

N U K T A A R T



Contents



44

4
CONTRIBUTORS

5
EDITOR'S NOTE

10
ART@NUKTA

26
ESSAY

From Temple of the Muses to the Bazaar of Story Tellers
Museum and the City by Gulzar Haider

32
The Rebirth of Tollington Market as a Museum by Samina Shah

36
Strategies of Opening And Openness in Lithuanian Museology
by Elonā Lubyte

44
Citizen - Art - Museum: An Unexplored Connection by Niilofur Farrukh

50
Weaving Stories of Solidarity: Reflections on Children's Museums
as **Activist Organizations** by M. Zulfiqar Ali

58
ART GLOBAL

Where is Contemporary Islamic Art in the Arab World? by Wijdan Ali

68
Anticipating a New Direction: The 51st Venice Art Biennial by Simone Wille

75
PHOTO ESSAY

Barefoot in Sri Lanka by Dominic Sansoni

82
ART GLOBAL

A Conversation with Maysaloun Faraj by Zehra Zaidi



58



82



75



68



116



88

Marking Emergence Of Regional Modernism: A Perspective on The Madras Art Movement by Ashrafi S. Bhagat

94

The Singular Journey: South Asian Visual Art in Britain

by John Holt and Laura Turney

104

Contact: Toronto's Photo Fest by Marie Noelle Chatelain

112

ART CONSERVATION

Art Conservation and Restoration by The Nukta Team

116

ART COLLECTOR

Nukta visits Tasneem Jatoi

126

ARCHITECTURE

Looking Beyond the Concept - The Living City as a Museum by Asiya Sadiq

130

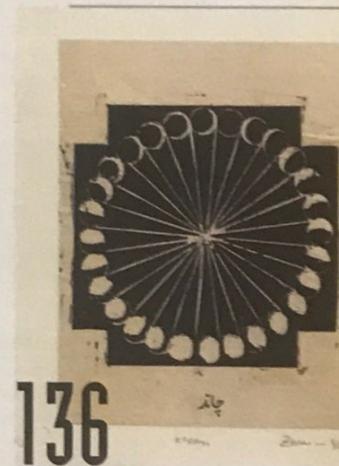
BOOKS

Sharjah Biennial 7- Belonging Review by Amra Ali

136

NUKTA -E- NAZAR

Nukta in conversation with Zarina Hashmi



Ashrafi S. Bhagat is Head of the Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Chennai, India. Her doctoral thesis was on 'The Madras Art Movement'. She has published research articles in books and journals, and written exhibition catalogues for artists. She freelances for India's national daily - The Hindu.

Asiya Sadiq has a Masters in Architecture from KULeuven, Belgium. An Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, she is also involved in practice and research of architecture, urban planning and urban design issues, both nationally and internationally.

Dominic Sansoni based in Sri Lanka, has been a professional photographer since 1980. His book, *Sri Lanka - Colour*, was launched in January 2006. He has traveled to over 30 countries and around the island, documenting and photographing all that is of interest to him. He has exhibited in Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, USA, UK and Thailand. He works with *Barefoot* in Colombo that runs a bookshop, an art gallery, a garden café and designs and produces hand-woven cotton.

Dr. Elona Lubyte was born in Lithuania and attended the Department of Art History at the State Art Institute. Here she completed her Postgraduate course from the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. Her doctoral thesis was on the System of Modern Art and its Management in Lithuania. She is the curator of Lithuanian contemporary sculpture in the Lithuanian Art Museum since 1987, and has been curating since 1988. She also lectures at the Vilnius Art Academy and VGTU. She writes about contemporary art and art management, and participates in republican and international conferences.

Dr. Gulzar Haider is Dean, School of Architecture and Design, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. He has been Emeritus Professor of Architecture, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, where he has lived for many years. Recipient of numerous scholastic awards during his academic career, Dr. Haider was Design Consultant to eleven different architectural practices in USA and Canada from 1979-2004, and has published several papers, reports, monographs and book chapters.

Huria Kazmi has recently obtained a Masters in Fine Arts from the Institute of Art and Design, Punjab University, Lahore, and is a new entrant in the field of art writing.

John Holt is a UK-based artist and writer. He has been a lecturer at Bretton Hall College, University of Leeds. He has contributed to several publications including the Third Text, in the UK. His present work is in the area of exploring art as therapy for the emotionally disturbed. He is extensively involved in South Asian art in England, and a director of *Shisba*.

Dr. Laura Turney works for the Scottish Executive in the field of Gender Equality. Her interest in arts and equalities relates to her work at the Universities of Leeds and Manchester where she was a research fellow until 2002.

Marie-Noëlle Chatelain lives in Toronto. She majored in painting and art history from l'École des Arts Appliqués in Paris, and studied etching and art history in Kassel, Germany. She used photography as a means for documentation;

Nilofur Farrukh *editor*

The many dimensions of Nilofur Farrukh's career in the visual arts include art criticism, art history, curatorial work, art education and art activism. Her book *Pioneering Perspectives* has made her the first Pakistani woman to publish a book on art. She contributes to publications like *Newsline*, *ArtIndia* and *Jamini*. She has been invited to present papers at national and international forums. As a curator, she has to her credit, among others, national shows like *The Takhti Exhibition*, *Uraan* (Flight), *Matti ki Sargoshi* (Whispers of the Clay), *Journeys with Clay*, and the *ASNA Clay Triennial*. Through the 1990s she headed the Department of Communication Design at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and is the former Dean of The Central Institute of Arts and Crafts. Nilofur is on the Advisory Council of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, and The National Exhibition Committee. She is currently President of AICA Pakistan - the national section of the Paris-based International Art Critics Association.

Rumana Husain *senior editor*

Rumana Husain writes on visual and performing arts, mostly contributing to the English daily *Dawn*. Trained as a graphic designer, her career has traversed multiple fields, including education and promotion of social awareness and the arts, particularly amongst children and young adults. She introduced cutting-edge curriculum and pedagogical innovations that have been emulated widely. She works as Head, Activism and Outreach at the Human Rights Education Programme (HREP). She has designed fabric murals and co-founded The Book Group, a publishing company for children's books, authoring and/or illustrating over forty children's books for different publishers. She curated a traveling poster exhibition, *Women @ Work*, profiling Pakistani professional women, which is being shown locally as well as in the UK.

later this approach evolved into a more abstract and sculptural adaptation of the medium. *Nota* (merging Noëlle and Tamara), is the collaboration between mother and daughter and produces photo-based material which may be printed in the darkroom then transformed into objects printed by exposing handmade papers/fabrics to the sun as Cyanotype, or computer manipulated images.

M. Zulfiqar Ali is founder and Director of the Human Rights Education Programme (HREP), Karachi. He is Member, Executive Committee of the Children's Museum for Peace and Human Rights (CMPHR) and Member, Executive Committee of the International Network of Museums for Peace. He is undertaking doctoral research at the Institute of Education, University of London, regarding the political economy and policy sociology of education in Pakistan since 1972.

Mukhtar Husain is a practicing architect based in Karachi, Pakistan. He was the Chief Architect for the terminal building at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi (1985-1992), and Technical Reviewer for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture for two cycles (1995 and 1998). He has been teaching, is a frequent contributor to local and international journals, and is presently working on a book *Pakistani Architects' own Houses*.

Samina Shah is an art critic based in Lahore, Pakistan. Freelancing under the name of 'Bibigul' she contributes to *Gallery* (daily *Dawn*) and other periodicals. She is pursuing a doctorate in History of Art from the Punjab University.

Sangeeta Thapa is a curator and art promoter from Nepal. As the director of the Siddhartha Gallery in Kathmandu, she has curated shows abroad. She is a member of the Nepal Heritage Society and contributes art writings to *VOI* magazine, Nepal.

Sheherbano Hussain is an artist and art writer, who has also been involved in curating art shows. She was on the curatorial committee of *The Takhti Exhibition* in 2001, and is co-curating an exhibition on two interrelated shows on calligraphy and figurative form in early 2006. She graduated from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in 1995.

Simone Wille is a free-lance journalist and art critic. She completed her MPhil, Art History and History/Media studies, from Vienna, Innsbruck and Rome - Cum laude - in *Contemporary Art in Pakistan: A Balance of Old and New*, and is a PhD candidate at the University of Vienna, researching on *Contemporary Art from Pakistan: A Continual Process of Anticipated Futures and Reconstructed Pasts*.

Dr. Wijdan Ali is an art historian, painter, art curator and academic. She received her PhD in Islamic Art from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and is the founder and president of the Royal Society of Fine Arts that established the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts in Amman. Since 2002, she has been the founder and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Jordan and has published several books and papers on classical and contemporary Islamic art.

Zehra Zaidi is a corporate lawyer based in Pakistan and the UK. However, she writes extensively and also deals in art, specializing in work from the Islamic world and the Middle East.

Amra Ali *senior editor*

Amra Ali is an art critic based in Karachi. She studied studio arts and art history at the University of Ottawa, Canada, and has been a Nieman Affiliate at Harvard University. Amra began writing art reviews for the *Frontier Post*, Peshawar, and has contributed to *The News*, *Friday Times*, *Star*, *Newsline* and *ArtIndia*. She is currently writing for *Gallery* (*Dawn*). Apart from commenting on issues related to artistic developments in Pakistan, she has written on the work of artists in the South East Asian Diaspora. She has taught Art History at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts. Her curatorial work includes *The Takhti Exhibition* and the *Flags of Peace*: a traveling show, which started in 2003. She is the Secretary of the Pakistan section of the International Art Critics Association.

Sabiha Mohammed *editorial design*

Educated in India and the US, Sabiha Mohammed's freelance design portfolio focuses on editorial design, book design and corporate identity. Her assignments have included magazines like *Zameen*, book designs for Oxford University Press and the newsletter for the British Council Pakistan. Catalogue designs for prestigious national art exhibitions like *Uraan* and *The Takhti Exhibition* have also come from her studio. Sabiha has also been involved in design education and has taught at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and coordinated the Department of Communication Design at the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts, Karachi.

It took only a few minutes to bury thousands of homes and millions of dreams forever under the rubble left behind by the most devastating earthquake in living memory. Perhaps the greatest and most unforgettable loss for Pakistan will be an entire generation of children who were fatally trapped within the concrete walls of their classrooms.

The world has joined the Pakistani nation in acts of unprecedented generosity and the art community too has begun to fundraise. The South Asian Gallery in Canada was the first to respond with an art auction. Artists generously donated works for a recent exhibition held at Nomad Gallery, Islamabad, in aid of the relief effort. This will be followed by a televised auction and other initiatives all over Pakistan in the months to come.

In this issue, **NUKTA** has selected to foreground museums - an important but untapped tool - to enhance cultural consciousness in developing countries. Five contributors identify alternative paradigms to address the issue. Dr Gulzar Haider suggests a break from museums that can become 'instruments of ideology and its attendant propaganda'.

Looking at our shared Islamic legacy with the Arab countries, **NUKTA** covers it from three vibrant centers. From Jordan we have the honor to share with you a critical piece on Arab Contemporary Art by Dr Wijdan Ali, the moving spirit behind art institutions in her country. The interview of Maysaloun Faraj from London underscores the resilience of the Iraqi artists and their endeavor to document Iraqi art in the Diaspora. The 7th Sharjah Biennale 2005 confronts questions of belonging as can be traced through the review of its catalogue.

A sneak preview of the book *A Post Colonial People* in 'A Singular Journey: South Asian Visual Art in Britain' - a chapter written by John Holt and Laura Turney is a 'scoop' for our readers. We thank the editors and publishers for making it possible.

On the request of **NUKTA**, Austrian curator and critic Simone Wille visited the Venice Biennale this summer to give our readers a first hand account of this mega art event. In her piece she discusses the changing trends and some outstanding works she viewed there.

I remember exchanging an email a day or two after 9/11 with Zarina Hashmi. Taking it all in her stride, she informed me that she could barely see New York from the haze that engulfed her mid-town artist's loft. This renowned printmaker was in Karachi for a private visit, and **NUKTA** caught up with her to record her candid views on a life dedicated to art and the challenges of being an artist of the Diaspora, for *Nukta-e-Nazar*.

A much-needed health checkup of Pakistan's aging art collections has inspired the regular column on art restoration and conservation. Shakeel Siddiqi, a leading painter and art restorer, will answer our readers' questions.

We hope **NUKTA** will be the space where the voice of the art community can be heard and from where a critical discourse can emerge. A space where ideas resonate and new ones are nurtured.

See you on the same page in 180 days.

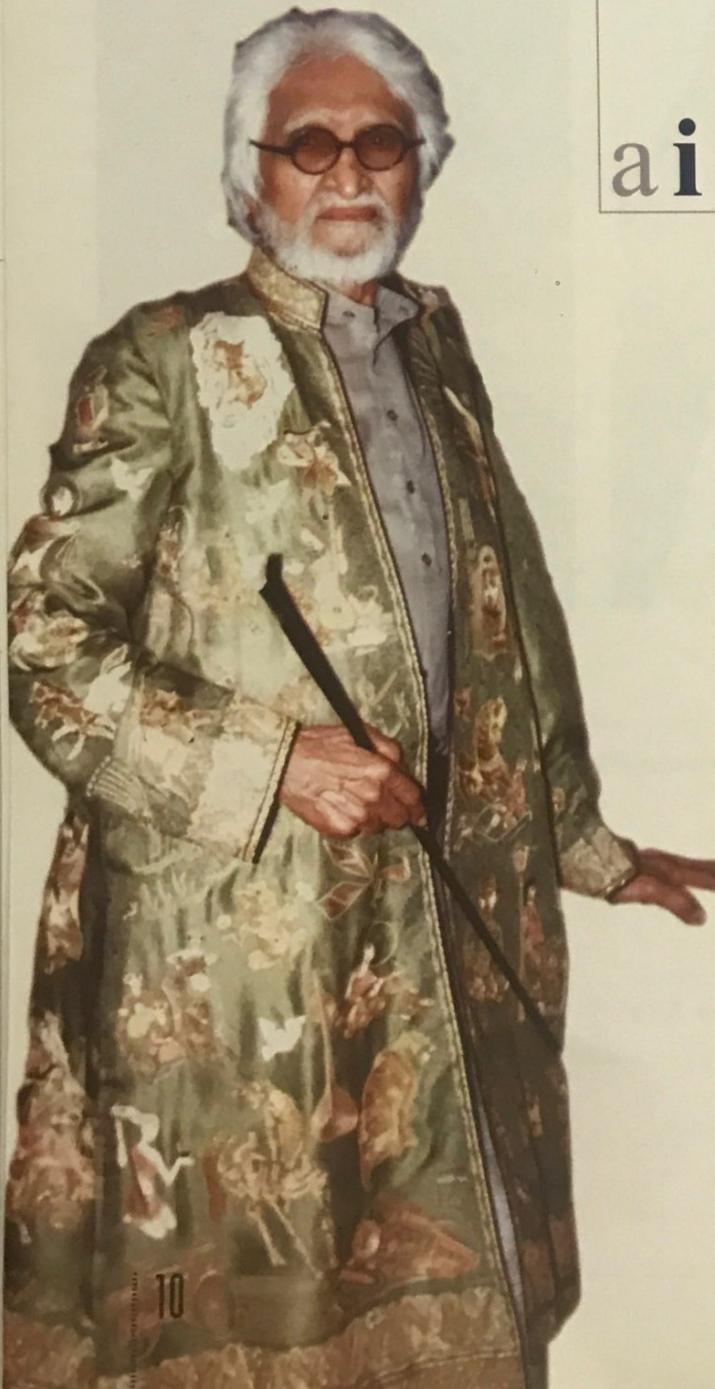
Nilofur Farrukh
December 2005, Karachi



left to right Sabiha Mohammed, Nilofur Farrukh, Amra Ali and Rumana

UK Art Critic Re-elected as AICA Head

Henry Meyric Hughes was elected for the second term as the President of the Paris based International Art Critics Association (AICA) at the 59th General Assembly at Koper/Piran in Slovenia. Mr. Meyric Hughes has an illustrious career as an art critic and curator. Through the 1990s he served as the director of the Hayward Gallery, London, and his curatorial work includes several significant shows in Europe. His future plans for AICA include expansion of programs in Africa, the Central Asian Republics, the Middle East and part of Latin America, and also to raise funds with the aim to improve services to members and increase the number of activities and publications.



aica

Art Encounters in Print

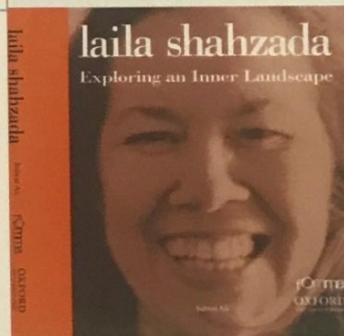
To the growing list of art books by the Foundation for Museum of Modern Art (FOMMA) were recently added Marjorie Husain's *ArtViews - Encounters with Artists in Pakistan*, and Salwat Ali's *Laila Shahzada: Exploring an Inner Landscape*. The latter is a joint publication by FOMMA and Oxford University Press (OUP), Karachi. Marjorie Husain's book is an anthology of her previously published articles and in many ways traces her long involvement with the art community in Pakistan.

Beginning from great masters like Abdur Rahman Chughtai and Fyzee Rahamin, the author deftly chronicles her 'art encounters' with over forty artists. The book also gives valuable brief biographical data on artists included in it. Marjorie Husain is a prolific and widely read art critic and her book on Ali Imam is also available from FOMMA. The launch of this book was hosted by Asia House in London where the author was also invited by Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's ambassador to the UK, to give a talk.

Laila Shahzada: Exploring an Inner Landscape - a biography - was launched in collaboration with Alliance Francaise de Karachi. The author, Salwat Ali, has based the content on interviews with family and friends of the late artist, which give an insight into the art and life of an artist who remained an enigma during her lifetime. Salwat Ali regularly contributes art reviews to magazines and newspapers.

Laila Shahzada burst on the art scene in the 1960s with her highly emotive '*Driftmood Series*' that made her one of the few artists to engage with the sea beyond the landscape genre. Just as she became a prolific painter of haunting mountainscapes in the 1990s, her life was cut short by a fatal fire accident.

Laila had the honor in the early 1960s to be the first Pakistani woman artist to have a solo exhibition in New York, and was awarded the Key to the City of New York by its Mayor. This documentation will introduce her to a new generation of art enthusiasts.



The Gift of a Coat

Karachi based couture designer, Bunto Kazmi, spent months in the research and design of a befitting gift for the ninetieth birthday of the great master M. F. Hussain. "He had once admired a similar garment I had designed for someone in Lahore, and this helped me to decide what I wanted to make for him..." explains Bunto. To personalize the coat, she studied M. F. Hussain's sketches for motifs, which were then meticulously interpreted through the wide repertoire of her talented embroiders. Masterfully worked with gold and silk thread on an olive green surface, the long coat also bore a portrait of the artist, which is an integral part of his iconography. There are secret embellishments in the garment as well. These lie in its pockets, which are lined with small images, hidden from others, as they belong only to the wearer. Combining subtle humor with perfection, Bunto has undoubtedly presented an elegant tribute to the celebrated master.

Karachi School of Art Celebrates 40 Years

Karachi's oldest art school celebrated its decades of success in an evening full of awards, reunions and fanfare. It was founded as the Meena School in 1964, in a living room and run by two sisters, the painter Hajra and sculptor Rabia Zuberi. Later, painter Mansoor Rahi joined them and gradually it expanded to what is now the Karachi School of Art (KSA) located in a purpose-built campus in Gulshan-e-Iqbal. This significant art institution of the country has many leading artists of Pakistan as its alumni.

At the well-attended celebration in the grounds of the Maritime Museum, the founders recognized many individuals from the art community for their contribution. The posthumous 'Best Teacher Award' was given to late Zaheen, a popular teacher at KSA who was a watercolorist with a big following. Established artists like Riffat Alvi, Lubna Agha, Ghalib Baqar, Ather Jamal, Abdul Hafeez and Mashkoor Raza from the early batches of graduates were among those recognized that evening.

A welcome precedent was the awards for contribution in Art Criticism and to galleries. These went to Marjorie Hussain and Zohra Hussain respectively. The evening's most significant citation was read for sculptor Shahid Sajjad when he became the recipient of a 'Lifetime Achievement Award'.



Graffiti Art on the Changing Face of Beijing

Thousands of Dali 'Heads' could be spotted all over Beijing. Often spray-painted, the profile could be seen alone or in groups in varying sizes spreading from the inner city to beyond its boundaries. Sighted on condemned buildings, freeway bridges and neglected walls they were conceived by the artist Zhang Dali, as a long-running graffiti *Dialogue* project that comments on the urban degradation of Beijing. As this Chinese city was confronted with the phenomenon of graffiti art for the first time, it sparked off a public controversy in the press and brought the changing face of the city into sharp focus.

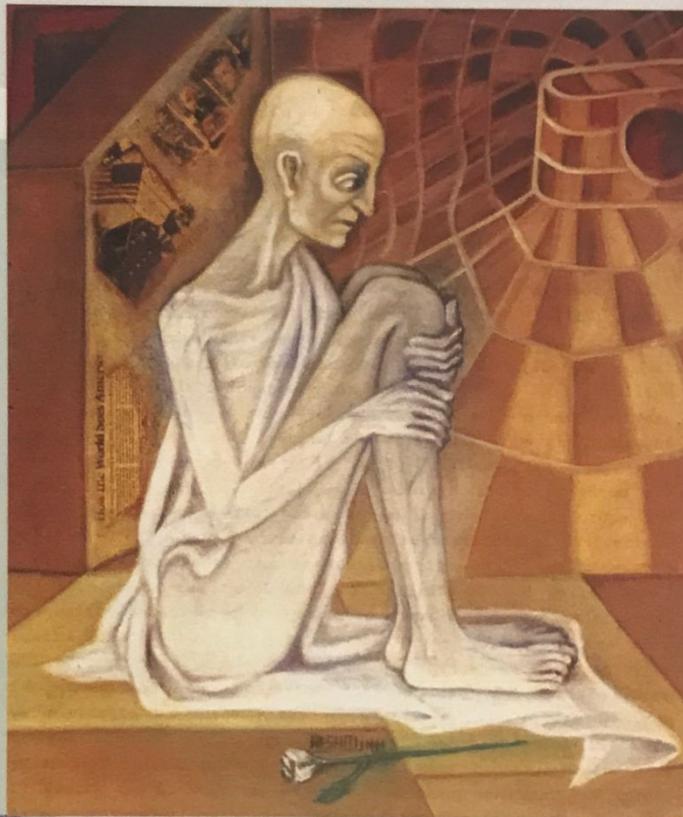
In the words of the artist Zhang Dali - a professional artist trained in Beijing's prestigious Central Academy of Art and Design - "This image is a condensation of my own likeness as an individual. It stands in my place to communicate with this city. I want to know everything



about this city - its state of being, its transformation, its structure. I call this project *Dialogue*. Of course there are many ways for an artist to communicate with a city. I use this method because, for one thing, it allows me to place my work at



every corner of Beijing in a short period."



Paint and Tell

Tracing the genesis of her career to a rebellious youth when cries of 'tally wali' followed her when she decided

to wear a bell as a pendant, London-based Pakistani political painter Afshan Shoaib Sultan is penning down her experiences in a candid autobiography.

Afshan's mother, a writer of fiction, and her father, a civil servant, were instrumental in nurturing her free spirit. Early chapters convey her angst as she saw her political idols either silenced forever or rendered ineffective as agents of progress either by their own unbridled ambition or that of the others. The verses of Faraz and Habib Jalib have often inspired the artist's political visual statements. The autobiography chronicles her personal and professional life in the midst of political turmoil at home and abroad, which she interprets in her provocative brand of art. Often fearless and outspoken - sometimes ahead of her time - Afshan's art has won her equal measure of recognition and official wrath. Her *Nuke Series*, a moving, very human, visual account of the survivors of nuclear war, was a protest against Hiroshima and Nagasaki when the Western countries were carrying out extensive testing in the Pacific through the 80s and the 90s.

Sculpted from Spare Parts



Art and automobile technology create intriguing sculpture at "Paps 2005 - A part of your future" reflecting changing trends in the industry. The artists were students from art and engineering colleges in Pakistan who took up the challenge to use this unusual material and integrate it into futuristic reflections. The imaginative use of auto spare parts

not only opened new possibilities with these objects but stirred the imagination of the visitors, making the show a success.

This unusual exhibition was organized by The Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (Paapam) at the Expo Center in Karachi.

An Ode to Menopause

With endless yards devoted to the nubile flawless body in the painting tradition, Mobina Zuberi, in her show at Chawkandi Art joins the small group of artists that assert their preference for the 'mature' body. Her bovine protagonists are women whose beauty bears the badge of long years, as they inhabit the canvas in joyous colors. The title of the show *Intezar* or 'The Wait' references Urdu verse, and is played out in vignettes of classical format replete with women adorning themselves alone and in groups. In some works it unexpectedly gives way to a buoyant figure in an illuminated sac. This skillfully painted halo that lights up the body seems to acknowledge an inner serenity made possible with the wisdom of age.



Unknown Works of Zahoorul Akhlaque Surface

Recently, Sheherezade Alam was surprised by a most unexpected package containing unknown works of her late husband, artist Zahoorul Akhlaque. Sent from Pacific Asia Museum in California, USA, they were probably created during the artist's brief stay there during the early 1990s. She shared this discovery with friends this summer in a show at the Arcadia Gallery in Toronto. In these small meticulous studies of everyday objects in monochrome, Zahoor can be seen as a master of his craft. The fine contemplative brushwork resonates with the memory of miniature painting, a tradition he deeply studied and valued. For more information on the artist visit www.laal.org

Switch to Reality

Islamabad-based Dutch artist Martina Anagnostou invited visitors to interact with her art at the recent show hosted at Nomad Gallery, Islamabad. The manipulation of light switch of these backlit works helped to discover hidden images within her complex works layered with scripts, symbols and photographs.

While in Pakistan, she has incorporated henna - an essential part of a woman's toilette in Pakistan and Afghanistan. To her, it is an emblem of the beauty and grace of women, which has become increasingly vulnerable in the face of new forms of violence introduced by political conflict and social dogma. The extensive use of text used in the art is also in Pushto and Persian; the artist would like to serve as a symbolic voice of the Afghan and Pakhtun tribes in this human narrative of the war-torn region.

Outdoor Art Fest

for Karachi

Koocha-e-Saqafat is Karachi's answer to a street fest and an outdoor art show rolled into one. Every Sunday evening the thoroughfare between the Arts Council and the Hindu Gymkhana comes alive with performances, and visitors can mingle with visual artists as they paint, sculpt and display their work. Plenty of stalls with books, crafts and food cater to a wider range of tastes.

This initiative is the brainchild of Saifur Rehman Grami, the man and his team at the Arts Council who gave Karachi its Public Art Library at Aiwan-e-Rifat. There is no doubt that this is a much-needed un-ticketed cultural event for the people, and one cannot but hope that the objective of *Koocha-e-Saqafat* goes beyond the present weekly art mela. This free public art space could become instrumental in promoting experimental art forms and initiating a challenging interface of ideas between the community and artists.

ROMA
PUNTO
UNO

I N K A R A C H I



Smokers, chewing gum fusion, 2004

A traveling exhibition 'Roma Punto Uno' of 170 contemporary works by 71 artists affiliated to the city of Rome, was on view in Karachi. Hosted at the Italian Cultural Center by The Consulate General of Italy, it was held in collaboration with local partners, AICA Pakistan and FOMMA.

Extremely diverse and distinct in their styles, the artists focused on the contemporary sociological set-up of Rome, presenting its different facets. Common to all was the size 18 x 24 cm.

With a wide selection of drawings, paintings, photographs, digital prints, ceramics and sculpture, the collection presents a surrealist portrait of Rome. Participating artists include well-known names and young artists. Claudioadami's obsession with 'endlessly fascinating visual writing' uses basics like India ink on wood; *Entomological Box* by Tommaso Cascella emphasizes his close rapport between sculpture and painting; Maurizio Savini, sculpts with chewing gum as his personal hallmark; and Maria Dompe makes a human rights statement with her installation photo entitled, *Amina Laval, 2003* a tribute to a young North African woman sentenced to stoning; with over 1500 orchids and brightly colored strips of cotton covering the paving of Michelangelo's oval Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome.

The exhibition was opened by Pakistan's celebrated sculptor, Shahid Sajjad, and was well attended. To some, the 'Roma Punto Uno' was an inspiration for organizing an exhibition with 'Karachi' as its theme.



Entomological Box, mixed media, 2002

BRITISH COUNCIL
PakistanMentoring Program for
YOUNG CRITICS

British Council Pakistan, in collaboration with AICA Pakistan and Visiting Arts UK, is organizing a Mentoring Program for Young Critics, in 2006. Two participants have been selected from submissions called from all leading art institutions in Pakistan. Successful candidates will join their peers from Lebanon and Palestinian territories and the UK, to participate in workshops with leading British critics and visit cultural events all over UK in January 2006. In mid March 2006, they will be joined by their Pakistani counterparts along with young critics and mentors from UK for workshops and cultural site visits. The program aims to enhance the understanding of art criticism among the young and develop potential critics for the future.

by Nilofur Farukh



Jamil Naqsh Museum

Citizen - Art - Museum:

AN UNEXPLORED CONNECTION

The museum as the repository of artifacts can probably trace its origin to the patrons of the arts, who wanted to extend their passion to a permanent collection. During this early stage, the imperial habitat, with its vast inherited and accumulated or commissioned collections, acted as a natural incubator for the museum concept.

The treasures of the Mughal court, seen in situ in the court scenes of the illustrated manuscript *Padshahnameh*, are today locked behind display cases in London's Victoria and Albert Museum. The fact that the finest South Asian miniature paintings are in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York and in European museums foregrounds the nexus between economics, politics of power and the museum.

This article will try to give an overview of the present museums with special emphasis on permanent art collections in Pakistan and their possible role in creating a collective historical and cultural consciousness among the citizens.

Museums in Pakistan are fairly diverse institutions. The oldest and largest are the archaeological museums of Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar. Site museums tend to be smaller and more specific to the excavations where they are located, like the ones at Mohen jo Daro, Taxila, Harappa, Bhambore, to name a few.

The Museums at conservation sites, like the Baltit Fort in the Northern areas, is more



ethnological in nature. The Sindh Museum in Hyderabad also offers extensive display of provincial culture. On a national scale the Lok Virsa Museum in Islamabad covers all four provinces. A more recent phenomenon is museums dedicated to the Armed Forces, that blatantly expose children and adults to violence and machines of war without any sensitivity to its social impact.

The country's most significant art collection is with the National Gallery, Islamabad, which is scheduled to shift to its new premises soon - by the middle of 2006. The Lahore Museum and the A. R. Faridi Gallery at the Pakistan Arts Council in Karachi have historically important art collections. While the first has some landmark works that trace Modernism in Pakistan, the second is significant for the works of early masters from East Pakistan (present day Bangladesh).

In Lahore, the house of a famous artist, Shakir Ali, has been turned into a museum, where his living space and studio have been preserved for the visitor. Managed by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, it offers library facilities in the basement, and the garden is sometimes put to use as an outdoor display space.

During the 1990s, private institutions like the Gulgee Museum and Jamil Naqsh Museum, dedicated to these artists, were set up in Karachi. The pioneer among this kind of ventures was the Chughtai Museum founded by the artist's family in Lahore.

Gallerie Sadequain, located in the historical precincts of Frere Hall in Karachi, has a special significance as the last studio of the great master who died while working on the ceiling there. Till recently, one could see there a number of Sadequain's works on marble.

The recently founded Mohatta Palace Museum in Karachi

has pushed the bar higher on museum management and has held some well-curated exhibitions.

In her extensive study of museum displays, Julia Noordegraaf writes in her book, *Strategies of Display** "Museums are interesting objects to study as they are emblematic of the way visual regimes influence and shape our views of the world. Like other visual media such as illustrated in newspapers, cinema and television, museum displays offer us representations of our natural and cultural environment of its historical development."

"An analysis of museum presentation can therefore provide insight into the way we interpret the world and the manner in which we communicate about it."

In the context of this statement it would be worthwhile to see how the existing museums, their collections and displays, have been sensitive to national aspirations and addressed the problematic relationship that the post-colonial society has with its past.

The archaeological Museums that came into existence some hundred years ago continues in many ways to project the mindset of the colonizers that prioritized research and display of artifacts from archaeological and historical sites, with a detached curatorial objectivity in which the voice of the 'subaltern' has been silenced. The very absence of contextual material and an interactive environment points to an authoritarian strategy with little regard to a socially and culturally diverse audience.

In his book *Forging The Raj*** , Thomas R. Metcalf observes that in the 1860s, a determined Alexander Cunningham placed the study of India's archaeological remains on a 'scientific basis'. The first survey produced a list of monuments, classified, labeled and deemed worthy of restoration and protection. *"This enterprise gave India a visible past, but one defined*

Gallery at the Arts Council, Karachi



by the imperial regime, and sustained by the assumption that the Indian people had themselves neglected and defiled these monuments. Preserved in a state of picturesque decay, isolated from the living present, India's archaeological sites testified at once to the country's past greatness, her subsequent decline and Britain's essential role as custodian of that greatness'.

So thoroughly did the British tear India's monuments from their historic connections, that they never even considered preserving intact entire districts or neighborhoods'.

The inherent contradictions in this commitment to conservation were manifested in the destruction of Shahjahanabad near Delhi and other traditional settlements which were sacrificed to accommodate railway tracks.

'By its very nature too, the act of defining another's cultural heritage, arrogant and patronizing, made manifest the authority of the colonial regime'.

This position of the colonizers has been blindly retained by archaeological museums and poses a challenge to a free nation; To subvert this strategy into a vital tool to dismantle the false construct of colonial history and reconnect citizens with their legitimate heritage.

Today post-colonial countries are

The pioneer among this kind of ventures was the Chughtai Museum founded by the artist's family in Lahore.

making serious efforts to reclaim their historical treasures. Both the Peacock Throne and the

Kohinoor Diamond taken away as colonial booty are now on display in British Museums. Dr. Huwas was recently able to repatriate the mummy of Ramses I to Luxor after lengthy negotiations. Presently he is campaigning to bring The Rosetta Stone back to Egypt. The spat between UK and Greece over Greek treasures continues to hit newspaper headlines.

Since 1947, except for a few minor interventions, the archaeological museums have not been reformed into an engaging institution committed to presenting an inclusive

history rather than the didactic ideological version it offers. This apathy extends to all departments and no attempt has been made to make the displays or the environment visitor-friendly. Among the drab walls and dilapidated galleries at the National Museum in Karachi, one comes across the Freedom Movement Gallery which is not only conceptually inadequate, but its unimaginatively displayed memorabilia fails to communicate the spirit of this critical movement to the discerning museum audience of today.

The dull remoteness of displays is not un-similar to the Lahore Museum. Its cherished painted ceiling by Sadequain, which is one of the finest works of art in the country, fails to engage the visitor. In the absence of contextual information that can come in the form of photographs of the work in progress at the gallery, preparatory sketches/plans, and audio visual interviews of the artist, there is not much to generate interest and pride.

A lack of awareness, disinterest or disconnect with the needs of the community keeps Pakistan's archaeological museums (with their priceless core of artifacts) from adopting a strategy that projects an indigenous point of view with the help of an appealing display and a proactive outreach program. In the West, where the Museum's state grant is often linked to the popularity of the institutions, it has no choice but to design programs that prioritizes the interest of the community.

Such a focus in Pakistan can draw the citizens to the museum and introduce them to the rich material culture of Pakistan and celebrate the long craft continuum in a meaningful way.

Targeting the troubled youth of Nottingham UK, are the 'Galleries of Justice' housed in a 19th century jail and courthouse. This unconventional museum has a strong social intervention program that encourages youth in hands-on activities. Using the language of video games, they have devised software to help them to survive rampant crime, drugs and racism. This is particularly successful among the immigrant population and the economically deprived. The replication of such a project would be very relevant in the



National Museum in Karachi

Art Hub

The Foundation for Museum of Modern Art (FOMMA) announces that pending the availability of the four buildings earmarked for the proposed "Museum Complex" - as part of the 112 acre Race Course Gardens - the Defence Housing Authority has allocated an old army barrack in Zamzama Park, to be developed immediately as the FOMMA-DHA Art Library and Center.

It is proposed that the barrack in Zamzama Park, provisionally made available to FOMMA, be converted as an art resource center for researchers of contemporary art, as well as a meeting place for the arts community generally.

FOMMA is actively pursuing sponsorship funding as well as establishing contacts with major museums of modern art in various countries in order to establish twinning arrangements with them for the exchange of art publications and other audio-video material. FOMMA's own publications are being offered in the first instance, and there has been a positive response from a number of museums as well as academic and professional institutions.



A. R. Faridi Gallery, Arts Council, Karachi

urban centers of our own country.

The marginalization of the Hindu and Buddhist heritage in our museums has led to the neglect of exhibits and galleries specific to minority religions. They have begun to disappear into dark corners and museum stores. Either done by political design or 'religiosity' of the museum officials, this sets a dangerous precedent that robs people of a true history of their ancient land. Only a pluralistic policy in the hands of a professional and enlightened museum team can the paradigm of exclusion end and a respect for the country's syncretic culture and the spirit of its civilization prevail.

In March 2006, after six decades of independence, the Pakistani nation will get its first purpose-built National Art Gallery in Islamabad. For a developing nation like Pakistan, a National Gallery or Museum is always looked upon as a luxury. Culture too is neglected unless linked to tourist trade or the entertainment industry. This may be the result of the absence of a strong cultural voice that can forcefully articulate the intrinsic link between visual arts and a cohesive national identity.

Like writers, how do visual artists reflect the collective concerns of the citizens and become their voice?

In the global arena in a Post Modern world, with its shift

from the 'center' to the periphery, every country has a chance to trade with its 'social capital', and art has begun to play a significant role in shaping a nation's image. In this region, the Sharjah Biennale and Dhaka's Asian Biennale have had success in exploring art to put their countries on the cultural map of the world.

Grasping the importance of cultural projection, a Saudi Prince recently gifted US dollars 20 million to put up an Islamic wing at the Louvre Museum in Paris. These efforts not only showcase national artists but also initiate a global dialogue that boosts local tourism while establishing a more authentic image of their people.

For a nation to inculcate pride in its contemporary culture,

national exhibitions and retrospective shows play a vital role. A good precedent was the exhibition 'Sadeqain: A Holy Sinner' (2003), at the Mohatta Palace Museum, that introduced his creative genius. Murals and paintings from various periods of the artist's career had been meticulously researched and displayed.

When similar retrospective exhibitions showcase the corpus of Chughtai, Allah Baksh, Zubeida Agha, Anna Molka Ahmed, Shakir Ali, Bashir Mirza, Zahoorul Akhlaq, and dozens of other artists, it will make visible the artistic

In March 2006, after six decades of independence, the Pakistani nation will get its first purpose-built National Art Gallery in Islamabad.

vitality and impact the way Pakistan is perceived in the global community.

Acting as a catalyst for awareness, the shows will enable Pakistanis and the world to discover the multi-cultural and multi-faceted oeuvre of the artists who referenced the link with our pre-Islamic history with the same enthusiasm as with the Islamic Arts. An accessible national collection of Modern art in Pakistan will assist the country's art historians to counter the Western claims of derivation and establish the legitimacy of an indigenous modernism. An equally important issue is to encourage a discourse on the continuum within the Miniature Painting tradition by creating a context with a collection of Mughal and post Mughal paintings along with the internationally acclaimed work of the Neo-miniaturists. This will create a space for dialogue and documentation around contemporary art.

For a National Gallery to be a vibrant and effective institution, it is recommended that it be run by an autonomous body of art professionals with a public and private partnership. An ambitious program will put much pressure on the already overstretched resources of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts that jointly looks after visual and performance arts on a shoestring budget.

To give a nation a sense of its own history and dispel colonial notions of an 'interrupted' people with a retrogressive culture, the museums and publications can be the strongest agencies to establish the truth through a dialogue with all tiers of society. Only a collective cultural identity with a strong sense of self can enhance a nation's ability to negotiate the present and the future with confidence.

* *Strategies of Display Museum Presentation in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Visual Culture*. NAI Publishers, Rotterdam, 2004

** *Forging The Raj*, Essays on British India in the Heyday of Empire. Oxford University Press, 2005

Photography: Zahoor Ahmed

THE ARTS SUPPORT CORPORATE

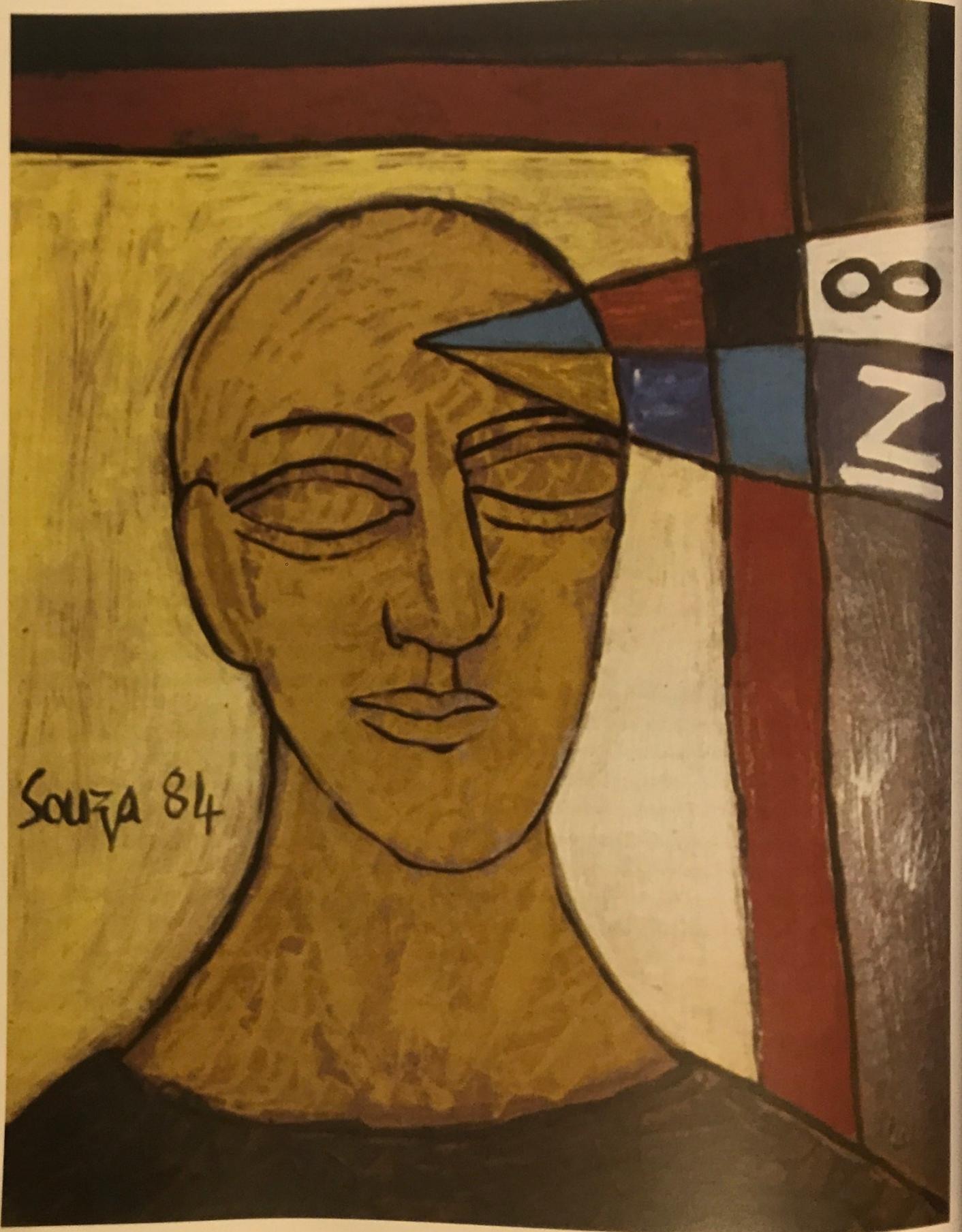
The Shell Gallery at Mohatta Palace Museum

As its corporate responsibility towards the promotion of art and culture, Shell Pakistan Limited had contributed Rs. 9 million to the Mohatta Palace Museum for the conservation and restoration of the Palace building. Consequently, the Shell Gallery was inaugurated in April 2002 at the Museum. Currently, the Gallery is being used for the Raj exhibition and displays heirlooms of the Talpur family. Although this was a one-off funding, but Shell continues to support the Museum by being a member of its board of trustees and helps raise funds for further expansion. Shell also supports the Himalayan Wildlife Foundation through an annual son e lumiere show for the restoration and preservation of the Rohtas Fort in the Punjab.

The Shell Gallery, Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi image courtesy Shell



by John Holt and Laura Turney



In many ways this essay aims to provide a snapshot or a taste of 'South Asian' art in Britain which is conceptually at odds with some of the debates that it will introduce to you; namely, the tension between recognizing the contributions and achievements of South Asian artists whilst simultaneously critiquing the marginalization and exclusion of such artists

but also through an understanding of how and why peoples, places, movements and works have been documented (or not). The story of South Asian art and artists is one of shifting boundaries, blurred beginnings and uncertain futures. It is also a story that has many characters, plots, sub-plots and denouements that are dependent on time and place, it

The Singular Journey: South Asian Visual Art in Britain

from what we might call 'the mainstream'. It is a tension between that which is described as 'the particular' being recognized for its 'particularity' whilst suggesting, at the same time, that 'the particular' is no less part of the 'universal' than that which is already considered 'universal'. So, in drawing attention to the contributions and work of South Asian artists, are we, at the same time, continuing to mark them as different and separate?

Despite this, however, it is possible to tell a story of South Asian art in Britain. The story we tell here is necessarily incomplete due to limited space. As such, there are omissions, gaps and absences that reflect, of course, the perspectives of the authors. These absences and silences are regrettable, but we would hope that this brief overview would encourage the reader to find out more and consequently flesh out the story further.

This story has a long history and cannot be removed from the context of colonialism and the Empire in the nineteenth century and migration and settlement from South Asia to Britain in the twentieth century. This story can also be told, not simply through a historical framework documenting social, demographic, economic and political changes and inserting peoples, places, movements and works accordingly,

is also a story intersected by questions of ethnicity and gender (among others). Any story we relate here is reliant on a certain set of essentialisms and assumptions that construct a sense of South Asian-ness regardless of whether the artists and movements included want(ed) or intent(ed) this. This story struggles to locate itself both within and without of the euro-centric history of art which has periodically excluded, marginalized, exoticised and denigrated artists and art works of the 'other' whilst constructing a mythical trajectory that links together the histories and achievements of the so-called 'West' unproblematic ally.

This is not simply a story, however, of South Asian Peoples, it is also a study of how the artistic motifs and symbols of 'South Asian' have been incorporated into the works of 'Western' artists and a consideration of how this incorporation is understood and theorized. The story of South Asian art and artists does not stand in isolation; there is a long and continuing history of exchange and crossover. This exchange and crossover has not necessarily been on equal terms, as the status and achievements of the 'Western' artist have been elevated above those of South Asian origin in numerous ways; for example, through reference to the 'authentic', the 'spiritual', the 'primitive' and the 'tribal'. Nonetheless, artists

have struggled to find voices and spaces from which to work, and it is these voices and spaces that we will consider here.

The issues affecting South Asian art and artists have changed over time as debates have moved on and artists and writers have challenged the euro-centricity of the art world. Certainly the Britain encountered by artists and writers such as Francis Newton Souza and Avinash Chandra in the 1950s is different to the Britain encountered in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000 onwards by new generations of artists such as, for example, the internationally renowned Anish Kapoor and others such as Chila Kumari Burman, Amrit and Rabindra KD Kaur Singh or Said Adrus.

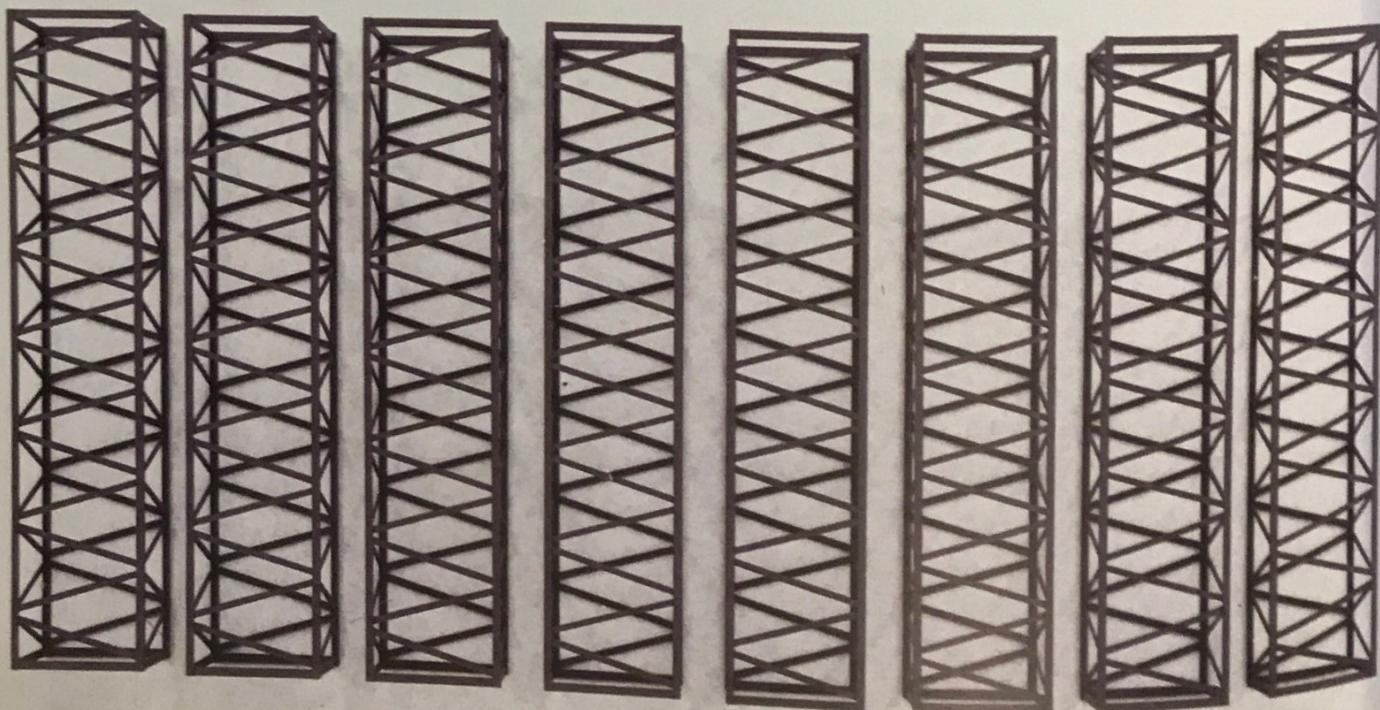
Beginnings

As we have already mentioned, the story of the South Asian art in Britain cannot be disconnected from its colonial roots. The relationship between the concept of 'art' and 'artists' was transformed (both in the UK and in South Asia) by its encounter with 'the other'. In the UK, the motifs and symbols of the exotic 'East' entered the creative repertoire of artists and designers and in South Asia (post 1850), the British attempted to elevate the status of artists from that of a humble and traditionally defined position to that of an

educated elite, particularly in India. This meant the end of the traditional artists as a class. The Westernization of India was enthusiastically supported by the literate elite whose command of the English language gave them power over those who did not have the language of their colonial masters. This linguistic hierarchy was extended to the realms of visual language where it was seen that the aesthetic of traditional India was lacking in the benefits of the European Renaissance. The concepts of chiaroscuro, and linear perspective moved the conceptual intentions of the visual arts to the need to create a facsimile, a likeness of the subject.

The British set up art schools in three major Indian cities based upon the model of British art schools, teaching drawing in the Western style exemplified in the aesthetics of South Kensington, and by the mid-nineteenth-century much traditional art began to disappear. In Britain the only major Asian artworks, which were to be seen, were in the major museums, particularly the Victoria and Albert and the British Museum. The art schools in India were set up in the 1850s in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras along the lines of the new English art schools which, in turn, were modeled on the School of Industrial Arts in South Kensington. The Government acknowledged that Indian artisans had little to learn from their European counterparts in matters of taste

Rasheed Aroon, 1970



but that the artists needed instruction in scientific drawing. When traditional artisans were made to draw from the antique they couldn't see the point in drawing what they saw as immodest stances of European ladies and gentlemen. The moral of the story is instructive: these students who did

lonely, isolated and faced with hostility, by Araeen (1989: 21). When they arrived in Britain, there were some artists such as Francis Newton Souza (India) and Avinash Chandra (India) who became very successful despite initial periods of poverty and unhappiness. These two artists, in particular, began to

This arrival of artists in London from the ex-colonies in the post-war period fits an established pattern of how artists, across countries and history, have traveled from one place to another in search of patronage

benefit from the art schools were not the artisans but those who hailed from English educated groups. The teachers in the new art schools were, it seems, from South Kensington and they brought with them exemplary drawings by English art students as though to provide evidence of a superior reality (Mitter, 2001). So, in the encounter between the arts of the Britain and South Asia there was a cross-fertilization of style, content, technique and subject matter. In South Asia, influences from Britain had some impact on the development of the arts either through rejection or incorporation. In Britain, of course, the same applied, however what is interesting for the purpose of this essay is a consideration of how incorporation, rejection and positioning has been inserted into a discourse of art and artists that has placed South Asia at the periphery.

Moving Forward... After the War

The story of South Asian art and artists in Britain begins to gain some momentum in the post-war period as artists from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh begin to settle in Britain. The work and development in South Asian art are not confined to Britain, as there was much movement between the UK and the sub-continent as artists settled in Britain, returned to South Asia and then returned to settle once more in Britain. For example, in 1946 Evan Peries (Sri Lanka) settled in London, returned to Sri Lanka in 1953/54 and subsequently came to live permanently in England. As Araeen points out, this arrival of artists in London from the ex-colonies in the post-war period fits an established pattern of how artists, across countries and history, have traveled from one place to another in search of patronage (Araeen, 1989); see, for example, the concentration of artists in Paris in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-centuries. Although many artists struggled (Peries, for example, has been described as

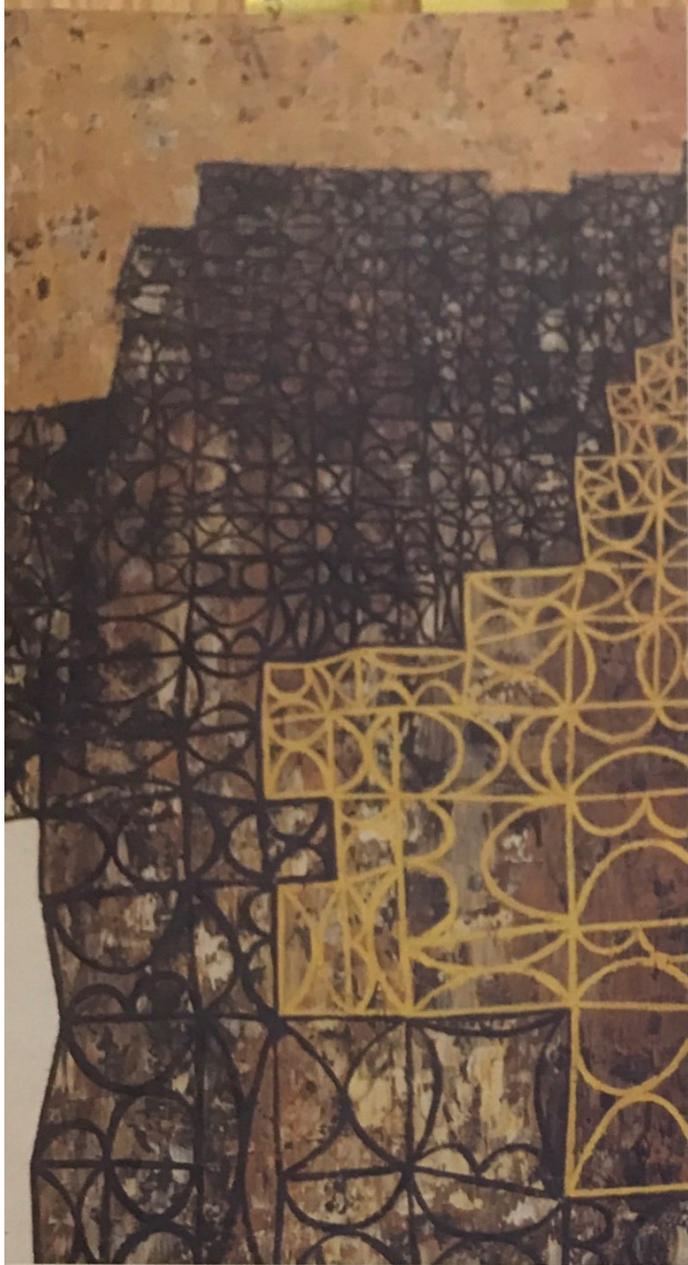
exhibit their works in the 1950s and were phenomenally successful throughout the 1960s. Souza and Chandra, despite their successes, however, were nonetheless 'othered' or 'particularized' as 'Indian' or 'Oriental' painters; their work often described through recourse to the clichéd symbols of the Orient: sensual, erotic, symbolic and spiritual. Although successful in Britain during this period, like many other artists, they moved to New York in the 1960s (Chandra in 1965 and Souza in 1967) as the British fascination with the 'other' began to wane. For example, in 1964 the Indian High Commission mounted an exhibition entitled 'Six Indian Painters', which included Khanra. Jenny Lee, Britain's first ever arts minister attended the opening which nonetheless was ignored by the press, as was an exhibition at the Upper Grosvenor Gallery in 1966 which included leading Indian artists such as Bhuppen Khakkar.

The establishment of artists such as Souza and Chandra was fraught with difficulties. Chandra, when entering a gallery in London to show his work, was asked by the gallery owner if he could paint tigers and elephants and recalled that:

I was so hurt. There is nothing wrong with painting elephants and tigers, which I perhaps do now or perhaps I should do, to express all that anger which is inside me, but to be asked to do these things because you were an Indian is insulting.

(Araeen 1989: 28, quotes from Araeen (1988) 'Conversation with Avinash Chandra', *Third Text*, Nos 1/4)

This issue, the essentialisation of the 'Indian' artist continued to be challenged throughout the 1980s and 1990s as South Asian artists struggled to express themselves and their identity, but without being reducible to cliché, surface and stereotype. These struggles also developed in a country where racism and discrimination against black and minority ethnic peoples increased and extreme right groups organized and became



Anwar Jalal Shemza, *The Wall*, 1958

more active. South Asian artists began to work in an increasingly explicitly racialised and racist environment which found its most vivid encapsulation in Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968. In this environment, artists have used their work to make statements about gender, ethnicity, racism and spirituality, amongst other things. For example, Chila Kumari Burman, one of the first British South Asian women to study at art school, asserts the right to speak from 'beyond two cultures', challenging the stereotype of the passive, silent Asian female victim by creating self portraits of herself practicing Shotokan (a Japanese martial art) in a sari (see the installation video piece, *Body Weapons: Wild Woman Beyond Two Cultures*, 1993). Burman says of her work: *My work is about a continual exploration of my dual cultural identity through the manipulation of the photographic image, painting, laser*

printmaking, and scratch video installation works. I'm reclaiming images of us Asian Women moving away from the object of the defining gaze towards a position where we become the subject of display clearly under our control.

(Chila Kumari Burman, "With Your Own Face On It", (Watermans Art Center, London) Exhibition Catalogue, 1994: 22).

Other artists, such as Amrit and Rabindra KD Kaur Singh (The Singh Twins), have also worked to find a space in which their creativity can be valued and accepted, though they have found this, at times, a struggle. They have achieved this, not, as Burman has done, by subverting the stereotype, but by reasserting what we could describe as 'the traditional' by using miniatures, forms to express an often subversive and playful perspective on life in contemporary multi-cultural Britain. Their experience of studying art at degree level in the UK elicited the following reflection:

Self expression was presented to us as the ultimate purpose of Art but was permitted, it seemed, only if it fitted in with contemporary Western ideals of 'acceptable art, namely, an art which tended towards non-figurative, non-decorative representations; an art which was essentially Euro-centric in focus... (We) felt it was equally valid to draw upon non-European and Ancient artistic traditions for inspiration and to present a modern art within that framework.

(Swallow, Deborah '... To a Modern Revival' in Singh, A.K. and Singh, A.K., Twin Perspectives: Paintings by Amrit and Rabindra KD Kaur Singh, Birmingham: Twin Studios, 1999: 16).

Moving 'back', however, the establishment of a black and/or South Asian art scene continued in Britain from the 1950s. Developments of note include the founding of the New Vision Group by Denis Bowen in 1951 and the opening of the New Vision Center Gallery in 1956. Bowen was the first person to give Asian artists shows in Britain and provided a venue for young international and unknown abstract artists. Here artists such as Ahmed Parvez (Pakistan), Anwar Jalal Shemza (Pakistan) and Balraj Khanna (India) found a space for their work until the gallery's closure in 1966.

Khanna's work, often described through implications as somewhat derivative, is also symbolic of the relationship between center and periphery in terms of the world of art. His work is compared to Joan Miro or Paul Klee, yet nonetheless described as displaying an intrinsic 'Indianness' which Araeen describes as 'a quality invented by Western critics who find it hard to come to terms with Khanna's own

modernity' (Araeen, 1989: 43). As such, he is positioned as both derivative and 'other' in a way that white, Western, male artists would rarely be. Rothko, Picasso, Hodgkin, Kandinsky and Pollock, to name a few, have all been described as taking inspiration from the 'other', the 'primitive' and/or the 'Orient', positioned in the 'center', however, they embody the universal rather than the particular.

The opportunities for artists from South Asia were broadened in 1957 when the Imperial Institute was renamed the Commonwealth Institute. This and the Africa Center in Covent Garden were the only galleries in London to have a written policy about showing artists from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean (Araeen, 1989: 130). The two Commonwealth Biennales of Abstract Art held at the Institute proved important in terms of the establishment of South Asian artists in Britain and in 1965 Rama Rao (Indian) was awarded the £ 50 prize.

Shemza's relationship with the British art world is poignantly symbolic of the relationship between euro-centric history and its 'others'. A young Anwar Shemza had come to Britain

of art, Professor Gombrich came to the chapter on Islamic art - an art that was merely functional - from his book "The story of Art", I remember leaving the room for a few minutes before the lecture finished, and sitting on the bench outside. As the students came...they seemed so contented and self-satisfied...all evening I destroyed paintings, drawings everything that could be called art..."

(Anwar Shemza, quoted in Holt, 1998: 105)

The 'suicide' of his work bears testimony to the crisis of identity he experienced at the time, precipitated by a culturally paranoid British art institution, in which a perceived dissociation was projected onto the 'other', the 'other' in turn internalized and vented anger upon itself. His intention in coming to Britain was to benefit from the environment of Western culture and British art education systems so that he might return to Pakistan as a better painter and, importantly, as a teacher. It is ironic that both the educational system and the British arts institutions in the main spurned him, and he remained in relative obscurity for most of his life here.

Shemza was, as were other Asian artists, not without supporters in Britain. Slade tutor Andrew Forge and later Denis Bowen,

Balraj Khanna, *New Play*, 1984



in 1956 as a successful writer and artist in Pakistan. His story of what happened whilst at the Slade is indicative of the general discriminatory ethos evident in Britain at that time.

"One evening when I was attending a Slade weekly lecture on the history

co-founder of the New Vision Center in Marble Arch who had shown many artists from South Asia, showed faith in the quality of his thinking and work. Shemza was a resistive character and his inner need to make work provided a greater

**These polarities are manifest in Shemza's work, for example, absence/
presence - to be/ not to be - the intangible/ the tangible.**

imperus than the doubts foisted upon him by an insensitive and partisan system. This issue of 'description' and categorization continues to reverberate today when we think, for example, of descriptive terms such as 'ethnic' or 'primitive'. This has often meant that the art of the non-white artist is posited behind the West on some abstract chronology of artistic development or evolution. This is forcefully underlined by artist Alnoor Mitha (1997) who argues that the 'history of art' follows an established pattern that observes the achievement of other cultures in the twentieth century on the assumption that they belong to historically receding cultures. This is a history that narrates only the history of the West and excludes those cultures that are seen as external to the idea of the West. In terms of the incorporation of objects and art forms from 'beyond' the West, Araeen writes that:

It is commonly believed that African peoples themselves were not aware of the aesthetic qualities of what they were producing and that it was the West, which 'discovered' these qualities and gave the African 'objects' the status of art. It is true that Africans did not write books on aesthetics, plasticity, or formalism (or whatever relates to art), but to deduce from this that African artists were not aware of what they were doing is to indulge in the kind of stupidity which can only result from a mental blockage or intellectual dishonesty.

(Araeen, 1991:165).

In this way, the West bestows artistic status upon those who, it is believed, have no concept of art to begin with. Further, the work of artists such as Anish Kapoor or Permindar Kaur is often evaluated or critiqued from the perspective of a specific cultural heritage. They are denied the aesthetic and artistic universality of the Western artist. Further, although artists such as Kaur believe that the situation (in terms of inclusion) for minority artists and the encouragement of black and Asian children to pursue art has been improved, that they are still the victims of tokenism.

The interconnections between the social and political milieu and the art world cannot be understated. This context, both in Britain and internationally, provided a focus for a number of artists and thinkers who have sought and continue to seek to challenge racism, discrimination and euro-centrism in the art world and beyond. For example, in 1984, four anti-racist

murals were commissioned by the GLC as part of their anti-racism year in Brixton, Notting Hill, Southall and East London. Chila Kumari Burman was among the eight artists to participate. In the same year, the Commission for Racial Equality published a report *The Arts of Ethnic Minorities*, which called for greater attention to and funding for minority ethnic arts whilst the GLC Race Equality Unit organized a conference on 'Black Artists White Institutions' at the Riverside Studios.

In terms of the hegemony of euro-centrism in the art world (and, of course, beyond), an article by Amrit Wilson (1992) summarized the problems faced by South Asian artists living and working in Britain. Wilson writes:

The Orient of course was a construct of the European colonialist imagination. It grew out of the various colonial relationships, planter and forced laborer, state power and peasantry, imperial power and insurgent nationalist and so on [...]. But Orientalism is not something we can relegate to history. Its theme still permeates European popular imagery from Thomas Cook brochures to pictures on tea packets...the experiences of Asians in Britain reflects the same contradictions [...]. Like Orientalism it seeks to define our culture for us. It tells us that it is about saris and samosas, melas and traditions, and that it is a complete and of the past, passive and unchanging, and finally that it is something which needs now only to be recapitulated.

(Wilson, 1992: 16).

It seems that damage done by the domination of the euro-centric view has extended to the Eastern sense of its own spirituality. Indian artist Amil Ghosh, born in India, and who later attended the Central School of Art in London, acknowledged the influence on British artists such as Howard Hodgkin and Stephen Cox of Indian spirituality as an inspiration in what Ghosh sees as 'the transition from ignorance to understanding', but Ghosh also observes that what he saw as the materiality of Western thinking had conspired against Indian traditional thought.

In the West 'the spiritual' has remained a problem in our contemporary materialist society. This became increasingly true during the 1950s and 1960s, when the majority of first generation South Asians and South Asian artists were arriving in Britain. There are now at least three generations of artists of South Asian origins practicing in Britain and Europe, each having a different relationship with the cultures of South

Asia, but with minimal references to the spiritual content of their cultural tradition.

(*Ghosh, 2001:79*).

Artists such as Gurminder Sikand and Balrak Khaima have retained the spiritual ethos of their work, it seems, without recourse to the exotic. The problem of not being trapped in an expectation derived from political polemic is one that is yet another trap to conspire against British South Asian identity being constructed in its own terms.

Other key events in the development of a 'South Asian' arts scene occurred in 1987 when the Indian Artists in the UK (IAUK) association opened the Horizon Gallery in London in order to provide a platform to artists from the Asian sub-continent working in Britain. It showed works by Sutapa Biswas, Avinash Chandra and Amal Ghosh. In 1988 Rasheed Aareen organized *'The Essential Black Art'* at the Chisenhale Gallery, London, which subsequently went on tour and in 1989 Anish Kapoor was selected to represent Britain at the Venice Biennale.

Kapoor is described as one of the most internationally influential sculptors of his generation. He was born in Bombay but has lived and worked in London since the early seventies where he was educated at Chelsea School of Art. His work has been exhibited all over the world and is held in a number of public and private collections. Kapoor's creativity is concerned with an engagement with deep-rooted metaphysical polarities. These polarities are manifest in his work, for example, absence/ presence - to



Anish Kapoor's *'The Bean'* at Millennium Park, Chicago

with ultramarine blue pigment, were testament to silence and contemplation.

Pier Luigi Tazzi writes that Kapoor achieves this effect (a manifest of 'the void') through:

...His knowledge, use of materials - the pigments and their dispensability, stone and its hardness, surfaces that are reflective and others opaque, chasms and protrusions - with the 'spiritual' import of his own research and the illusions of sight and the mind. Kapoor's work is always

metonymic, never metaphorical, even when it draws from the vast repertoire of universal symbolism.

(*Tazzi, 1998: 104*).

In 1991 Kapoor's often astonishingly overwhelming work was recognized again when he won the Turner Prize. Kapoor is an enormously inventive and versatile artist whose works not only take over the physical space of a gallery but also the psychological space, as his work is transformed by the physical, psychological (and for some) spiritual experiences of the viewer.

Kapoor, without doubt, stands as one of the world's most important contemporary artists; his 2002

Anish Kapoor's *Marsyas* at Tate Modern (Turbine Hall), London, 2002



Kapoor, without doubt, stands as one of the world's most important contemporary artists; his 2002 installation at the Tate Modern in London was staggeringly grand in concept, design and experience

installation at the Tate Modern in London was staggeringly grand in concept, design and experience. Drawing on Greek mythology, *Maryam* occupied the whole length of the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, which was composed of three steel rings joined by a single span of red PVC membrane.

1989 also saw a major exhibition held at the Hayward gallery London - *The Other Story: Afro Asian Artists in Post-War Britain*. This exhibition is certainly a landmark in terms of the recognition of the work of both black and South Asian artists. Other important developments in the 1990s included the creation of the Institute of the International Visual Arts (InIVA). InIVA was established in 1993 as an independent non-profit making organization with support from the Arts Council and London Arts Board. InIVA's remit has been to encourage knowledge and understanding of contemporary visual art in the UK and abroad by giving priority to visual art practice and scholarship that has not been adequately represented or disseminated. As the hegemony of the art and artists of the West has been steadily challenged by both organizations and individuals alike, so, too, has the public profile of South Asian art in Britain been steadily rising throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium. For example, in 1995, Cartwright Hall hosted an exhibition curated by Salima Hashmi and Nima Poovaya-Smith - *An Intelligent Rebellion: Women Artists of Pakistan*, this exhibition gave space and a voice to those who had never before been heard in Britain. The exhibition was described by its curators as:

'...Overturning a number of stereotypes that the West may have, about contemporary art practiced in a Muslim country. Belying their usual image of seclusion and subjugation, women have actually dominated the arts in Pakistan.'

(Poovaya-Smith and Hashmi, 1995, An intelligent Rebellion: Women Artists of Pakistan catalogue, City of Bradford Metropolitan Council Arts, Museums and Libraries Division).

Much of the most innovative work in raising the profile of

South Asian art has occurred in the North West, for example, in addition to the work of Cartwright Hall (where, incidentally, you can find UK's only permanent collection of contemporary South Asian art) in 1995/1996, *Tampered Surface: Six Artists from Pakistan* (curated by Alnoor Mitha and Richard Hilton) was held at Huddersfield and Oldham art galleries. Recently, the work in the North West has been consolidated by the establishment of *Shisha* in 2001. In 1997, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of India and Pakistan there were several major exhibitions that took place across the country, many of which were in the north of England. Building on the work of Alnoor Mitha and others in the North, it was identified that there was need for an organization to facilitate and centralize this work and *Shisha* was finally formed as an independent 'diversifying agency' in 2001 to promote work of South Asian origin, acting as a link between artists, galleries and theorists in Britain and South Asia fostering awareness amongst people in Britain as well as the British South Asian people who can take pride in the contemporary visual arts of South Asia.

July 2002 saw the project ArtSouthAsia initiated by *Shisha*, the first international program of visual culture from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Exhibitions and events in the North West, Oldham, Preston, Liverpool and Manchester saw significant exhibitions, curated by individual curators from each of the contributing countries. These developments of South Asian artists in Britain and across the Diaspora as they assert the right to tell their own stories and to create in their own ways without being constrained by the expectations of the mainstream - the story, of course, continues and now, at least, South Asians in Britain (and elsewhere) are no longer expected to paint elephants and tigers.

Excerpts from *Post Colonial People* - forthcoming book by John Holt and Laura Turney.

References

- Anson, R., *The silver story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post War Britain*, London: South Bank Centre, 1989.
- Anson, R., 'From primitivism to ethnic arts', in Hillis, S. (ed) *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art*, London: Routledge, 1991.
- Burman, Chila Kumari *With Your Own Face On It*, and London: exhibition Catalogue, Watermans Art Centre, 1994.
- DeSouza, A. and Shabben, M. (eds) *Crossing Black Waters*, London Working Press, 1992.
- Ghosh, A., 'The Transcending Vision: Another Vision' in Ghosh, A., and Lamba, J. (eds) *Beyond Frontiers: Contemporary British Art by Artists of South Asian Descent*, London: Saffron, 2001.
- Bhabha, H.K. and Tagg, P.L., *Anish Kapoor*, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press and the Hayward Gallery, 1998.
- Holt, John, 'Anwar Jalal Shereza: A Search for the Significant,' *Third Text* (42), Spring 1998: 104-108.
- Mitha, A., 'Artscene', *Yorkshire and Humbershire Arts*, June 3 (1997).
- Mitter, P., 'Indian Artists and the Raj: Westernisation and Nationalism 1850-1947,' in *Beyond Frontiers: Contemporary British Art by Artists of South Asian Descent*, in Ghosh, A. and Lamba, J. (eds), London: Saffron, (2001).
- Nead, L., *Chila Kumari Burman: Beyond Two Cultures*, London, Kala Press, 1995.
- Poovaya Smith, N, and Hopper, C., (eds), *Cartwright Hall Art Gallery and its Collections*, Bradford: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Arts Museums and Libraries Division, 1997.
- Swallow, Deborah '...To a Modern Revival' in Singh, A.K. and Singh, A.K., *Twin Perspectives: Painting by Anrit and Rabindra KD Kaur Singh*, Birmingham: Twin Studios, 1999: 14-19.
- Wilson, A., 'Beyond as assertion of identity', in deSouza, A. and Merali, S, (eds), *Crossing Black Waters*, London: Working Press, 1992.

Shabbi, Chaitalch (detail), 2001

Surendran Nair, *Melancholy of the 12th Man (cuckoonebulopetis)*, 2002

NIWTA acknowledges the support of the editors and publishers of 'The Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain'. Edited by N Ali and V S Hala and S Sayyid and published by Hurst and Co., Nov 2005.

NIWTA would like to thank *Shisba* for permission to reproduce images from their catalogue of ArtSouthAsia.

ArtSouthAsia was initiated by *Shisba*, the international South Asian crafts and visual arts agency based in Manchester. *Shisba* aims to support artist and curatorial development, build audiences and strengthen the infrastructure for disseminating this work. *Shisba* organizes exhibitions, events and residencies and produces publications as well as networking and consultancy services.