catering to their needs is essential. Customers' preferences for colours and themes add to the appeal of these artefacts but they do not think the meanings of symbols may change radically. The data from the findings indicates that the meanings of the employed images do not alter with the shift; rather, the change simply takes place in accordance with personal preferences.

### 5.5.2 Size Constraints

*Size constraints* plays an important role in how and what images and symbols are used during the shift. The majority of the artisans who shifted this art form emphasised that choosing the images to shift mainly depends on the size of the artefact which is used for the shift. The artisans stressed that the design details remain the same as traditional art on trucks, but the dimensions change to fit the shape, size, and type of the canvas.

According to Zahraa and Abdullah (2020), every inch of Pakistani trucks was adorned, as it was a large canvas that the artisans could work on. Hence, the scale of the canvas encourages artisans and acts as a motivation in the choice of symbols and motifs for both heavy trucks and artefacts.

The research participants also commented that it was sometimes difficult to transfer and choose images for smaller artefacts because traditional Pakistani trucks are large in size, to bring an image from a truck to a smaller object (artefact) takes time and effort, as the artisan has to modify the image accordingly. The change in size would not affect the meanings of the images.

As my study focuses on the shift from a traditional Pakistani truck/heavy vehicle to modern artefacts, there is a significant size difference that should be considered. There is no existing literature that focuses on this shift of canvas and the size constraints and choices in this regard that the artisan faces.

Some other themes also came into focus from this study's findings. *Innovation* was a theme that emerged from what the artisans shared in their interviews about when shifting the images and symbols to contemporary artefacts. In the recent shift, some artisans added a twist to the traditional style to make it even more appealing. Due to market competition, artisans have also been driven to build their own specific niche for these objects, which

represents their own style as well as classic patterns, which can be seen in their work with the recent transition. One of the examples of this is Haider Ali's artwork, as he states that although growing up surrounded by traditional truck art, he wanted to stand out and add his own style to this contemporary art form. This can be linked to Elias's (2003) observation that traditional Pakistani trucks and heavy vehicles were painted in different regional styles depending on where they were painted. Each artisan who creates modern artefacts tends to do something different to exhibit their individual style and distinguish their art from others. This study shows that the artisans who performed this art form have been innovative in their approach to doing something different; the only difference is that, with the recent shift, they have been innovative not only with their imagery but also with their choice of canvas.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The key themes identified in the findings and presented in Chapter 4 were discussed in this chapter with reference to existing literature to produce responses to the research questions. Following an analysis of all participants' comments, it became evident that the artisans' motivations and the significance of the images used are interwoven with the customer demand—likes and dislikes. This shows the commercial and functional turn in modern truck art and artisans' thinking.

After reviewing the literature in Chapter 2, it was concluded that probably no research on the motivations of artisans for the recent shift from traditional trucks to modern artefacts had been conducted, even though the motivations of the truck artisan painting on the heavy truck and the artisan shifting to modern artefacts were quite similar. It could be stated that Pakistani truck art, despite being a magnificent art form, has been undervalued in the past, and for a long time was not considered popular art, due to the truck artisan being uneducated and not belonging to any recognised art circle. This itself has led to

modern artisans moving it to modern artefacts and hence the shift of this art form to contemporary artefacts. This transformation not only gives truck art more audiences, respect and value, but also makes it more popular among the public in Pakistan and beyond.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

### 6.1 Research Objectives

This chapter summarises this research with reference to the central objective, research questions, and literature review, noting the contribution of the findings. This is followed by a brief discussion of the study's limitations and recommendations for further research.

The research study's central objective was to delve into what has motivated the artisans to make this shift from heavy vehicles to modern artefacts and if this shift, in artisans' views, impacted the meaning of images used on traditional truck art to modern artefacts. Understanding the artisans' motivations for the shift can help us better comprehend the evolution of this art form and further knowledge about this art form, which in turn can support further scholarship and truck art practice. To acquire a deeper grasp of the research topic, qualitative research was undertaken. The intersection of primary semi structured interviews I conducted and interviews I collected from the public domain yielded a rich set of themes on the link between the artisan and their motivations that influenced them. I used Seidel's (1998) QDA as the method of data analysis which was effective in helping to gain a deeper understanding of the data.

The central research question of this study is:

- What are the motivations of artisans to shift Pakistani truck art from heavy vehicles onto modern artefacts?

I also examined this sub-question while researching the central question:

- How does this shift, in the artisans' view, may affect the meaning of symbols and images used in Pakistani truck art?

A thorough review of existing literature was carried out in order to understand artisan motivations and how the shift has impacted the use of images and symbols on these modern artefacts. The literature on this topic is rather limited and it began with a history of Pakistani truck art as well as an in-depth examination of the visual components of Pakistani truck art. Also considered was art from around the world that had been influenced by the truck art style, information for which was mostly found in online blogs, YouTube videos and websites and not scholarly research-based materials, an indication of limited scholarship on the topic.

In terms of participant demographics, some fascinating insights about the current transition and how artisans from many domains have entered this field were provided. The participants in this study were chosen because they were Pakistani artisans who had shifted Pakistani truck art away from traditional trucks and towards other artefacts. The findings of the qualitative investigation were interesting. For the central research topic, replies based on artisans' motivations were analysed according to several themes. *Pakistani Culture*, *Fusion*, *Artisan's health constraints*, *Easy access to Public*, and *Artisan's satisfaction* were shown to be the most influential motivations for the artisans. The research sub question focused on the artisans' perspectives on the significance of images and symbols used during the shift. *Customers' Choice*, *Size Restrictions* and *Innovation* were the main themes that emerged in response to this study's sub-question.

The study presents an understanding of the artisans' motivations to make this shift from traditional art form to contemporary canvases. Overall, this study contributes to the existing knowledge gaps regarding Pakistani truck art's transition from traditional to modern artefacts and the motivations of artisans participating in this transition. In addition, the study contributes a scholarly research-based knowledge on the subject.



## **6.2 Limitations**

While conducting the study, there were some difficulties that needed to be addressed, the first of which related to communication. The participants in this study were of Pakistani origin, living abroad or in Pakistan. Despite the fact that Pakistan is a technologically advanced country, some communication restrictions were encountered, particularly when attempting to contact the truck artisans for whom email was not a regular means of communication. A lot of the artisans could not be reached, as the available online contact details were either incorrect or the numbers were not used. The artisans living in Pakistan were mostly approached through WhatsApp. Similarly, some truck artisans involved in this shift could not be reached since they did not have an online presence. Only two of the 10 interviews to collect primary data were conducted with original truck artisans. More interviews with these truck artisans would have been possible if they were available online or if travel to Pakistan during COVID-19 was not restricted. International time differences were experienced as a difficulty to overcome. Pakistan and New Zealand have a 7-8 hours' time difference, so this had to be accommodated while keeping the participants' comfort in mind. Nonetheless, the constraints might be used constructively as recommendations for future research in the same field.

Another area that could be considered for a larger scale research project such as a PhD study is the sample size. In the master's degree project, a larger number of artisans were approached but only some of them were contactable. A larger sample size could have given the qualitative data more richness.

## **6.3 Future Research**

The following are some recommendations for further research based on this study. To begin with, this research project was initially to be conducted as a practice led project and

to practice this shift of canvas by the researcher-artisan herself. Because the researcher would have gone through the entire process herself, this method of experiencing the entire process would have been a different lens to understanding the artisan's motivations. However, the practice-based approach would have not allowed to capture the various motivations of a larger group of artisans. This project could be continued in the future using this practice-based approach to focus on the medium and the shift and the materiality of the medium and aesthetics of truck art.

Secondly, if time and travel permit, future research in the same field needs to collect data from artisans currently living in Pakistan by interviewing the participants face to face, given the difficulty in contacting them. This would encourage freer communication and more detailed insights. Additionally, future studies could also explore the customer perspective in the shift: how their thinking has changed towards this art form; and if they are able to relate this shift in canvases to what they have seen growing up. It would also be interesting to see how younger generations perceive this art form, as most of them are only aware of the shift rather than the original art form.

As some of the artisans, especially designers, have travelled abroad to display this art form, it would be interesting to study how this art form has bridged the gap between countries and culture and how this art form is similar to other art forms from those countries. Truck art, as a cultural symbol of Pakistan, is still not taught in schools and universities thus, future research could point to ways to promote this art form not only in the entertainment market but also in the education sector.

I would like to conclude that the study's findings offer fresh perspectives on how this wonderful art form evolved from old-fashioned trucks to contemporary artefacts. The project, directly or indirectly, assist in exploring and comprehending the motivation

behind Pakistani truck artisans' move as well as determining if the images and symbols employed in this art form changed with the shift of canvas.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A Ethics approval letter



**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)**

Auckland University of Technology  
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ  
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316  
E: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)  
[www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics)

29 October 2021

Arezou Zallpour  
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Arezou

Re Ethics Application: **21/325 Art on the Move: Pakistani truck art and its shift onto modern artefacts**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 29 October 2024.

**Standard Conditions of Approval**

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.
8. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz). The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat  
**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: [wjs1453@aut.ac.nz](mailto:wjs1453@aut.ac.nz)



## Appendix B. Participant Information Sheets



### Information Sheets

#### Date Information Sheet Produced:

July 2021

#### Project Title

Art on the Move: Pakistani truck art and its shift onto modern artefacts

#### An Invitation

Kia ora, my name's Nadia Ahmed and I'm inviting you to participate in my research project, for my Master of Communication Studies qualification at Auckland University of Technology.

#### What is the purpose of this research?

The research project explores the motives of art practitioners to shift Pakistani truck art from heavy vehicles onto modern artefacts for my Master's degree qualification.

#### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You're identified as you're an art practitioner who have transferred the traditional Pakistani art from heavy vehicles to other artefacts while being located in Pakistan or abroad. We believe your knowledge and experience could make a significant contribution to this research project. Your contact details were collected using publicly available sources. This is an invitation to participate.

#### How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you agree to take part in this research, please respond to my university email address: [wis1453@autuni.ac.nz](mailto:wis1453@autuni.ac.nz). To partake in this research, you will need to complete a Consent and Release Form.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

Since our interview will take place online, you can scan or photograph the signed Consent Form and return to me before the interview starts.

#### What will happen in this research?

The interview process will involve one formal interview with you at a mutually agreed time. The interview will take 40-60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted and recorded online through Zoom App, in November 2021. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed, and quotes may be attributed to you. After transcribing, I will send you a copy of the transcription for you to approve or edit, and I will destroy the recordings. I am happy to work around a time that suits you best. The purpose of the interviews will be to inform about your motivation and inspiration to shift this amazing Pakistani Truck art to other contemporary mediums. In addition, the publicly available images of your artwork may be analysed in this research in relation to the interview ideas and some images may appear in the thesis with your consent. This is to confirm that no claim is being made over your art and all IP of their art will rest with the artist, as well as consent being sought for its use in the consent form.

**What are the discomforts and risks? How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

We do not foresee there will be any significant risks or discomfort for you when participating in this project. You don't have to say anything if there is a topic you do not like to talk about or you feel it may be sensitive. It is your right not to answer any questions that may cause discomfort. You'll be invited to review and correct the summary of your interview. In addition, a summary of research findings will be shared with you.

**What are the benefits?**

I believe that you may benefit from this project as this is the public research project that will help promote the significance and nature of the work you do. Additionally, your expertise and ideas will help people understand your motives behind this process and the presence of this new art medium that Pakistani Truck art has been shifted to, giving it a new meaning and in a way keeping this art form alive for the new generation.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your participation will mean that your interview will part of the research project which will be shared with you.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

Other than your personal time required to partake in this research, there are no other associated costs to take part in this research.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have one – two weeks from the time of invitation to consider your participation.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

You will be updated on the progress of this project and be invited to view the summary for feedback if you would like to do so. Later, you will be provided with a short summary of the findings along with the access to an online link of the final research when it is completed.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, *Arezou Zallipour*, [arezou.zallipour@aut.ac.nz](mailto:arezou.zallipour@aut.ac.nz), +9 21 9999 EXT 8682

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

*Nadia Ahmed*, [wjs1453@autuni.ac.nz](mailto:wjs1453@autuni.ac.nz), [nnadyaahmed@gmail.com](mailto:nnadyaahmed@gmail.com)

**Researcher Contact Details:**

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**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 29th October 2021 AUTEK Reference number 21/325.



## Appendix C. Consent and Release Form

**AUT**

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI  
O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

### Consent and Release Form

**Project title:** Art on the Move: Pakistani truck art and its shift onto modern artefacts

**Project Supervisor:** A/P Arezou Zalipour.

**Researcher:** Nadia Ahmed

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated ....
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I have any further concerns about this research project I can/will contact the researcher who will identify any issues and do her best to remedy or mitigate any concerns.
- I understand that I will be identifiable because of my artwork and my profile is on public domain.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the research project then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes  No

Participant's signature : .....

Participant's name : .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
.....  
.....

Date:

#### **Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Associate Professor Arezou Zalipour, arezou.zalipour@aut.ac.nz, +9 21 9999 EXT 8682

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 29th October 2021 AUTEK Reference number 21/325**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## **Appendix D. Indicative Questions for Interviews**

Tell me about yourself, what you do?

How did you start working on this art form?

What do you think about decorated trucks in Pakistan?

Where do you derive your inspiration from? What about your design process?

What are your motivations in shifting a traditional art into a modern object?

Why did you choose traditional Pakistani truck art in your artwork?

While doing this shift how do you choose which elements of Pakistani Truck art to use while conducting the shift?

What is the purpose behind creating this visually elaborate truck art inspired piece?

Why did you choose to shift to this medium? What has been your vision?

What do you hope is the audience response to your work?

## Appendix E. NVivo data

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. On the left is a dark blue sidebar with navigation options: Quick Access, IMPORT (Data, Files, File Classifications, Externals), ORGANIZE (Coding, Cases, Notes, Sets), and EXPLORE. The main window has a menu bar (File, Home, Import, Create, Explore, Share, Modules) and a toolbar with icons for Project, NCapture, Files, Survey, Classifications, Bibliography, Notes & Email, Codebook, and Reports. Below the toolbar is a 'Codes' panel with a search bar and a table of codes. The table has columns for Name, Files, and References. The codes listed are:

Name	Files	References
Connected to our culture	1	1
Create Fusion	1	1
Demand of truck art decreased	1	1
Introduce Pakistani art abroad	1	1
Love for colours	1	1
Make a difference	0	0
Promote softer image of Pakistan	1	2
Respect was not given	1	1

Below the table is a prompt: "Drag selection here to code to a new code". At the bottom of the main window, there are dropdown menus for "In" (set to Codes) and "Code to" (set to Create Fusion (Codes)). On the right side, there is an "Interviews" panel showing a text snippet:

sort of like my own myself.  
but I'm always looki because I feel there  
You know, a lot of p there are these digi  
you know, there's tl get interested.  
But I feel like weavi but it's not as popul  
So I'm always lookir as well.  
So I felt like it was li technique.  
Like it's it's an innov