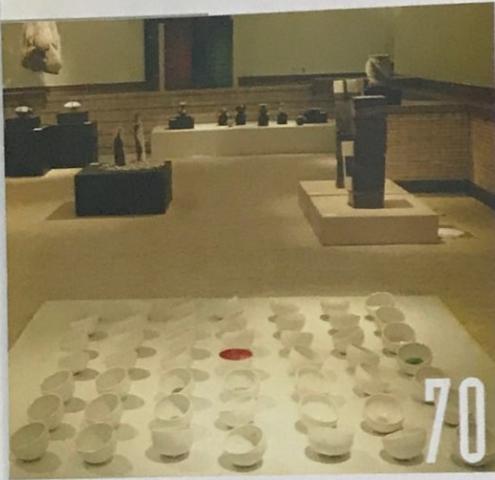




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# CONTRIBUTORS

**Adnan Madani** is a Karachi born writer and artist. He has a degree in Visual Culture from Goldsmith College, London. His research interests include the philosophy of language and ideas of cosmopolitanism in contemporary art, as seen through the works of Wittgenstein and Derrida.

**Ahmed Fouad Selim** is Director General of the Museum of Modern Art, Cairo, Egypt, since 2005. His first one-man show was held in 1963, after which he participated in some forty-two solo shows and more than hundred group exhibitions in Egypt and other countries. He is the President of the Egypt section for the International Art Critics Association (AICA) and the Director General, Center of Art (Akhnaton Galleries).

Awarded the *Chevalier L'Ordre des Art* by the French government in 1986 and an *Arts Medal* from the Queen of Denmark, he has been the Commissioner and curator for Egypt's pavilions at the INT Biennale of Paris in 1980, Sao Paulo in 1987, and Venice in 1993 and 2001. He has published three books on art and his works are in collections at all Egyptian museums, many museums in the Arab world, and at a number of galleries in Europe, and the USA.

**Ali Haider** took up photography a few years ago as a hobby which opened a new world and a new kind of seeing through the narrow rectangle of the viewfinder. His work has always emphasized natural light. He hopes to hold an exhibition of his photographs soon.

**Amean J** was born in Karachi in 1974. He graduated with a BFA in Photography from the Academy of Art University San Francisco, in 1997, and later completed his MFA in Media, Culture & Technology from the University of Luton, UK, in 2005. He is an established name in fashion photography, but his passion remains art photography which he exhibits regularly in galleries. Amean J works out of his studio, 18% grey based in Karachi.

**Atteqa Ali** is a doctoral candidate in the Art History Department of The University of Texas at Austin. She is completing her dissertation that examines the genesis of socio-political art made in Pakistan today. It looks at the colonial history of South Asia and traces the last two decades of art making in the nation.

**Christine Bruckbauer** was born in Steyr, Austria, in 1969. From 1987 to 1992 she studied Art History and Art teaching at University Graz in Austria, and later, for two years she studied Cultural Management at University Linz, Austria. From 1995 to 2001, she was exhibition organizer and curator at the International Exhibition Hall for Contemporary Art, Secession Vienna, Austria. She has lived in Pakistan from 2002 - 2006. Since 2001, she has freelanced as curator and art writer, focusing on contemporary art practices in South Asia. A PhD candidate in Art History at the University of Vienna, Austria, on *Female Metaphors in Contemporary Art of Pakistan*, she is currently based in London, UK.

**Huria Kazmi** holds a Master's degree in Fine Arts with a major in Painting from College of Art and Design, Punjab University, Lahore. Her articles appear in local magazines and newspapers. She is also working for TV shows, while painting for her is a pivotal practice.

**Inayat Husain** had his early education in Indore and graduated in Civil Engineering from Aligarh Muslim University, India in 1945. He received a Master's, also in Civil Engineering, from Tennessee, USA, in 1948, and came to the newly created Pakistan where he has been living since then. He served in Engineering and Techno-administrative appointments, Government of Pakistan, including the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission. He also served as Registrar, N.E.D University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi. In 2005, he translated in English a book *Indian History - Background and Perspective*, originally written in Urdu by Zahid Husain.

**John Holt** is a UK based artist/writer. He has taught at Bretton Hall College, University of Leeds. As a writer, he contributes to publications around the world. He is founder of A.I.M. (Artists in Mind), an arts

and mental health charity that focuses on art as therapy for the emotionally disturbed.

**Koulsy Lamko** was born in Chad, in 1959. A poet, playwright, novelist, author of scripts and actor, he has a PhD in arts, language and French literature. His work has been presented by theater companies in Africa, Europe and Canada. Promoter of the Theater of the Community in Burkina Faso, he was one of the founders of the International Festival of Theatre for Development. He founded and directed the Center for the Arts and the Theater in the National University of Rwanda, where he has also taught theater and creative writing. He produced a Poetry CD in 1997 and has numerous publications to his credit. Presently he lives and teaches in Mexico City, Mexico.

**Kristine Michael** is a ceramic artist, curator and researcher based in New Delhi, India. Though trained as a tableware designer and potter, her present work is based on organic forms in installations. She recently exhibited and lectured at the 4th World Ceramics Biennale, Korea. She is a working group member of KHOJ International Artists Association, New Delhi. In 2006, she participated and presented a paper at the ASNA Clay Triennial, Karachi.

**Nadia Kurd** is an emerging artist and writer. Her work has been published in *FUSE Magazine*, *Critical Times*, *MIX Magazine* and *Proteus: A Journal of Ideas* as well as various exhibition catalogues. Her interests focus on contemporary urban spaces and architecture and the Muslim diaspora in North America. Nadia has a B.F.A. from the University of Ottawa and a Masters of Art History from York University. Formerly the Programming Coordinator for SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Collective), Nadia hopes to pursue her PhD at Mill University (Montréal) in the fall of 2007.

**R.W. Lawrence** is a professor in the Philosophy and Religion Department at Albertus Magnus College. He received his M.Div at Princeton Theological Seminary (1995) and went on to complete a Ph.D in Philosophical Theology at the University of Notre Dame in January 2006. His dissertation, entitled *John Milbank and the Creation of Truth: Dialectical Readings*, argued for the inherently religious nature of political structures while, through its method, attempting to re-establish the importance of the dialectical tradition for philosophical theology. His research focuses on the intersection of theology, philosophy and theory especially as it exists in the Continental tradition in so far as that embraces philosophers and theologians both from phenomenological and (post) Marxist backgrounds.

**Sara Mehmood** grew up in Wales and has lived in Pakistan since 1986. Her main interests are art and literature and her articles and book reviews appear regularly in daily *Dawn* newspaper and quarterly *Libas* magazine. She works in Islamabad as a trainer/examiner with British Council, Pakistan.

**Shazia Zuberi** did her Bachelor's degree in Economics with a minor in Studio Arts from Allegheny College in Pennsylvania, USA in 1992. Ever since her graduation, she has combined her development work with her art, specifically focusing on women's rights. She has developed a language in clay that reflects women's rights issues pertaining to their sexuality, the ability to control their lives, make decisions which impact their bodies, etc. and has held several solo and group shows. Over the years she has written art reviews for *Newsline* and *NuktaArt* magazines in a freelance capacity. She is currently living and working in London, UK.

**Sumbul Khan** is Assistant Curator at the State Bank of Pakistan Museum and Art Gallery. She studied for her Masters at Tufts University in the History of Islamic Art. Since then she has taught Undergraduate Art History at Framingham State College, the Textile Institute of Pakistan and the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Her research interests include gender and identity politics in 16th century Mughal manuscripts and contemporary art from post-colonial countries.

The year 2007 will be remembered for the inauguration of Pakistan's first National Art Gallery (NAG) in Islamabad. Its significance was further enhanced by the country's largest assembly of art and a rare interface between early masters and contemporary art.

The multiple facets of this momentous event are the focus of this issue.

Amra Ali explores the significance of this new journey, what it means for artists to finally have an institutionalized space for the intellectual and artistic nourishment of our art: past, present and future. In her essay, Sara Mehmood chronicles the history of NAG that runs parallel to the politics of Pakistan since 1981. Also included is the architect's statement with his design philosophy that informs its blueprint and choice of material.

*Nukta-e-Nazar* with Jamal Shah, Director of the NAG, presents his life and work as an artist, and the vision he brings to the new assignment. In the Photo Essay, Karachi-based photographer, Ameen J focuses his lens on the fortress inspired brick façade and the nuanced interior of the exhibition spaces.

**NUKTAART** continues the theme of 60 Year Celebrations of Pakistan with an exclusive translation of Chughtai's writings by Inayat Husain. This explores the historical and cultural environment that gave impetus to his art and made him one of the eminent painters of early 20th Century in South Asia. From Egypt, a country close in age to Pakistan, Ahmed Fouad Selim sends a historical narrative to help us explore similar trajectories within the art, of both the young post colonial nations.

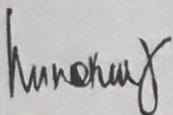
Exploring international art, Robert Lawrence contributes his reading of the oeuvre of three Iranian artists in the context of identity issues and iconography. Nadia Kurd's commentary on improvised mosque designs of Canada extends to the Islamic identity in the Diaspora. The 4th Ceramic Biennale 2007, Korea, is viewed from the perspective of a participant by Kristine Michael, and Halima Casell's exquisite carved clay objects is the subject of John Holt's article. A comprehensive review on the seminal retrospective *The Age of Discrepancies* in Mexico City draws attention to the emergence of a new confidence, as history is reclaimed through research. Subversive alternative strategies of Mexican artists during the thirty year long authoritarian rule remain central to the debate.

From the world of music, **NUKTAART** brings the *Sahel Opera*, the first ever African opera that took Holland by storm this summer. Koulsy Lamko, one of the writers of the Opera evokes the spirit of this shared odyssey of African musicians and singers. For long a dream of the late Prince Claus, it was recently turned into a reality with the efforts of his foundation, The Prince Claus Fund.

In this issue, Lahore's eminent architect and art collector, Nayyar Ali Dada shares his masterpieces in the permanent collection of the Nairang Gallery with Huria Kazmi.

Two book reviews come from different ends of the art spectrum. One is based on carefree and spontaneous art from children, and the other is from a highly skilled visual expression of an aviation artist.

With this issue **NUKTAART** begins its three years in the relatively unexplored territory of art periodicals in Pakistan. As we look to the future, our belief is reinforced that art is a potent force in the contemporary culture of Pakistan. One of the objectives of NuktaArt will be to generate an awareness of the vast social and intellectual promise it offers to the nation.



Nilofur Farrukh

Editor

October, 2007



Nilofur Farrukh



Rumana Husain

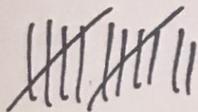


Amra Ali



Sabiha Mohammed

# DOCUMENTA KASSEL 16/06 — 23/09 2007



National  
Art  
Gallery in  
Male

Documenta is one of the oldest and most important art exhibitions of contemporary art, held every five years in Kassel, Germany. The leitmotif of Documenta 12, 2007 was the *migration of form*, stemming from a loosely built connection to *modernity, life and education*. Three questions posed in this year's Documenta were: *Is modernity our antiquity? What is bare life? and What is to be done?* (in terms of education).

Artistic Director Roger M. Buergel and Curator Ruth Noack stressed the importance of individual interpretations when conceiving the show, hence trying to focus the initial dialogue to the visual as a response to the formal aesthetics of the works, which was supplemented by theoretical and conceptual mediation into the works. An integral part of this mediation came in terms of Documenta 12 magazines, a platform that brought together 100 publications on art from diverse parts of the world and was displayed at the main Hall. In August 2007, Amra Ali, Senior Editor, NuktaArt was invited to Documenta 12 as part of the Visiting Program arranged by the world wide network of the Goethe-Institut. The program brought together professional artists, curators, art critics and writers from 28 countries for a week of tours, discussion and talks in Kassel. Apart from the cultural exchange with the main curators of Art in Germany, the program provided a unique exchange of ideas and intellectual dialogue between a broad spectrum of art professionals from around the globe.

## Art and Tourism: A view from the Maldives

The exhibition *Beyond the Tourist's Eye - An Issue of Identity in Maldivian Art* held at the National Art Gallery in Male explores the issues that influence the art of this small country. While the tourist industry provides a lifeline to the artist but its demands for exotic art as souvenirs from the tropics allow little space to experiment and evolve. A catalogue essay points out that the Maldivian language has no word for art but it has one for craft. This helps to trace the roots of creative expression to crafts till as recently as early 20th Century, when a member of the Royal family of the Maldives received formal art education abroad and plastic arts entered mainstream consciousness.

Maldives still has no art school and a handful of commercial galleries but the initiative to bring all existing art together at the National Art Gallery presents a sign of optimism.



Professor Khalili



## Islamic Art in Australia

Fifty of the three hundred of the finest and rarest of the Islamic arts from the renowned Khalili Collection went up on display at Sydney's New South Wales Gallery. These exhibits, mostly from 17th Century to early 20th Century, include ceramics, decorative metal crafts, textiles, manuscripts, etc. developed under the patronage of powerful Islamic courts.

The show aims to create an awareness of this technically developed and aesthetically strong design legacy that extended a strong influence on European art and craft. Professor Khalili, an Iranian-born devout Jew, hopes that this exhibition will contribute to building bridges between world religions and cultures as these have far more that unite them than setting them apart.



Hassain Ali Manik, *For the Young Ones* (detail), acrylic on canvas (handprint), 92x45cms, 2007

# AAA Research Post now in Pakistan



The not-for-profit Asia Art Archive (AAA) based in Hong Kong, is one of the world's most comprehensive and easily accessible resources for contemporary Asian art. More than a static collection of material, the AAA actively organizes programs and research projects. With the aim

of increasing understanding, encouraging dialogue, building greater networks and facilitating research and writing on the field of Asian art, AAA has established research posts in Asia.

Maliha Noorani is the new full-time researcher for Pakistan. She will work to facilitate in-depth study on and keep track of contemporary Pakistani art developments, participating in art events and exhibitions, collecting publications and primary source materials, documenting events and exhibitions in Pakistan. This material will then be made publicly accessible from AAA's website and library in Hong Kong for research purposes. Noorani will also assist AAA in developing its regional network and initiate focused research projects. Noorani completed her BFA at the National College of Arts, majoring in Indian and Persian Miniature Painting, and a Master's in History of Art and Archeology from SOAS, London. She has worked at *MotiRoti*, a London-based international arts organization, ASL, a South Asian Art Consultancy, and at Sotheby's in the Department of Indian and Islamic Art.

For more information visit [www.aaa.org.hk](http://www.aaa.org.hk)



## World Curators Tour Mexico

The Prince Claus Fund, Netherlands invited Ola Khalidi (Jordan), N'gone (Senegal), Sangeeta Thapa (Nepal) and Nilofur Farrukh (Pakistan) to join art writers and curators from Holland and Belgium hosted by the Mondrian Foundation on a tour of Mexico and Curacao. This provided a rare opportunity to explore the Contemporary Art Scene of Mexico through its museums, galleries, alternative spaces and private collections. Among the many highlights of the tour were visits to the globally renowned Jumex Collection of Contemporary Art in the small town of Puebla, the spectacular murals of Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco in Mexico City and Guadalajara.



An illustration from *Rubaiyat* by Sadequain

## A Foundation for Sadequain

Committed to documentation and preservation of the legacy of his paternal uncle - the great Sadequain - Salman Ahmed recently founded the Sadequain Foundation in San Diego, USA. The Foundation maintains a gallery and has a collection of over 500 original works of Sadequain that date from the 1950s to his last days in February 1987. The long term goal of the Sadequain Foundation is to establish a world class museum by 2012 which will house the master's art and facilitate research and publications on his life and work.

On 14 August 2007, The Sadequain Foundation was invited to organize an exhibition at the Embassy of Pakistan, Washington DC. It showcased 30 panels of the master's calligraphies from 1969, and 50 pen and ink drawings featured in the illustrated books of *Rubaiyat* by Sadequain. In addition to this, three large sketches from his Cobweb series (1967) and two drawings completed in 1986 were also included. Books connected to Sadequain, such as his *Rubaiyats*, a compilation of letters written by him, and other personal items in the show provided an interesting context to his work.



## Art History from Primary Source

In July 2007, art historians and art critics in Karachi launched Project Art History Pakistan for Fomma - Art History Resource Centre (AHRC) to document Pakistan's art history from primary sources. This will include audio/video interviews and comprehensive digital photography of art works from each period. The Karachi Module is expected to last for two years and hopes to offer a model that can be replicated in other cities.

The primary objective of this initiative that coincides with the country's 60th year of independence is to create a corpus of research which will facilitate a serious review of the existing art history curricula so it can address art history and other theoretical concerns pertaining to art in the context of Pakistan. The Project Art History Pakistan research will be available in publications on each module after the completion of the project.

# Dolls of Pain

Maimuna exhibited her dolls of pain at San Donato Milanese, Gubbio and Macerata this year. Her migrations from the country of her birth - Pakistan - to India, to attend the Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay, then onto Birmingham, UK, to study at the Birmingham College of Arts and Crafts, and finally to Milan, Italy - where she has lived ever since she studied painting at the Brera Academy - have all left profound influences on her.

The child of a mixed marriage, Protestant and Zoroastrian, in a Muslim-dominated country, the artist's art comes from her reflection on her past; her experiences, and her mixed culture, manifesting her feelings and ideas into hand-sewn cloth sculptures made of old sheets and pillow cases stuffed with wool. The bodies and hands of women that she constructs in this manner are decorated with found material that she resurrects from dumps, embroidering scars, symbols and evocative words on them. Maimuna's art is also a reflection of the painful and 'tortured' body of Frida Kahlo or the wounded and tortured bodies of the Abu Ghraib prisoners. She represents burned and maimed bodies of women due to domestic violence or sexual abuse, or depicts mutilations resulting from wars and other kinds of violence.



Maimuna



## Fish Skin as Fabric

A recent show at the Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto, focuses on the ancient craft of turning fish skin to fabric. The creator of the exhibit, You Wenfeng learnt the centuries-old skill from her grandmother, a member of the Hezhe people that live on the banks of the Songhua River in the Heilongjiang province of Northern China.

The child's clothing created by You Wenfeng, and featured in the exhibition, was completed in 20 days and is made from the skin of 25 salmon.

Photographs and a film that accompany the show demonstrate the intensive process of fabricating usable material from fish skin, which has existed through centuries as a living tradition of the Hezhe communities in China.

Jamil Naqsh



## A Master

In early 2007, a large collection of works by eminent Pakistani artist Jamil Naqsh was put on display on the occasion of the third anniversary of Unicorn Art Gallery in Karachi. Borrowed from private collections from all over the country, viewers were able to see some of the most important works done over three decades, under one roof. On view were works such as a bullock cart composition from Naqsh's early days of rural landscapes; works from his earliest show in 1971 in impasto technique; and later works with horses and women, influenced by Marino Marini. Apart from the figurative, the inclusion of Naqsh's calligraphy gave viewers a chance to see the different phases of the master's artistic journey. The Unicorn Gallery aims to hold similar exhibitions of the works of Ustad Allah Baksh, Abdur Rehman Chughtai, Bashir Mirza and other Pakistani masters.



Maimuna, Barbie Madonna, 2005

## Celebrated

## History of Swat Valley Traced

The Italian Archeological Mission (IsIAO) in a recent exhibition of photographs at Gallerie Sadequain shared their five decades of research in the Swat Valley of Pakistan.

The large sized images reveal how IsIAO actively excavated, researched, documented material culture, architecture and living crafts of the Swat Valley and exhibited it in Pakistan and Italy.

In graveyards that date back to the 2nd Millennium, they excavated the earliest settled human presence in the valley. Their investigation led them to cave art from 1700BC to 1400 AD that exists in small mountain shelters. The simplified figures central to the work are painted in red ochre and orange ochre with a symbolism that evolved over the centuries and facilitates an understanding of socio-religious influences.

The living craft of Swat's wood architecture with its intaglio decorations attracted their attention as early as 1959 and after decades of photography and study the patterns have been found to be linked to Gandhara, Central Asia and early Dardic and Kafir origins of the people. The finding of the IsIAO team confirms the significance of Swat as a transition point on the trade route linking Gandhara with the Tarim Basin (Xinjiang in China). Visited by traders and armies, the culture of Swat shows an assimilation of influences over several millennia.

Translated from Urdu by Inayat Husain

# My Art: How I See It

Abdul Rahman Chughtai (1899 - 1975)

Parents view all their offspring as the legendary prince or princess out of the Arabian Nights. All my paintings may not be the Princess Shehrezad or Badar-el-Budur, but each of them represents my aims, intellectual inclinations and thoughts. Each is a creation which identifies its creator's thought process, cultural awareness, ecstasy and discernment. Alladin's magic lamp could produce palaces, royal chambers and metropolises, but it could not create the "moon among moons" which in its form and appearance could present the higher and nobler aesthetic feelings. In my works I have produced Shehrezads, Badar-el-Budurs, Sindbads, Haroon-el-Rashids, Zubeda Khatoons and Abul Hassans as well as beautiful dancers, slave girls, soldiers and marshals, princes, princesses, masters and servants, ladies of the palaces and bedouin maidens. I have paraphrased the poetry of Rumi, Saadi, Khayyam, Hafiz and Iqbal. I have personified characters which have been the custodians of our past glory, tradition, affluence, nobility and grandeur. My paintings go with human desires and ambitions. They create immortal impressions of man's heart and mind. They say all that needs to be said through metaphors about our culture, greatness, and standards of aesthetics which are the marks of distinction of living nations and their arts.

My paintings talk and converse. Their silence gives eloquence to the intellect and perception. But whatever their message,

one needs to have the insight, vision and passion and only he, who possesses the aesthetic sense and can relate it to the eternal values, can enjoy and appreciate them. My art not only interprets my own creative abilities and aesthetic values, it has also given birth to a new movement and a new set of values. It has thus augmented the national heritage.

Every movement gives birth to a response. If one does not have ability and strength to face opposition, the movement soon fades into oblivion. My paintings have given birth to new techniques, discipline, shape, form and meaning and a totally new style of art and a radically different school of thought. To me something that is not the bearer of revelation and courage, and does not allow differences of opinion and criticism, is not art. If there is no inter-relationship of imagery, creativity and reality, there is a lack of an individual and distinct style.

Cultural values and capabilities are recognized only through shape and form. I have therefore, at every stage and at every turn in my artistic life tried to highlight our cultural values and traditions, so that my work may establish its Oriental authenticity. Only the ones with attachments to their past can ensure complete stability and permanence for their future.

Copying western styles and schools of thought based on vanity are nothing to be proud of. Copying and imitating are frauds perpetrated on the society, because they are devoid



of revolutionary forces. Innovation, originality and courage cannot be achieved by imitating and copying. Because truthfulness is the outcome of being realistic, it cannot be accessed by blindly following the Western thought and style.

My creative instincts and natural talents would not permit of my evading the cultural ties and traditions of the past, and have made me actively promote them through my art. This act and attitude of mine has unwittingly been the cause of opposition and criticism. The more my work has been the target of criticism, the more it has matured and flourished, and the closer I have come to the fulfillment of my ambitions. When as an artist, I put the lines and colors of my painting on paper or canvas, I am fully conscious that art is not merely lines and colors, it is also a part of traditions and past glories. A true artist is the inheritor of vital human values, and is duty-bound to lead in the right direction. It is for the man of intellect and discernment to benefit from the importance and usefulness of the creative image of the master-artist or the master-craftsman. Colors and lines have a vernacular of their own. Their individuality, utility and rhythm are the truth that imparts luster and polish to human understanding.

Our artists are scared of the classical idiom, just as atheism and materialism would be scared of religious beliefs. I have firm faith in the classical art, although, as art goes, mine has not achieved the ultimate degree of classical purity. However, I believe that there would be a day when it will reach that stage of excellence, and will be judged in comparison with the European and other Western or Japanese art. My art is as modern or even supra modern as the art of the most modern nations of the world today. In the matter of form and the combination of tints and technique, my art has its own place among the classical. Let not the masters like Behzad, Mirak, Sultan Mohammad, Raza Abbas, Mir Ali Tabrezi, Abdul Sarmad Shirazi, Farrukh Beg Qalmaq, Ustad Mansoor or Nadiruzzaman look at my work and exclaim that art has not progressed beyond where they had left off, or that its creator has shunned the society's needs or overlooked the demand and value of art. Be it an Orientalist or a Westerner, whoever has looked at my art, has had to admit that it is vibrant and passionate, and the torch-bearer of the intellect and enlightenment of the Eastern values.

Paintings are the manifestations of their own existence. This munificence cannot be acquired through copying or blindly

following others. The perception, intellect, passion and endeavor that go into the creation of a work of art, give out a message under highly noble motives. For the understanding and judging of this message, one needs the acumen and depth of feeling which are not available to a novice, who is all the time engaged in confusing and confounding his audience for the sake of cheap popularity and who unhesitatingly makes use of terms such as modernism and neo-modernism, that too, at the risk of being disloyal and unfaithful to his own community and society. My art, on the other hand has attracted the attentions of all religions and faiths.

It is a fact that when I set foot in the world of art, the Bengal School which had been flourishing for nearly a half century, was dominant all over the sub-continent, and also enjoyed the exclusive official patronage. The disciples of the Tagore dynasty could be found all over India as well as abroad.

Under the circumstances there was little room for any new school or style of art. I was the first Muslim to enter the realms of art. The Bengal School was confined to depicting the legends and commands of gods and goddesses: Shiva and Parvati, Rama and Laxman and Radha and Krishna. It was full of pessimistic thought, dominated by monasticism. My art, on the other hand, attracted the attention of other religions and faiths also and without the benefit of any propaganda and assistance, turned the course of the tide which had submerged the whole of the Indian Sub-continent.

My first work of art was published in 1919 in *Modern Review* of Calcutta. My elder brother Dr. Abdullah Chughtai had a great deal to do in getting my work published. *Modern Review* was in the forefront in promoting the Bengal School, and was instrumental in getting the Nobel Prize for Rabindranath Tagore, the primary reason being that it was quite influential in contemporary politics. My art got formal recognition in 1920, when the first art exhibition was held under the auspices of the Punjab Fine Art Society. Tagore's and all his disciples' works were also represented on this occasion, which was the first-time that I had the opportunity to see their paintings, because until then, I had seen them only in print. Their paintings were all of very ordinary dimensions whereas mine were much larger. Even Tagore's famous *Emancipation of Buddha* was just three inches by three inches. This painting was acquired by the Lahore Museum where it is on display even today.



Abdul Rahman Chughtai, *Potter's Daughter*, watercolour wash on paper, 62x48cms, 1954

In the beginning when I started with my art, I used to think up unusual topics. One of my earliest paintings showed a woman going to fetch water from the stream, by chance she drops the vessel and her heart misses a beat. Later I made *Sham-e-Oudb* (Evening in Lucknow) and *Subb-e-Banaras* (Dawn in Banaras). Another painting depicted a woman with a lamp in her hand which she put afloat in the river, to fulfill a vow. These and several other paintings that I made then did not, however, come to the standard of art that I had set for myself, and I destroyed them all. Then my art took a turn, and I made Iqbal's verses and other literary works the topic of my painting. My very first painting of this type which is still intact in my possession shows a woman going towards the shrine, one hand holding a lamp and the other shielding it from the wind and the moths hovering around it. Another painting was *Saqi* (the wine-server) which became quite well-known. It represented the poet with a unique admixture and blend of colors and hues and was first published in *Hazaar Dastan* (A Thousand Tales). The idea of illustrating the poetry of Ghalib and Khayyam had not till then occurred to me.

One cannot turn oneself away from the call of the time and its trends. A new movement and style of painting was slowly but surely coming out in my first works. Feelings and emotions

were gushing out with great passion, and in the matter of colors and techniques, my work was acquiring an individual posture. After *Saqi*, I made another painting entitled *Fame*, this showed a woman, reclining in a semi-nude posture, holding a lamp above her head, her delicate arms and voluptuous bosom drawing unreserved attention. This painting appeared at various exhibitions all over India and drew equal praise and criticism. It won awards, was published in *Modern Review* and abundantly copied. Ultimately it found place, in its revised and completed form, in my work *Amal-e-Chughtai*, the illustrated edition of Iqbal's verses.

When I was drawn to the rural life of the Punjab and its tales of romance, many aspects of my creative and artistic talents began to develop. I made unforgettable priceless paintings on these topics. I was not merely influenced by the legends of the land, but had begun to cultivate much stronger and deeper relationships with it. My paintings of that period point to the growth and development of my art and temperament. A painting of *Heer and Ranjha* which I had then made, acquired great acclaim. It depicted the episode of Ranjha, plodding all the way from Takht Hazara to Jhang Sayal, and encountering Laddan, the care-taker of Heer's barge moored on the bank of the Chenab. In the barge was

a sumptuously embellished couch for Heer's pleasure. Ranjha, all tired and exhausted, without a moment's hesitation stretched himself on the couch to the great consternation of Laddan. It was then that Heer arrived at the scene. First she was furious at Ranjha's insolence, when her eyes fell on the handsome youth in repose, there arose the unmistakable "love at first sight", and the two became one body and soul. This immortal moment was captured in all its glory in my painting, which even today arouses the old feelings of ecstasy in me. I have never parted with this and several similar paintings. One of these shows yet another legend of the Punjab, *Sohni*, walking along the river bank, with an unbaked water pitcher in her arms. Another painting shows *Sassi* being forcibly separated from *Pannu*. Besides these romantic themes, I illustrated the legendary personalities of Waris Shah, Bulleh-Shah, Shah Husain and Punjabi warriors and the equally glamorous sons of the soil. As a huntsman, I have traveled widely in the Punjab and developed a natural affinity with this Land of the Five Rivers. My soul is indebted to this land of romance and I am proud to be a son of the soil.

During this period of my artistic endeavors, I also painted numerous characters of Hindu Mythology. This was intended as an exercise in self assessment. The topics used to be the favorite of the Bengal School, as also its foundation. I however, presented them in my own style. My paintings of Radha and Krishna, Rama and Laxman, Vishwamitra, Tulsidas, Shiva and Parvati and Buddha and Ambapali were totally different from those belonging to the Bengal School. There was a vast measure of relish, delicateness and aesthetics in them. Not only the lives and colors but also the features, the visages, the attires of the characters were all different, and reflected my own individuality. There was none of the pessimism, grief and sense of decay which were the hallmark of the mythological paintings of those times. Instead, there was a vibrancy, freshness and a sense of strength. Even Hindu art critics had nothing but praise for them. These paintings, including one of *Arjuna the Conqueror* (which is still in my possession) were widely exhibited throughout India and won awards and laurels from such patrons as the rulers of Baroda, Cooch Behar, Mysore, Gwalior, Patiala as also from other Indian dignitaries.

When I put on canvas and paper the characters of the Caliph Haroon-al-Rashid, Zubeda Khatoon, Ishaq Mosuli and Al-Barmaki, Firdausi, Saadi, Hafiz, Rumi and Omar Khayyam,

Mahmood and Ayaz, Tariq and Tipu Sultan and other great names of Muslim history, I experienced a unique sense of fulfillment and felt that by representing them in lines and colors, I had truly responded to the calls of our cultural heritage. This was the time when my art neared its climax.

I was induced to picturize Khayyam's *Rubaiyyat* and verses from *Devan-e-Ghalib*. People often think that I first went into the poetry of Khayyam and Ghalib, whereas these works were more or less incidental.

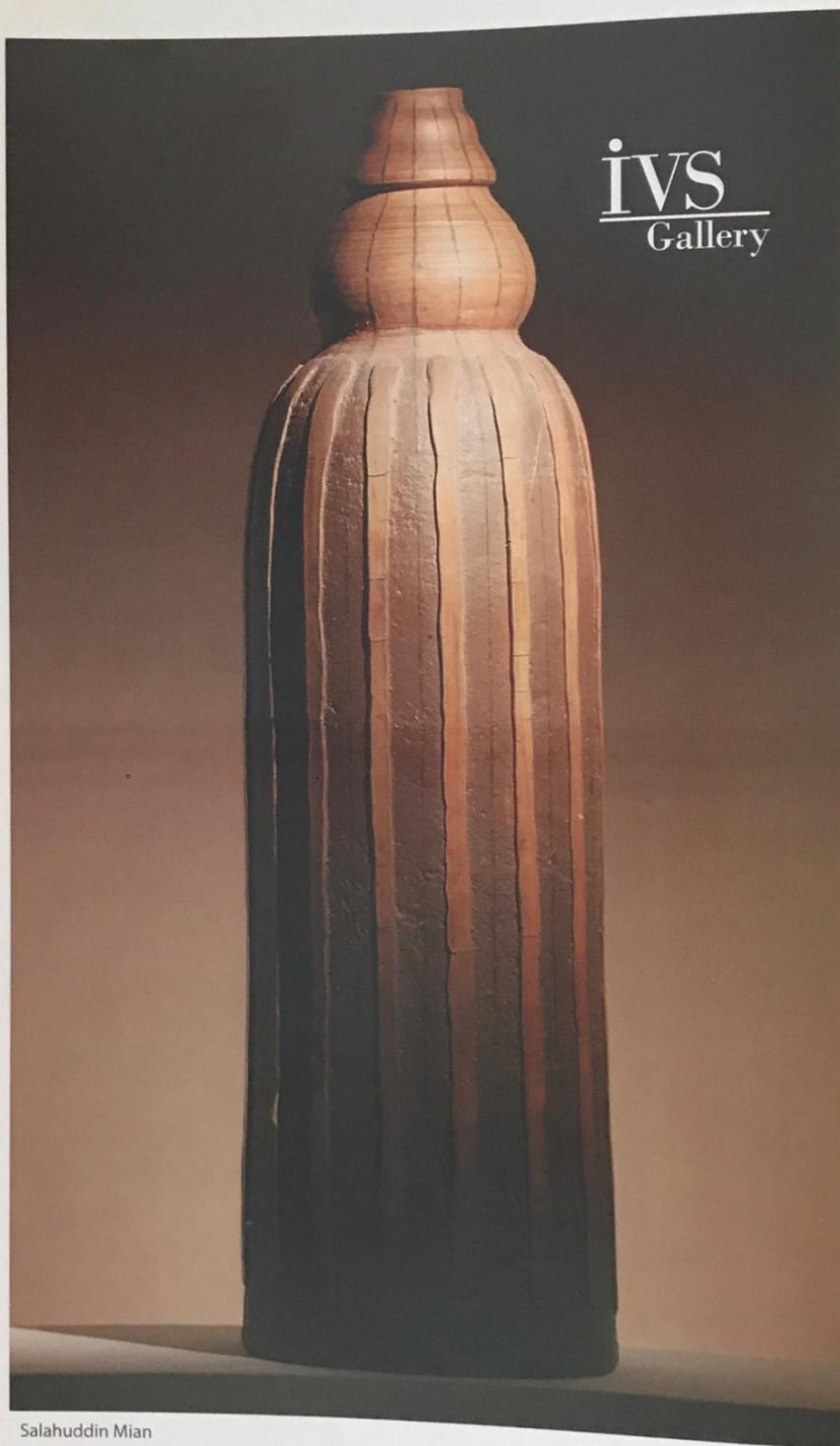
My technique, color combinations structuring and line-work are all mine. I have spent a lifetime in giving them maturity in individuality, and in this respect my work can easily be placed side by side with the European masterpieces. Because of their beauty and freshness and delicacy they will last for centuries. They are made in watercolor, which as a medium of artistic expression has been prevalent in the Orient and even after lapse of centuries they have not undergone the least bit of change or deterioration. The watercolors of the Orient are here to stay. They are not the least bit behind the oil paintings of the European Masters in the matter of withstanding the vagaries of climate and weather.

Calling my paintings mere 'wash technique' is gross narrow-mindedness and ignorance. These superficial 'admirers' should know that 'wash' technique has been developed by me and not borrowed from anywhere. For its elegance, durability and maturity, I have toiled day and night literally with blood and tears. I tried and tested hundreds of substances before getting the desired effects. People looking at the brilliant colorfulness and beauty of my paintings are often inclined to observe that I prepare these colors indigenously from some mysterious process. The truth is that these colors and materials have been imported like all other painting material, but their brilliance and individuality is entirely due to my own technique of using them. They will not lose color or fade away even if immersed in water for extended periods.

Looking at my paintings which depict the Moghul, the Iranian, the Rajput, the Hindu, the Punjabi and the Kashmiri cultures, a Western art critic had observed that merely enshrining one's subject, with all its invocations into a painting, cannot be called true art, however intelligently and skillfully it may have been done. A master artist is obligated to his techniques and skills, to shun, bias, religious prejudices and bigotry. He is expected to rise above petty politics, and to represent his art

Abdul Rahman Chughtai, *The Slave Girl*,  
watercolour wash on paper, 65x55cms,  
circa 1950





Salahuddin Mian

Collection: Akhtar Abbasi Abidi

The IVS Gallery is located at the Indus Valley school of Art and Architecture, Karachi. It is a dedicated, professionally designed and spacious gallery that showcases work of eminent artists as well as promising young talent.

*Information:*

Mr. Usman Ghouri, Curator

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and art alone. This should be his goal and responsibility which alone would gain him a place in eternity.

The Modern Bengal School, founded on defeatism, frustration and negativism could not produce a single artist who could truly redirect the School's countenance towards the traditions of the Moghul and the Persian art. Modern Indian art is concerned primarily with murals in the temples and cave paintings which present a grim picture of despair and depression and not the throbbing and vibrancy of life. My technique, almost from day one prevailed and became popular among all communities and societies, among friends and foes alike. Even the Bengal School stalwarts had to concede, perhaps reluctantly, the superiority of my up and coming style of art. My style has become an idiom, almost proverbial, and has come to be known as "*Chughtai Art*", which will always be called and referred to as such.

When the Punjab Fine Art Society first put on display the works of Tagore and his disciples, the Bengal School paintings were acquired by the Lahore Museum in sizeable quantity. However, my paintings had attracted the largest number of buyers notably such well-known patrons of art as the rulers of Patiala and Kapurthala and personalities such as Lala Krishan Lal and other Indian and European dignitaries. The late Nawab of Bahawalpur was foremost in encouraging me. This exhibition had really sparked the artist in me. Exhibitions were being held in other cities of India, such as Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Simla, at best once a year and I made it a point to participate in them regularly, where I could compete with the products of the Bengal School. I had, from

the very beginning concentrated in illustrating verses of the well-known poets. In 1927 - '28, my now well-known *Muraqqa-e-Chughtai* had come out, and people had gone to the extent of observing that my art surpassed the impact of the verses themselves. Some of my paintings depicting verses of Ghalib do create this impression. *Naqsh-e-Chughtai*, also based on Ghalib's poetry cum art subsequently employed for the first time until then - unknown photo gravure process-libraries the world over keep on their shelves these compilations which have since been published in several editions.

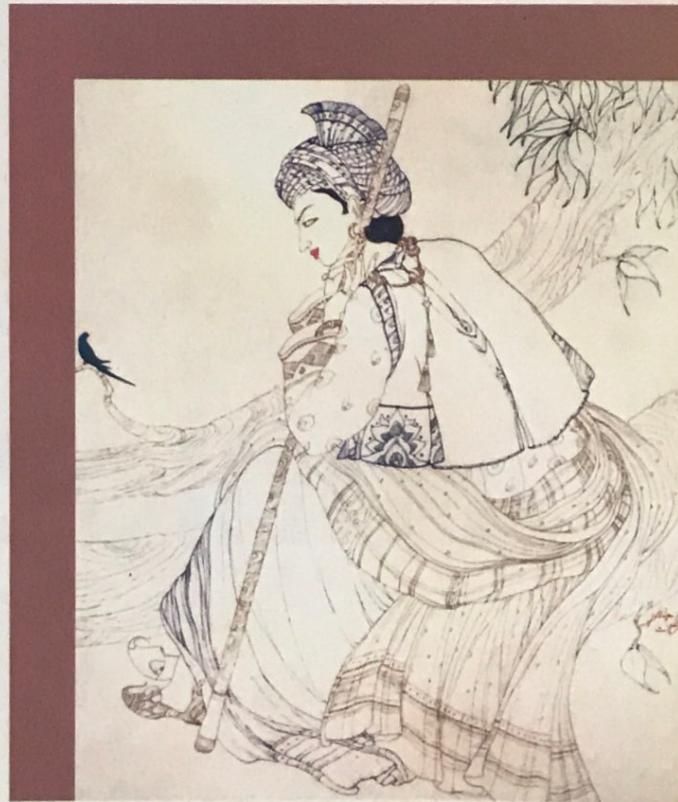
To date, some five or six of my books have been published. These include the *Muraqqa*, the *Naqsh*, *Chughtai Paintings*, *Chughtai's Hindu Paintings*, *Amal-e-Chughtai* (on Iqbal's verses) and the *Kar-e-Chughtai*. I plan to publish another illustrative work on Ghalib and yet another to be titled as *Chughtai Art*. These projects unfortunately have been held up and not gone through because of the onset of the World War and the Partition of the subcontinent.

Translated from

Essay titled: *Meri Tasweerein Meri Apni Nazar May* from *Maqalaat-e-Chughtai*, Volume One

Essays compiled by: Sheema Majeed

Published in 1987 by the Department of Culture, Pakistan



Abdul Rahman Chughtai, *Ranjha*, watercolour, circa 1950

by Amra Ali

The long overdue opening of Pakistan's first National Gallery of Art, in August 2007, is of immense psychological and pedagogical significance to its creative core. Finally, the art community has paved way for creativity spanning 60 years of art making in Pakistan, past and present, to be viewed, celebrated and critiqued. A first hand engagement with the art can open new doors for research and documentation. As a primary source of education, the permanent and rotating exhibits can both educate and challenge preconceived biases and notions of creativity amongst students and researchers. Like all national galleries of the world, this gallery can become a reservoir of creative energy and a forum for national pride. It will provide the space where the present can be seen in

continuum to its past, which can pave way for informed ways of tracing the dynamics within contemporary art and its relationship to its own historical contexts, as well as its location in terms of the dominant art discourses.

The presence of 13 curators for the 14 opening exhibits allows room for the multifaceted and diverse, even conflicting streams of thought to be voiced. Because there has been an intentional strategy to stay away from a centralized curatorial core, the exhibits convey parts of the whole in fragments. On one level, this way of entry provides a microcosm of the directional and attitudinal nature that constitutes art making in Pakistan; on another, it serves as an identification of areas



Carving an

Intellectual

SPACE

for Art

to be explored and debated.

One of the parts that seek sense of art making in the context of Pakistan, is that which is provided to voices that have chosen to function outside the physical presence of its geography, but nevertheless form some part of its sociological framework.

There is new ground for artists who have lived and worked abroad, in what Homi Bhabha refers to as the Third Space or the space that is 'neither here nor there', to re-anchor into the environment of the estranged 'Home'. The exhibit *Homecoming*, curated by Ateeqa Ali, acknowledges the space which has been viewed as being 'outside' the parameters of

the national and local; this lens seeks to expand and permeate beyond physical borders to incorporate altered contexts of expression by artists from Pakistan. The text-based work of Rasheed Araeen, in his *Art of Resistance: Theory of Nominalism* (Third Text, volume 16, issue 10, 2002), is the outcome of his contributions to art practice and critical inquiry as a voice of activism in the face of the dominant 'white' discourse and the shaping of histories. A fragment of Araeen's journey from his disk-throwing happenings at Jheel Park, Karachi, in 1969, to his more recent proposals for land use in barren Balochistan, can engage the viewer with the work both as in understanding its conceptual nature as well as in using it as a reference for research into Araeen's oeuvre. Iftikhar and

Elizabeth Dadi's large posters (digital prints on Mylar), titled *Clash of Civilizations* and *West and the Rest*, examine the post 9/11 power politics of the American right. The approach is the continuum of Dadi's exploration of popular Pakistani cinema aesthetics. The meeting points of these works, may vary with the viewer, but will nevertheless provide access to trajectories within practical and theoretical frameworks.

An intervention such as *Out of the Box*, also curated by Ateeqa Ali, provides a parallel narrative to the art that is shown inside the gallery spaces. Scribbles like 'wounded heart', sentimental poems and images inscribed on the gallery walls while under construction, by laborers, bears testimony to a process of participation by those who may not be the artists or visitors to the gallery in future: incidental, but one more part that forms the whole. Marking the inauguration of a pioneer institutionalized space for art, *Out of the Box* provides an indirect opportunity to reflect at the concept of inclusion/exclusion within the institution of art and its hierarchies such as the consumer, viewer, dealer and the creator. At the same time, this chance encounter, remarks the curator, is a narrative on the class divide in post colonial Pakistan.

Such a relationship of the art to the space/s that it is shown in, engages the viewer in a new dynamics that permeates beyond the work to new contexts of interpretation based on the internal energy of the Gallery space. The concept of the structure of the Gallery, its architect Naeem Pasha explains, is 'based on a series of squares which are the essence of the universal whole'. Thus, the architectural vision plays an integral and



Iftikhar and Elizabeth Dadi, *Clash of Civilization*, digital print on panaflex, 600x213 cms, 2002

inspirational role as becoming the cortex that holds the art. The audience participates in this unfolding of ideas from the outside in, from the central to the specific, permitting the openings that let natural light and landscape in, to be used as transitions between the different exhibits. One can visualize a more dynamic and interactive relationship of the inside to the outside. However, one has to be wary of appropriating from the big museums of the West, and instead explore an approach that suits participation of the local audiences. One can also imagine the inviting and inward movement of this space to become the precursor for curators to look inwards, into indigenous histories of Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan and the Frontier Province; as well to what Salima Hashmi writes in the exhibition catalogue, to '*the incongruities of living in a volatile urban environment on the one hand, and an archaic social order on the other, the artist has fecund territory to investigate*'. Challenging the prevalent perceptions of Art is part of the opening shows, allowing for more than one way of



Ahsan Jamal, *Line of Control*, canvas tape, size: variable, 2007

approaching it. The exhibit titled *Love*, curated by Quddus Mirza, absorbs the viewer into an embrace of the unexpected and the ordinary; very likely an intentional approach, the artists seek alternate ways of looking and validating 'art'. This conceptual framework works well within the context of the 'official' and authoritative space of the gallery. Rashid Rana's use of aluminum foil and plastic flowers identify with the decadence and consumerism associated with kitsch to be acknowledged and celebrated. These are different in approach to Rana's work with pixilated photographs that unravel many

levels of interpretation; a commentary on art about art and the concept of gaze.

The lighthearted playfulness and pun in Rana's works, *Wrapping Paper Roses* (mixed media on board, 2001, 120 x 150) and *Flower on Flower* (oil on canvas), sets the mood of the exhibit. At the opposite end of the room, Adeela Suleman's untitled mixed media installation with a series of car gear shifts challenges the viewer to first cross the barrier of the medium and then to interpret it. It must also be considered that audiences in Pakistan largely and intuitively respond to



Adeela Suleman, *It Feels Like Fire*, rubber gear covers, metal and fibre, 244x152cms, 2007



Masooma Syed, *Heart*, fibre glass, 150cms length, 2006

traditional painting on canvas or paper as art. Using the discarded as her material, Suleman manipulates the recyclable into new explorations of form through which she weaves stories of power, ego and sexual politics. The work gains its strength also in its relationship to Resham Syed's fibreglass *Heart*. No pretty pictures here, these are voices of dissent, although if there was a more aggressive and deeper conceptual engagement within the whole and more linkages between the works, there would have been more meat to bite on, so to speak. Drenched in red paint, this is a coat hanging with a heart attached to it in 3D, charging an imposing intrusion to an otherwise quiet space.

Some of the artists can be accessed from different viewpoints by having them shown in the context of different exhibitions, thus somehow forming an unexpected link that expands the understanding of their respective repertoires. Adeela Suleman's 3D work with metal drain covers (*Containment*) shown in Sites

of Substance curated by Salima Hashmi reflect what the curator refers to as 'being part of a generation that has dispensed with the 'received' notion of sculpture' and is 'part of the process of assembling an idiom which is dramatically different from anything which has preceded it'. Nilofer Akmut's 3D works form a close link to *Homecoming* in their conceptual significance, yet demand the viewer to address some of the influences that are part of the larger vocabulary of sculpture in the Pakistani context. Similarly, Hamra Abbas' 3D circular work hung from the ceiling is like an insertion into the local from the global, and marks that debate as a reference point for sculpture. Ali Raza's *Throne*, composed of 90 lotas speaks of yet another level of engagement with the social and the political; Khalil Chishti's *Woman* climbing a tight rope using white plastic bags that are such a composite element of the urban landscape, reveal the richness in the vocabulary of material at the disposal of the contemporary artist: embracing the global as well as

Ruby Chishti, *Sketch of a Fading Memory*, dried wood and textile, 900x527x458cms, 2007





A J Shemza, *Roots Series*, oil on Japanese paper, 41x31cms each, circa 1980

the local. Shahid Sajjad's totemic presence, in wood and metal, occupies the central exhibition space in the gallery but stands isolated in its connection to the works by younger artists. While the inward and ambiguous spirituality carved from its material and form draws us towards itself, the new artists explore the more 'contaminated' and material concerns that are part of their life experiences, education and influences.

The constant push and pull to locate the new centers of creativity are exposed through the curatorial voice of Nilofur Farrukh in the exhibit '*Hasan Kuzagar Kay Naam*'. Inspired by the protagonist of Noon Meem Rashid's poem, the curator draws reference from the vessels that Hasan the pot-maker crafts through his skilled hands, reminding the viewer of the clay continuum that has lived on since Mehergarh. Through the exploration of complex glaze techniques, Salman Ikram builds a vocabulary that strengthens his form. Thus exploring the non utilitarian value of clay. Shazia Zuberi, Ghania Asad, Shazia Mirza, Arji Karim and Kaif Ghaznavi dispel the given hierarchies between art and craft. According to Shazia Zuberi, clay enables her to express intangible thought processes hidden from the viewer's eye, into narratives on the lives of the marginalized. '*By privileging the form she delinks it from its utilitarian soul*', writes Farrukh about Sheherezade Alam, in her curatorial statement. The innovations in the use of clay as a contemporary material can also be seen in the installation by Kaif Ghaznavi, who combines metal and cotton ropes in her expression that deals with the chauvinism and claustrophobia of her feudal background. This exhibition,

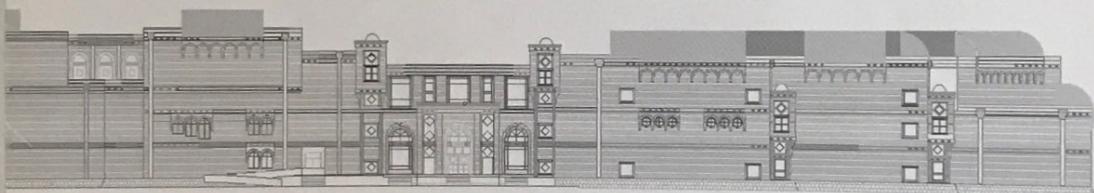


Kaif Ghaznavi, *Choose Your Desired*, terracotta, paperclay, terrasilgata and cotton, size: variable, 2007

located in between the two galleries with new media work, reveals the essence of artistic concerns within the local: the meeting point of the present to a past, or the lack of it. Perhaps clay becomes the medium that crosses the boundaries of appropriation and presents one more answer in this quest. The past revisited, the past appropriated, or the past rejected: these questions linger within the psyche of creativity amongst

by Sara Mehmood

# Where Light and Space Await Color



Pakistan's National Art Gallery (NAG) was rescued, when looking out of the President's house early in the new millennium General Musharraf noticed the curved skylights of the structure across Constitution Avenue and wondered what the building under construction was meant to be. He sought a report, and Naem Pasha, architect of the NAG was requested by the Secretary Culture to explain his building design for the President. Knowing that only a four-minute slot had been granted for the presentation, Pasha employed a first class cameraman to film the NAG model from all angles to show it at its best advantage. The President was captivated and the Rs 540 million tranche required to complete the remaining seventy five percent of the building was swiftly released.

The architectural façade of the National Art Gallery becomes fully visible only as you access its main entrance, from a quiet

road off the main avenue. It has a graceful and imposing but not forbidding entrance. A walk through an inviting courtyard finds you inside the foyer of Pakistan's most delightful art repository.

From the foyer, art lovers turn right through the door that marks the beginning of the exhibition space. They proceed to circulate through a sequence of display areas that work via a scheme of careful contrasts of height, light, space and shape to project the artworks on display.

Pasha's design for the NAG is an intriguing complex of varyingly proportioned halls and rooms where space, height and light become the architect's tools for doing justice to the artwork on display. Architectural features are judiciously employed so that they do not intrude or compete for the viewer's attention. One of the most striking features to dominate the entrance to the exhibition space is the ceiling

on either side of the door into the first display area. Planed in ribs of honey-colored wood set at perfect right angles, it creates the effect of a serene series of concentric squares. Yet from then on, high quality workmanship - soft grey porcelain floors for instance - does not distract.

Inside the display space, it is the imposing height of the first hall that makes an impact. Turning left into the gallery that houses the current calligraphy display, the ceiling is relatively low, the rectangle broken by an L-shaped curve at the end and the lighting an astute mechanical arrangement. Turning right off the hall, the sunlight slants in through generous skylights onto a fine large room that balances wall display

exhibits already seen close up at ground level from viewpoints at a higher elevation is one aspect of the way in which the design of the National Art Gallery sustains a dialogue between artworks of different periods and various media.

The first floor has a series of spaces that sequence the predominance of natural and artificial light and the varying height, shape and outlook that is the building's particular distinction. The room designed to house the inaugural's miniature exhibition is carpeted to provide the softened context that this most delicate of artwork demands. Given the significance of the miniature as an art form in Pakistan, it is anticipated that in future the space will continue to be

## The National Art Gallery, Islamabad



with works strikingly positioned across the ample floor. The large window at the far end gives onto the city skyline. Next, in the area intended for showing ceramics or small sculptures, a display shelf made of brick encircles the space. Across the intricately crafted brick floor, exhibits are mounted on stands; natural light flows in from the window at one end.

And then the *pièce de résistance* - the grand central hall, currently showing a sculpture exhibition for the inauguration, where natural light enters from high up to supplement the electrical lighting that shows off the floor exhibits in a dramatic manner. The ramp leading from this central hall to the NAG's upper level affords the visitor the chance of a lingering look, down on the central space. Where the ramp reaches the landing, viewers looking to their right catch the breadth of the display; to their left they hit a small balcony that looks back down onto the second gallery. Catching

dedicated to this form. A series of discreet rooms on the first floor comprise the Honor Galleries intended to house permanent collections of some of the country's masters once the inaugural exhibition closes.

Apart from exhibition space, the Gallery contains an array of other facilities: offices for the administration tucked away behind the foyer on the ground floor; a library and gift shop at the same level; lecture theater, painting studios, children's workshops, restoration laboratories and other facilities on the second floor, plus an open courtyard that will lend itself to special gallery functions; on the first floor, a sweeping, curved terrace presents another prospective venue for formal events.

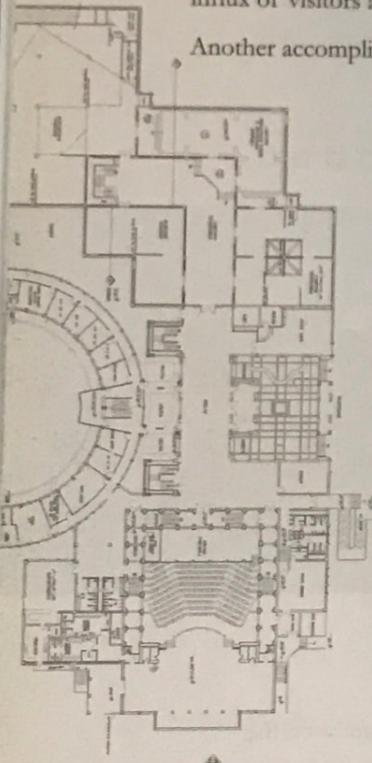
The basement accommodates the building management system that controls the efficient organization of the NAG's complicated security and temperature maintenance systems.

High security is guaranteed by the link between sixteen screens in the basement and sixty-five cameras installed throughout the building. This is reinforced by a sophisticated burglar alarm system and a system of smoke detection to guard against fire. Temperature maintenance is crucial to conservation of the artworks and air conditioning keeps the display areas free of damaging humidity whether the rooms are cooled in summer or heated in winter. The system is also sensitive to temperature increases brought about by a large influx of visitors and adjusts accordingly.

Another accomplishment of the architect is the auditorium

scene changes. Behind are two dressing rooms to accommodate twenty six artists and there are storage areas for costumes and props.

The history of the gallery is more than three decades old, dating back to 1973 when the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) was created. Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the first Chairman, announced at that time the plan to design and build three separate cultural monuments: the National Museum, the National Art Gallery and the National Theatre. In 1981, President Zia-ul-Haq sanctioned Rs. 2 crore for the Gallery's inception. Of the five architects who competed for



Auditorium



Exhibition space

of the NAG, which provides seating for 450 people. Pasha explains the access point along a corridor lined with exquisitely crafted bricks etched with graceful arches as inspired by the ruggedness of ancient Roman amphitheatres in Southern Europe.

However, the brickwork carries more than aesthetic significance. Along with a scientifically calculated system of grills and angled panels in the auditorium ceiling, it provides the performers on stage with perfectly balanced acoustics. This led Michael Kaiser, President of the Kennedy Centre in Washington D.C. on his visit to the theatre at an early stage of construction, to pronounce every seat in the auditorium "a prime seat". The generously proportioned wooden stage is equipped with a mechanism for sideways

the design, Suhail and Pasha were awarded the project. Naeem Pasha's engagement with the Gallery project thus straddles nearly three decades.

In fact, under the military rule of Zia-ul Haq, nothing more happened. It was only in 1989, when Benazir Bhutto came into power that her ambitious Cultural Secretary, Khwaja Shahid Hussain, revived the Gallery project. A new competition was held that included submissions by the original competitors with two additions. The original brief to the architects was modified to include a fully functional theatre in the design. Again Suhail and Pasha's design was commissioned; this time the jury included representatives of the performing arts community, along with two architects of the Capital Development Authority and the distinguished



Passage leading to the auditorium

British architect Professor Robert Tavernor of Bath University. At this point, a site was allocated to the Gallery as well as a National Theatre - originally envisaged as a separate adjacent building to be built at some unspecified time in the future. After the commission had been given, it was decided to go ahead and build the gallery-cum-theatre complex on the part of the site originally earmarked for the Gallery. But plans for the theatre had to be drastically scaled down when the

as befitting the dignity of the project. With the CDA planners hostile to this choice, a compromise was eventually found in a site on the edge of the F9 Park adjoining the main thoroughfare leading from the Blue Area. A committee met to approve detailed plans, and then the government fell. After a brief interim, Ms Bhutto was back. Khwaja Shahid Hussain resumed his tenure at the Ministry of Culture, rejected the F9 site and the CDA was forced to yield the

A few years ago, when I asked Faiz Ahmed Faiz what one can learn from his experience in poetry in order to make a meaningful contribution in architecture, his reply was forever enchanting. He referred to a meeting with Hasan Fathy decades ago, when Fathy was not such a well known architect. According to him, Fathy borrows from nature, whereas Faiz borrows from folk. For Fathy a building is a miniaturized version of what is the essence of nature. Or in other words, it is to harness nature in such a way that it is not taken for granted, in fact the interaction with its elements is enhanced.

For Faiz, the colors, sounds and their juxtaposition evoke meanings beyond the literal. When one talks about kasni pazaib, a pazaib, said Faiz, is never kasni. A pazaib or anklet is an ornament of pleasure for women, yet symbolically it also represents shackles. "Kasni" is the color of sadness in folk and myth. The pazaib to Faiz is the color of sadness: when someone dances with sadness. He had said, "If you are looking for meaning in your work, look deeply into folk and myth."

The National Art Gallery that we open today is one such effort: The effort to combine Fathy and Faiz and what their understanding in their respective fields of expression gave them. Coupled with the universal will in geometry, this forms the basis for the design of the National Art Gallery.

For such associations, one has to look for essence rather than an imitation of the past. Depicting history as it was, forgetting the changes of the times, the new methods of construction and the evolution of new materials would be a repetition that history would not forgive. We must not deprive future generations of the chance to ascertain the contribution of our time and our particular expression.

The whole concept of our design for the National Art Gallery is a series of squares which is the essence of the universal whole. We arrived at this form from nature, tradition, unconscious creativity of the folk and the concept of a circular circulation pattern which is the essence of viewing. The pure form is embellished by a system of skylights in the form of mellow curves of the folk architecture, which again are the trusted forms of curving light shafts of the modern and post-modern galleries built after World War II, may it be Joan Miró Foundation Galleries in Barcelona, the Kemble Museum in Texas, or the Everson Museum in Syracuse, N.Y.

The entrance to the Gallery is in the spirit of the East. An entrance in our tradition has a certain sense of invitation, as though the owner of the space wishes to invite you at different levels, which makes the entrance not domineering and imposing but inviting and subservient to the building, and the generosity of the host.

PNCA made an official case for focusing on the Gallery for which the original funds had been allotted. The new mandate was to build a gallery that included a modest 450 seat theatre. When Nawaz Sharif replaced Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister, he appropriated the Gallery site for his own secretariat. A new controversy concerning the problem of relocation was thus generated. The first offer of Shakarparian was firmly rejected. Pasha championed a site opposite the Presidency on the corner of Constitution Avenue, a prime civic location (reserved for the National Bank) that he saw

present site, earlier proposed by Pasha. In 1996, the foundation stone was laid by Ms Shehnaz Wazir Ali but the momentum ran out when the funds available could not stretch to cover the requirements of both the National Gallery and the Convention Centre. Work on the Gallery stopped, with less than ten percent of the project completed.

Thus it was that a couple of years into his tenure, President Musharraf chanced to catch sight of the partially completed building - unfinished and unaccounted for - across from the Presidency. Persuaded by a forceful Secretary Culture, Jall

Abbas, to sit through Pasha's lightning presentation, the President fell for the project. His sanction in February 2005 of the outstanding amount needed for its completion saw work begin in earnest. At this point, the CDA also yielded project control to the architect. The target completion date of July 2006 could not, however, be met, largely because of extensive flooding that damaged the basement. After this problem had been taken care of, the President's inability to

stalled half a dozen times over subsequent decades, the National Art Gallery is finally ready, located at a site befitting its purpose. The building itself achieves a rare feat: it inspires and invites in equal proportions. Moreover, the inaugural exhibition will provide satisfaction to the architect that by and large his spaces have been employed to their best advantage.

Entering into the building, one comes upon a space which is an open courtyard. The courtyard, like the Mughal and pre-Mughal houses where every space surrounds it, looks onto it and at the same time borrows light, air and ambience from it.

In our design, it becomes a multi-layered space around which all activities happen and it gives the building a majestic yet introverted sense of space of eastern humility and resolve. The central court is treated in layers of arches, buttresses, cornices, and corbellings, reminiscent of Cordoba, Spain, making the Gallery at once monumental and humble.

We feel that in an art gallery, the movement of people should be the major concern next only to the display and placement of art objects. Circulation in the gallery is designed in the form of a complete circle, with the viewer starting from one end and coming right around to the same place at the conclusion of his or her journey, having missed nothing. In the National Gallery, as one moves in the spaces, one is provided with gradually changing levels providing for the viewing of objects at different levels.

This has been a journey of nearly thirty long years. In 1981 we proposed the first blueprint of the National Art Gallery on its original site where the Prime Minister's Secretariat now stands. This journey of love and at times madness is full of commitment and hope. Since the first winning proposal there have been changes of site and concepts. Fortunately, one of these has come full circle.

commit to an official opening date in March 2007 was a disappointment to the artist community, and also to the public.

Yet none of this will matter once the go-ahead is given for the doors to be opened. Provided the exhibition program maintains the high standard of the inaugural show, the National Art Gallery will work its own charm and become a must-visit place for people of all ages.

Thirty years is a long gestation period for the public to wait for the birth of a national institution. Promised in 1973,

Naeem Pasha with sculpture by Shahid Sajjad

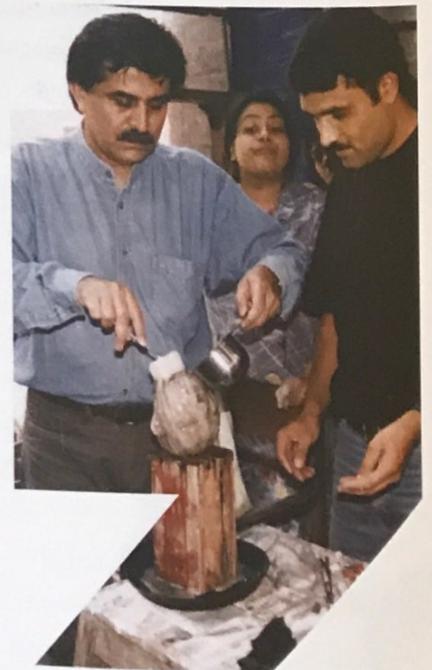
## Naeem Pasha

writes  
about  
his  
design





NUKTAART  
in conversation  
with



# Jamal Shah

Jamal Shah,  
Situation  
Series, oil on  
canvas, wood  
and metal,  
approx  
90x180cms,  
1996



**Jamal Shah** is a significant artist of the generation that emerged in the 1980s. He is the first artist from Balochistan to gain such prominence and have his art in important national and international collections. In the last two decades, **Jamal Shah**, through his prints, paintings and sculpture made visible the socio-economic struggle of the Baloch people. He also has the singular honor of being the founder of two important art institutions in the country. In July 2007, **Jamal Shah** was appointed Director of the National Art Gallery (NAG), Islamabad.

In a conversation with NuktaArt he spoke about his life, his art, and his future plans for the NAG.

**My work is layered...and rain... which is always present in it, acts as a metaphor for different things; it's about aspiration as people eagerly wait for rain in my province.**

*When you started out wanting to be an artist, the odds were stacked against you. What inspired you to struggle despite being from an orthodox tribal community and having no access to formal art school in Balochistan?*

Yes, I do belong to an orthodox tribal community but my immediate family was pro-art. I remember scribbling on the walls of my home as a 15-month old. My mother never stopped me and she would wash the walls in the night. The elders around would ask me to draw their likeness and I became well known for my talent. My father was also talented and would sometimes offer me advice on how to improve my work.

All this response encouraged me to think of an art career and in 1971 after passing my Matriculation I expressed my desire to go to the National College of Art (NCA) in Lahore. My father however wanted me to become a doctor so I did my intermediate with pre-medical subjects. Since my heart was not in it I drifted into singing and acting for television. I then completed my Masters in English Literature from Balochistan University. It was in 1979 that I finally joined the NCA and four years later graduated as its first graduate with a major in sculpture.

*Your years at the NCA coincided with the military dictator Zia-ul-Haq's era, the most repressive for Pakistani artists in our 60-year history. In what way did this period radicalize you as an artist?*

While I was at NCA during the Zia era I definitely remember it being a stifling atmosphere. This became a catalyst for a movement, as it forced artists to take a position regarding their role in society. This dialogue may have started by default but it politically charged the art scene at NCA and made the artists look at strategies of resistance against the tyrant.

Prior to this our art had been seeking conformity with the West. Now, for the first time, artists began to ask questions and address social issues around them. My teachers were Saeed Akhtar and Zahoorul Akhlaq but I explored things on my own and met many intellectuals in Lahore. They were self-taught artists, writers, film makers and human rights

Jamal Shah, *Situation Series*, painted fibre glass, approx 60x90cms, 1995



activists.

This period will be remembered as a time when the relationship between art and life was forged in Pakistan.

*You spent some years in the UK. Did the time spent there change your art in any way?*

I studied for two years at the Slade School of Art in London. I went to do an MFA in Sculpture and to learn bronze casting but since it was not available there I was advised by John Elkin, my teacher, to join printmaking. UK was in many ways similar to home because at that time many Pakistani activists were in exile there and I was sometimes asked to organize rallies.

Political activism put me in touch with Vanessa Redgrave who at that time was fundraising for the Palestinian cause. I was exposed to the Theatre of Protest for the first time and found it very powerful. I recall a particular work titled *The Tramp and the Umbrella*; it was inspired by the constant

drizzle in London, which was new to me as I came from a place that barely had any rain.

The first time rain appeared in my art, it was an accident while working with my etching tool. As I began to knock it against my plate the end result on the print reminded me of falling raindrops. Maybe it was in my subconscious. There was a lot of nostalgia in my work at that time. This was the only time that I wrote letters, sometimes 3 to 4 times a week, to friends and family.

When I completed my studies I had the honor of having thirteen prints of my thesis work being selected by the Victoria and Albert Museum for its collection.

*Over the years you have evolved a language of symbols. What do you want to communicate through them?*

In my work I struggle to give a voice to the people. My earlier work was stark and somber and now it's more playful and has humor in it. My work is layered...and rain... which is always present in it, acts as a metaphor for different things; it's about aspiration as people eagerly wait for rain in my province. Much of the Balochi folklore and children's games are influenced by this desire for rain.

As a child I remember playing a game after a particularly dry spell with my friends. In the game a child is dressed up and given a bowl and accompanied by a group of children he visits houses in the neighborhood to collect foodstuff which they cook collectively and share. In a way this game is also a prayer for rain.

The presence of animals in my work is not a critique on them; the dog can also be a protagonist in my art. For sometime I have depicted people within cages, and slowly it has become increasingly abstract. In short without being literal I try to create an atmosphere similar to what is around us.

*As the founder of two educational institutions, one in Quetta and the other in Islamabad, both cities which had no previous history of any formal art academics, how was one experience different from the other?* I set up the Fine Arts Department in 1984 when the then Vice Chancellor of Balochistan University (BU), Agha Akbar Shah invited me to do so. I selected my faculty among the



Jamal Shah, *Situation Series*, oil on canvas, 120x120cms, 2007

NCA alumni from Quetta: Akram Dost Baloch and Kaleem Khan, who later served as its Chairpersons. The Fine Arts Dept. was received very warmly and many young boys and girls joined the classes. However, the bureaucratic red tape frustrated me.

At this time I was offered the British Council scholarship to study at Slade so I left for UK.

On my return I tried to go back but they were not interested in having me back so I was drawn to my other interests like acting, and in the years that followed I acted in two films, *Traffic and K2*.

The reason why you see stagnation today at the Fine Arts Department at the BU is because you draw an energizing force from the place you work in, but things have changed in Quetta. Also, there is a dearth of good teachers, as good artists cannot always be good teachers. These issues presently exist at the BU.

I came to Islamabad by chance and was asked to establish Hunerkada in 1992.

It was almost impossible to run such an institution in the early days but being an optimist I kept going. In its own limited way Hunerkada has made a difference in Islamabad

and its 300 graduates have received training in painting, sculpture, ceramics, product design, textile design and graphic design. Some outstanding graduates like Arji Karim, Babar Gul, Shuja, and others have done well. It's a not-for-profit project, as I still have to subsidize it from my other projects and sale of art. In future I would like to see Hunerkada expand and move to a bigger location.

*The art community has a lot of expectations from the National Gallery. What are your immediate plans as its Director?*

I was requested by the Minister for Culture to join the National Art Gallery as its Director and Director of the Visual Arts Department of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). Today funding is a critical issue. Only adequate funds can allow us to hire a trained staff to manage the NAG effectively. I have gone to the concerned persons and am very hopeful.

While we have initiated a volunteer program of gallery guides with the help of various colleges, my priority is to take on full time curators and we would like to hire trained people from all over the country who are willing to move to Islamabad.

The Department of Restoration urgently needs to be set up

to take care of the aging national collection with the PNCA. My vision for the National Gallery includes permanent national and international art collections. After the inauguration, we would like to have regular shows and presently we have begun to work on plans to hold a national exhibition in the first quarter of 2008. Public dialogue and outreach is very important and this will be carried out through planned talks of artists from all over the country. I would also like to involve the private sector as sponsors of shows and gallery spaces.

*The Art Community is keen to know if the Honor Galleries will be available for the inaugural show?*

Presently the Honor Galleries are yet to be completed. One of them is being used for storage of our permanent collection. As soon as the storage space under the auditorium seating is handed over to us, all the works will be transferred there and we hope to have the Honor Galleries available for the next exhibition at the National Gallery.

Note: The NAG was inaugurated by President Musharraf on 25 September 2007. A few weeks after this interview.

Jamal Shah, *Situation Series*, graphite, approx 56x75cms, 1996



Review by Rumana Husain

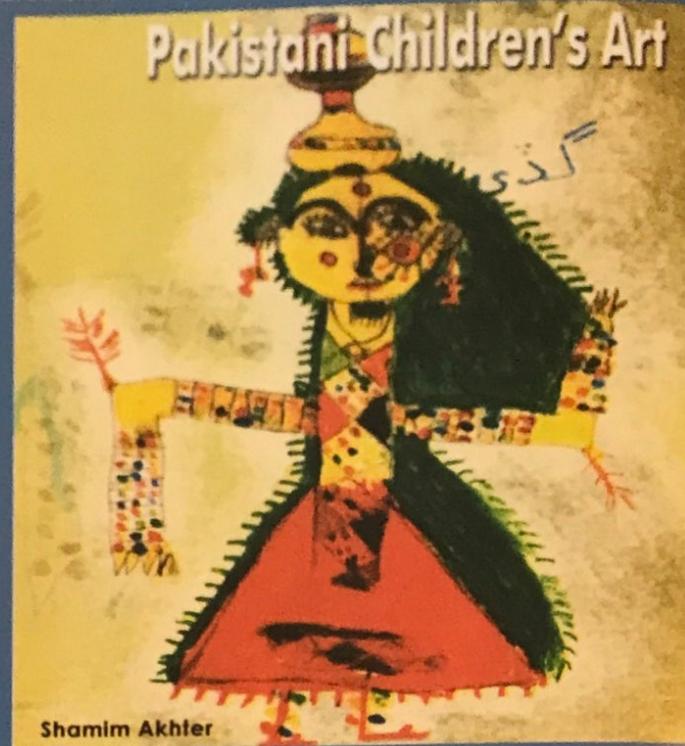
# Documenting Pakistani Children's Art: No Child's Play



Amber Tariq Shah, age 14, Pakistan

The first book on this subject in the country, Pakistani Children's Art showcases child art from a social cross-section and diverse geographical locations. It is indeed a commendable effort by the author as children are an overlooked and underprivileged group in our society.

Art is taught as a subject in selective schools, whereas most children do not get an opportunity to use it as a creative expression. The children who study in government schools and who do not get a chance to draw and use colors in the primary classes, are deprived of this free expression. Like any other subject is taught in most schools here, where the emphasis can be on rote-learning, drawing too is reduced to mere copying and coloring of pre-printed objects in 'drawing books'. The book under review, therefore, opens a window into the psyche of Pakistani child artists for the parents, teachers and social scientists. It is profusely illustrated, and divided into seven chapters, namely:



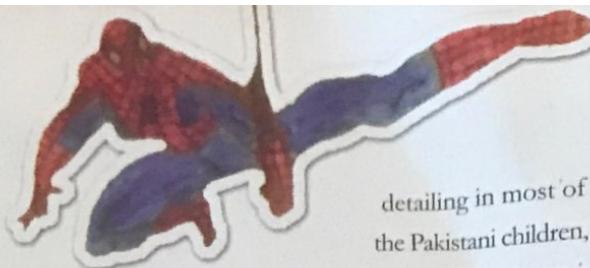
Shamim Akhter  
Book cover

Title: Pakistani Children's Art  
Author: Shamim Akhter  
Published by: Hamdard Foundation  
Pages: 104, Hardcover  
ISBN 978-969-412-408-7

- Workshops
- Thematic Paintings and Poster Competitions
- Exhibitions at Commercial Art Galleries
- World Children's Art
- Indian View
- Mariam's Special World
- Newspaper Clippings

Additionally, there is a chapter in the beginning called Observations, in which the author discusses her point of view while presenting an analysis of how children think and draw. It projects the expressions of both affluent and underprivileged children and the inclusion of children's art from other parts of the world provides an exceptional comparison from around the globe.

The chapter on Workshops maps the art training sessions held by various NGOs in different remote villages of Sindh



and Balochistan, and also in the Punjab and Azad Kashmir. The painting adorning the cover of the book is the outcome of one such workshop in Mithi, Tharparkar - the desert region of Sindh - from where a seven-year old girl, Geeta Bai, depicts with a flourish a village woman (probably her own mother), dominated by red and green colors. She stands poised, balancing two water-pots on her head (water is a precious commodity in the arid land where she belongs), with vibrant spots on the sleeves and the front of her garment, showing a simplified version of beautiful embroidery which normally embellishes it. The little girl has managed to beautify the woman in an incredibly detailed manner, complete with jewellery articles and eye make up. Other paintings from the rural areas show the children's everyday environment and life. For example, a nine year old has illustrated a dacoit taking away cattle.

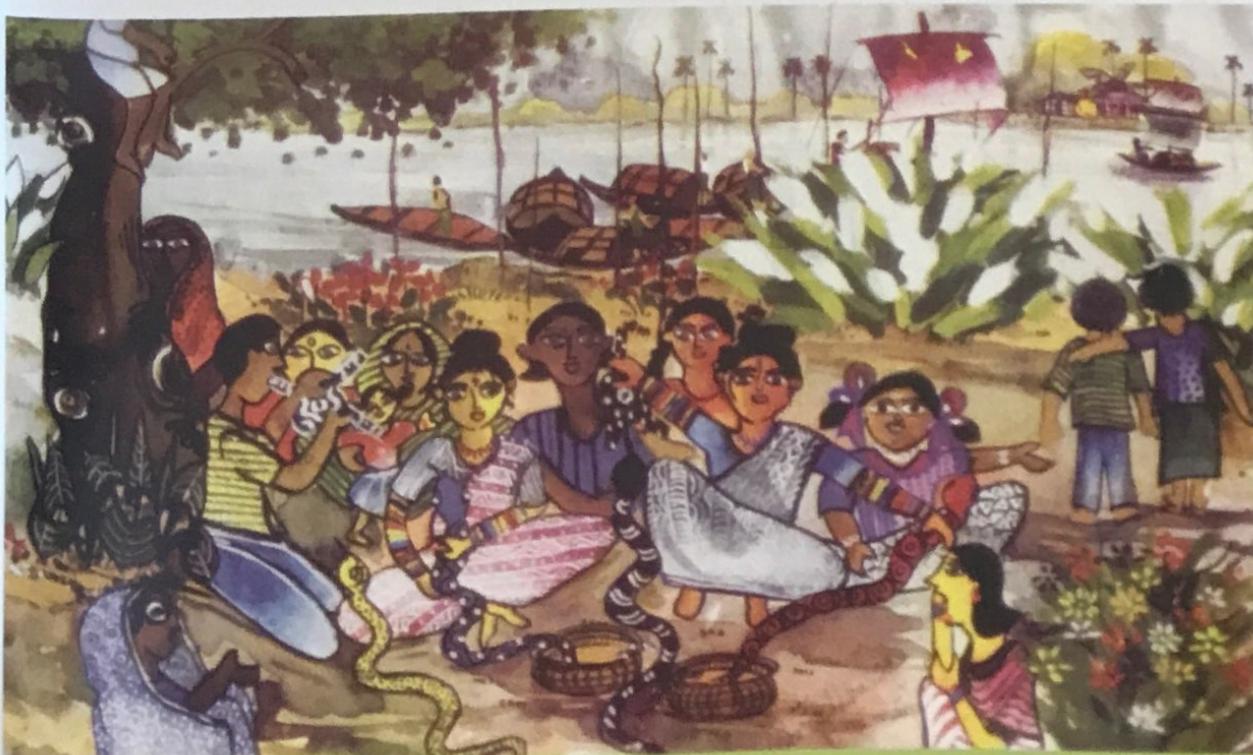
Recently, Pablo Picasso's daughter-in-law, Sydney Picasso was invited to Karachi to judge a children's art competition. A journalist asked her what she thought of the standard of art-teaching methods being used in Pakistan, to which she replied that "in international art forums, we really don't look at how you're teaching art, it's about the results. If the product is good, then the method of instruction is obviously working. The work is excellent over here and I think this itself is testimony to whether art is being taught well or not. Pakistani children are doing art just the way any other children that I have seen around the world..."

Nevertheless, one thing that struck me while going through Pakistani Children's Art was the lack of observation and

detailing in most of the artworks of the Pakistani children, with the exception of the paintings shown in the chapter

Thematic Paintings and Poster Competitions. Contrary to most paintings in the book, the ones presented in the chapter: World Children's Art, children from countries such as Qatar, China, Turkey and Bangladesh have depicted a variety of scenes in a more intricate manner, and their spatial sensibility is better too. The forms and colors of these paintings lend to striking compositions which are extraordinary. In her Observations, Akhter maintains that children hailing from disadvantaged sections of society display extra talent compared to children belonging to affluent classes. This is most evident in her chapter entitled Newspaper Clippings which showcases some examples of artworks that are routinely printed in English as well as Urdu dailies (not read by children of the poor) which have a weekly publication of children's pages. Spiderman, Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Winnie the Pooh, and other popular cartoon characters dominate these pages. One seldom finds an original creation. It's unfortunate that these newspapers rarely take up the cause of promoting imaginative works.

The author, Shamim Akhter is a journalist by profession, who worked with the Urdu women's weekly, Akhbar-e-Khawateen, for 29 years, including 22 years as its editor. As a free-lance journalist, Akhter, amongst other subjects, has been writing on art. The book, with its considerable research, is a laudable effort. However, the publisher should have engaged the services of an innovative designer to do justice to the material.



Aisha Siddika Eli, age 12, Bangladesh