

News Release

New Art Gallery of St. Albert exhibition honours an unimaginable tragedy

August 22, 2023, St. Albert, Alberta – The Art Gallery of St. Albert (part of the Arts and Heritage Foundation) is launching its newest exhibition in the beautiful main gallery space, that tenderly crafts a space to honour an unimaginable tragedy.

Edmonton based artist **Riaz Mehmood** strives to capture the lived complexity of his home province of Khyber Paskhtunkhwa, Pakistan. His latest exhibition **Remember - Resist – Relive** centers on Peshawar, an ancient city that has been settled for nearly 2000 years. Throughout that time, the city has been known for its flowers, a paradise of gardens and greenery.

But a singular event in 2014 has marked this community forever. On December 16, 134 students and 15 staff members at the Army Public School and College in nearby Peshawar, Pakistan were murdered in the deadliest terrorist attack in the country's history. The attack lasted over 8 hours. The terrified parents of the school's 1,000 pupils gathered outside the school and at local hospitals, desperate to find their children.

Families were bonded together in tragedy, supported in their grief by the wider community. But not long after the attack, political interest invaded this community's mourning, absorbing their loss into a tangled and complex battle against militancy. Politicians lauded the lost children as heroes, martyrs who'd made the ultimate sacrifice.

Today, there is mounting pressure from the government to move on and consider this tragedy resolved. In an act of heartfelt and compassionate defiance, memorials continue to be held annually by the families, remembering the lost children.

Inspired and guided by the resilience of his friends and family in the face of this tragedy, Mehmood fills his work with a deep sense of loss and love. **Remember – Resist – Relive is infused with gentleness, looking to the flowers that have defined Peshawar for centuries.**

In this exhibition, fragrant living plants surround a re-creation of a student's desk. Watercolour paintings, video and delicate cut paper books add to the installment, tenderly holding the memories of a community.

Through this work, Mehmood strives to create a space to remember and a place to heal.

The exhibition runs from August 24 to September 30.

- **In-person tour:** September 5 at noon
- **Virtual tour:** September 13 at noon on Facebook Live
- **Artist talk and reception:** September 28 from 6-8 pm

For more information contact:

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