Asma Chaudhary, MFA

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Biography

Asma Chaudhary is a Pakistani-American artist from Fairfax, Virginia. Her artworks explore the duality of a domesticated homemaker by physically recreating the home environment. Asma makes every effort to use discarded materials and repurpose them into basic necessities for survival such as shelter, warmth, luminance, sustenance, mobility, and intellectual growth. Some of her installations include breaking down grocery carts and welding them into chairs, sewing workman's gloves together to create couture-like dresses and cushions, and reformatting sleeping bags to play on the idea of innocence and crisis. Asma pays homage to handicrafts made by village artisans in India and Pakistan through her use of vibrant colors and intricate techniques. Her sculptures, furniture pieces, artist-made books, photography, and performance-based work have been shown in several juried group and solo exhibitions throughout New York, Michigan, Illinois, Texas, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, Connecticut, and the Washington, DC area.

Education

MFA	**Art and Visual Technology/InterArts**, George Mason University	2013
BFA	**Graphic Information Design and Electronic Journalism**, George Mason University	2008

Residencies

- **Visiting Artist-in-Residence**, Shenandoah Valley Children's Discovery Museum — Summer 2016

Awards

- **Editor's Choice Award**, 2016 National Maker Faire, Washington, DC — 2016
- **Best of Show Award**, Buchanan Partners Art Gallery, Hylton Center — 2014

Exhibitions

- **2016 National Maker Faire**, University of the District of Columbia, Washington, DC — 2016
- **Off the Wall Alumni Exhibition**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA — 2016
- **NoVA Maker Faire**, Reston, VA — 2016
- **Charlottesville Maker Faire**, Charlottesville, VA — 2016
- **Extreme Fibers Exhibition**, Dennos Museum Center, Traverse City, MI — Dec 2015-Mar 2016
- **Silent Auction at Off the Wall Exhibition**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA — 2016
- **Rehnuma Ki Beti (The Pioneer's Daughter)**, Hylton Performing Arts, Manassas, VA — June-Aug 2016
- **Extreme Fibers Exhibition**, Muskegon Museum of Art, Muskegon, MI — June-Dec 2015
- **Barnes and Noble Maker Faire**, McLean, VA — 2015
- **Artomatic 2015**, Hyattsville, MD — 2015

- **EXPO 34 Juried Exhibition**, BJ Spoke Gallery, Huntington, NY 2015
- **NoVA Maker Faire**, Reston, VA 2015
- **Bank of the Arts Juried Exhibition**, Craven Arts Council Gallery, New Bern, NC 2015
- **Mending: New Uses for Old Traditions**, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, NC 2014
- **Islamic Art Revival Series: International Juried Exhibition**, LuminArté Gallery, Dallas, TX 2014
- **Material Matters: National Juried Fibers Exhibition**, Union Street Gallery, Chicago, IL 2014
- **Hylton Center's Inaugural Juried Exhibition**, Buchanan Partners Art Gallery, Manassas, VA 2014
- **Soulcology of Metals Exhibition**, Guilford Art Center, Guilford, CT 2014
- **Figuratively Speaking, Contemporary Art, and the Human Body**, Rymer Gallery, Nashville, TN 2014
- **Women's Voices, Women's Visions**, Fenwick Gallery, Fairfax, VA 2014
- **NoVA Maker Faire**, Reston, VA 2014
- **Washington Post Juried Art Exhibition at the Hill Center Gallery**, Washington, DC 2014
- **Alchemical Vessels Exhibition**, Smith Center for Healing and the Arts, Washington, DC 2014
- **EMULSION: First East City Art Regional Juried Show**, Gallery O on H Street, Washington, DC 2013
- **AWSome Call for Art!**, Amazon Web Services Headquarters, Herndon, VA 2013
- **Artifex: First Annual MFA Exhibition**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2013
- **Home Maker: MFA Thesis Exhibition**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2013
- **Exchanged 2, artWORKS Gallery**, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA 2013
- **Hickok Cole's 14th Annual Art Night**, Hickok Cole Architects, Georgetown, DC 2013
- **Juncture Show**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2010
- **SOA Graduates: Recent Work**, Gallery 123, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2009
- **Lucky 13: Graduate Design Show**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2009
- **Free Hugs Campaign: Part Deux with Burqah**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2009
- **Design du Jour: BFA Thesis Exhibition**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2008
- **The S. Carbonneau Case Show of Amazing Marvels**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2008
- **Exchanged Show**, artWORKS Gallery, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA 2008
- **The Sustainability Project: Tree Lighting Performance**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2007
- **The Free Hugs Campaign Performance**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2007
- **Arts, by George!**, de Laski Performing Arts Building, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2007
- **Container and Contained**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2007
- **Honors Seminar: Recent Work**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2007
- **Time Constraints and Escape: Site Specific Installation**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2006

- **Hanging Gates: Site-Specific Installation**, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2006

Publications

- ***American Art Collector***, Alcove Media 2017
- ***Studio Visit Magazine***, Volume 31, Open Studios Press 2016
- ***Studio Visit Magazine***, Volume 30, Open Studios Press 2015
- ***Studio Visit Magazine***, Volume 27, Open Studios Press 2014
- ***Studio Visit Magazine***, Volume 25, Open Studios Press 2013

Volunteer Experience

- **Washington Project for the Arts**, Fundraising Volunteer ($10,000 at Hickok Cole Art Night) 2016
- **Greater Reston Arts Center (GRACE)**, Fundraising Volunteer ($1,000 at VA Fine Arts Festival) 2014
- **An Unkindness**, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Exhibition Assistant, Sculptor, and Gallery Docent 2013-2014
- **Arts, by George!**, de Laski Performance Building, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2011-2012
- **Always Becoming**, National Museum of the American Indian, Sculptor, Washington, DC 2007
- **Green Festival**, Fundraising Volunteer, Washington DC 2007

Teaching Experience

- **Adjunct Professor**, New Media/Graphic Design, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2015-Present
- **Post-Graduate Teaching Assistant**, Sculpture, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2013-2014
- **Graduate Lecturer**, Sculpture, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2013
- **Graduate Teaching Assistant**, Sculpture, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 2011-2013

Affiliations/Memberships

- South Asian Women's Creative Collective
- International Sculpture Center
- Aperture Foundation
- Washington Project for the Arts
- Hillyer Art Space
- CulturalDC
- Washington Sculptors Group

Specialties and Skills

Welding, metal work, woodworking, furniture, sculptures, mixed media, repurposed objects, yarn wrapping, graphic design, photography, brand identity, performances, maker faires, and commissioned works

- Pyramid Atlantic Arts Center
- District of Columbia Arts Center
- McLean Project for the Arts
- American Visionary Art Museum
- National Museum for Women in the Arts

Checklist of Works

1) *Interstellar Lamp Field*, 2015, Repurposed polyurethane garden planters, cords, and lightbulbs, 12" H x 18" W
2) *Blue/White Collar Society*, 2015, Two collared men's dress shirts sewn together, 24" H x 18" W
3) *Tumare Zindgai Taand Rusti (Urdu for "May Your Existence Be Blessed")*, 2015, Ironing board, iron, and embroidery yarn, 12" H x 36" W
4) *Warrior Series Helmet #1 (After Malala Yousafzai)*, 2015, Repurposed kitchenware to create a helmet, 18" H x 12" W
5) *Damaka (Urdu for "Explosion")*, 2013, Repurposed sleeping bag sewn into the shape of a grenade, 24" x 60" L
6) *Spider Stool and Gloves Cushion*, 2013, Repurposed metal chair legs welded into the shape of a spider and features a cushion made from repurposed workman's gloves stuffed with cotton, 18" H x 24" W
7) *The Great Divide's Bicycle Rickshaw Adventures*, 2013, Repurposed bicycle and shopping cart wrapped in over 10 miles of yarn, hundreds of liberty and jingle bells, and miniature elephants, 48" H x 36" W x 108" L
8) *I See America and America Sees Me*, 2013, Two identical mannequin heads facing each other about five feet apart with two different styled fabric patterns worn as scarves, 12" H x 60" W
9) *Perplexity and Centurion*, 2012, Two chairs welded out of shopping cart pieces, 36" H x 18" W x 12" D
10) *Steel Town Charpai (Urdu for "Woven Metal Bed") and Julnaa (Urdu for "Burning")*, 2013, Repurposed steel and over 50 feet of continuous steel wire cables to create a woven bed, 48" L x 24" W x 18" H
11) *Haute Couture*, 2013, Repurposed rice bags filled with cotton and placed on mannequin hands like expensive handbags
12) *Lotus Flower Stool*, 2012, Numerous metal washers welded together to form a basket-like stool, 36" H x 18" W
13) *Warrior Series Helmet #2 (After Malala Yousafzai)*, 2015, Repurposed kitchenware to create a helmet, 18" H x 12" W
14) *Warrior Series Helmet #3 (After Malala Yousafzai)*, 2015, Repurposed kitchenware to create a helmet, 18" H x 12" W
15) *She's Got Way Too Many Feelings*, 2013, Repurposed workman's gloves filled with cotton, fabric, and thread, 48" H x 36" D x 18" W



Interstellar Lamp Field, 2015, Repurposed polyurethane garden planters, cords, and lightbulbs



Blue/White Collar Society, 2015, Two collared men's dress shirts sewn together



Tumare Zindgai Taand Rusti (Urdu for "May Your Existence Be Blessed"), 2015, Ironing board, iron, and embroidery yarn



Warrior Series Helmet #1 (After Malala Yousafzai), 2015, Repurposed kitchenware to create a helmet



Damaka (Urdu for "Explosion"), 2013, Repurposed sleeping bag sewn into the shape of a grenade



Spider Stool and Gloves Cushion, 2013, Repurposed metal chair legs welded into the shape of a spider and features a cushion made from repurposed workman's gloves stuffed with cotton


ELEPHANT
Organic
PARI
RICE
SUPER
BASMATI RICE

The Great Divide's Bicycle Rickshaw Adventures, 2013, Repurposed bicycle and shopping cart wrapped in over 10 miles of yarn, hundreds of liberty and jingle bells, and miniature elephants



I See America and America Sees Me, 2013, Two identical mannequin heads facing each other about five feet apart with two different styled fabric patterns worn as scarves



Perplexity and Centurion, 2012, Two chairs welded out of shopping cart pieces



Steel Town Charpai (Urdu for "Woven Metal Bed") and Julnaa (Urdu for "Burning"), 2013, Repurposed steel and over 50 feet of continuous steel wire cables to create a woven bed



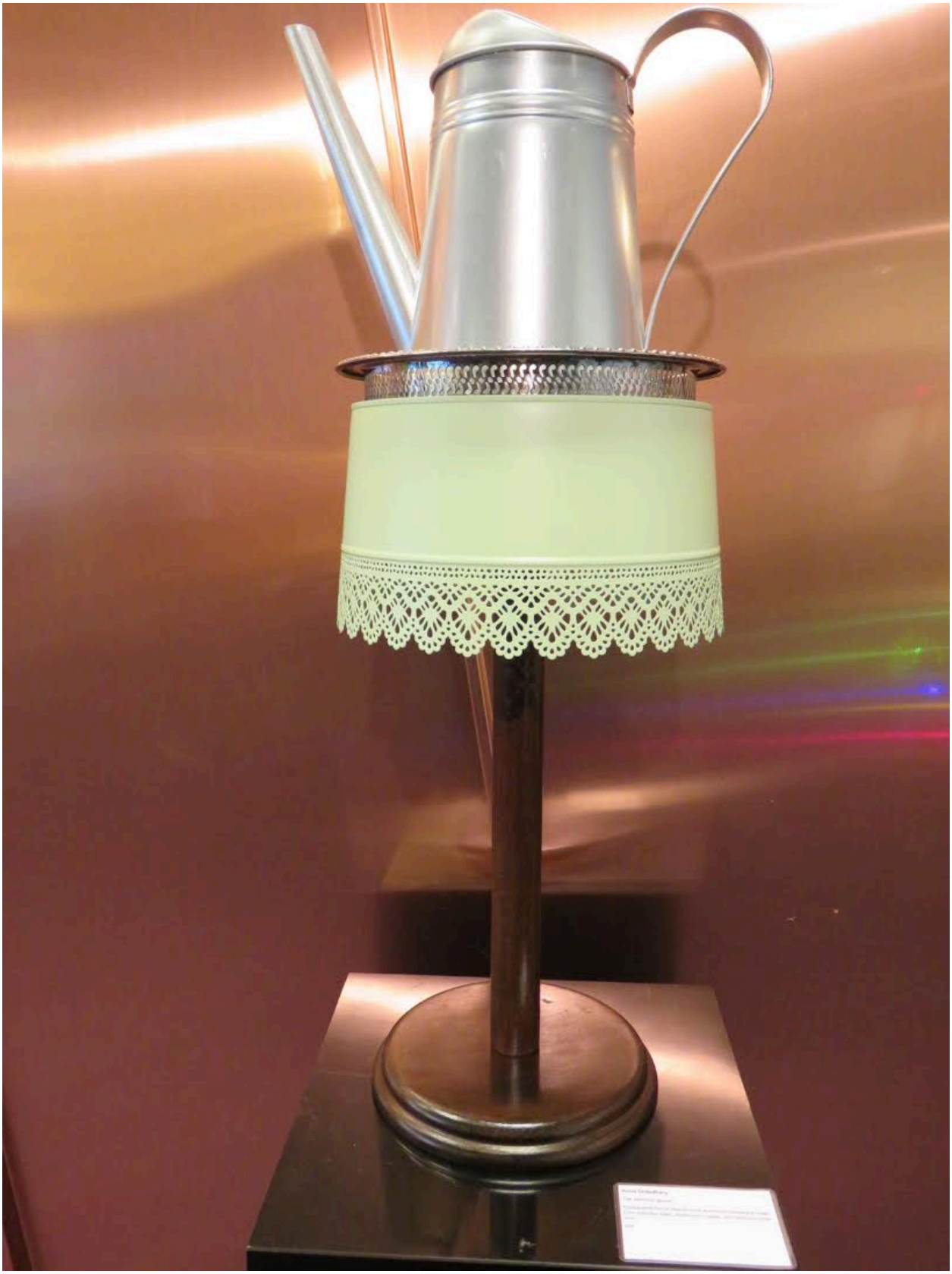
Haute Couture, 2013, Repurposed rice bags filled with cotton and placed on mannequin hands like expensive handbags



Lotus Flower Stool, 2012, Over 50 metal washers welded together to form a basket-like stool



Warrior Series Helmet #2 (After Malala Yousafzai), 2015, Repurposed kitchenware to create a helmet



Warrior Series Helmet #3 (After Malala Yousafzai), 2015, Repurposed kitchenware to create a helmet



She's Got Way Too Many Feelings, 2013, Repurposed workman's gloves filled with cotton, fabric, and thread

THE POETIC HOME OF ASMA CHAUDHARY

VELVETEEN (dearvelvet.com) JUNE 30, 2014 ART

If you've ever wondered, how to bridge two very different cultures and still retain a singular identity as a woman, Asma Chaudhary, of Pakistani heritage, raised in the United States, would definitely be the person to ask. As she tells it: *"I was born in the United States but I was able to visit Pakistan when I was five years old…that was the last time I went! So it has definitely changed since 25 years ago."*

A few months ago, I was able to talk with Washington, D.C., based artist and sculptor, Asma about her MFA graduation exhibition from George Mason University, which I featured in Fresh Art. The passionate color and politically intense subject matter of her show moved me a great deal.



I See America and America Sees Me, two identical mannequin heads and fabric.

In a huge, calm gallery space, she wove an atmosphere of femininity and fairytale with her story of what it means to make Home. Exploring themes of belonging and alienation, acceptance and assimilation, and tolerance where there is often rejection, she held me spellbound. The pieces themselves looked like everyday items, a stool, a chair, a row of coloured lights, even a bag of rice: everything a woman could use to build the fabric of her home.

As I listened to her tales of village life and noticed the sparse, albeit beautifully made furnishings, some of the quaint, almost folkloric shine began to rub off. The bright colours and gorgeous items, worthy of

any upmarket design company, took on an uncomfortable edge, while Asma's gentle tones lulled me into the feeling of security I normally get when shopping in a big store or an exotic market for home trinkets.

Nothing here was as innocent as it seemed.

The bowls had holes in them, chairs and stools likewise. The shopping cart or local taxi for gathering food from the market was a bicycle rickshaw, just as in her ancestral home, laden with sacks of rice and flour, all in their brightly coloured wrappers. I loved this section of the exhibit particularly, the sight of the basics of a pantry, so familiar yet so exotic was oddly calming.





The Great Divide's Bicycle Rickshaw Adventures detail by Asma Chaudhary

There was a darker side to this haul. The collection of foodstuffs, not even as large as a weekly family grocery run in a western city, was, Asma told me, more than enough to feed a village in Pakistan. The portions would be much smaller than ours, and the range of foods would be seen as luxurious. Clearly our obsession with dieting would not go down well there.

She's Got Way Too Many Feelings, cotton workman's gloves, cotton filling, and polyester thread.



Asma made a dress out of black household gloves, symbolising the terror, sensitivity and joy of being touched, especially for a woman whose own culture curtails such experiences, and encourages a strict level of modesty. This piece earned her a received a $500 Best of Show Award, and she was also selected and published in Studio Visit Magazine's Volume 25.

When she described her hugging experiment, wearing full burka on campus, while holding a placard inviting students, including those with strong Muslim beliefs, to embrace her, and showed me the documentary pictures, I was astonished at her bravery.

Students were hesitant at first, she said, but then the most unlikely people, male and female, finally came over, arms outstretched, shy, warm, laughing and open. It was at once an act of political provocation and a celebration of our so-called differences, and the weak barriers they present to social acceptance when explored with an open heart.

Phir Bhi Dil Hai Pakistani, hand-sewn flag made of green and white satin fabric.



The exhibition included a huge Urdu poem Chaudhary had made up as a flag, shawl and headscarf, which she photographed a Pakistani-American woman wearing as a hijab, a shawl, a cloak, a dress, culminating with her running in western clothing, scarf flying free in the wind behind her.

The poem reads like this in Urdu: "Na bijli, na atta, na paani…Phir bhi dil hai Pakistani." It means in English: "Despite living without electricity, food (flour or rice), or water…our hearts are still Pakistani." This is an original couplet my aunt in Pakistan came up with and mentioned during a phone call. She lives in an impoverished part of Sialkot, Pakistan, which faces quite a bit of turmoil. It is endearing to

hear about one's innocence and sense of identity despite struggling with poverty each day. Almost like she said, "You can take everything away from me…material possessions and whatnot, but I am still who I am. This identity cannot be taken away from me."

"I wanted to portray this rhyming couplet as a banner because I understood that even if you are a regular citizen paying for electricity in your home, those yielding power over the people will cut the connection– leaving many people in the dark. This means school children and university students must complete their homework by candlelight, cook on top of stoves with matches and fire, and likely have their food spoil since there is no more power to the refrigerator unit. On top of that rations for villagers are scarce and this ultimately inspired the bicycle rickshaw project…all the elements mentioned in the couplet are items in the rickshaw's basket: rice bags, flour bags, candles, matches, and water gallons."



The whole exhibition was thought provoking, touching and a complete visual feast. True to the name of her work, the artist has so far stayed in her home territory, with her art proving popular throughout Virginia, Tennessee, Washington, D.C., Texas, Illinois, North Carolina, and Connecticut, although she is beginning to venture out on the international stage. Her efforts at weaving two worlds together are often deceptively fun and charming: *Another effort was to support the Mini Maker Faire where engineers and artists come together…I was able to display my bicycle rickshaw and get children and adults involved into yarn bombing and wrapping objects in yarn!*

Despite the sweetness and magic, her ideas, actions and statements were courageous, foolhardy even, as she challenged the mores of two strong cultures. By no means a shrinking violet in either tradition, Asma's graceful fingers in their velvet glove held an enormous strength that every woman needs. The whole message and presentation resonated in my mind for a long time. I'd love to fill my own home with these pieces, message and all.