

Book Prospectus- AIIS Dissertation Workshop
Abstract

As with many of the postwar movements in non-western contexts, modernism in the context of Pakistan cannot be considered simply as a single movement that operated parallel to or in conformity with Western modernist trends. Instead, the first generation of Pakistani modern artists utilized a range of traditional stylistic elements, with antecedents in Western art movements such as De Stijl, Abstraction, Cubism, and Post-Impressionism, and incorporating them into their practices to establish their own modern idiom. This book project will be the first to present groundbreaking research on a small group of avant-garde artists called Lahore Art Circle (LAC) which constituted an integral part of a larger collective of Pakistani intelligentsia (centered in Lahore), with a modern viewpoint. Without blindly following the unspoken state agenda of shedding a shared history with India, just as importantly, without undermining the formulation of Pakistani identity, LAC struggled to find its own voice among the many prevalent art practices. Through their works, LAC members established a distinct continuum of modern sensibilities in Lahore, one of the major centers of arts and literature in the emerging nation.

Even though LAC was the most active and vibrant group of artists during the formative years of Pakistan and played a critical role in the development of Pakistani modern art and contributed to the discourse of nation-building, LAC artists have been overlooked. They have not been given their due scholarly attention in Pakistani art history and in the history of international modernism. This book will focus on highlighting the long-overdue research on LAC as a group: their role and contributions in promoting modernism in Pakistan.

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