



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rasheed Araeen: Conscious Forms Exhibition Premieres at RWA Bristol
Bristol, 25 May – 11 August 2024

The RWA proudly announces "**Rasheed Araeen: Conscious Forms**," a new exhibition celebrating the pioneering work of the veteran, London-based Pakistani artist Rasheed Araeen. Set amidst a trilogy of exhibitions at the RWA Art Gallery showcasing global majority artists, this event marks Araeen's first appearance in Bristol, inviting audiences to engage with his bold, innovative creations and re-telling the story of this vital figure in British Modernism in the context of Bristol's own post-colonial present.

"Conscious Forms" goes beyond highlighting Araeen's artistic achievements; it is not yet another retrospective of his much-celebrated oeuvre. The show critically examines the political context surrounding the development of Araeen's artistic language, showing how aesthetics and social critique have always been inextricably linked in his practice.

This topical show – containing old and new works from the 1950s to the present – includes an array of Araeen's gem-hued, abstract sculptures in the RWA's daylight galleries. Visitors are encouraged to interact with and rearrange the colourful cubes, forming a central 'Reading Room' installation, which showcases copies of *Black Phoenix* and *Third Text*, radical art journals that Araeen founded in 1978 and 1987 respectively. The interactive sculptures demonstrate how Araeen's engineering background and his engagement with Islamic geometry and architecture are vital to his investigation of form. The show includes Araeen's delicate semi-abstract paintings of boats from the 1950s and 1960s (made in Karachi), his politically charged photomontages from the 1970s and 1980s and his more recent geometric wall-pieces. By shedding light on the biases inherent in Euro-American art history and Britain's identity politics, Araeen's work prompts a re-evaluation of established narratives around 'inclusivity', at a moment when these discussions rage in the public sphere.

Curated by **Dr Zehra Jumabhoy** and **Dr Elizabeth Robles**, Lecturers in the History of Art at the University of Bristol, “Conscious Forms” showcases Araeen’s multifaceted exploration of British identity, belonging and migration, and probes Bristol’s own Imperial past.



Uniting the various themes of “Conscious Forms”, **on Sunday 21 July at 11-11.45 am**, Araeen’s seminal performance, *Chakras*, will be re-staged on the Bristol Docks. First performed in 1970 in London’s St. Katherine Docks to high acclaim – the photo-installation of its later performance in Paris can be seen at the RWA as part of the exhibition – this time Araeen’s circular discs will float on the waterfront outside MShed, the resting place of the dethroned Colston statue, as part of the **Bristol Harbour Festival 2024**. The performance invites audience participation for the creation of a new Bristol-themed artwork by Araeen: *Chakras-Bristol, 2024*. Join us!

Supported by The Elephant Trust.

Exhibition Details:

Title: Rasheed Araeen: Conscious Forms

Venue: RWA

Dates: Saturday 25 May – Sunday 11 August 2024

Press Day: Friday 24 May 2024

Admission: £9.90 day ticket, £16 Annual RWA Art Pass for unlimited entry

For press inquiries, interviews, or additional information, please contact Hemali Modha, Marketing Manager at hemali.modha@rwa.org.uk

About the RWA: The RWA is a renowned art gallery promoting visual arts through exhibitions, education, and collaboration. Situated in the heart of Bristol, the RWA has a rich history of supporting and showcasing innovative and thought-provoking works by both emerging and established artists. Visit www.rwa.org.uk for more information.

About Rasheed Araeen:

Rasheed Araeen is a pivotal figure in the British art scene. London-based Araeen is a conceptual artist, sculptor, painter, writer, and curator. He graduated in civil engineering from the NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, in 1962. He moved to London in the 1960s. His diverse practice encompasses publishing, writing, and visual art. He was the founding editor of art journals *Black*

Phoenix (1978), *Third Text* (1987) and *Third Text Asia* (2008). Notable amongst his achievements was the curation of the groundbreaking exhibition, *The Other Story, Afro-Asian artists in Post-war Britain* at the Hayward Gallery, London, in 1989. The show established a space for Afro-Asian artists within the mainstream art establishment.

Araeen's own work has been exhibited and collected extensively both in the UK and internationally, including at prestigious institutions such as the Tate in London, the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.