

# The A to Z of art galleries

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**T**HE city of Lahore, endowed with a rich cultural heritage, has never had a dearth of artists. However, till rather recently, the venues available for the display of art were relatively limited. Arranging exhibitions of artists' work was the domain of a few public institutions like the Arts Council and there was a paucity of private art galleries. One can recall, that first a little over a decade ago, Nayyar Dada's Nairang gallery seemed like a novelty, and that, too, eventually closed down. Nonetheless, a number of other private galleries have gradually come up in the city. Now, in the year 2002, Lahore offers the following venues for art exhibits: (The list is in alphabetical order and not in order of merit).

**THE ALHAMRA ART GALLERY:** Also known as the Allah Bakhsh gallery, this is the country's largest gallery. It is part of a large complex which houses an auditorium, lecture halls and a puppet theatre. Till recently, it was being overseen by the Lahore commissioner and resident director of the Lahore Arts Council. Now, however, a board of governors comprising 18 prominent citizens from the cultural milieu of Lahore has been given the task of managing the Alhamra in an attempt to improve its functioning.

**CO-OPERA ART GALLERY:** Situated on The Mall, this gallery is a unit of The Pakistan Writers Cooperative Society. Its aim is stated as 'the promotion of art and literature' and apart from paintings, the gallery houses a large variety of books, mostly in Urdu.

**THE CROWEATERS GALLERY:** Named after the novel by Bapsi Sidhwa, it is housed in her ancestral property near Lahore's old Tollinton Market area. This compact but purposeful gallery has a lot to offer. Since its inception a couple of years ago it has made an impact with a variety of group and solo exhibitions, both by established and new artists. Besides paintings, an interesting collection of craft arts as well as books and stationery are always on display.

**CHITRKAR:** Chitrkar is the newest addition to Lahore's art scene. Situated on the Upper Mall in a lane opposite the Lahore Gymkhana Club, (and

right next to the NGS School), it promises to be an interesting place. Chitrkar offers drawing, painting and music classes, besides space for displaying art work. It also aims to promote Punjabi language and culture — a recent invitation to a musical performance was worded in Punjabi — an unusual occurrence, indeed.

**EJAZ GALLERIES:** Located in Mini Market, Gulberg (next to the trendy Cafe Zouk), this is perhaps Lahore's sleekest gallery. With its posh interior embellished with the works of well known artists, it is proving to be a success story in terms of fame and fortune. While the predisposition towards commerce is obvious, credit is due for its rise to a prominent place that offers a variety of works. Its owner

started off with a successful framing outlet and ended up as a successful gallery owner. The profits have now been channelled into a separate state of the art framing outlet — The Framer, that was recently inaugurated on MM Alam Road, Gulberg.

**THE LAHORE ART GALLERY:** Situated on Lawrence Road, this gallery is part of a huge mansion owned by the Saigol family and converted into an art gallery by Shehla Saigol.

It began with a bang, a decade ago and soon developed into a prestigious gallery that displayed the works of only famous artists. For the past couple of years, however, its performance has been rather erratic and exhibitions have been infrequent.

**LE GALLERIE - CHEN ONE:**

This small but attractive art space functions within the Chen One shopping mall in Gulberg. It may be a somewhat commercial enterprise, but it does lay claim to a number of quality exhibitions of paintings as well as craft arts including ceramics, jewellery and furniture.

**ROHTAS-II:** Previously named Art Shart, this is the brainchild of Salima Hashmi and is also one of the newest additions to the local art scene. It promises to be the most unconventional and 'non-commercial' space available for artists. Located in Model Town in Salima's own home, it has held a few but unusual exhibitions.

**SHAKIR ALI MUSEUM AND GALLERY:** This government-run gallery uses the space within the house of the late artist, Shakir Ali. Situated in Garden Town, this is a museum-cum-gallery where the belongings and art works of the legendary artist have been preserved. A portion of the house has been reserved for other exhibits.

**ZAHOORUL AKHLAQUE GALLERY, NCA:** The gallery of the National College of Arts, has been recently renamed after the late Zahoorul Akhlaque, whose tragic murder sent shock waves around the country. It is one of the oldest venues for quality art exhibitions in the city. The students' thesis work is exhibited every year. Off and on, the work of the faculty as well as outsiders is also displayed.

Apart from these galleries, there are other venues where works of art are displayed. These include Punjab University's Fine Arts department, the Lahore Museum gallery, the Chughtai Museum, the Permanent Gallery at Qadhafi Stadium's Alhamra Cultural Complex, the Alliance Francaise, and the British Council (recently not operational because of the political tension in the region).

It is heartening to see an increase in the number of art galleries and there is still room for more, particularly in the direction of non-commercial enterprise, where artist can be free to display original and socially relevant work. Prominent artists and well-to-do citizens can get together for the promotion of art education that can help creative endeavour.



THE Croweaters Gallery.