

USC Pacific Asia Museum

Event Announcement



EVENT: From the Grand Trunk Road to Route 66: Visiting Truck Artist Haider Ali

ON VIEW: October 2, 3, 5, 8-12, 15-19, 22 2014

Colorful trucks and buses are a striking aspect of the landscape and society across Pakistan. Highly personalized designs celebrate regional treasures, legendary heroes, local flora and fauna, movie stars, myths and treasured words of wisdom—truck art is a truly dynamic folk art. Colorful elaborate designs on Pakistan jingle trucks brighten the Grand Trunk Road, which for centuries has linked Pakistan to neighboring countries. Decorated top to bottom with flowers, portraits, landscapes and poetry in brilliant colors, these transports are mobile art. And the artists who decorate them are in high-standing in the community.

As early as the 1920s, competing companies would hire artists to paint their vehicles to attract patrons. By the late 1950s, truck art flourished. **Haider Ali** is a truck artist based in Karachi, who was taught by his father from the age of eight. Ali's work is much sought after in Pakistan. In 2002, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival selected Ali and bodywork expert Jamil-ud-Din as the best in the truck painting trade and brought them and a truck from Karachi to Washington D.C. Their finished masterpiece is now part of the Smithsonian Institution's permanent collection.

While Ali has achieved world-wide recognition as a truck artist, he does not keep secret about the craft. One of his goals is to mentor young artists so they can carry on the legacy.

Ali travels around the world, invited by museums and to special events to showcase his famed painting on donated trucks and cars. This is only his second visit to the US and his first to California. USC Pacific Asia Museum, with support from the museum's Pakistan Arts Council, vehicle sponsor Dara Shah Khan/Shahnawaz Restaurant and paint sponsor Sherwin-Williams, is hosting Ali as an artist-in-residence from Thursday, Oct. 2 through Wednesday, Oct. 22, when he brings his beautiful folk art form to Southern California. **From the Grand Trunk Road to Route 66: Visiting Truck Artist Haider Ali** is a live event where Ali will start and finish painting a donated vehicle in the museum's parking lot. Once his artwork is finished, he'll move on to the next job, transforming metal to masterpiece.

From the Grand Trunk Road to Route 66: Visiting Truck Artist Haider Ali is one of 30 events taking place in conjunction with the Los Angeles/Islam Arts Initiative (LA/IAI). Anchoring the LA/IAI are two connected exhibitions, Doris Duke's **Shangri La: Architecture, Landscapes and Islamic Art** and **Shangri La: Imagined Cities** commissioned by the Department of Cultural Affairs and showing from October 26 through December 28 at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdale Park.

About USC Pacific Asia Museum

USC Pacific Asia Museum is the only museum dedicated to Pacific Asia at a major research university in the United States. The museum's mission is to further intercultural understanding through the arts of Asia and the Pacific Islands. Since 1971, USC Pacific Asia Museum has served a broad audience of students, families, adults and scholars through its education and outreach programs.

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Image caption: Artist Haider Ali painting an Indian truck in Amritsar, 2012. Photo: ANI

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