



150  
YEARS OF  
EXCELLENCE  
1875-2025



NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ARTS  
A FEDERAL CHARTERED INSTITUTE  
4-SHAHRAH-E-QUAID-E-AZAM,  
LAHORE 54000, PAKISTAN.  
Ph: +92 42 99211622-99210601  
WWW.NCA.EDU.PK

## The NCA Triennale 2025: *Kasb e Kamal Kun*

As we enter the historic National College of Arts (NCA) on The Mall, Lahore, we find the epigram, *Kasb e Kamal Kun Keh Aziz e Jahan Shavi* imprinted at the entrance.

From the myriads of human creations possible, *Kasb* means work of the hand- working through and with the hand.

Over generations, the NCA has borne and carried forth a deep commitment to *Kasb*. *Kasb e Kamal Kun Keh Aziz e Jahan Shavi* – the poetic aphorism is a romance with memory and being remembered. It is a reminder that you will be remembered with admiration, fondness, and endearment for what matures through your hand.

You will be loved for time immemorial for your *Kasb*.

## About the First Edition of The NCA Triennale 2025

The NCA Triennale 2025 is rooted in the National College of Arts' historic motto, *Kasb-e-Kamal Kun; Keh Aziz-e-Jahan Shavi*, (seek excellence in your work, so you may be admired by the world) – a mastery of the working hand that transcends limits of the priorly known, familiar creative bounds and cerebral constructs.

The first edition of The NCA Triennale serves as the first of its kind initiative to unpack gaps and explore crossovers between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary art practices. In a world growingly driven by artificial intelligence and ever-evolving technological possibilities, The NCA Triennale's exhibitions seek to highlight the lasting significance of artisanal traditions while advancing approaches to their interpretation. Additionally, the inaugural Triennale will bring together local and international artists, inviting them to create new projects that resonate across the themes of heritage, contemporary art, technology- inviting fresh ways to reimagine the future of craftsmanship.

Craft, in the context of The NCA Triennale 2025 is not restricted to the narrow, familiar traps that rigidly dichotomize art and craft as distinct, even antithetical entities. Instead, we aim to direct our attention towards *making* processes, not merely as a set of interdependent physical and operational methods but as an alchemy of psychological, experiential, social, cultural – even physiological processes ensuing from one another.





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The comprehension, discourse, and praxis of objects, materials, and artefacts catalogued as art are oft-times circuitous, accessible only to private, somewhat unshared realms and circles, that are exclusionary of organically developing shades of societal meanings. Our intention is not to nativize, exoticize, or localize craft into a separate communal activity estranged from art, often viewed from a patronizing vantage point. Instead, we attempt to acknowledge that craft and art are a continuum.

It is the visceral memory of the hand, the contour where art and craft meld in a subtle gradient that finesse becomes seamless, culminating into an expression that is no longer tied to any particular-ism, yet affords a largeness of meaning.

## Open Call Themes

Some over-arching themes for The NCA Triennale 2025 Open Call are:

*Retelling everyday practices of making<sup>1</sup>*

*Preserving material culture within the context of “the broader conceptualizations of craft”<sup>2</sup>*

*Craft-oriented histories of travel and migration*

*The branding and marketing of traditional cultural expressions<sup>3</sup>*

*Phenomena referred to as the ‘poetics of the handmade’<sup>4</sup>*

*The inner processuality of craft - making as a method of autobiographical inquiry*

*Practices of resilience and protest through handiwork*

*Collectivizing of sentiment through patterns reminiscent of resilience – what do you do when the only memory you have left of your collective self is a visually intricate pattern?*

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<sup>1</sup> Totten, *Craft Knowledge and Performance*, 126.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Johnsson, Daphne Zografos. “The Branding of Traditional Cultural Expressions: To Whose Benefit?” In *Indigenous Peoples’ Innovation: Intellectual Property Pathways to Development*, edited by Peter Drahos and Susy Frankel, 147–64. ANU Press, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt24hfgx.13>.

<sup>4</sup> Claudia Sbrissa (2008) Poetics of the Handmade, *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 1:2, 303-306, DOI: 10.2752/174967808X325587.





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*“Craft not merely as a cultural phenomenon that is attended by the anxieties, hopes, failures, and insights that make (it) worthy of study”<sup>5</sup> – but also as a living and dynamic set of practices continually in discourse with the wider world around them*

*Poetry/Indigenous Verse/Writerly Speculation as an idiom for modern craft*

*Multiple geographies<sup>6</sup> and historical periods when craft was consciously conceived of/framed as opposed to mass-produced, mass-disseminated, and mass-circulated objects*

*Multivocality and animating the cultural space of the city in relation to processes of making*

## **Who Can Apply?**

We invite applications from individuals and collectives across diverse creative disciplines, including but not limited to visual arts, design, architecture, music, film, theatre, and traditional art and craft practices.

Those engaged in interdisciplinary or experimental approaches are also encouraged to apply.

Aspiring participants must have showcased their works/projects, creating engagement within the public domain, and exhibited at acclaimed contemporary art galleries with at least one solo show to their credit.

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<sup>5</sup> Editorial Introduction, 6.

<sup>6</sup> (2008) Editorial Introduction, The Journal of Modern Craft, 1:2, 179-180, DOI: 10.2752/174967808X325488. Vol. 1, Issue 2





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## Application Format

Applications must contain three documents: Participant Proposal, Portfolio, and Resume.

### 1. Proposal for The NCA Triennale 2025

Each Proposal PDF must feature the following:

#### Cover Sheet

##### Personal Details

Full Name (Passport Name for International Participants)

Email Address

Phone No. (With Country Code)

Contact Address

Passport No. for International Participants

Website & Social Media Links (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn etc.)

##### Title of the Proposed Work

**Proposal \*-** 500 to 1000 words followed by visual and/or audio-visual representation of work – comprising any of the following: High-Res Artwork Images, Photographs, Illustrations, Animations, Prototypes, Sketches, Diagrams, Videos etc.

Specifics such as space and equipment requisites, along with technical requirements for light and sound, and any other particulars, such as those for site-specific installations must be mentioned beforehand.

### 2. Portfolio

The PDF must contain the following:

**A Compilation of Selected Works/Projects as High-Res JPEGs**

**Artist's Bio** (Condensed Personal History/Profile of the Artist) – 80 to 150 words

**Artist's Statement** – 250 to 300 words





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### 3. Participant CV/Resume

#### Important Dates

**Proposal Submission:** May 15, 2025 – Status email will be sent within two weeks of proposal submission.

#### Guidelines for Participants

- a. Participants are to adhere to the prescribed word limits and specifications for the visual and/or audio-visual documentation of works shared. Proposals that do not follow the said specifications will be desk-rejected in the earliest stages of evaluation.
- b. Video submissions will be shared as YouTube, Vimeo or Google Drive links. Additionally, participant portfolios may also be sent as online links where applicable.
- c. Participants must ensure that original work, not displayed anywhere else previously is being forwarded as part of the proposal to be materialized for The NCA Triennale 2025.
- d. The submission size limit for one application must not exceed 10 MB.
- e. With an emphasis on the themes of *Kasb e Kamal Kun*, we discourage AI/Chat GPT generated content within participant bios, statements, and proposals. However, the use of such content must be clearly acknowledged in case the participants employ it anywhere in their submissions. Participants have the liberty to use either English or Urdu to format their proposals.
- f. Participants whose proposals contain plagiarized material will be barred from current or future participation in the first and subsequent editions of The NCA Triennale.
- g. Projects featuring art and design collectives and traditional craftspeople must clearly acknowledge that in the proposal.
- h. Site-specific proposals can be accompanied by prototypes of the proposed installation.





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- i. Residencies for international participants may be offered based on their proposals.
- j. The selection criteria include consistency and relevance to the context and scope of the Triennale themes, the overarching concept and artistic vision of the participants, collaboration and adaptability, and execution engagement with process and experimentation.
- k. Once selected, the shortlisted participants will stay in regular contact with The NCA Triennale Team via emails, in-person and/or online sessions. Additionally, an individual contract will be formalized with each participant.
- l. The NCA Triennale 2025 Selection and Curatorial Board reserves the right to the selection and final display and curation of works and sites.

## **Additional Information**

### **Proposal Format for Participants**

Participants may consider the following set of questions, as and where relevant while framing their proposals for The NCA Triennale 2025.

Briefly describe your artistic practice and how it aligns with the theme of this Triennale. How does your work challenge or blur the boundaries between art and craft? Consider the following: In what ways does your practice engage with the idea of *Kasb-e-Kamal* (the pursuit of excellence through skill)? What message or experience do you hope to convey through your work?

Can you discuss a moment in your practice where technical mastery led to new conceptual insights? How do you perceive the role of the “hand” in contemporary artistic production?

What materials, techniques, or technologies will you use for this project? Can you describe how you experiment with materials, techniques, or forms in your creative process?

Does your practice engage with memory, folklore, or material culture? If so, in what ways?

How do you see craft evolving in contemporary art/art-historical discourse? You may choose to answer this with special attention to the realities of artistic practice within a postcolonial South Asian context.





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How does your project challenge conventional artistic boundaries or narratives? What role does interdisciplinarity play in your work?

How does your work respond to contemporary social, cultural, or political issues?

What is your perspective on making art more inclusive and public spaces accessible beyond academic and elite spaces?

How does your work respond to the urban and cultural landscape of Lahore (or your own city)?

### **Practical Considerations**

Please specify if you have worked on similar large-scale exhibitions before? If so, what were the challenges you faced?

Do you have prior experience managing logistics (installation, transportation, budget, etc.) for exhibitions?

Are you open to collaboration with other artists or curators during the Triennale?

