

## Rasheed Araeen

### *Minimalism Then and Now: 1960s - Present*

Aicon Gallery Exhibition May 7<sup>th</sup> – June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Press Preview & Opening Reception: Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup> 6:00pm – 8:00pm

35 Great Jones St., New York NY 10012

Frieze New York: May 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> | Stand A21 – Randall's Island

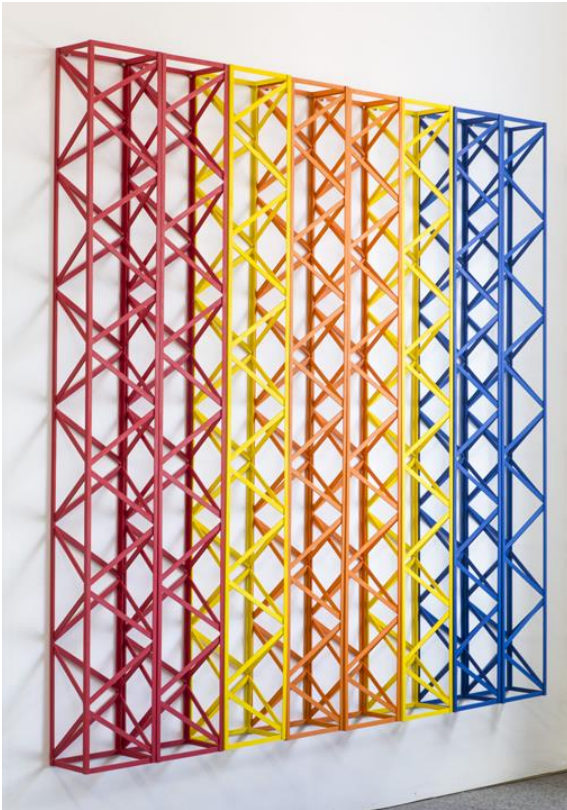
**Aicon Gallery New York** is proud to announce *Rasheed Araeen – Minimalism Then and Now*, the first major survey exhibition of the artist's work in New York City. A pioneering artist and voice for alternative and Non-Western interpretations of Minimalist and Conceptual art in the 1960s and 70s outside of the typically referenced canon, Araeen's work in this exhibition spans his oeuvre from his beginnings in Pakistan and London to the present day. The exhibition ranges from Araeen's earliest and most iconic sculptures of the 1960s, through his pioneering kinetic, interactive and performance-based works, in addition to a group of increasingly complex relief constructions from his current practice. The exhibition at Aicon Gallery will be accompanied by a solo booth in this year's **Frieze New York, Stand A21**, from May 14<sup>th</sup> through May 17<sup>th</sup>.



Rasheed Araeen, *Sculpture No. 2*, 1965, Steel and paint, 48 x 48 x 48 in.

Writing on the occasion of Araeen's retrospective at Birmingham's Ikon Gallery in 1988, editor and curator Patricia Bickers argued: "The formal language Araeen began to develop during the Sixties owed much to his critical awareness of Modernist discourse about abstraction, particularly the theories of Mondrian and the Constructivists. Such ideas were then still current in England." Araeen himself pinpointed the influence of Anthony Caro on his developing practice. "I have often talked about my encounter with Anthony Caro's works after I arrived in London in 1964 and its influence on what I myself subsequently arrived at in 1965, which turned out to be a form of sculpture that later became known as Minimalism." For Araeen, it was not so much the forms of Caro's artistry that were interesting but his use of engineering material such as steel girders which, as Araeen recalls, "had the appearance of having been picked up from a discarded heap of demolished engineering works." At the time, Araeen was working as a civil engineering assistant in London, producing drawings of industrial structures. The two influences of Caro and his day-job came together with the drawing for *Sculpture No. 1*, conceived in December 1965, which detailed four steel girders symmetrically placed next to each other. Conceived in the same year, the drawing for *Sculpture No. 2* again showed painted steel girders, this time arranged in four stacked layers.

However, Araeen was keen to move away from what he saw as an ongoing traditional approach to the relationship of work to its surroundings, seen in the work of London's New Generation sculptors and others. Instead, he was keen to explore a more non-hierarchical relationship between the work, the viewer and the work's surroundings. His solution was what he termed his 'structures'—works made in open modular form that theoretically could be re-positioned by the viewer. Moreover, Araeen introduced a lattice structure into the oeuvre of Minimalism, a visual language that had come independently to Araeen at the same time as it was taking root in New York; although, in Araeen's case, it was linked back



Rasheed Araeen, *RRYOYBB*, 2014, Wood and paint, 80 x 72 in.

to his background in structural engineering. Art critic Jean Fisher noted the key differences between Araeen's articulation of Minimalism and that of the New Yorkers: "There are, however, important distinctions to be made between the Minimalist cube and Araeen's Structures, which to my mind resides in the difference between an instrumental, abstract-logical regulation of the world and an organic one."

This acknowledgement of the spectator as being a constitutive element in the work resulted in a further development of Araeen's work. He opined: "My interest in participation emerged from the nature of my own work in 1968. While manipulating four small cubes to see how many different arrangements I could make out of them, I realized the potential in them of infinite movement and transformation." Works such as *Char Yar* (1968) contain this potential of the spectator unmaking and re-making the work through them. However, Araeen himself was moving away from making objects for viewing in galleries towards more participatory and collaborative work, which became increasingly informed by his growing political activism. In 1969, Araeen began working on *Chakras* and its subsequent counterpart *Triangles*, which were his first participatory works outside the gallery space. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1970, Araeen and members of the public threw sixteen two-foot diameter discs into

London's St. Katherine's Dock. This quantity of sixteen, selected to reference a four-by-four configuration of a Minimalist structure, would immediately be undone by the action of being thrown into water.

Araeen went on to have solo shows at institutional spaces such as the Ikon Gallery (1987), the South London Gallery (1994) and the Serpentine Gallery (1996). In all, mainstream critical discussion of the early part of his career up until the early 1970s was less prevalent, until 2007 when the Tate London purchased and displayed his works from the late 1960s. In 2010, Aicon Gallery, London hosted the first major retrospective of Araeen's work in over a decade, paving the way for a new string of exhibitions and critical attention. In 2014, Araeen's work was a prominent feature in the exhibition *Other Primary Structures* at the Jewish Museum in New York, a long-overdue exploration of Minimalism outside its art-historical canonically Western context. In that same year, a major exhibition hosted by the Sharjah Art Foundation emphasized that the hiatus in critical and institutional responses to Araeen's works had finally passed. A variety of reasons contributed to that hiatus. Araeen's own activist-publisher activities setting up the periodicals *Black Phoenix* and *Third Text*, his involvement in the debates around 'Black Art' and his curating of exhibitions such as *The Essential Black Art* and *The Other Story* meant that the critical and curatorial focus on his artistry was irregular at best. More crucial however, was confusion amongst curators and art historians as to how to account for the appearance of Minimalist sculpture in Britain not directly influenced by the work of contemporaneous New York Minimalists. It has now been over fifty years since Araeen produced *My First Sculpture*, and with the belated institutional recognition his work is now receiving, it seems critical to bring this large survey of his works to New York in order to reconsider the various and overlapping accounts and artistic journeys that can be described as Minimalism.

Please contact Aicon Gallery ([Andrew@Aicongallery.com](mailto:Andrew@Aicongallery.com)) for more information.

## RASHEED ARAEEN – Selected Works



**Rasheed Araeen, *Sculpture No 1*, 1965, Steel and paint, 12 x 12 x 72 in. (x4)**

# RASHEED ARAEEN



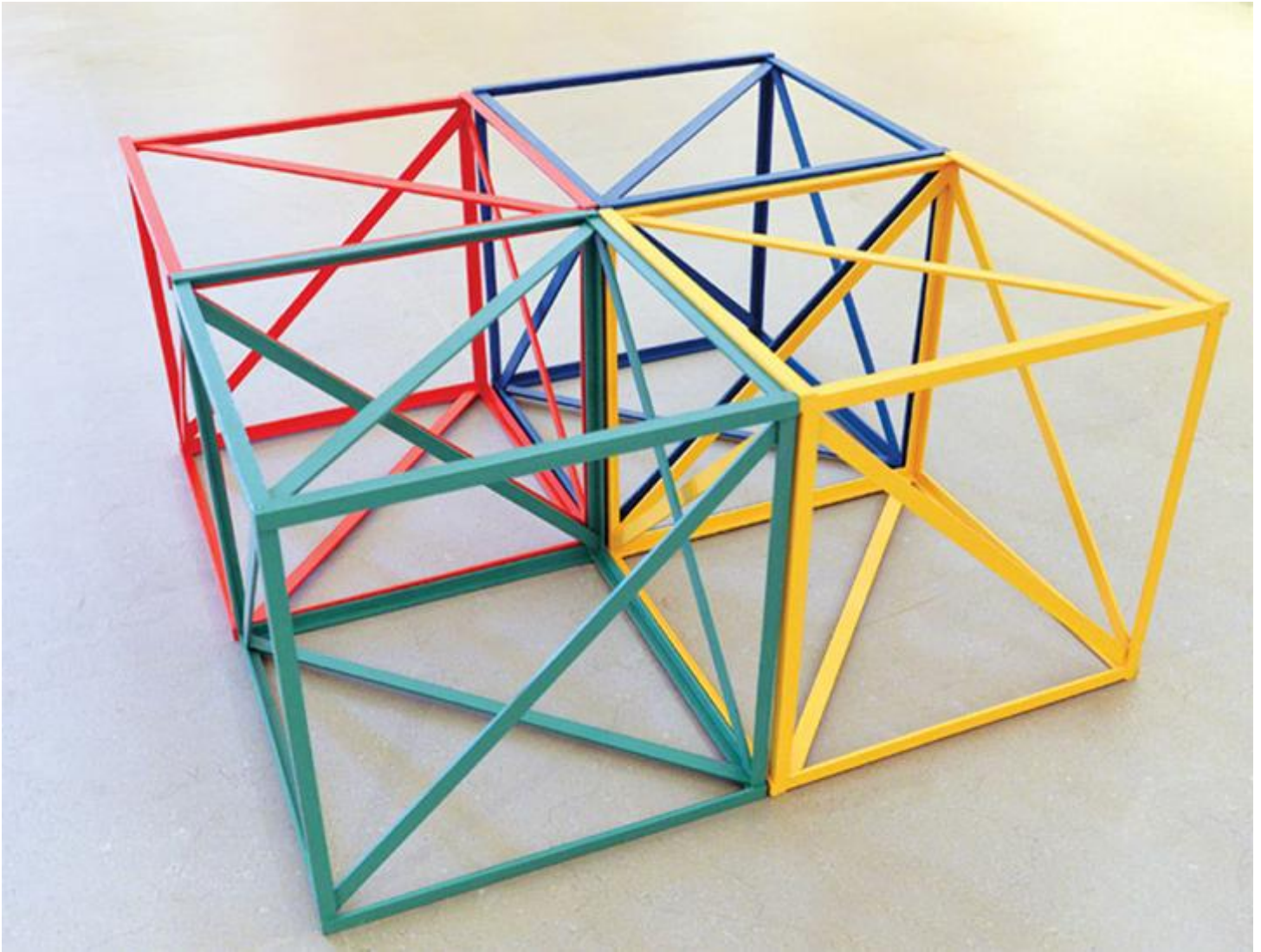
**Rasheed Araeen**, *Sculpture No 2*, 1965, Steel and paint, 48 x 48 x 48 in.

# RASHEED ARAEEN



**Rasheed Araeen**, *First Structure*, 1966-67, Steel and paint, 55 x 55 x 55 in.

## RASHEED ARAEEN



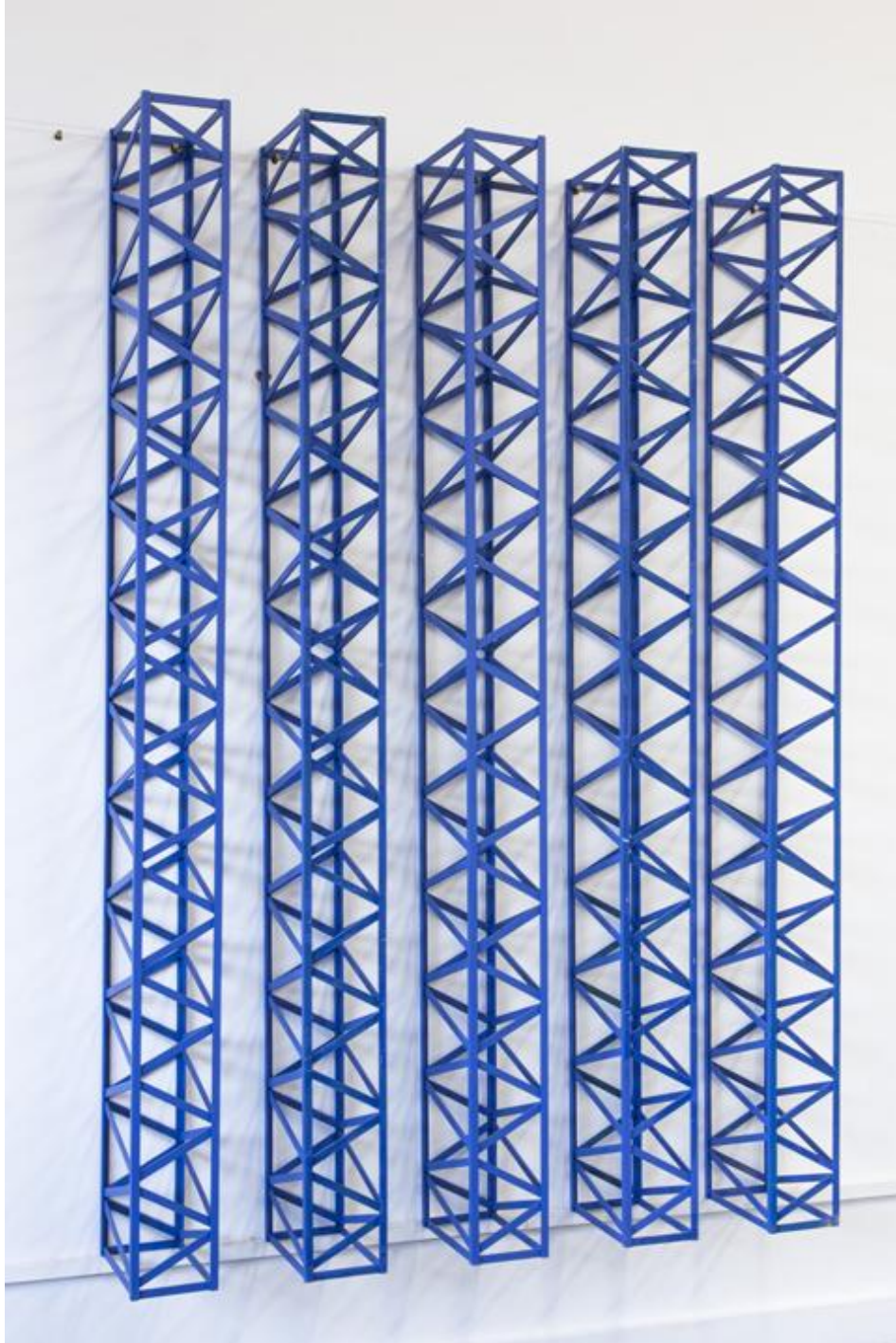
**Rasheed Araeen**, *Chaar Yaar II (Four Friends)*, 1968, Wood and paint, 24 x 48 x 48 in.

## RASHEED ARAEEN



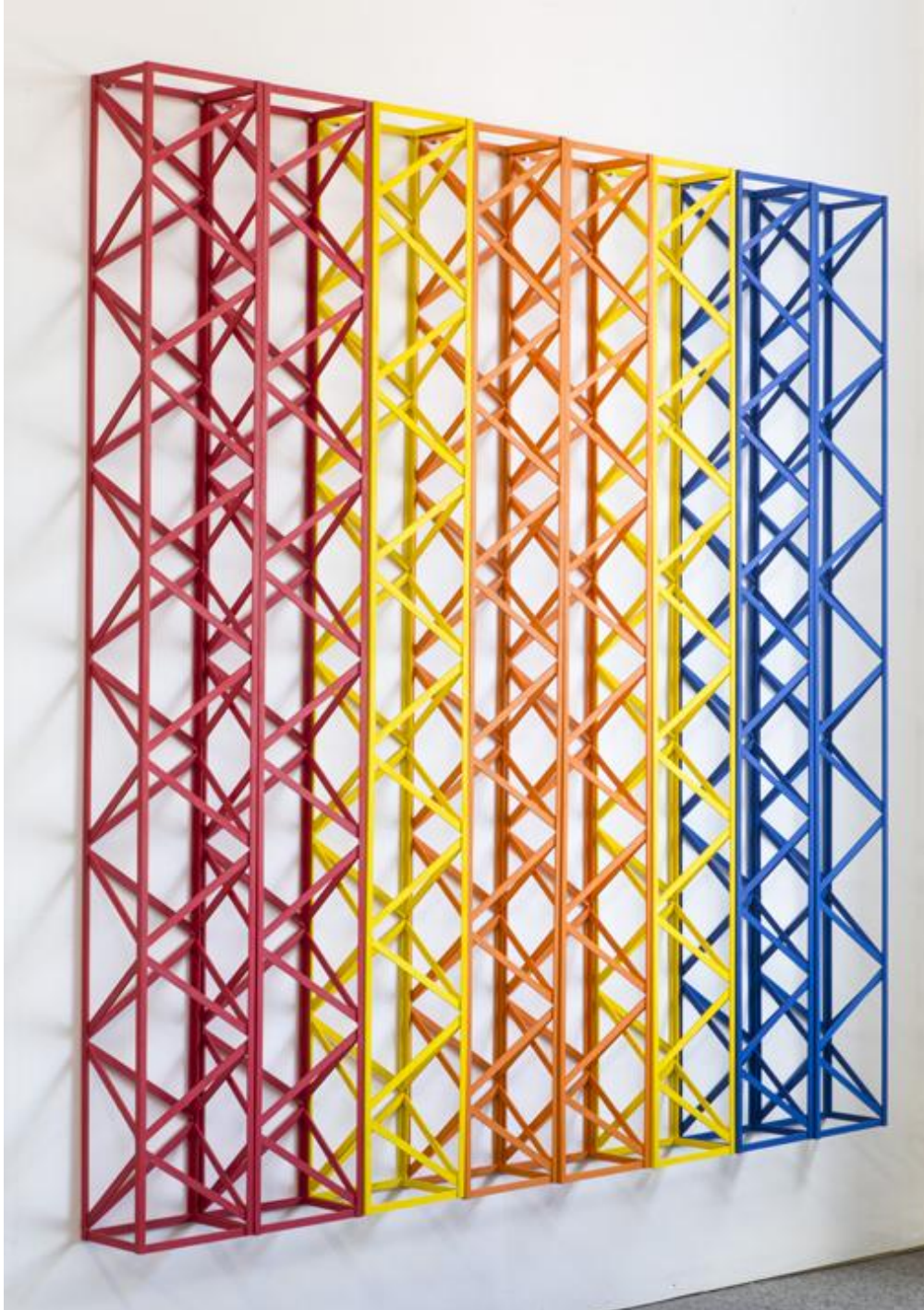
**Rasheed Araeen**, *Triangles*, 1970, Wood, paint and photographic prints on paper, 72 x 72 in. (x2)

## RASHEED ARAEEN



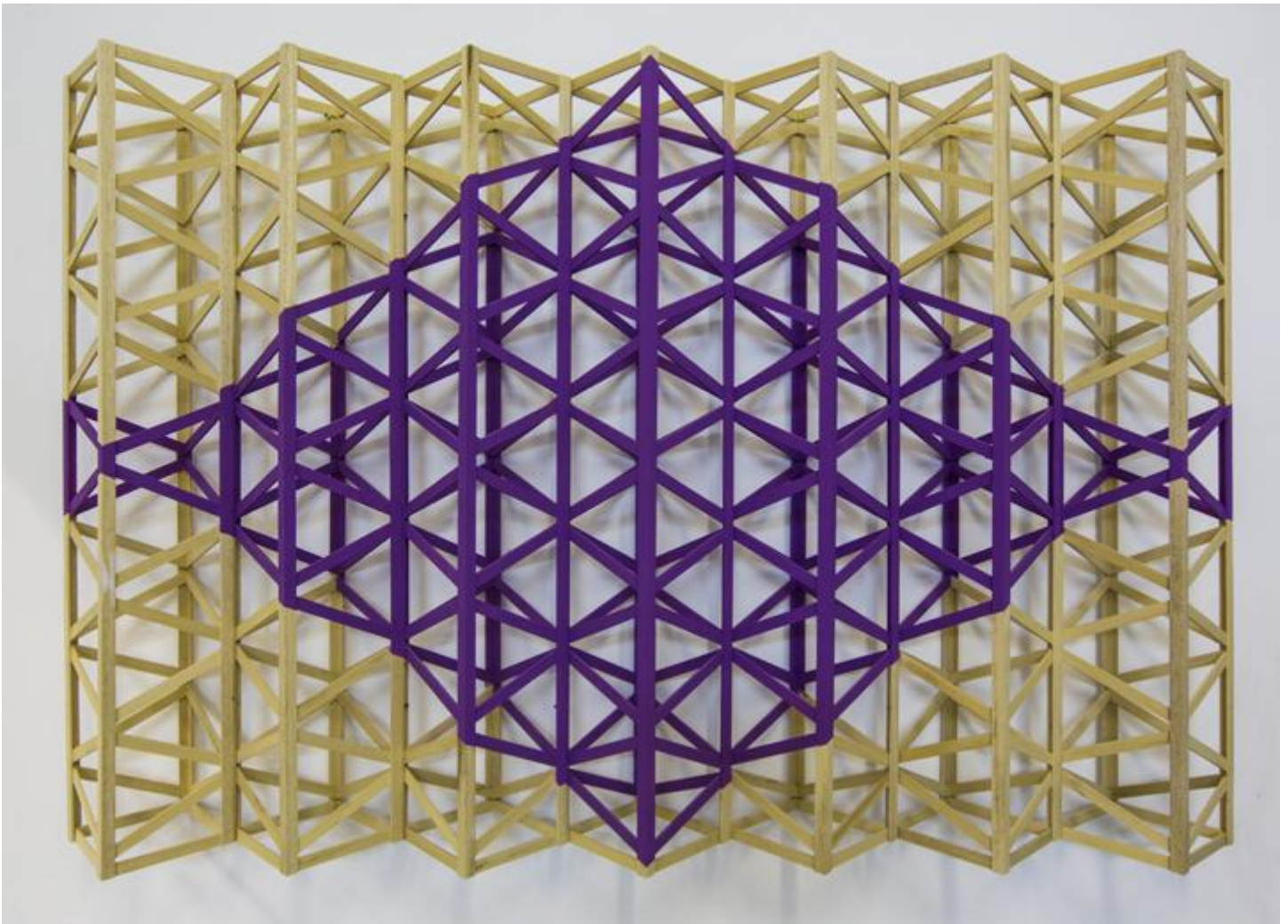
**Rasheed Araeen**, *Punj Neelay (Five Blues)*, 1970, Wood and paint, 80 x 72 in.

## RASHEED ARAEEN



**Rasheed Araeen**, *RRYOYBB*, 1971, Wood and paint, 80 x 72 in.

## RASHEED ARAEEN



**Rasheed Araeen, *Jaamni (Purple Diamond)*, 1971 (2014), Wood and paint, 72 x 80 in.**



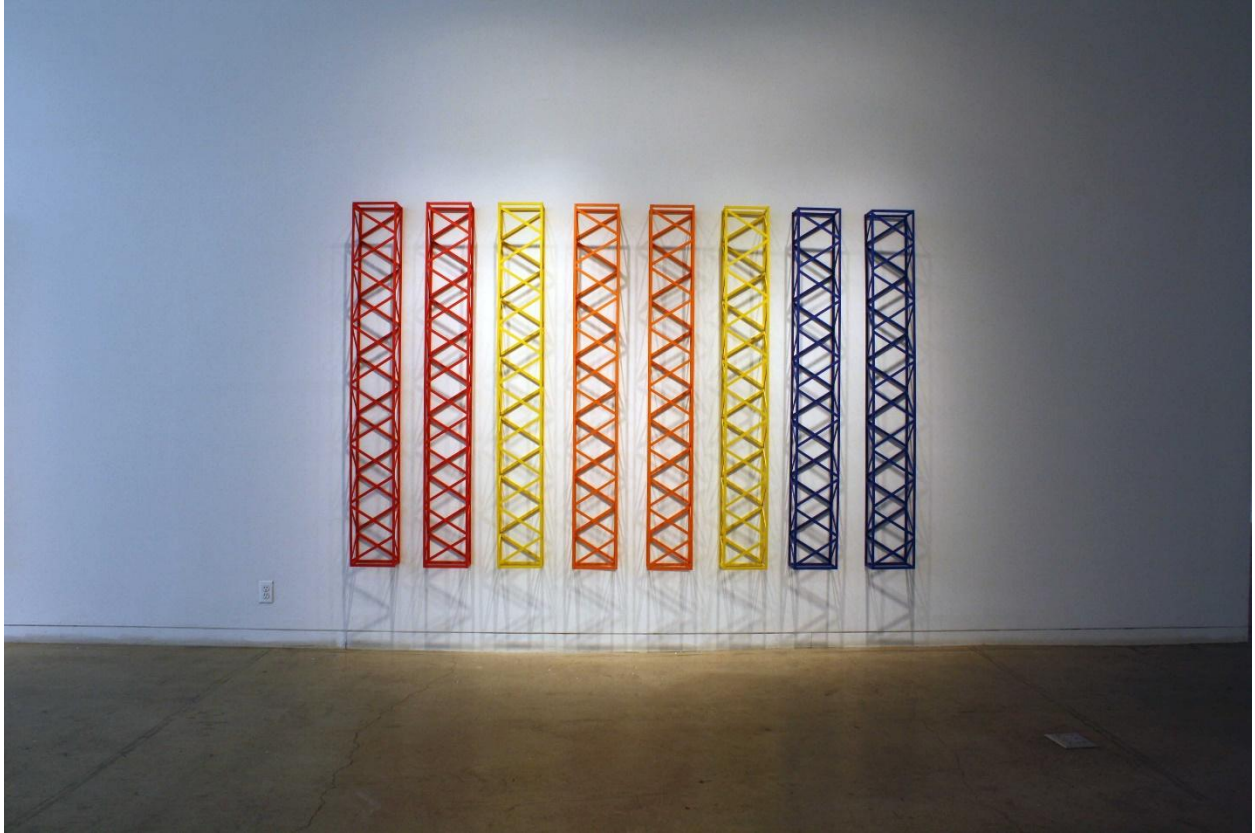
Rasheed Araeen, *Minimalism Then and Now: 1960- Present*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



Rasheed Araeen, *Minimalism Then and Now: 1960- Present*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



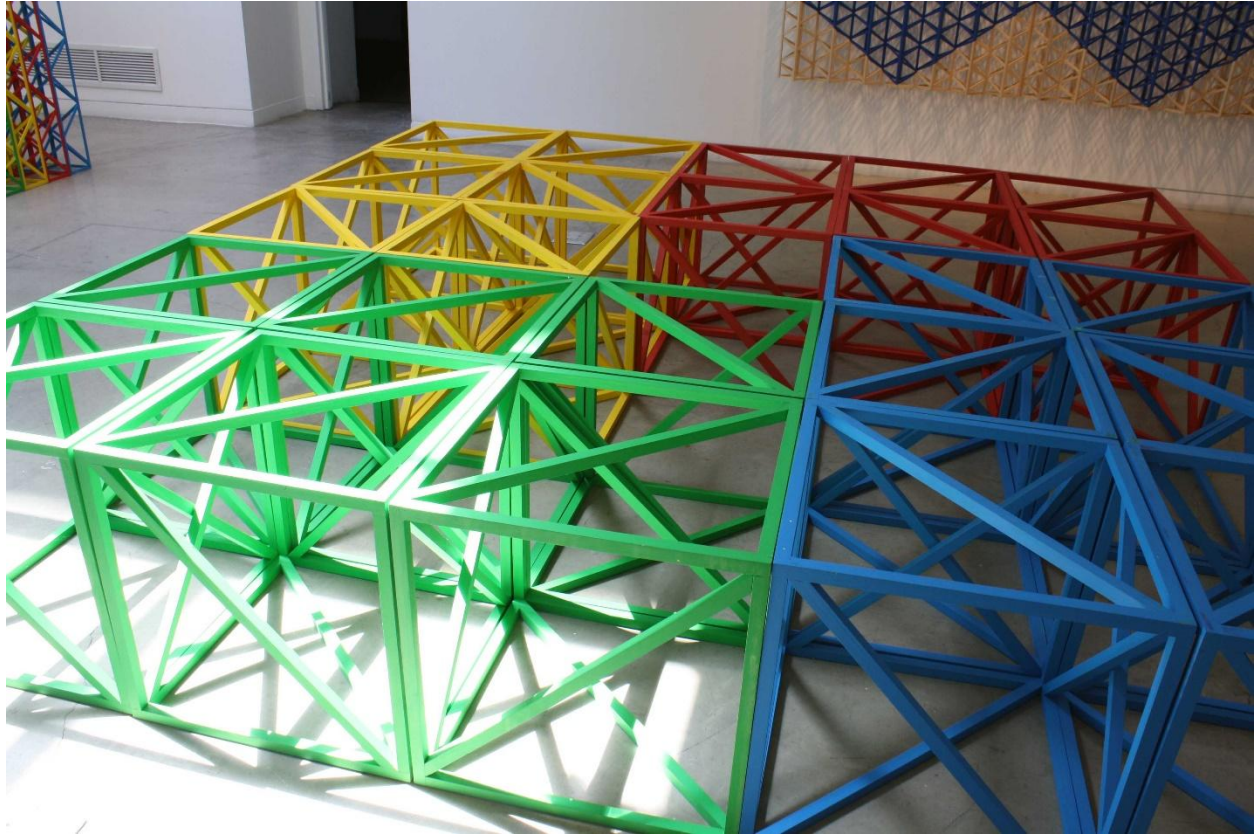
Rasheed Araeen, *Minimalism Then and Now: 1960- Present*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



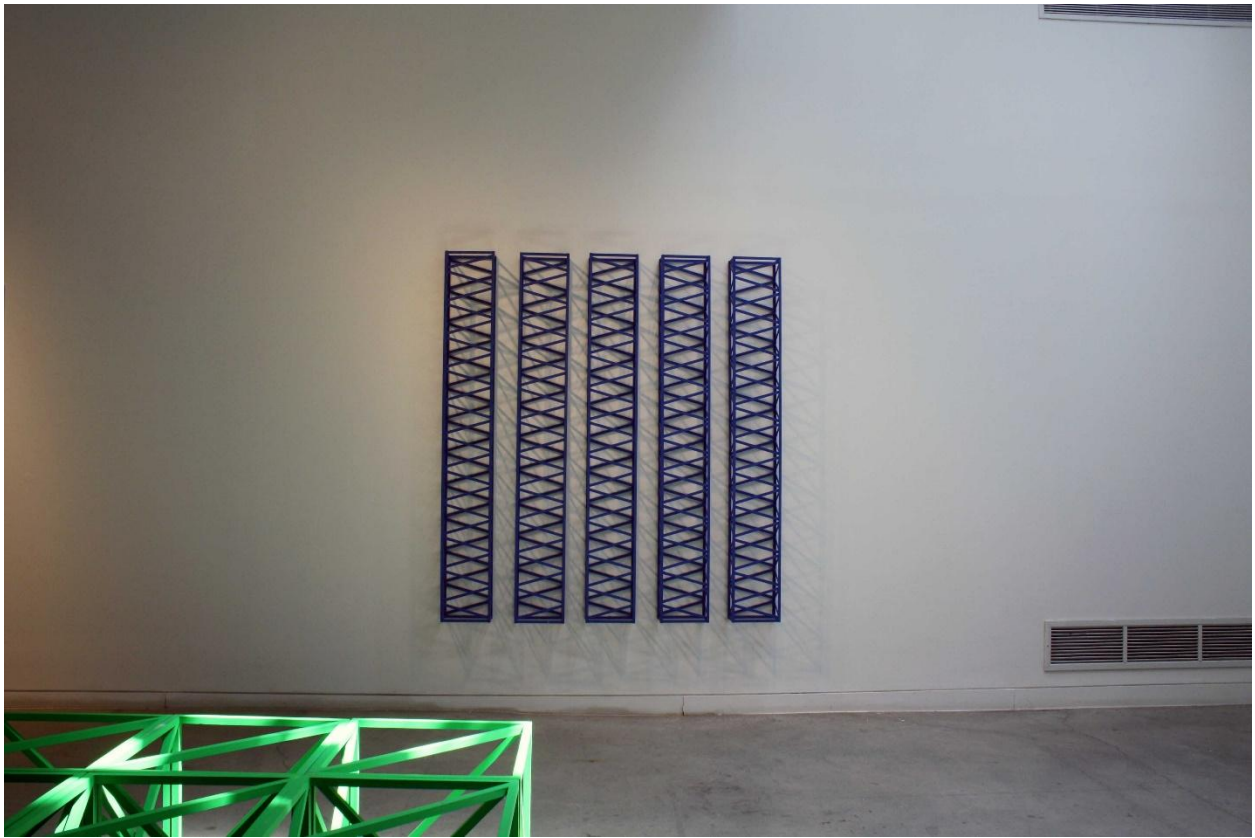
Rasheed Araeen, *RRYOOYBB*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



Rasheed Araeen, *Minimalism Then and Now: 1960- Present*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



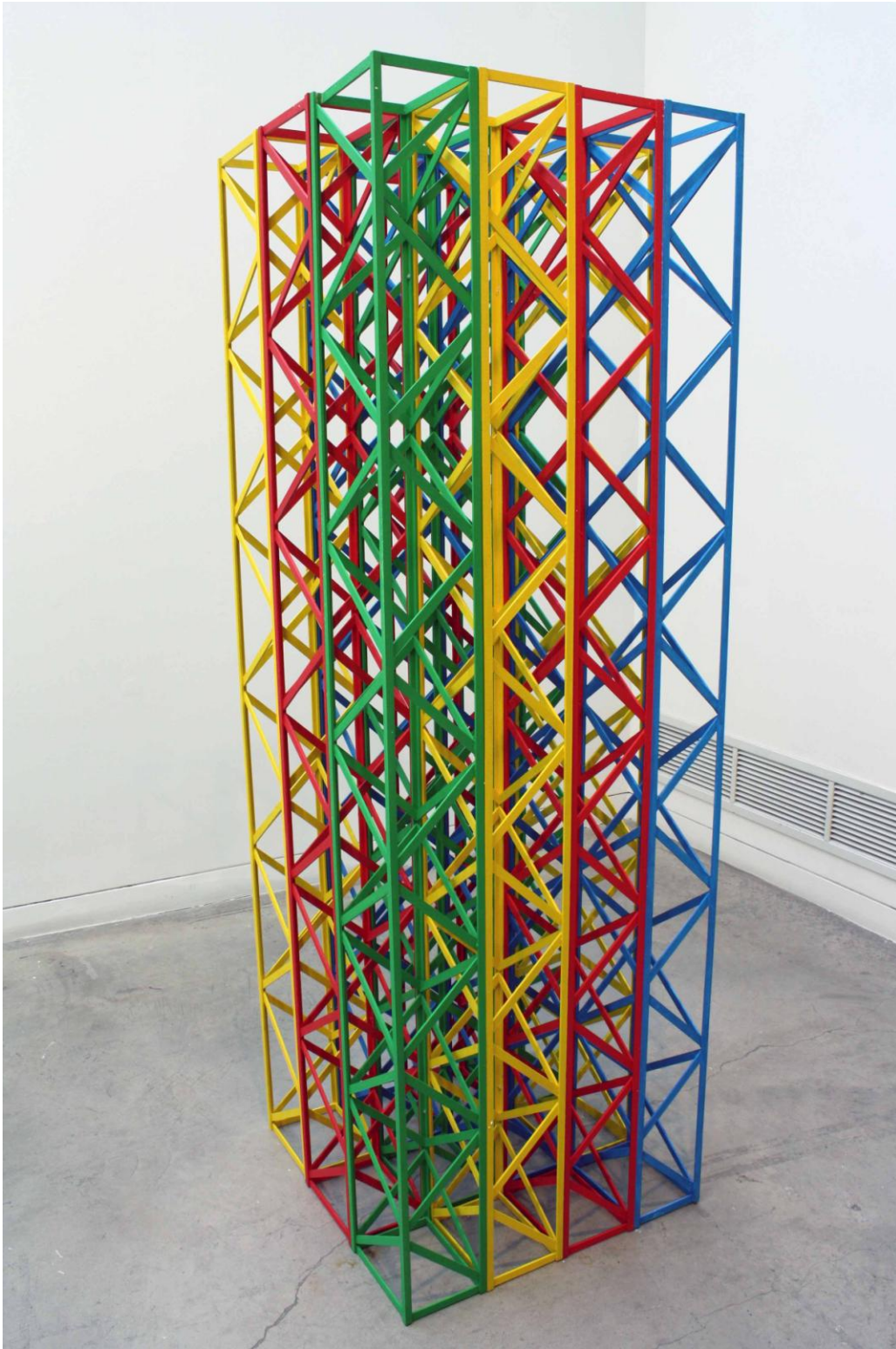
Rasheed Araeen, *Zero to Infinity*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



Rasheed Araeen, *Punj Neelay (Five Blues)*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



Rasheed Araeen, *Springtime in Euston Square Gardens*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



Rasheed Araeen, *Rang Barangra II*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



Rasheed Araeen, *Chaar Neelay Heeray*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



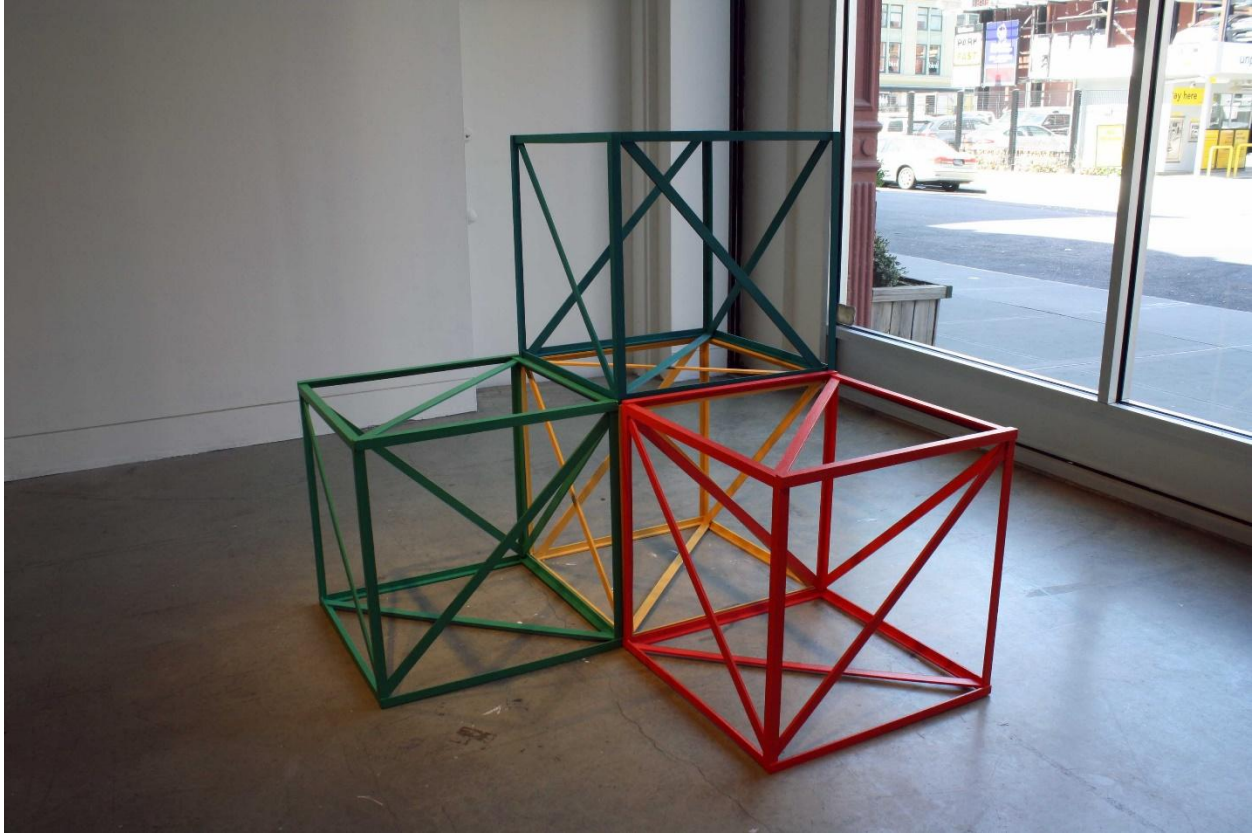
Rasheed Araeen, *Drawing for Sculpture II*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



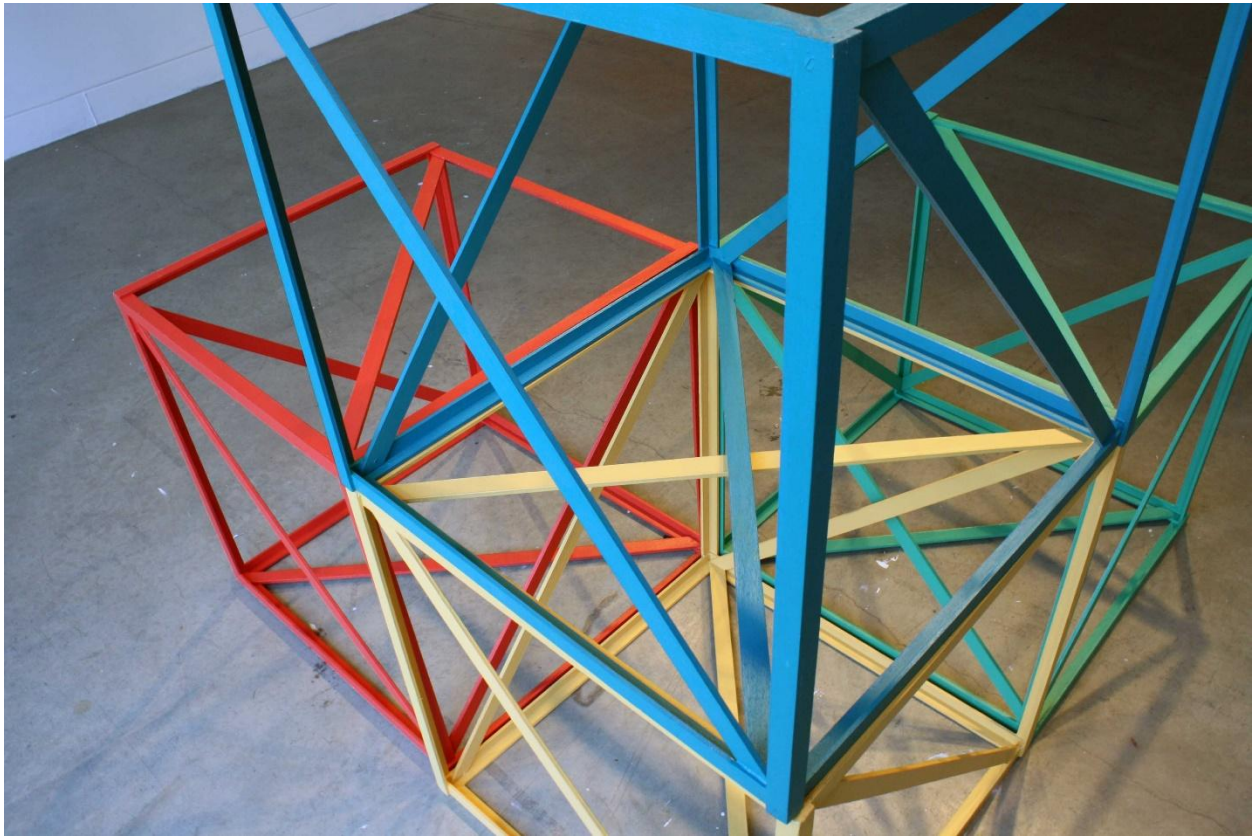
Rasheed Araeen, *Minimalism Then and Now: 1960- Present*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



Rasheed Araeen, *Pehli Si Muhabut*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



Rasheed Araeen, *Chaar Yaar (Four Friends)*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



Rasheed Araeen, *Chaar Yaar (Four Friends)*, Installation view, Aicon Gallery



Rasheed Araeen, *Untitled A* (left) and *Untitled B* (right) Installation view, Aicon Gallery

Is the pioneering British Minimalism  
of **Rasheed Araeen** finally  
receiving the attention it deserves?

A longtime  
collaborator  
reflects on  
the artist's  
struggle for  
recognition

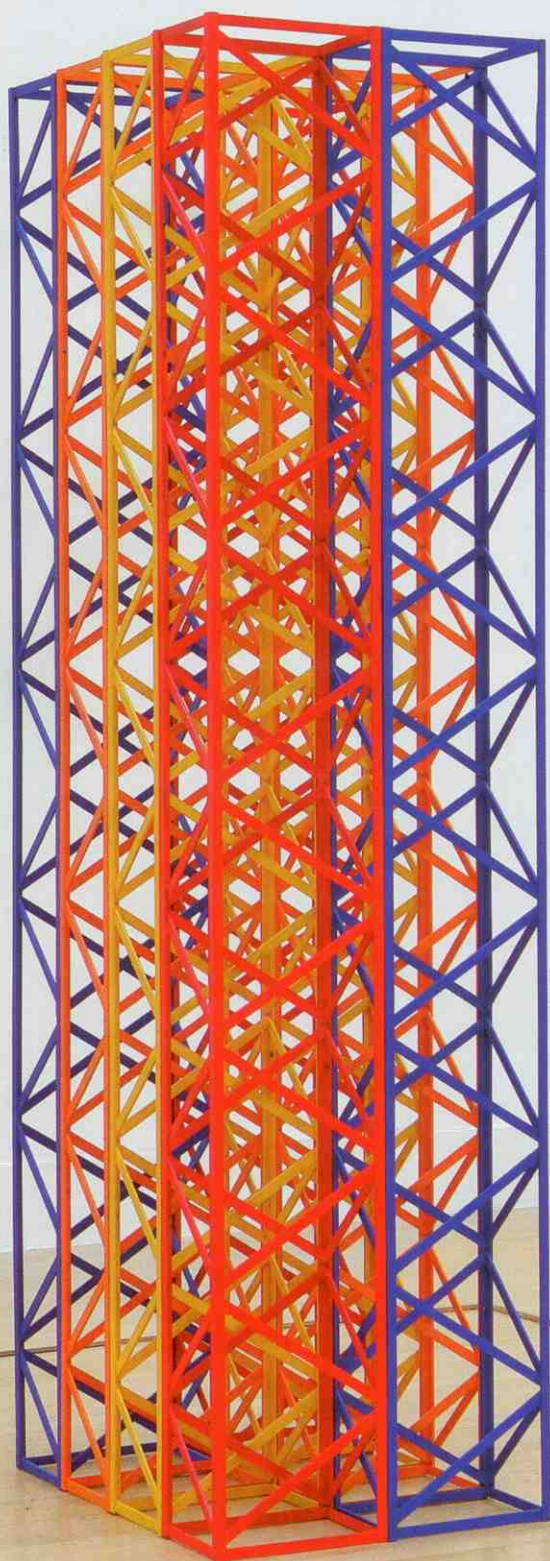
WORDS: RICHARD DYER

**IN 2007** Tate Britain mounted a small exhibition of recently acquired works by Pakistani-born British artist Rasheed Araeen, including *Zero to Infinity* (1968–2007), *3Y + 3B* (1969) and *Rang Baranga* (1969). It was an exhibition that publicly, if modestly, acknowledged that Araeen was indeed – as the artist had claimed for many years – one of only a few British contributors to Minimalism during the 1960s. Indeed, as if by way of belated apology, a wall text in the exhibition stated precisely that.

This late acknowledgement by the British art establishment of Araeen's contribution to the history of contemporary art has come at the end of a lifelong struggle for recognition, not only of his own work but also that of other artists who are excluded from the official history of British postwar art due to the fact that they migrated to Britain from other countries.

Born in 1935, Araeen left Karachi for London in 1964 and has lived there ever since, beginning writing in 1975 (and, in 1978, publishing the art journal *Black Phoenix*, the precursor to *Third Text*, the scholarly journal he established in 1987). He's since had solo exhibitions at Birmingham's Ikon Gallery, in 1987, at the South London Gallery (1994) and at the Serpentine Gallery (1996). His career as a minimalist, however, began almost as soon as he moved to London.

*Sculpture no. 1*, comprising four metal I-beams painted the colour of rust and placed directly on the floor, and *Sculpture no. 2* (both 1965) were conceived in response to his encounter with the work of Anthony Caro. Although Caro's radical Modernism



broke innovatively with the traditions of British sculpture, he could hardly be said to be a minimalist, continuing as he did established traditions of hierarchical composition and lyrical curvilinear form. Caro's contribution to the history of contemporary art was to liberate sculpture from its plinth – placing it on the floor of the gallery or on 'tables' – and to construct the work from separate elements welded together, in a manner akin to the construction of an early cubist collage by Picasso or Braque. Furthermore, Araeen's breakthrough into and personal take on Minimalism, and his innate grasp of its language, was not only informed by his reaction to Caro but also by this former civil engineer's familiarity with structures and materials such as girders, struts, latticework and the like.

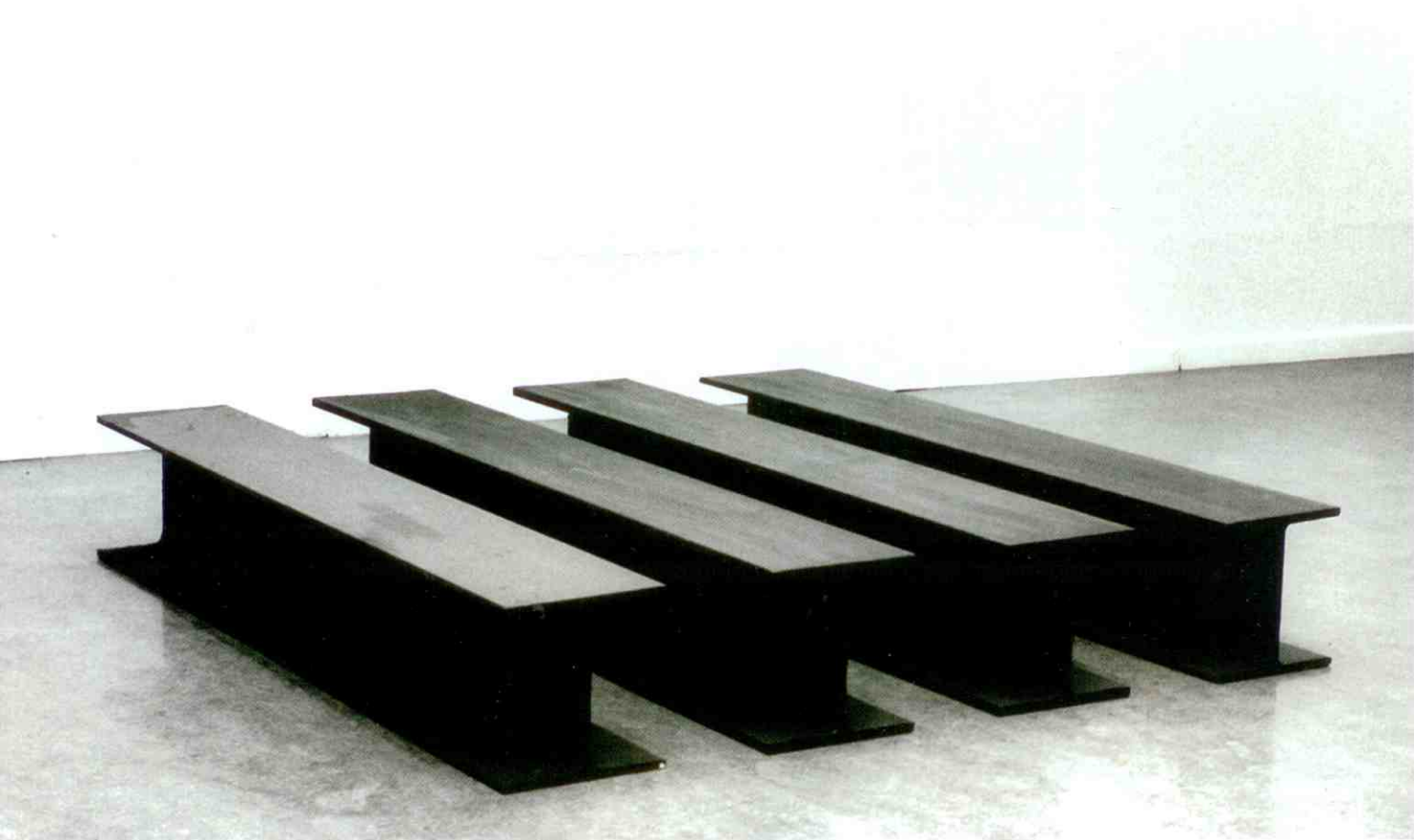
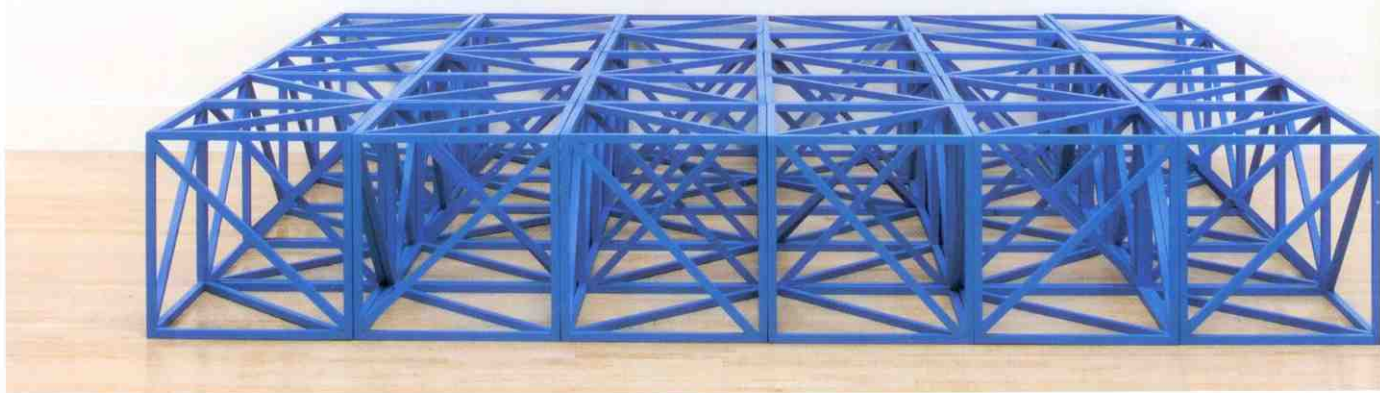
The minimalist movement, which emerged in the US during the early 1960s, was not widely known in Britain until 1968, three years after Araeen's first minimalist sculpture was conceived. Sol LeWitt's work, which demonstrates a close formal relationship to Araeen's, was not shown in the UK until the spring of 1969, in the seminal Tate Britain (then simply Tate Gallery) exhibition *The Art of the Real: An Aspect of American Painting and Sculpture 1948–1968*, and Araeen had not seen this work at the time of making *Sculpture no. 1* and *no. 2*. During this period, in works such as *Zero to Infinity* (1968–2007), Araeen didn't settle for discrete and static

objects: indeed, he dismantled that notion altogether. What at first appears to be a minimalist sculpture, comprising multiple boxes with diagonal cross struts, in fact only becomes an artwork via the viewer's participation: the sculpture can be endlessly reconfigured by the audience, creating new and original sculptures. This radical introduction of the participatory intervention of the viewer – also emerging in other art movements of the time, such as Viennese Actionism, Fluxus and Allan Kaprow's 'happenings', which Araeen was certainly aware of – challenged core notions of twentieth- and twenty-first-century contemporary art.

Although Araeen's minimalist sculptures stand as individual works of art in their own right, this interactive aspect of his practice is often overlooked. His photoworks have often been favoured instead (one, *Bismullah*, 1988, was acquired by Tate as early as 1995). This may be due to the fact that they fit more easily into the paradigm of work which artists from 'ethnic backgrounds' are expected to produce, ie, work dealing with their ethnic origins and identity. Araeen also produced many other artworks that were principally based on the participation of the audience, such as *Chakras* (1969–70), where the audience created the sculpture with the artist by throwing orange discs into the water.

Araeen's sense of frustration at the inability of the British art establishment to comprehend that a Pakistani, Indian, Afro-





Undoubtedly his struggle to alter perceptions of contemporary art history has distracted from a full appreciation of his own artistic practice



Caribbean, African or 'Other' artist could contribute to the history of contemporary art eventually drove him to establish *Third Text* in 1987. I have worked with him at *Third Text* (as assistant editor) since 1992 and have therefore had the opportunity to discuss in depth with him his views on the history of postwar British art. At first the journal championed the work of these hitherto-excluded artists, but it soon developed a more critical position, from which it questioned the whole official history of art and the domination of the West in constructing that history.

Writing and artmaking, however, haven't been the only vehicles for Araeen's thinking. Having begun a parallel career as a curator with *The Essential Black Art* in 1978, he curated the groundbreaking 1989 exhibition *The Other Story* at London's Hayward Gallery. It showed the work of British artists who had been 'written out' of art history due to their ethnic origin. This drew an extraordinary degree of blatantly racist rhetoric from the rightwing art press, while Brian Sewell wrote in *The Sunday Times* that it was impossible for an artist of African or Asian origin to make contemporary art, and that their production was either the continuation of an exhausted indigenous tradition or a second-rate copy of Western art. Araeen is now working on part two of this project, which will take the form of a book (now in production) and an exhibition with the working title *The Whole Story*, which will seek to present a more encompassing vision of postwar British art, exhibiting *all* of the significant artists contributing to postwar British art history together, regardless of ethnic origin. Consequently, we will see artists such as Frank Bowling, Avinash Chandra, Uzo Egonu, David Medalla, Ronald Moody, Francis Newton Souza and Aubrey Williams exhibited alongside Francis Bacon, Peter Blake, Lucian Freud and Patrick Heron.

Undoubtedly Araeen's involvement with the struggle to alter perceptions of what constitutes contemporary art history has distracted from a full appreciation of his own artistic practice. Though he may regret this, Araeen unquestionably felt he had no choice but to turn from his own practice to what he perceived

as a fundamentally necessary task. His work should be viewed in the context of the work of widely acknowledged artists such as Donald Judd, Carl Andre, John McCracken and Sol LeWitt, because although Minimalism has principally been constructed, historically, as an American movement, it was also significant to the development of British postwar art. Araeen's artistic practice in the 1960s and 70s was certainly central to this, in that his rejection of the 'pictorial' and 'expressionist' aspects of sculpture embraced a new notion of the artwork as demonstrated in the medium of painting in the work of his contemporaries such as William Turnbull.

Now that the art establishment would have us think that race has become a 'nonissue' in the artworld, with the rise of contemporary artists of African and Asian origin such as Chris Ofili, Yinka Shonibare, Anish Kapoor and Isaac Julien, it's worth remembering that Araeen's generation did not have such an easy time. :

*Work by Rasheed Araeen is included in Modern British Sculpture, at the Royal Academy, London, 22 January – 7 April*

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WORKS  
(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

*Rang Baranga*, 1969, painted wood, 183 x 61 x 46 cm. Tate Collection

*3Y + 3B*, 1968–9, painted wood, 183 x 244 x 13 cm. Tate Collection

*Zero to Infinity*, 1968/2003/2007, painted wood, 100 cubes, each 50 x 50 cm. Tate Collection

*Sculpture no. 1*, 1965, painted steel, 213 x 183 x 30 cm

*Sculpture no. 2*, 1965/1987 (installation view, Hayward Gallery, London, 1989), painted steel, 122 x 122 cm

*all works* courtesy the artist

# ARTNEWS

## ‘OTHER PRIMARY STRUCTURES’ AT JEWISH MUSEUM

BY Lilly Wei POSTED 08/27/14 12:00 PM

New York



Installation view of “Others 2,” the second part of the exhibition “Other Primary Structures.”  
KRIS GRAVES

Jens Hoffmann, the Jewish Museum’s deputy director, re-imagined the institution’s 1966 show “Primary Structures,” organized by Kynaston McShine. Hoffmann’s version, “Other Primary Structures,” was presented in two installments: the first, with work from 1960 to ’67; the second covering 1967 to ’70, with a response focusing on artists from once-“marginal” areas of the world, such as Rasheed Araeen, Gego, Hélio Oiticica, Jiro Takamatsu, and Edward Krasinski. The original exhibition launched and defined Minimalism and included American and British artists Anthony Caro, Donald Judd, Carl Andre, and Robert Morris. “Other Primary Structures” replicated that show in a wonderful miniaturized model of the museum, while floor-to-ceiling blowups of the initial venture worked conceptually but proved distracting. Hoffman was not interested in restaging “Primary Structures,” but in expanding its geographical and esthetic parameters.

Standouts were the blank gessoed canvases *Relatum* (1969) by Korean artist Lee Ufan and *Phase of Nothingness—Water* (1969/2005), by Japanese artist Nobuo Sekine, with its undulant water forming the surface of a black lacquer-and-steel box and cylinder.

Hoffmann’s exhibitions might have had more impact if the two parts were shown together and given the run of the museum.

# DAWN

## *Rasheed Araeen: Radical politics*



SHAHANA RAJANI — PUBLISHED FEB 08, 2015 06:51AM

Rasheed Araeen (1935) is a pioneer of modernist art. A contemporary of Sadequain and Hanif Ramay, Araeen moved to London in 1964 to further his artistic practice, and is credited in Britain for his avant-garde Minimalist sculptures from the '60s. These latticed three-dimensional grids translated his engineering education into artistic design. However, his desire for social engagement led him to introduce public participation into his minimalist practice through a series of works called "Structures". His geometric modular forms were left in gallery and public spaces for viewers to rearrange and reconfigure. The rigid geometry of his sculptures transformed into perpetual flux, becoming willfully unstable, open-ended and interactive.

Araeen was amongst the first Pakistani artists to integrate a radical political consciousness in his modernist practice. By the end of the '60s, Araeen found the language of minimalism limiting. Daily and scarring encounters with racism in Britain prompted him to engage with a more radical politics. He joined the Artists for Democracy (AFD), which brought him into contact with many other black and Caribbean-born immigrant artists. Together they raised a voice against issues of immigration and racism in Britain, and combined their strengths to resist state violence and marginalization.

In 1977, Araeen performed 'Paki bastard (Portrait of the artist as a black person)' for the first time. His performance marked a break with the medium of sculpture, bringing the body and lived experience to the centre of his work. In this one-man performance, Araeen played the part of an immigrant worker, sweeping the floor, who then becomes a victim of street violence, blindfolded and gagged, whose tragic murder then goes unnoticed and ignored. 'Paki bastard' spoke to the painful experiences of immigrants and their vulnerable existences in a limbo-land of fear and violence.

Almost four decades later, Araeen's radical practice is still as relevant to today's world. Globally and within Pakistan, there still exists extreme discrimination, injustice and violence against migrants and refugees. The artist's practice provides an important historical example to the younger generations about the possibilities for meaningful political action through art. In his words, "It is not a question of political art, but an art which embraces the radical consciousness of its time."

*Published in Dawn, Sunday Magazine, February 8th, 2015*



# Art in America

## Verbatim: Jens Hoffmann on “Other Primary Structures” at the Jewish Museum



A show opening this week at New York's Jewish Museum riffs on the groundbreaking 1966 exhibition "Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors" at that same venue. The '66 exhibition, organized by curator Kynaston McShine, was the first American museum show to focus on Minimalism, and included artists such as Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd and Anne Truitt.

The new exhibition, "Other Primary Structures" (Mar. 14-Aug. 3), expands on the earlier show, presenting art from the '60s by artists from Latin America, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Among the 30 artists on the roster are Rasheed Araeen, Sérgio Camargo, Willys de Castro, Branko Vlahović, Susumu Koshimizu, Nobuo Sekine and Lee Ufan. Most of the works on view have never been seen in the U.S.

The first part of the exhibition, titled "Others 1" (Mar. 14-May 18), examines work created between 1960 and 1967, while "Others 2" (May 25-Aug. 3) presents work created between 1967 and 1970, some of which was directly influenced by the 1966 exhibition.

Jens Hoffmann, the show's curator and the museum's deputy director for exhibitions and programs, selected six key works from "Others 1" and discussed what makes them vital to the show.

### **Rasheed Araeen, *First Structure* (1966-67)**

Rasheed Araeen is important to the history of minimal art on multiple levels, as a curator and editor. Araeen created these minimal works as early as 1960, before or simultaneous to the artists in "Primary Structures." *First Structure* uses the cube as motif—something that is formally extremely reduced. There is a relationship between this work and that of artists like Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt.



Rasheed Araeen: Before and After Minimalism  
Exhibition  
Building I, SAF Art Spaces  
13.03.14 – 14.06.14

*Rasheed Araeen: Before and After Minimalism* presents sculptures, paintings and drawings created during the more-than 50-year career of this influential Pakistani-born British artist. The exhibition traces his evolution as a painter in Karachi to his shift towards Minimalism in London and ultimately to his international recognition and achievements as a post-Minimalist sculptor.

Trained as a civil engineer, Araeen is best known for his formal, geometric sculptures often created from simple, sometimes industrial materials. Eschewing traditional sculptural hierarchies and compositional concerns, Araeen's works are informed by his social and political convictions.

Founding editor of important critical journals including *The Third Text*, Araeen has been at the forefront of the politically charged discourse between artists, institutions and audiences. This first major exhibition of the artist's work in the MENASA includes early paintings and drawing, documentation of participatory and performance works, seminal sculptures from the 1960's and a new sculpture specially commissioned for Sharjah.

# frieze

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## Rasheed Araeen

AICON GALLERY, LONDON, UK



Writing in 1967, Lucy Lippard pronounced Minimalism – what she was then calling ‘post-geometric art’ – a ‘virgin birth’. The early sculptures of Pakistani-born British artist Rasheed Araeen, however, which take superficially comparable routes to those of his American contemporaries (though he didn’t come to know them until later), are only too aware of their conception. Trained as a civil engineer in the 1950s, the latticed window grilles Araeen designed as a young man in Karachi are echoed again and again in the crisscrossing diagonals of the modular units he went on to produce as an artist. While he is from the same generation of Karachi-born Nasreen Mohamedi, whose pristine works on graph paper suggest abstracted landscapes, those of Araeen – who had no formal training as an artist – are nothing more rarefied than grubby technical drawings of heavy girders. It’s hard to fit his work into the standard narratives of

Minimalism. After a while, the differences between Araeen and his contemporaries become more striking than the similarities: unlike the production-line precision of Donald Judd et al or the car-culture finishes of the West Coast Minimalists, his wooden and metal modules were usually hand-assembled, never quite perfect and often intended to be rearranged by the unwashed hands of passers-by.

Titled 'Before and Beyond Minimalism: Drawings, Paintings, Sculpture and Concepts, 1959–74', this engaging survey of Araeen's early work at Aicon Gallery focused on the years before and after his move to London in 1964, where his first encounter with the works of Anthony Caro, Philip King and others influenced his decision to abandon painting for sculpture. While Caro's use of heavy-duty industrial materials was certainly important for his early development – such as Sculpture No.1 (1968), a symmetrical configuration of four painted I-beams on the floor – Araeen has described his move to serial composition as a reaction against the hierarchical compositions of the older generation. Araeen is often talked about as a British Minimalist but, as curator Niru Ratnam notes in his accompanying essay, this is an awkward label, in that it overlooks both his technical training in Pakistan and the increasingly radical politics he adopted in the '70s, not to mention his activities as a writer and editor (Araeen founded Black Phoenix in 1978 and Third Text in 1987). (I'm hoping that this later work will be the subject of another Aicon show.) There are subtle (but significant) formal differences too. While he uses the open cube structure as his basic unit, it differs from that of Sol LeWitt in that each face is bisected by a diagonal strut (as in Char Yar, 1968). This creates a lattice – an engineer's elegant solution to a minimal, structurally stable form.

Aside from the earliest I-beam floor-pieces, Araeen's work from this period is marked not by heavy industry but by a sense of play: the drawings that he made shortly before moving to London – overlapping, organic squiggles that work up and down the paper – were apparently inspired by hula-hooping children ('Series A', 1961 and 'Series B', 1962). He later sought to introduce participation into his Minimalist vocabulary, with what he called 'Structures': brightly coloured modular forms which viewers could reconfigure and that were often left in public spaces. For 'Chakras' (1969), 16 orange disks were floated in St Katharine's Docks in East London, eventually floating down the Thames – documentation was shown here, alongside reconstructions of the disks made for his 1987 show at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham.

The variousness of Araeen's different activities – demonstrated by this compact survey – perhaps accounts for the only sporadic interest that institutions in the UK seem to have taken in him (his last solo show here was in 1996 at the Serpentine). Early next year his work will be shown alongside Caro and King in 'Modern British Sculpture' at the Royal Academy, a setting that I hope won't smooth off Araeen's spikiness to make for a comfortable fit.

**Sam Thorne**

# The New York Times

## Minimalist Show, Minimally Revised

### ‘Other Primary Structures,’ a Sequel, at the Jewish Museum

By **ROBERTA SMITH** APRIL 10, 2014

Museum art exhibitions are painfully ephemeral. Once they close, they are gone, except for their catalogs and documentary photographs. This has understandably spurred visions of time travel among curators and curators in training.

As Jens Hoffmann, the deputy director of the Jewish Museum, writes in the catalog for “Other Primary Structures,” the new show he has organized at the museum, the history of exhibitions has become “a separate field of critical examination.” In addition, it has spawned a very hands-on form of study: exhibitions that are themselves re-creations of — or responses to — past exhibitions.

“Other Primary Structures” is in this vein. It is an unusually site-specific sequel to “Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors,” which was staged at the Jewish Museum in 1966. The earlier show was organized by Kynaston McShine, the museum’s chief curator (soon to move on to the Museum of Modern Art) and it is widely viewed as a harbinger of Minimalism.

The current show is, then, a compensatory curatorial action, a bit of historical revisionism. It presents artists from other parts of the world who might have been in the original. This is a great idea in theory, but its execution here is weak. The show itself feels skimpy and parsimonious compared to what might have been. Too large for the galleries allotted, it has been compromised by being divided into two parts, and its catalog, while clever, is insufficient.

And yet beyond the lessons about art, art history and the curatorial craft that this exhibition only partly conveys, it morphs into something quite useful. This is mainly because of what you encounter in its final gallery: a meticulously made architectural model of the Jewish Museum in 1966, before the latest expansion of its Upper East Side

home in 1993. In it is a miniature copy of the original “Primary Structures” exhibition — with each tiny artwork placed to echo the original installation.

Mr. McShine’s show surveyed the momentous changes that had been developing in sculpture since the late 1950s in the work of 42 artists, including 32 Americans, 10 Britons and, for the record, three women, all Americans — Anne Truitt, Tina Matkovic and Judy Gerowitz, who would become better known as Judy Chicago. (A review of “Chicago in L.A.,” at the Brooklyn Museum, is on Page 30.) Sculptors were abandoning the figurative tradition in favor of abstraction and were forsaking bases and pedestals to establish a new spatial relationship with the viewer. Geometric forms and color were increasingly the norm, as were industrial materials and manufacture. That show registered these changes among major Minimalists (Tony Smith, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin), soon-to-be post-Minimalists (Robert Smithson, Douglas Huebler, Ms. Chicago), relative non-Minimalists (like the British artist Anthony Caro) and lots of hangers-on.

Mr. Hoffmann aims to demonstrate that these interests extended far beyond the two English-speaking countries surveyed in the original exhibition and were being acted upon by artists in South America, Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia, which had their own traditions of three-dimensional abstraction. But he is also indiscriminate, which isn’t the worst thing, but, as with the original show, it blurs the focus.

Part 1 of “Other Primary Structures,” which contains sculpture from 1960 to 1967, includes the work of the Brazilian artists Willys de Castro (1926-88), Lygia Pape (1927-2004) and Sérgio Camargo (1930-90), and the Croatian Branko Vlahovic (1924-79). While all are excellent, their geometries are rooted in prewar Europe, in de Stijl, Russian Constructivism and the more abstract of Alberto Giacometti’s early works. (Part 2 will include work from 1967 to 1970.)

One of the best-known artists here is Lygia Clark (1920-88), who definitively closed the gap between sculpture and viewer as early as 1960, with interactive work that skipped Minimalism, presaging post-Minimalism. Her small hinged geometric forms, made of aluminum, are intended to be arranged and rearranged by us; it is quite pleasurable to do so. Similarly mutable (but by museum staff only) is “Situation of Four Aluminum Plates,” a 1966 piece by the Argentine David Lamelas (born in 1946), whose four shortish strips of thin, highly flexible aluminum can be arranged any way, as long as they are touching. (Richard Serra comes to mind here.)

In most cases, the show is pinched: not only too little space but also too little art. Another well-known Brazilian, Hélio Oiticica (1937-80), an artistic prodigy, is represented here by a marvelous hanging piece in painted plywood from around 1960, but that unfortunately is all. Similarly, there is much more to the work of the Polish artist Edward Krasinski (1925-2004) than the seemingly kissing arrows and speeding spear on view here — charming forms of drawings (albeit in space) reminiscent of Joan Miró and Saul Steinberg.

More conventionally Minimalist are two works by the London-based Pakistani artist Rasheed Araeen (born 1935): an open steel cube painted blue (1966-67) and four painted I-beams placed side by side (1965). So is a giant black-and-white X stretching from floor to ceiling by Noemí Escandell from Argentina (born 1942). It was carefully rendered in a 1967 drawing, but built for the first time only for this exhibition, delayed partly by the mostly military rule of the late 1960s to early '80s.

All this is to say that Mr. Hoffman's response exhibition goes blurry around the edges, as the original "Primary Structures" did. It would have been more interesting and nuanced if he had discussed some of the differences among the works in both shows in the catalog. But, as with the show, it is squeezed for space.

The cleverest part of the catalog is that it is accompanied by a second edition of the original cursory but indispensable "Primary Structures" catalog, long out of print. Less clever is that the new catalog hones so precisely to the original's design and dimensions (even thickness) that it, too, is cursory, which makes the show feel unresearched and not quite of the present.

Far more illuminating is the intricately detailed model of the Jewish Museum as it was inside and out in 1966, when "Primary Structures" was in residence. It creates a thrilling feeling of time travel that would be valuable to anyone with curatorial interests. I felt that I was helicoptering above it, swooping in for closer looks.

The model, made by students at Parsons the New School for Design, is certainly much more effective than the blowup photographs of the 1966 show that line the walls of the current one and distract from the art. The students' work demonstrates what a wonderful building the Jewish Museum had before it tore down its sleek 1963 wing, the Albert A. List Building, and replaced it with an addition that merges seamlessly with the museum's late-19th-century fake-chateau design. It's fine that the museum wanted to concentrate more on Jewish culture, but the model makes it clear that the new design reduced the space appropriate for contemporary art, which is its own kind of loss for New York.

In emphasizing the essential relationship of art to museum architecture and space, the model shifts the focus back to the curatorial craft. Maybe every museum exhibition should have a model. We might get both better shows and better buildings.

## Rasheed Araeen

Born 1935 in Karachi, Pakistan

Rasheed Araeen is a civil engineer, artist and writer. In 2009, he was granted a US patent for an invention, which is both a floating sculpture and water sport, followed in 2001 by a full international Patent. Trained as a civil engineer, Araeen eventually turned to art as a profession. As an artist, he began his career in 1953, continuing his pursuit art while studying civil engineering at Karachi's NED Engineering College. While still in Karachi in 1959, he pioneered the concept of making sculpture by burning and transforming an object from one material (or form) to another. After establishing himself in Karachi, he left for London in 1964 (where he presently resides). In 1965, he pioneered minimalist sculpture, representing what is arguably the only Minimalism in Britain. After being active in several groups for liberation struggles, democracy and human rights, he began to write in 1975, and published his own art journals: Black Phoenix (1978), Third Text (1987) and Third Text Asia (2008). He also established online versions of Third Text in Cape Town, South Africa, entitled Third Text Africa, and the Spanish language Tercer Texto in Lima, Peru – both available free of cost to readers. He curated two significant exhibitions: The Essential Black Art (1987), The Other Story (Hayward Gallery, 1989); and, he is a recipient of three honorary doctorates (PhDs) from the universities of Southampton, East London and Wolverhampton (UK). In 2011, he developed a project that generated a comprehensive and inclusive history of art in postwar Britain, which was inclusive of all artists from all cultures who have contributed within the historical framework of modern developments. Rasheed Araeen published an autobiographical book, Making Myself Visible (1984), along with a second book, Art Beyond Art / Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the 21st Century (2010).

### Select Solo Exhibitions

1963	The Arts Council Gallery, Karachi.
1974	Indus Gallery, Karachi.
1975	Artists for Democracy, London.
1984	Pentonville Gallery, London.
1986	Pentonville Gallery, London.
1987	'From Modernism to Postmodernism: Rasheed Araeen, A Retrospective: Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; Cornerhouse, Manchester; John Hansard, Southampton; Chapter, Cardiff.
1988	The Showroom, London.
1991	The Central Space, London.
1993	'Strife and/or Strugure' Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka-Shi, Japan.
1994	SKUC Gallery, Ljubijana, Slovenia. V Habana Bienal, Havana, Cuba. South London Gallery, London.
1995	John Hansard Gallery, Southampton.
1996	The Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania. 'To Whom It May Concern' Serpentine Gallery (external project), London.
1997	The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Middlesbrough, UK.
2010	'Before and After Minimalism, 1959 - 1974', Aicon Gallery, London
2012	'Zero to Infinity', Tate Modern, London
2014	'Before and After Minimalism', Sharjah Art Foundation Art Spaces, Sharjah 'Homecoming', VM Art Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
2015	'Rasheed Araeen – Minimalism Then and Now: 1960 – Present', Aicon Gallery, New York

### Select Group Exhibitions

1957-64	numerous group exhibitions in Pakistan.
1970	'Manufactured Art', Camden Arts Centre, London.
1971	'SPACE', Midland Art Gallery, Nottingham, UK.
1973	'Artists from Five Continents', Swiss Cottage Library, London.
1975	'Vietnam Festival', Artists for Democracy,

1978	'Art for Society', Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.
1979	'Art from the British Left', Artists' Place, New York. 'Tape/Slide Show', Audio Arts, Riverside Studios, London.
1980	'Accrochage', Gimpel Fils, London. 'Koffer fur Rottweil', Forum Kunst, Rottweil; and Kunstverien, Freiburg. 'Kontakt: From Contemplation to Agitation', Galleria MDM, Warsaw.
1982	'New Art Platform', Midland Group Gallery, Nottingham, UK.
1983	'New Beginning', Pentonville Gallery, London.
1984	'Creation for Liberation', Brixton Art Gallery, Brixton, London.
1985	'Roadworks', Brixton Art Gallery, London.
1986	'Conceptual Clothing', Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK. 'From Two Words', Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.
1987	'Heros', Air Gallery, London. 'State of the Nation', Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, UK
1989	'Magiciens de la terre', Centre George Pompidou/La Villette, Paris.
1989	'The Other Story', Hayward Gallery, London.
1990	'New Necessity', First Tyne International, Gatehead, UK.
1991	'Lost Illusions', Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada. 'TV Habana Bienal', Havana, Cuba.
1995	'Dialogue for Piece', Palais de Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.
1996	'Inklusions:Exklusions', steirischer herbst, Graz, Austria.
1997	'2nd Johannesburg Biennale', South Africa.
1998	'every day', Sydney Biennale, Australia.
1999	'Art-Worlds in Dialogue: From Gauguin to the Global Present', Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany.
2000	'Live in Your Head', Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.
2001	'Live in Your Head', Museu do Chiado, Lisbon, Portugal.
2009	'The Death of the Audience', Wiener Secession, Vienna
2010	'Raising Dust – Encounters in Relational Geography', Calvert22, London 'A Rock and a Hard Place', Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Greece 'A Missing History: The Other Story Re-visited', Aicon Gallery, London
2011	'Situation Z art-cade', Galerie des grands bains douches de la Plaine, Marseille '3 <sup>rd</sup> Thessaloniki Biennial of Contemporary Art', Greek State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki '3 <sup>rd</sup> Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art', Old Intersections – Make it New, Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki 'The Global Contemporary', Art Worlds After 1989, ZKM Zentrum fur Kunst and \ 'Medientechnologie Karlsruhe', Karlsruhe 'Super Farmer's Market', Handel Street Projects, London
2012	'9 <sup>th</sup> Gwangju Biennale', Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju 'Migrations, Journeys into British Art', - Tate Britain, London
2014	'Dark Waters Group exhibition', Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris 'Other Primary Structure's, The Jewish Museum, New York, USA 'As Exciting As We Can Make It: Ikon in the 1980's', Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK

## Public Collections

Guggenheim, Abu Dhabi, UAE  
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK.  
Arts Council of England  
CANAL PLUS, Paris.  
Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka-Shi, Japan.  
Wifredo Lam Centre, Havana, Cuba.  
Tate Gallery, London.  
Imperial War Museum, London.  
Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania.  
Museu de Arte Moderna Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro  
Arthr Gallery, Jeddah

## Other biographical information

1962                      Graduated in civil engineering, N.E.D, University of Karachi.

1964	Moved to London
1964-65	Architectural draughtsman with Wimpey Construction Co.
1965-69	Assistant architect/civil engineer, BHC/BP, London
1978	Founded/edited an art magazine, <i>Black Phoenix</i> (3 issues).
1982-84	Initiated and developed multiracial art/art education programme, as a result of which the Arts Council in 1994 established INIVA in London.
1984	Published a collection of writings, <i>Making Myself Visible</i> , Kala Press.
1987	Founding Editor of art journal <i>Third Text</i> (107 issues so far).
1989	Initiated and curated 'The Other Story' exhibition, Hayward Gallery, London
1995	Honorary Doctorate of Letters (PhD), University of Southampton.
1997	Honorary Doctorate of Arts (PhD), University of East London.
1998-	Member, Advisory Board for the School of Communication, Design & Media, University of Westminster.
2001	Received an International Patent for an invention.
2003	Honorary Doctorate of Arts (PhD), University of Wolverhampton.

The artist lives and works in London, UK.

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