

The Radioactive Decade- the 70s Show  
Curators: Nilofur Farrukh and Amin Gulgee  
Year: 2016  
Location: The Amin Gulgee Gallery , Karachi

The “The Radioactive Decade, the 70s Show” was a multidisciplinary meditation on the cultural output of that pivotal decade in Pakistan’s history. According to the curatorial premise , the political events of the early 1970s opened up a discourse in the cultural and social space that allowed for unprecedented experimentation in fields as diverse as art, dance, music, television, fashion and advertising.

The 1970s was seen as a weirdly dynamic decade as after the debacle of civil war, a sense of optimism paradoxically emerged. Political forces opened up, so did society as a whole. The show examines the 1970s as a springboard for the avant-garde and a time of great innovation in cultural expression, both high and low.

The curators have invited thirty artists from across the country to look back at this momentous decade. Although the show surveyed national developments through the prism of Karachi, not all artists were Karachi-based. The curators also engage not only artists who lived and worked at the time, but younger artists who can only imagine life then. The show opened up the possibility for contemporary interaction with archival footage and to access primary sources from various cultural fields. On a greater level, it presented an opportunity for today’s artists to reassess the boom in cultural output that the 1970s allowed, whether it was through a dance performance by Nahid Siddiqui on PTV, or a pop song by Alamgir, or an iconic ad that ended in the husky mouthing of the word “Satisfaction.”

From the urgent need to reinvent itself as a nation at the beginning of the 1970s, Pakistan forged new possibilities for itself by claiming its own cultural identity. The show spotlights this and how, in the end, the cultural life of the country withstood the political vagaries of the time, only picking up momentum in the process through the individual and collective acts of the country’s creative community.