

**ZARAH HUSSAIN – ‘grids and sub-grids’**

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Zarah Hussain's (°1980 lives and works in London) talent for mathematics and interest in patterns fostered her interest in geometric shapes from the ancient Persian Empire. After her university education in the press and media, she worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Her training at the 'Prince's School of Traditional Arts' in London was the start of her artistic practice in 2004. Since this hands-on training, Hussain has expanded her artistic career spectacularly with diverse exhibitions and large-scale public commissions.

The artistic identity of Zarah Hussain is at the intersection of science and sacredness. Her oeuvre consists of drawings, paintings, reliefs, sculptures, installations, light installations and results in digital applications such as apps. The creation of works of art is supported by a wide-ranging investigation into the essence and cultural-historical processing or recuperation of Islamic art. She is currently concentrating on textile manufacturing in Kashmir and the relationship between weaving and abstraction. Simply put, the basic principle is about acquiring a piece of fabric made up of warp threads that are stretched over the length of a frame and crossed in the width by weft threads. Those intersections automatically create a grid pattern comparable with hand-woven carpets.

Underlying geometric structures fascinate Hussain. Her works of art invite observers to enjoy the pieces open-mindedly while reflecting on the underlying structure. The world that is perceptible through the senses can be expressed scientifically in lengths, surfaces and volumes or in Western art it followed the mimetic tradition of describing that world. Just like in Islamic art, the historic avant-garde also opts for an expression in which the representation of the visible world doesn't play a role. Hussain creates visual formulas that express universality based on mathematical instructions with rotational and mirror symmetries. The repetitive arrangements have a hypnotic-contemplative effect; they often suggest infinity. The artist compares them to DNA: numerous meaningful variations unfold from one source.

The complex phenomenon of existence, from the level of the atom to the orbit of a planet, is captured in geometry. Three-dimensional squares, hexagons and polygons are often the basis. The spatial dimension is emphasised by providing the surface with facets that are partially coloured in. There is rarely an unequivocal centre: part and whole interact resulting in harmony. This allegoric game of shape and colour pursues little or no narrative meaning. It's all about the combination of values: primary shapes or colours - how they relate to each other thereby summoning the idea of totality.

Stef Van Bellingen