



GALLERY 5

Aafia Ali Shah

To love the empty cup

Lismore Regional Gallery



11 Rural Street
Lismore, NSW 2480

Open hours
Wednesday to Sunday, 10am – 4pm
Thursdays until 6pm
Closed on public holidays

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@ [LismoreRegionalGallery](https://www.facebook.com/LismoreRegionalGallery)

Lismore Regional Gallery is a creative initiative of the Lismore City Council supported by the New South Wales Government through Create NSW and the Friends of the Gallery. The Gallery acknowledges the Widjabul Wia-bal people of the Bundjalung Nation as the traditional owners of the land upon which the gallery stands. We pay respects to elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all First Nations cultures and their contributing connection to land, waters, community and the arts.

7 MARCH –
27 APRIL 2025

The human being is an in-between of things. It is a membrane between external and internal experiences, of the world and of the spirit. The two fronts which one must attend to don't often create a singular whole experience but more often seem to pull in opposite directions, making clear the rift that forms in an uneven relationship between spirit and external-facing self.

The language of the external self, logic and the known easily becomes the dominant voice that we speak in. The language of the spirit, in its sensitivity, becomes assigned to fleeting whims that are easy to ignore or are a distant alarm, sometimes culminating in a profoundly confusing pain. Logic doesn't always possess the vocabulary to perceive what lies on the other side of the human entity, let alone understand what that other side seeks as meaningful, fulfilling, and true. All of this exists within a blind spot of logic, one step beyond the known into the Unknowable.

To connect with the internal spirit of the human, its balance with the external self must be recalibrated. The external self, in its custodianship of the human body, is intimately reinforced through habits, particularly of the mind. It distracts itself persistently to solve for the discomfort of the spirit's dissonance. Whether through the attention or through external concepts of identity, it fills one's capacity to cure the internal quiet that exists naturally, this quiet in which the spirit's subtleties can be heard. In order to achieve balance, one must step into the silence and open their eyes, to start again.

To love the empty cup is an exhibition that seeks to visualise the Unknowable, not as the mind understands, but as the spirit sees.

Aafia Ali Shah, 2025



Mirror 2024
oil on paper
90 x 65 cm

In dialogue

It means to start again
to start again
to start again
Rebuild and regrow
Love what comes to you, whether it's fleeting
or persistent
Love the things that you can only catch
glimpses of
Things that exist as flashes between the right
light and the right time
excruciating livingness
Things that you have no control nor authority
over
These things that remind you of God
Windows into your heart where all you can
see is His Love
The Evidence that He has left for you to
trample by
Stumbling as you go
But you always see it, because He has
Written that you should
He insists
And so you look
And in one second, for one second
Your brain is filled with the reflection of your
heart



Through line 2025
oil on paper
48 x 70 cm



Phrase 1 2024
oil on paper
28 x 40 cm

list of works

Aafia Ali Shah
born 2001 Mullumbimby, Australia
lives/works in Rawalpindi,
Pakistan

Because it must 2025
oil on paper
50 x 65 cm
\$644

Desert 2025
acrylic ink on paper
17.6 x 15.5 cm
\$57

Eclipse 2024
acrylic ink on paper
18.2 x 14 cm
\$57

Fire alarm 2024
acrylic ink on paper
15.6 x 15.8 cm
\$57

Fleeting or persistent 2025
oil on paper
48 x 60 cm
\$536

In/out (weave) 2024
acrylic ink on paper
23 x 18.2 cm
\$57

Insist 2025
acrylic on paper
40 x 50 cm
\$286

Mirror 2024
oil on paper
90 x 65 cm
\$750

Nest 2025
acrylic ink on paper
19.5 x 22.5 cm
\$57

Notes on communication 2025
artist book: paper and embroidery
thread. Interior paintings: acrylic on
paper
14.3 x 10.2 x 0.5 cm
nfs

Phrase 1 2024
oil on paper
28 x 40 cm
\$250

Phrase 2 2025
oil on paper
28 x 40 cm
\$250

The grander self 2025
oil on paper
40 x 60 cm
\$536

Through line 2025
oil on paper
48 x 70 cm
\$680

To start again 2025
acrylic on paper
47.5 x 50 cm
\$286

all works courtesy the artist

Aafia Ali Shah is an emerging artist who lives and works between Australia and Pakistan. She completed her Bachelor of Art and Design at Southern Cross University, Lismore, in 2023.

Through the mixed practices of expressive painting and meditative making of books and fibre artefacts, she seeks to encounter and reflect on insights relating to Islamic spirituality.

Aafia uses symbolism, material engagement, and poetic translation and re-translation to engage with the human habit of pattern-seeking and the experiencing of feelings complex beyond language, with intuition playing a crucial role as her compass to triangulate a path to states of being which are fleeting and highly subtle. She is interested in creating spaces which embody these states of being and internal narratives that are inexpressible, such that they put one in the position of a witness to the Unknown, to reach into it and find ‘Truth’.

Subjects such as relationship with place and placelessness, time, and the meta-physical experiences of the inner self in relation to the external world are recurrent in her work.