

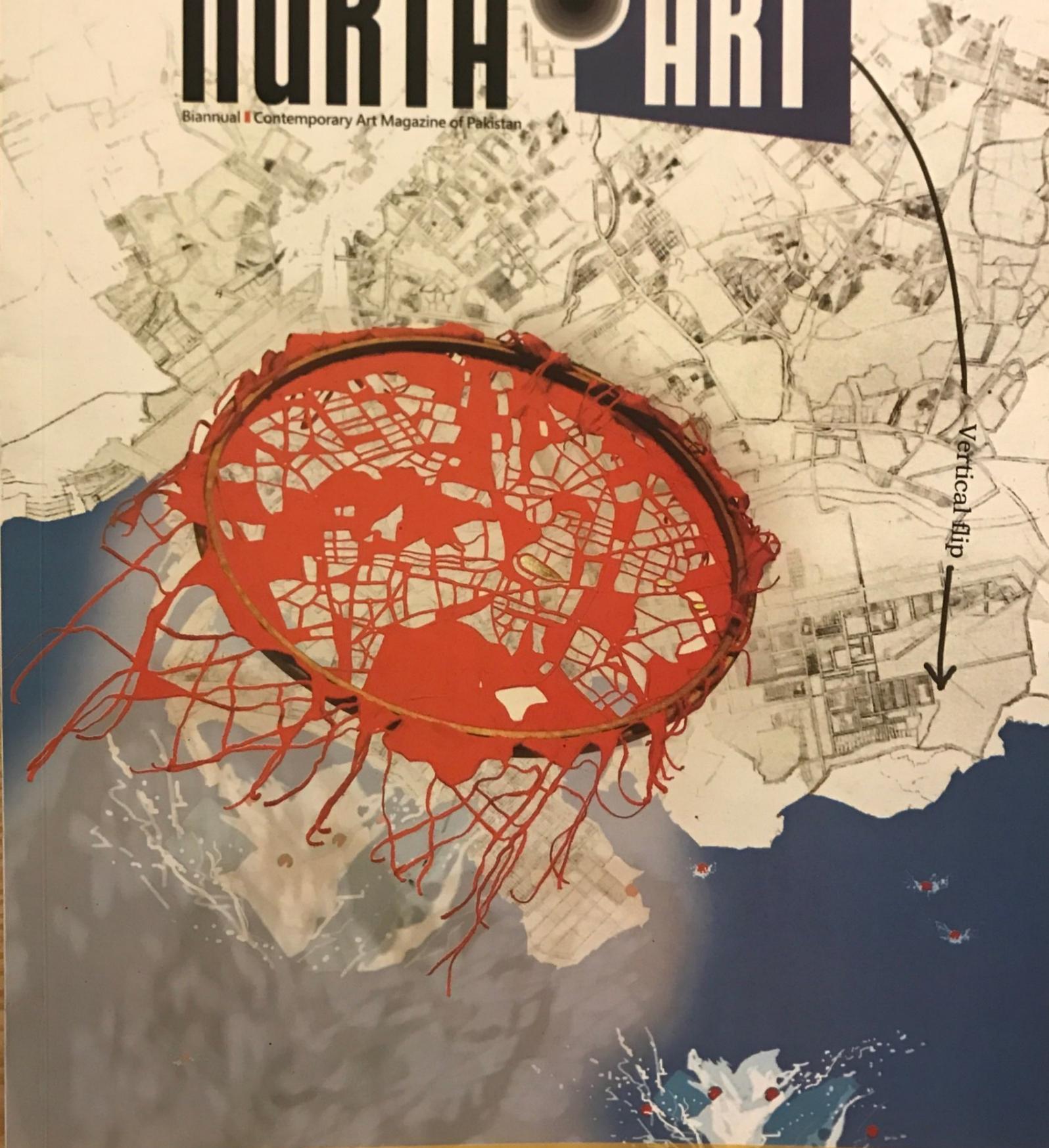
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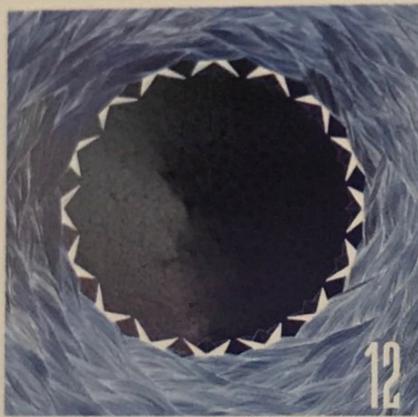
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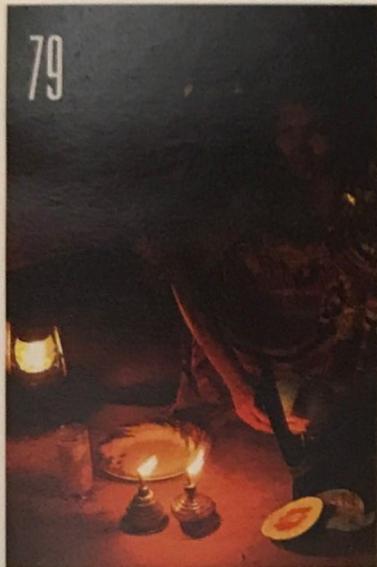
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CONTRIBUTORS

Almas Bana has, for most of his professional life, worked in the Education and Health sectors at university and school levels. He has a long standing interest in art, and he and his wife are also art collectors. This is his first foray in writing on art.

Aziz Sohail has a BA in Art History from Brandeis University. He is currently working as the Studio Director for Rashid Rana Studio in Lahore. With interest in art criticism, curating and business he also pursues independent projects focusing on contemporary art and culture of South Asia & Middle East, with a special interest in studying and promoting contemporary culture in Pakistan. In addition to *NuktaArt*, his writings have appeared in *Big, Red & Shiny*, a contemporary art magazine based in Boston, *The Huffington Post*, *Herald* magazine and *ArtNow*.

Durriya Dohadwala is an independent art writer based in Singapore and has been actively involved in the area of art appreciation for the last eight years. She is a docent at the Singapore Art Museum and has recently completed a Masters degree in Asian Art Histories from Goldsmith College, University of London. She thinks that *If the World Changed*, she would still be an art docent.

Imrana Tanveer is a visual artist and writer based in Karachi. She holds degrees from National College of Arts, Lahore, and Textile Institute of Pakistan, Karachi. She is currently holding the post of Art Director at Morpheme Studios, Karachi.

Inseya Ali is a 15-year-old tenth grader who is currently studying at the C.A.S, a private school in Karachi. Inseya writes about many things including art. Some of her work can be read on the *Express Tribune Blog*, and the *Express Tribune* newspaper. She is also an aspiring artist, inspired by local art and its significance in society; hoping to one day also change whatever she can through her art and her words.

Muneeza Shamsie is a literary critic, who has served as a judge of the 2013 DSC prize for South Asian Literature. In 2009-2011 she served two terms as regional Chair (Eurasia) of the Commonwealth Writers Prize. She is editor of three pioneering anthologies of Pakistani English Literature including the award-winning '*And The World Changed: Contemporary Stories by Pakistani women*'. She is bibliographer (Pakistan) for the Journal of Commonwealth Literature, guest editor *The Journal of Postcolonial writing: Special issue* (Pakistan) May 2011. She writes freelance for *Dawn*, *Herald* and *Newsline*.

Nafisa Rizvi is an art critic and curator and writes for several publications within Pakistan and abroad. She was the founder editor of *ArtNow*, the first online magazine of contemporary art in Pakistan. She has curated numerous shows, including a show of Pakistani artists in Dubai. Nafisa is also a writer of fiction having published a novel titled *The Blue Room* in 2008. She teaches Art Related Study at The Lyceum School.

Shahana Rajani has an MA from the Critical and Curatorial Studies program at the University of British Columbia, Canada. She received a BA in History of Art from the University of Cambridge in 2009 and has since worked as a curator and educator in Karachi. She is invested in exploring the politics of visibility and representation, urban space and violence, desensitisation and public grieving, and using curatorial strategies to generate counter geographies and forms of resistance.

Shahid Suharwardy (1890-1965) was born in West Bengal. He is regarded as the first modern English language poet of undivided India. He published his famous *Essays in Verse* in 1935. After graduating from Calcutta University in 1908, he studied at the Sorbonne, Paris. He studied history and law at Oxford University (1914) and went to Europe to study Slavic languages. He taught English language and literature at the Imperial University of St. Petersburg and the Women's University in Moscow. From 1921-28, he was the producer and art expert of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation under the League of Nations in Paris. His books include *Of Mussulman Culture*, by Vassili Vladimirovich Bartold, translated by Suharwardy from Russian to English in 1934. From 1940-47, he was art critic for *The Statesman*. His posthumous publication *The Art of the Mussulmans in Spain* is based on lectures given in Calcutta on Islamic art and architecture.

Tehmina Ahmed is one of the founding editors of monthly *Newsline* magazine, published from Karachi. Starting out with a Masters in Psychology, she trained in filmmaking at the New York Film Academy and in Photography at the Brooks Institute, California. She combines her practice of photography with filmmaking, writing and editing. Her work has featured at group shows at Koel Gallery, Karachi, Chobi Mela, Dhaka and the Twelve Gates Gallery, Philadelphia.

Vaqar Ahmed is an engineer who quit the safety of his profession and re-invented himself as a journalist and photographer. After getting education in Pakistan he went to Canada to get further academic qualifications. For 28 years he was living in a beautiful and interesting freezer called Montreal where people speak French and perpetually want to secede from Canada. He recently returned to Pakistan permanently and photographs and writes regularly for *Dawn Online*.

Zahra Malkani is an artist and writer based in Karachi. She recently completed an MA in Contemporary Art Theory from Goldsmiths University and is teaching in the Liberal Arts department at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. Her work explores internet art, resistance and ethno-nationalisms.

Ziaul Karim is a fellow of the Contemporary British Writer programme, Cambridge University, UK. He was a literary and cultural editor with the premier English daily of Bangladesh, *The Daily Star*, for over a decade. In 2001, he played a key role in launching *ICE Today*, the first English lifestyle magazine in Bangladesh. He also launched the first art magazine in Bangladesh - *Jamini*. He heads the Brand and Communication section of Eastern Bank Limited.

Zurain Imam is a US-trained print journalist, who has primarily been covering Pakistan's burgeoning Fashion and Entertainment industries. After earning a double BA in English Literature and Political Science from a Portland, Oregon college, he completed a Master's degree in Media Studies, Strategic Planning and Magazine Development from NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study in 1996. He has contributed to *Dawn Images*, *Express Tribune*, *Libas*, *Newsline*, *Xpoze*, *Visage*, *Dival*, *FAQ!* among others locally, and to *The Washington Post* (Style Section), *Harper's Bazaar*, *WWD*, *The Seattle Times* and *The Oregonian*, internationally. Zurain lives in Karachi and enjoys browsing the city's Sunday Bazaar for art and fashion tomes and knick-knacks.

"Meanwhile...History" the title of the Global Art Forum, Art Dubai 2014 suggested the incompleteness of history...almost as if historical events await reclamation from distortions and erasure to restore authenticity to the present.

DUKTAART too has been foregrounding cultural and social narratives to create a new circuitry of ideas from the past and present to re-imagine the future.

From the eclipses of art history, **DUKTAART** brings Shahid Suharwardy's 1939 essay, *A Nation's Art*. As a thinker, his engagement with world culture led him to extrapolate on, what later came to be seen as globalization of national cultural expression. His deliberations include investigations into the resistance and subversion of Greek aesthetics in the Indian Sub-continent following Alexander's annexations. His conclusion '...a national art can be vigorous and effective only when it has the courage to accept freely adaptable foreign influences, and is vital enough to assimilate them to its own artistic needs even after eight decades, continues to have relevance'.

The ways in which appropriation and synthesis is played out in the new century is taken up in Art Global articles on Asia's expansive art expositions, The Singapore Biennale and the recently concluded Dhaka Art Summit. These ambitious showings of regional art seek recognition leveraged by the power of the art industry.

The essay on Pakistani artist Rashid Rana, who with his simultaneous critical acclaim and art market triumph has become a new archetype of success in Pakistan, looks at how inventiveness lends new meanings to historicized images in his conceptual practice. The author also brings into discussion how a new paradigm in public programming is needed to de-eliticize art into the cultural mainstream.

With Shirin Niazi as this issue's 'Art Collector', **DUKTAART** reminisces on a pre-art market era when family memories were archived through paintings and art objects passed through generations. Her collection simultaneously provides a lens to view the nostalgia of the Burmese Diaspora.

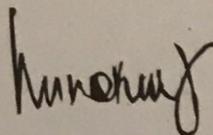
The book review of *Ganga Jamuni: Silver and Gold : A Forgotten Culture*, a compilation of narratives by Naz Ikramullah brings into discussion the convergences between the social and cultural practices of Hindu and Muslim communities in pre-partition India. This elaboration on the code of interaction between people that kept their religious identities intact is supported by expressive visuals from history.

Pathways activated by personal affinities of six Karachi artists restore a conflicted city with a new sense of belonging in 'Right to the City: Travel Guide to Karachi'. This publication, the art project of curator Shahana Rajani in Nukta-e Nazar, offers further insights with interviews of the participants and reiterates the objective of 'Devising our own subjective maps and images of the city, we have set in motion our own discipline of detail, to construct new spaces of visibility which otherwise remain invisible'.

In the Reviews section, **DUKTAART** has invited three new voices to participate in an inclusive gesture to add yet another layer of how art is read by individuals who are engaged with art from the perspective of their own experiences that lie outside the profession of art writing.

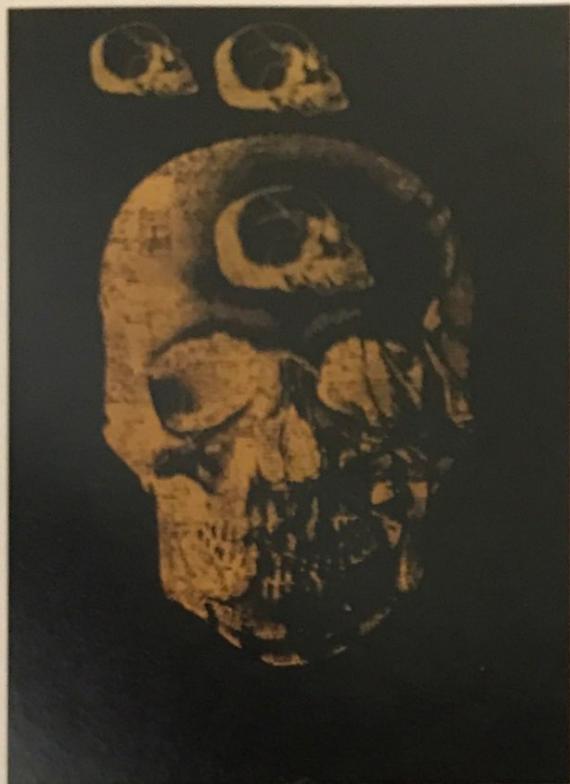
According to an anonymous quote '...to archive is not to 'save' but to throw forth, an archive should not be a fortress but a rocket' suggesting a proactive use of documentation to create new knowledge that activates imagination, creating new instruments to understand the present.

DUKTAART as a repository of texts and images hopes to archive, animate and spark new connections.



Nilofur Farrukh
Editor

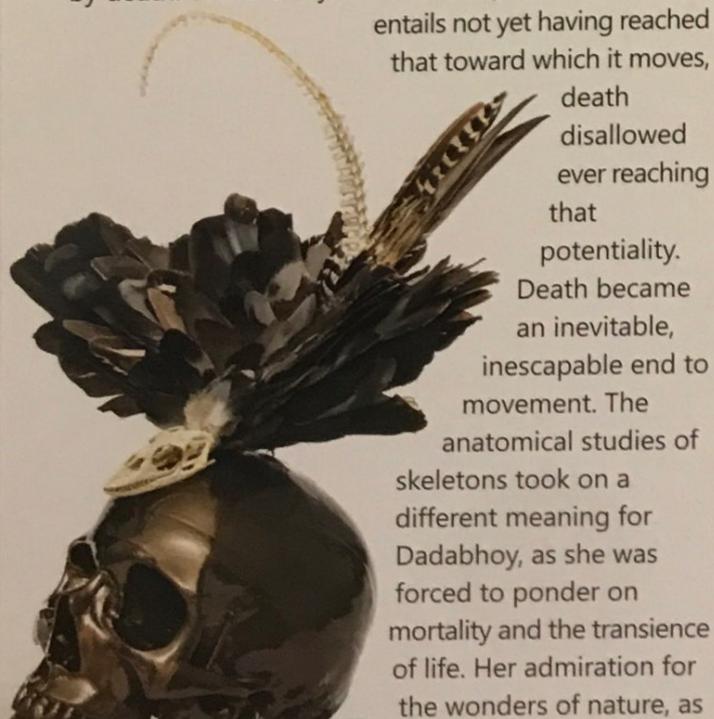
Rumana Husain
Amra Ali
Senior Editors
Summer 2014



Naima Dadabhoy, *Untitled*, Screenprints on paper, 50 X 70 cms, 2014

For Dadabhoy, the impetus for this series came from a bird sighting: watching an eagle gliding through the sky. This image of the eagle's agility stayed with her in months to come, prompting her interest in bird anatomy. She started investigating its skeletal structure and muscles to understand its movement. This studious process is reflected in her large screen-prints on display, wherein the artist has reproduced some of the anatomical illustrations that she studied.

In the midst of her research, Dadabhoy suffered a personal, familial loss. Movement, as the coming into presence of a potentiality, was all of a sudden halted by death. While every movement by its very meaning entails not yet having reached that toward which it moves,



death disallowed ever reaching that potentiality. Death became an inevitable, inescapable end to movement. The anatomical studies of skeletons took on a different meaning for Dadabhoy, as she was forced to ponder on mortality and the transience of life. Her admiration for the wonders of nature, as

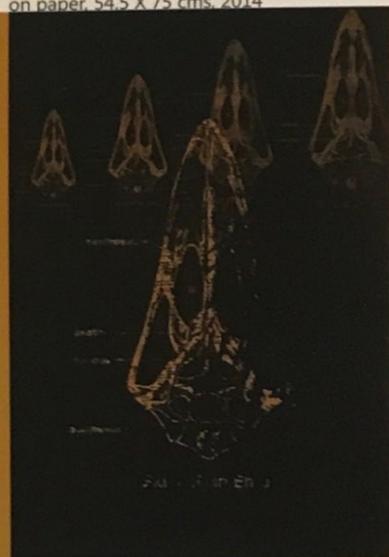
Naima Dadabhoy, *Untitled*, Bird feathers, preserved reptile skeletal parts, polystone resin skull, oil paint, books 42 X 33 X 33 cms, 2014

apprehended through the imperial movement of an eagle, was challenged through the macabre reminder of impermanence and temporality. Her screen-prints became increasingly multi-layered; they celebrated the joys and pleasures of movement as an intrinsic part of life, but also portrayed a darker study of mortality.

The life-size reproduction of a skull is plated in gold. The use of gold, a color of wealth and luxury, reminds us that material possessions cannot change the facts of mortality. In the vanity of our daily lives, we forget our own vulnerability to death. Crowning the skull is a cluster of preserved butterflies. Historically, butterflies have been used as a symbol of the soul, which cannot be destroyed by physical death. However it is also a symbol of empty vanity and nothingness due to its short lifespan and ephemeral beauty. Hence the viewer is free to make their own associations, whether it be

Naima Dadabhoy, *Untitled*, Screenprints on paper, 54.5 X 75 cms, 2014

Dadabhoy pairs the traditional memento mori symbol of the skull, with the body of an eagle. While the former speaks to death and mortality, the bird, ready for flight, symbolizes speed and mobility.



the ephemerality of life, or a new beginning through death. In another sculpture, the artist has screen-printed the skull with letters that she had written to her father. Imprinted on the skull, these indecipherable words represent an emotional struggle and longing for communication. Death was not an abstract concept, but a painful reality of an eternal separation from her father.

Naima Dadabhoy refuses a simplistic representation of life and death. Movement becomes a central theme through which both concepts can be dynamically apprehended and understood. Her representations are embedded in personal experiences, which embrace and celebrate the contradictions of life. Like the historic vanitas paintings, she offers her viewers a chance to reconsider their own mortality, to think about death

• NAFISA RIZVI

Ahmed Saleem Paracha (Karachi School of Art), *Hope*, Fibre Glass, Dimensions not available, 2013



CONGREGATION OF THE EMERGING

A student's thesis show is a memorable experience for art graduates as in many ways it delineates their future and sums up their past learning. If we assume that in spite of subjective and nebulous paradigms for the evaluation of art, art can be assessed in terms of originality, the ability to surprise the audience and the element of creativity, then the same parameters including a few extra may be visited upon students' works. Here, skill is another factor that must be taken into account, one that may later be discounted, as must be the merit of the educator, whose conclusions,



Sana Anwer (Karachi School of Art), *Pokhya Sen Khwab*, Fibre Glass, Dimensions not available, 2013

Many of these twenty-something students struggle between bleeding-heart liberalism at their place of learning and more conservative, restrictive values at home which leads them to their thematic choices, some ambivalent, some lucid.

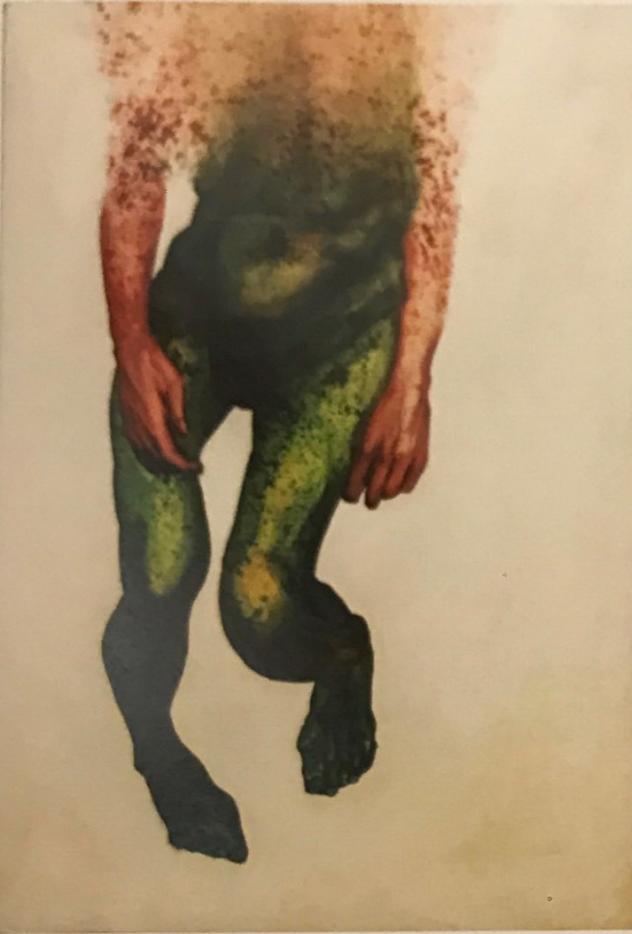


preconceived absolutes and motivations for their own practice should not intrude upon the pedagogical output - but invariably do.

The artists exhibiting their thesis work at the 12th Emerging Talent Show at VM Art Gallery, Karachi, are somewhat identifiable by the schools they have gained diplomas and degrees from. That is unfortunate in some cases and fortunate in others. The sculptures of abstract shrouded women and vultures in a swirling mass titled *Ghaat e Nafs* by Sana Anwer, as well as the figure of the man crouching called *Hope* by Ahmed Saleem Paracha were predictably by students of the Karachi School of Art (KSA). Even though the principal and founder of the KSA, Rabia Zuberi, may not actively teach students any longer, a defining sensibility has been established under her aegis and continues to thrive with the students of sculpture there. The quirkily inspirational miniatures by Qudsia Jabeen and Quratul-ain from NCA Rawalpindi denote a younger, more edgy tutorship and understanding of neo-miniature.

Many of these twenty-something students struggle between bleeding-heart liberalism at their place of learning and more conservative, restrictive values at home which leads them to their thematic choices, some ambivalent, some lucid. It is enjoyable to try and fathom the mindset of the students without having met them.

Sehar Shah (CEAD Jamshoro), *Material*, Gouache on wasli, Dimensions not available, 2013



The student Mir Jabal from University of Balochistan seems to have a discrete if dark perception of the human form. We are not sure if the figure is a photograph or a painting but it doesn't matter. The naked male figure has mottled almost scaly, reptilian skin, but he is not explicitly repulsive, only curiously bizarre.

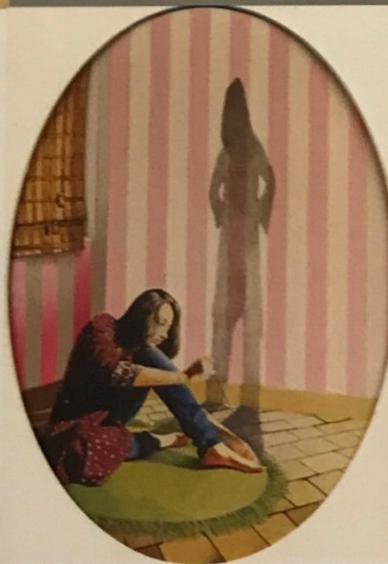
Mir Jabal (University of Balochistan), *Unquiet Souls*, Oil Paint with mixed media, Dimensions not available, 2013

The students from Kinnaird College Lahore, Umme-Habiba, Javeria Irshad and Hina Shazib speak of their travails as women in their work...

College Lahore, Umme-Habiba, Javeria Irshad and Hina Shazib speak of their travails as women in their work, with limiting choices of either studies or marriage but not both, the perils of further education, and the watchful eye of society. Zohra Bano from NCA Rawalpindi uses the metaphor of hair to investigate feminist ideologies, although she should have been reminded that artists like Alice Anderson and Wenda Gu, to name a few, have used human hair prolifically in their practice.

In previous years, students have opted to focus on the political and social wrongs in the country as these topics do not encounter criticism from any segment of their societal structures. When the themes tend to lean towards religion or personal introspection, some degree of ambivalence creeps into the work since it is rare to find young men and women unabashedly open about their views, especially amongst middle income households to which many art students now belong. That is where art teachers can have a profound influence on students. Art is not required to be understood, in fact it is not required to be anything tangible but the surprise element in a work, referred to earlier, goes a long way in making the mundane spectacular and the good, outstanding. In the works of Nazeer Ahmed and Sehar Shah from Centre of Excellence in Art and Design, Jamshoro University (CEAD), the concerns addressed are personally reflective and societally critical without being overtly lurid, unlike the work titled *Wall Chalking* by Zohaib Rind from Central Institute of Art and Craft.

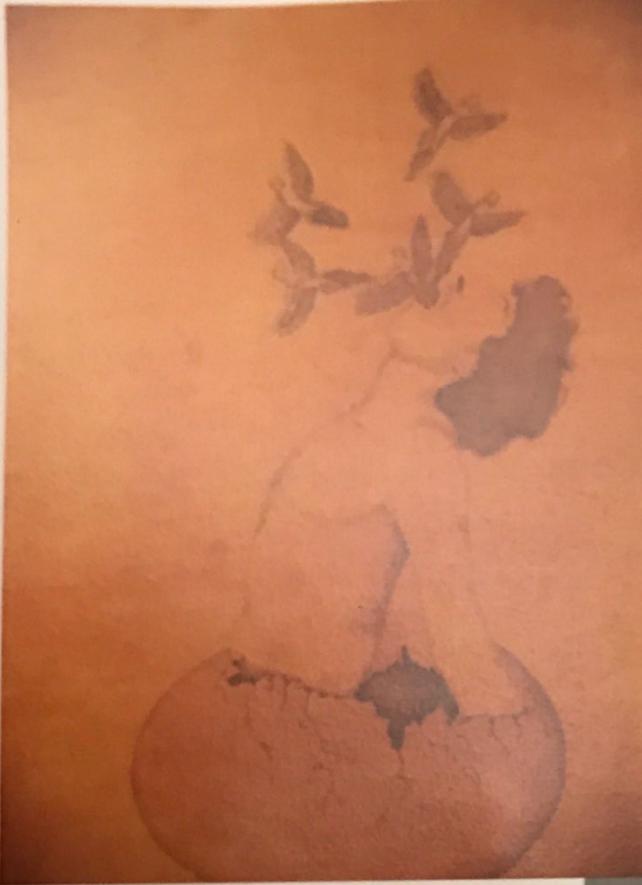
One overriding theme in this show is feminism, replacing preferred topics like terrorism and violence that previous shows were deluged with. The students from Kinnaird



Hina Shazib (Kinnaird College, Lahore), *Shadow*, Gouache on wasli, Dimensions not available 2013

in contemporary art. It is true that the physical fabrication of an idea is sometimes challenging and students opt out of experimental formats for the sake of expediency. But it is imperative that students are exposed to new age art and installation. Two students from Karachi University have pushed the envelope to create interesting light boxes, one of which, by Arsalan Nasir is relational as it requires intervention on the part

It is important for art schools to keep up with new technologies and the study of its usage



In the works of Nazeer Ahmed and Sehar Shah from Centre of Excellence in Art and Design, Jamshoro University (CEAD), the concerns addressed are personally reflective and societally critical without being overtly lurid...

Nazeer Ahmed (CEAD Jamshoro), *Untitled*, Pencil on wasli, Dimensions not available, 2013

to be self-analytical, especially when you have an industry overview presented to you at such exhibition. Kudos to VM Art Gallery curator Riffat Alvi in establishing the tradition of holding the Emerging Talent show and persisting in spite of all odds. Those schools or individual students who don't consider the show valuable enough to present their works here, fray the fabric of the art industry as there are already very few opportunities for the country's artists to pursue a discourse about contemporary art. ●

is relational as it requires intervention on the part of the viewer to activate it. The other by Nasir Ansari is a fascinating installation constructed by layering sheets of plexi glass and inserting metal rods to generate an image of shadowy terrorism. A set of two works stand out due to their exceptional understanding of medium fusing seamlessly with conceptual perspicacity. The student Mir Jabal from University of Balochistan seems to have a discrete if dark perception of the human form. We are not sure if the figure is a photograph or a painting but it doesn't matter. The naked male figure has mottled almost scaly, reptilian skin, but he is not explicitly repulsive, only curiously bizarre. We identify with his human form but realize that he is dissimilar and therein lies the struggle between what seems and what is or may be. An art work able to create this skirmish of the senses is to be reckoned as provocative.

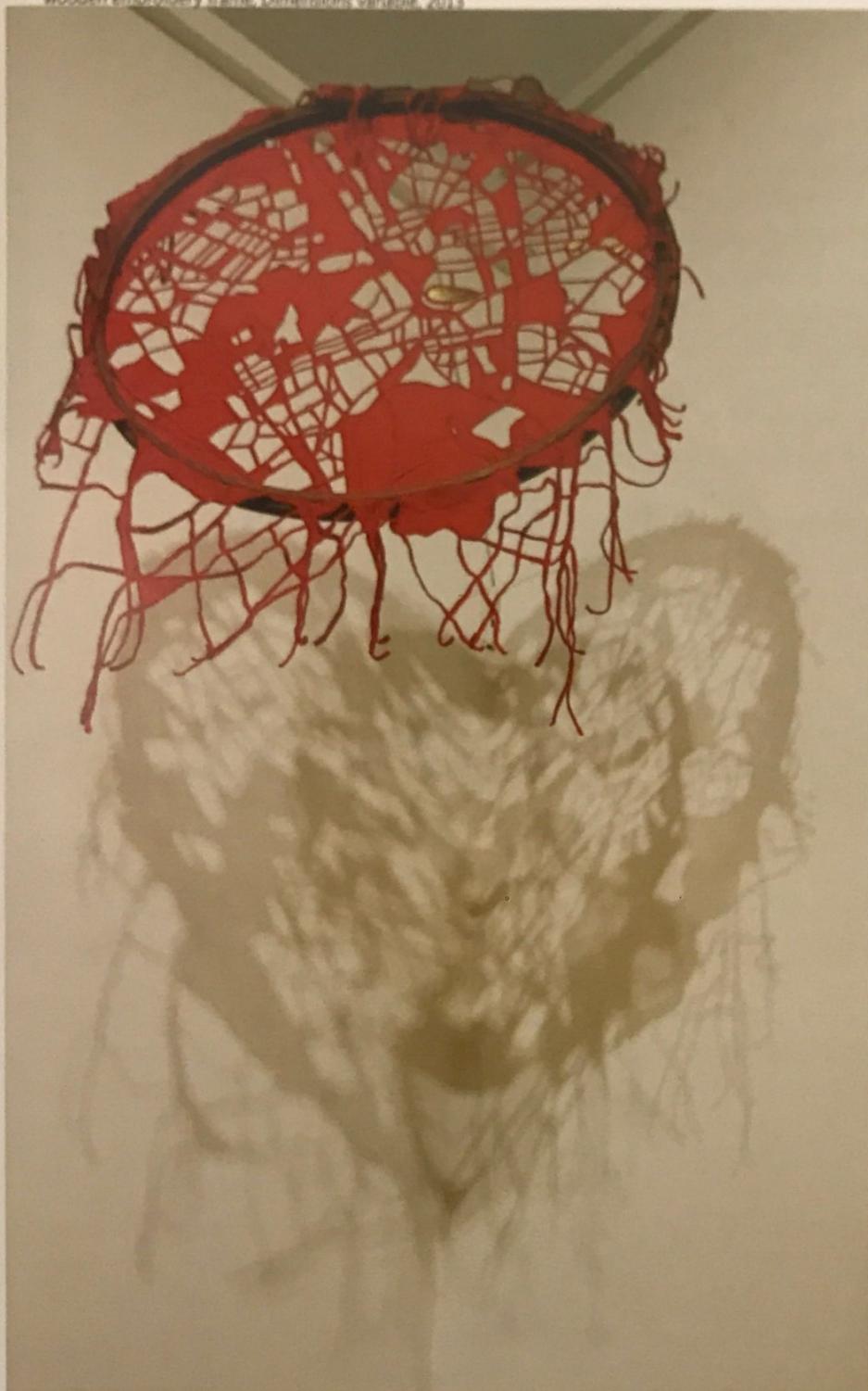
The assessment graph of artworks in the show varies more than the themes or mediums but it is important for students

Nasir Ansari (Karachi University), *Labour 1*, Plexi glass and metal and glass print, Dimensions not available, 2013



Two students from Karachi University have pushed the envelope to create interesting light boxes, one of which by Arsalan Nasir is relational as it requires intervention on the part of the viewer to activate it. The other by Nasir Ansari is a fascinating installation constructed by layering sheets of plexi glass and inserting metal rods to generate an image of shadowy terrorism.

Roohi S. Ahmed, *The Shadow of My Love*, fabric, silk and zari thread, wooden embroidery frame. Dimensions variable. 2013



● SHAHANA RAJANI

'I LOVE REAL' DILEMMA

"Mad in Karachi II" - a much anticipated sequel exhibition curated by Munawar Ali Syed, opened at Art Chowk Gallery, Karachi, in December 2013. At the inaugural, many speculations were being made about the title of the show. The city's inhabitants were keenly looking for ways to connect to the show, claiming their own stakes in the city's madness. One person exclaimed "Mad in Karachi - I totally get it! We are all a special sort of mad to be living in this city that breathes violence and bloodshed." Simultaneously, another conversation

was ongoing. "Mad in Karachi - it must be a play on the phrase Made in Karachi. It must be referencing our geographic locations and situated knowledge despite an increasingly global world."

The curator verbalised his own understanding of Karachi as "a city that routinely faces breaking news [and] makes us mad... in a positive way." The exhibition brings together 21 artists, who each privilege their own understandings and experiences of the city. There is a refusal to circumscribe explorations of Karachi through

the polarities that dominate images of the modern city: development and decay, phantasmagoria and shock, dream world and catastrophe. Instead, each artist, through their three-dimensional practices, represents a politics of visibility, which has been formed by and in return given form to our understandings of Karachi.

Abdullah Qamar's *Legacy* at first glance is a large sculptural relief of a bird's head.

Abdullah Qamar, *Legacy*, Iron
12.5 X 137 X 12.5 cms, 2014



Adeela Suleman, *Karr Wa Farr*
(series), Steel and Iron,
Dimensions 30.5 X 48.5 X 23 cms,
2014



day. It serves as a kind of armor against the world it seeks to sense. Zahid Chaudhary explains this brilliantly in *Afterimage of Empire*:

Aesthetic form is the process by which one makes sense, habitually, of worldly stimuli; it is not a rarefied term referring to a realm that hovers above politics and the crude, primitively material world. Rather, aesthetic form, because it arranges the world into sense, necessarily has its shielding aspect, in the same way that habit does.

Therefore, visibility inevitably performs a habitual kind of shielding against an overload of signification and sensory stimulation. We are surrounded by violence and suffering; we constantly read in the media about lives lost, but these stories are repeated every day, after every blast and every target killing. This repetition appears endless and has resulted in a collective desensitization. We are sufficiently anesthetised to dehumanize the human consequences of violence in our own city. For instance, the resilience aesthetic allows us to censor out human suffering, and the habitual marginalization of otherness allows us to disown

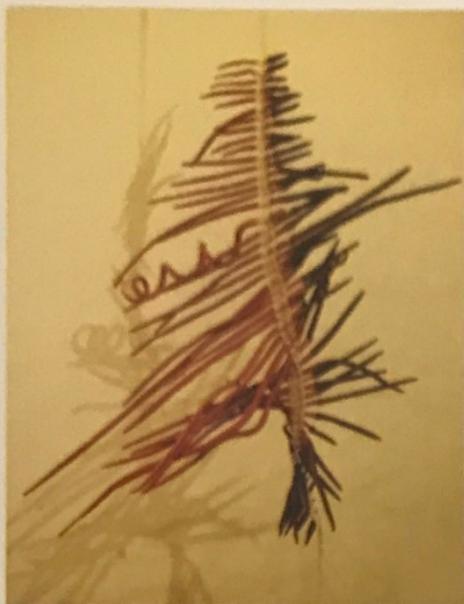
Closer examination reveals an intricate surface pattern made of bullets and bullet indentations, resembling a kind of protective armor. Going beyond literal references to flying bullets, violence and armed protection, his sculpture is conceptual armor, symbolizing the scripted and habitual ways we come to see and experience the city.

Habit is critical to the business of perception, because it is what allows us to filter out objects from consciousness in order to get through the

Fahim Rao, *Vertebrates I*,
Metal, 102 X 98.5 X 43.5 cms



1. Zahid Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth century India* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2012), 12.



Aliya Yousuf,
Spineless,
Terracotta and
thread,
66 X 76.5 cms

rhetorically the very city we inhabit so that we define it as other. It is up to us to resist scripted ways of seeing and presenting the cityscape, and to produce alternative modalities through affect and embodied practices.

In the exhibition, Fahim Rao and Aliya Yousuf explore the volatility of the turbulent city through the form of the spinal column. While Rao's "Vertebrates I" is a symmetrical black, metallic spinal column, Yousuf's "Spineless" is equally fragile and asymmetrical. Made from terracotta pieces held together precariously by thread, Yousuf's vertebral structure lacks the tensile strength and flexibility of Rao's form. It exists in a defeated, dilapidated state, a symbol of the precariousness of life. Its fragility is beautiful, yet of no use-value. Both works confront the social pressures of construction and destruction. They visualise the living costs of inhabiting the spatial mutations of Karachi, where lives oscillate between potential and disappointment, promise and betrayal, dream and disillusionment.

Another artist, Fraz Mateen examines the visual signifiers used to express affection for the city. His work, *I love real* is imprinted with the recurring phrase "I [heart] khi." Commonly found in street graffiti, "I [heart] khi" is a popular catch phrase, in which all of one's conflicting emotions and affections for the city are neatly contained in a red heart. At the center of his work, Mateen has carved out the shape of a biological heart so that the hollowed relief signifies absence. This absence of the heart destabilizes the text, unveiling the simulacrum of real emotion. It brings into doubt our capacity and commitment to love connect, mourn and empathise with the city.

Tucked away in a corner, Arsalan Nasir's light-sensitive boxes explore the intervention of memory in urban

space and time. These seemingly ordinary cardboard boxes, light up to reveal intimate childhood belongings of the artist such as toys, books, photo albums, etc. For the viewer, these objects enact a mnemonic trigger for a vortex of memory, so that memories from childhood and the remote past interpenetrate the contemporary landscape and present moment. These memories are often

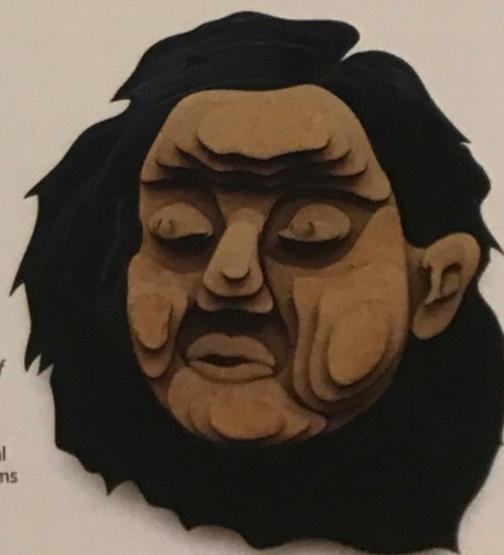
not recoverable at will, but return unexpectedly and unbidden, through accidental encounters with certain sensory triggers, enabling an intersection and illumination of past(s) and present(s). Such triggers hold the potential of

discovering within the city, enchanted worlds, mythical realms, magical childhood objects and remnants from the past. After all, for each of us, the city's labyrinthine topography is experienced through the unfolding of our personal histories and memories.

Through the embodied practices of 21 artists, this exhibition forms many critical constellations that mobilise a crucial political imagery to represent and reinvent the city more after our heart's desire. These constellations contest the dominant narratives of Karachi as a ruined and repellent city, under siege by uncivil masses. They resist the myopic understandings that are often generalized to represent the whole city. Instead, they show Karachi as made up of many spaces of simultaneity and paradox, spaces which are constantly negotiated and mediated by people in their everyday lives. ●



Fraz Mateen, *I love real*, Carving on Paper,
30.5 X 30.5 X 6.5 cms



Hamida Khatri,
*Manifestation of
Her Existence*
(detail)
Vinyl records,
wood and metal
76.5 X 61 X 7 cms
(body), 2013

● AZIZ SOHAIL

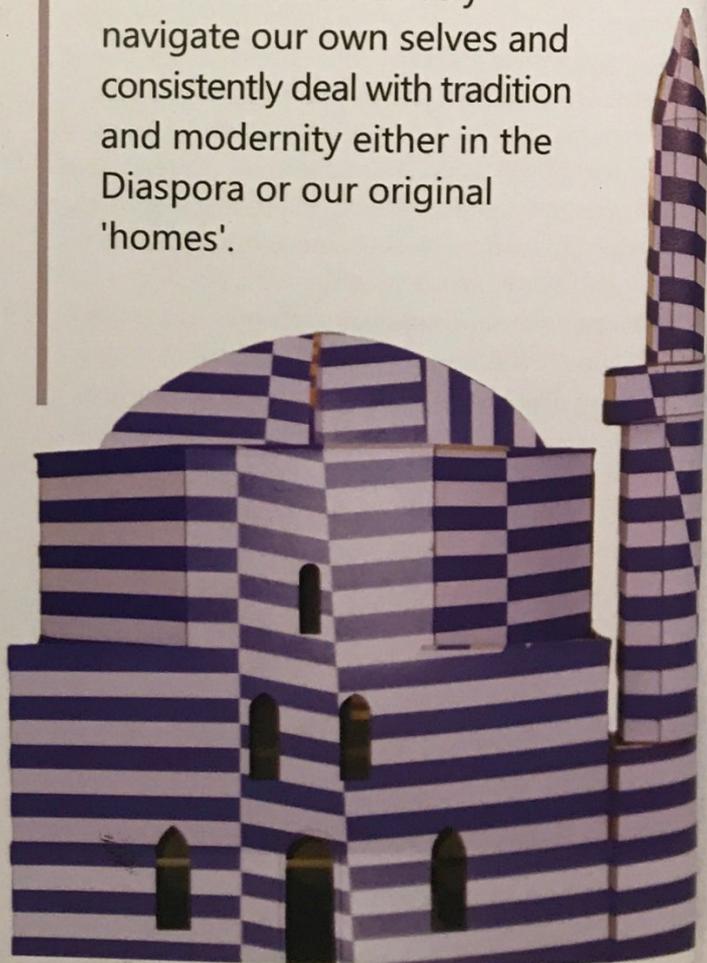
In November 2013, the Karachi art community was privileged to engage with the traveling exhibition 'Homelands' curated by Indian-based Latika Gupta. After traveling to Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Lahore, the exhibit, consisting of works from the British Council Collection, opened in November 2013. The exhibit, the concept of which was selected from an online competition, showcased a new world order, and a new reality for a post-imperial Britain, was particularly relevant for a post-colonial Pakistani audience that continuously navigates its problematic relationship of belonging to and sharing a history with the United Kingdom.

Latika's curatorial question, i.e. the navigation of our identity, of our place of origin and our sense of home is particularly relevant in a globalized world, where she herself states that 'Today, many of us move with ease across inter/national boundaries. We are born in one country, we make another our home.' However, it is an even more important question for those of us of Muslim heritage situated in a post 9/11, post recessionary world, where we continuously and anxiously navigate our hyphenated British-Pakistan/British-Asian heritage, and where the reality of a 'European Fortress' is ever more present. While London continues to be a coveted destination for rich South Asians and Arabs to buy second properties, and a magnet for higher education seekers, it is at the same time a nation where immigration becomes restricted and bound by new rules and privileges, and where one encounters higher barriers for cultural exchange and dialogue. As a recently returned university graduate from the United States, where similar anxieties are shaping national policy, these contexts and questions made this exhibit particularly relevant to me.

Nathan Coley, a past nominee for the prestigious Turner Prize was represented in the exhibit with *Camouflage, Bayrakli Mosque*, commissioned for the exhibition *Breaking Step* shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, Serbia in 2007. The contested history of this mosque itself is important to contextualize this powerful work. Built as a mosque during the Ottoman era, it was later converted to a church, and then reverted to a mosque again. Post Yugoslavia Civil War, it remained the only

SENSE OF ENTRAPMENT

The sense of entrapment, of dealing with hybridized-hyphenated identities is something all of us can relate to in this globalized world, where we continuously navigate our own selves and consistently deal with tradition and modernity either in the Diaspora or our original 'homes'.

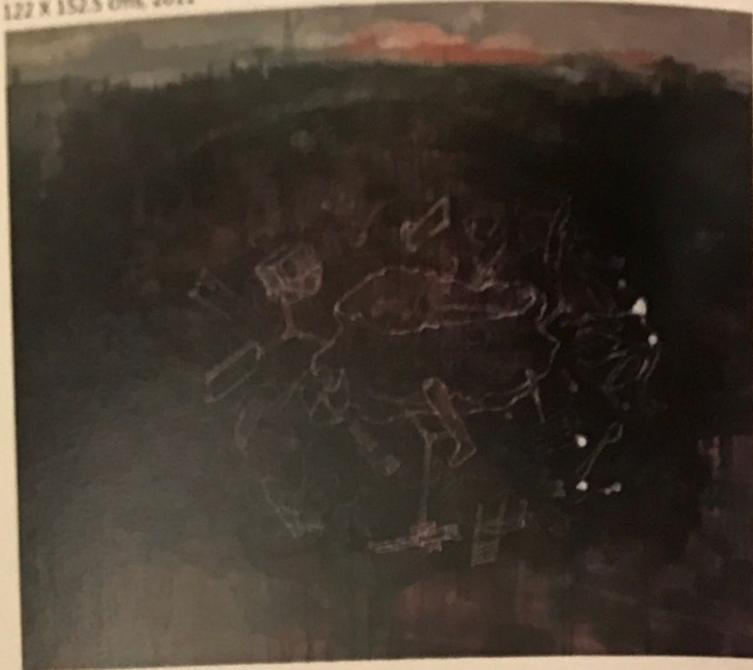


Nathan Coley, *Camouflage Bayrakli Mosque*, Painted hardboard, mirror, 100 X 78 X 63 cm

● ALMAS BANA

THE WEIGHT OF THINGS NAIZA KHAN

Naiza Khan, *An Invisible Landscape Conditions the Visible One*, Oil on canvas, 122 X 152.5 cms, 2011



To understand Naiza and her work you have to spend some portion of your time at the exhibition at Koel and not just flit through. There are no bombs and bullets on show here but a whole range of finely wrought imagery differing significantly with the mediums she has used. Although the subject of her works is tough and oh so common for the people of Karachi, there is a touch of lightness in whatever she has done as if she wishes to tread lightly on the already over-burdened state of our mind and our land.

She creates slowly and works on more than one item at a time, each technique requiring different materials and skills which she says helps her improve her concentration on the processes.

Let's take some of her works on the different media she has used.

Building Terrain 1 a digital print on Hahnemuhle paper is an elliptical of two images of the act of land reclamation from the sea. A surveyor with his equipment marks the land being carved out of the sea for habitation along side the imagery of the concrete creation being put in place. Who knows many of us, or our children, will inhabit this very space stolen from the sea. It might make us think out of our smug self righteousness when we realize that the houses that we are living on may have been built after undergoing such erosion of nature.

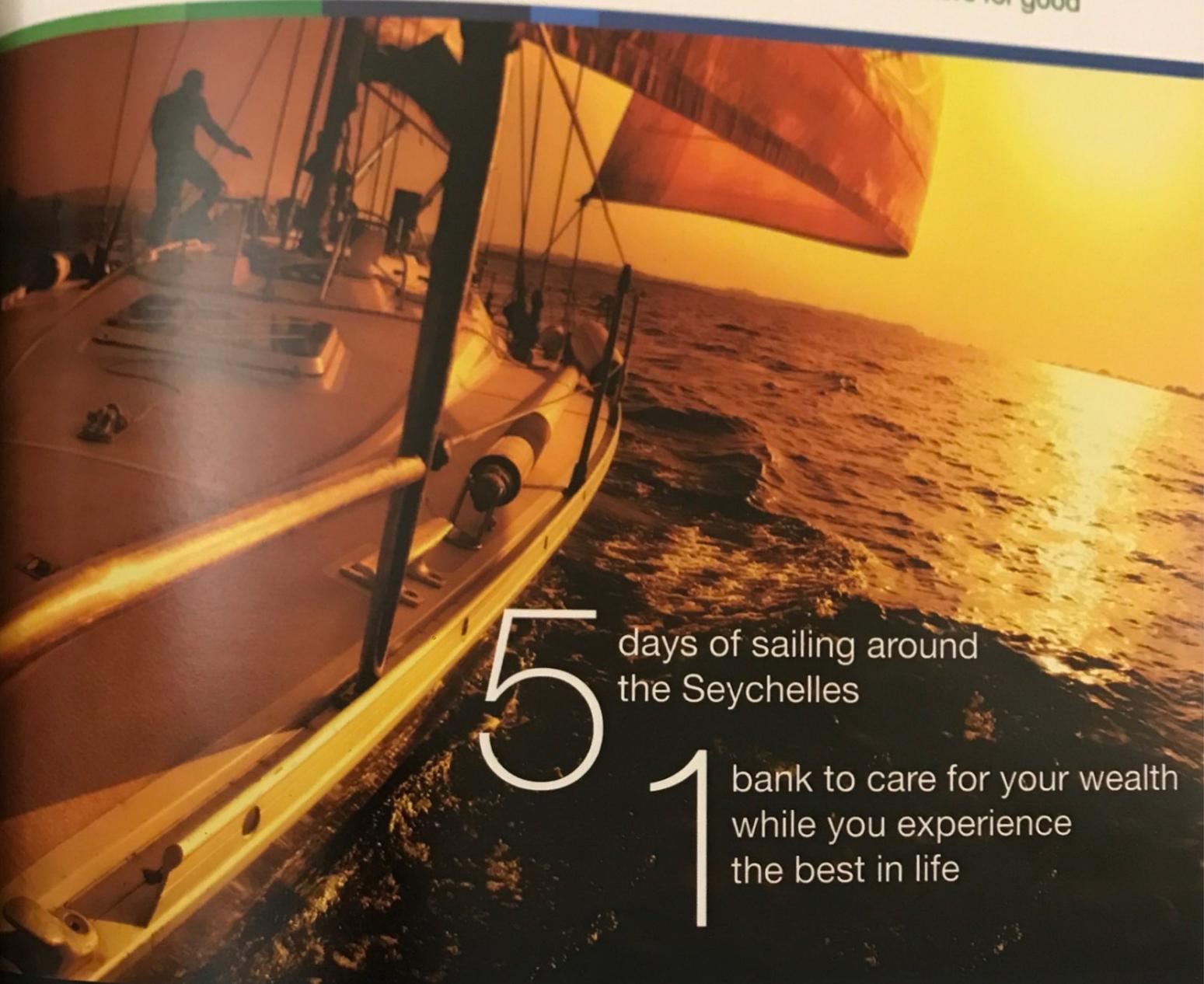
Her video at Manora is achingly simple. Here she is seen painting amongst rubble of desks and chairs in bright sea blue color. Next to her is a young man painting but also talking. If one spends time listening to him one realizes through his rambling monologue

that this is the furniture of a classroom that was bombed and many children lost their lives. Whether the classroom has restarted and the children back in school is left to our collective conscience to find out.

The duo of oil on canvas paintings *The Invisible Landscape Conditions the Visible one* and *Small Creatures Glowing in the Dark* shows Karachi of the past and the present and the difference in the forms and creatures that inhabit the city in the two times. One aspect is of Karachi in simpler times and fewer people, where fishing was the primary activity, and the other is the current megapolis with the familiar yet universal skyline. Over worked on these muted images is the stark white-outlined depiction of the inhabitants of the two different times. Tranquil boats and marine creatures contrast with the morass of the present.

For me her piece de résistance is the *Merry-go-round* with charcoal, Conte crayon and acrylic on Fabriano paper. Presented starkly and deceptively simply, she depicts an abandoned merry-go-round. The child-size horses and airplanes are secured with chains and frayed ropes as if the owner still dreams of coming back when Manora can once again welcome children who will sit on this contraption, and laughter will prevail in the simple delight of living an ordinary life.

Her works can be seen as an ode to the present times but the story behind her works can be read two ways. One as hope for the coming times, and the other is the exasperation of foreseeing a dodgy future. You take your pick and you could be right both ways. ●



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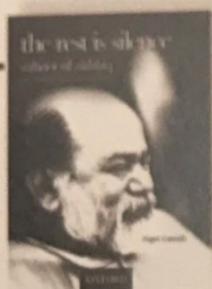


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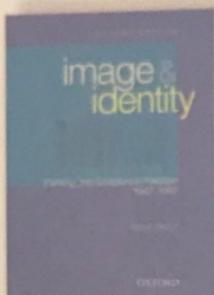
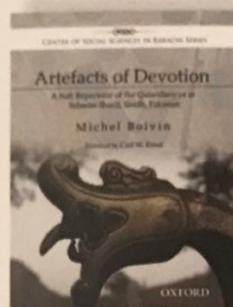


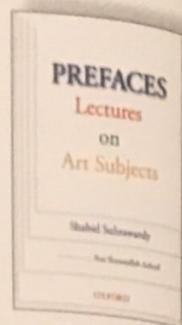
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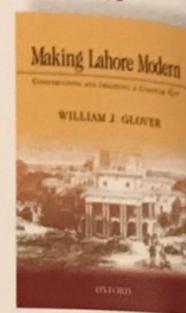
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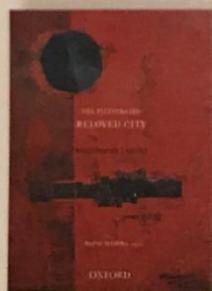
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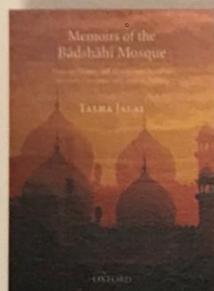
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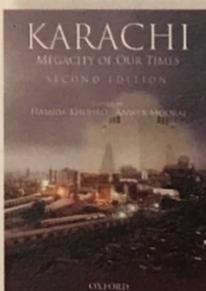
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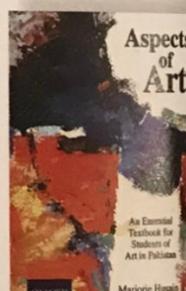
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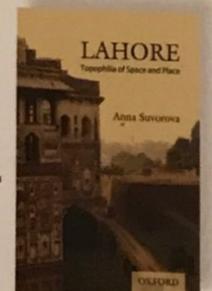
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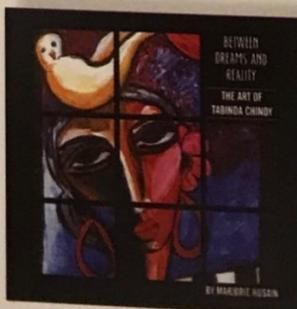
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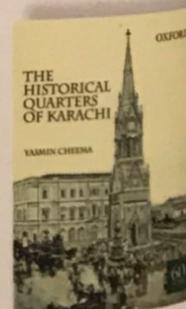
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● SHAHID SUHARWARDY

NuktaArt, in its attempt to revisit the writing of early art critics, is privileged to reprint Shahid Suharwardy's essay, A Nation's Art, from his book Prefaces, Lectures on Art Subjects (1938). As one of the most comprehensive critiques on aesthetics and art education, the writing conveys the earliest concerns on Modernity, as well as questions of influence and assimilation, and on nationhood; issues that may have taken new forms, but are still carried in the baggage for art and ideas in Pakistan and the region. It is by re-opening these pages of the past that we can make historical linkages to our times.

A Nation's Art and other essays were given by Suharwardy to his students at the Osmania University, Hyderabad, the Visva-bharati, the Lucknow Exhibition, c. 1936, and from talks given at the BBC London and at the Calcutta station of the All-India radio. In 1938, these lectures on art were collected and published by Calcutta University, in the book titled Prefaces, Lectures on Art Subjects. It was republished in 2009 by Ameena Saiyid at Oxford University Press, Karachi, Pakistan, with an introduction by Suharwardy's niece, the artist Naz Ikramullah Ashraf. It is reprinted here with permission from the Publisher.

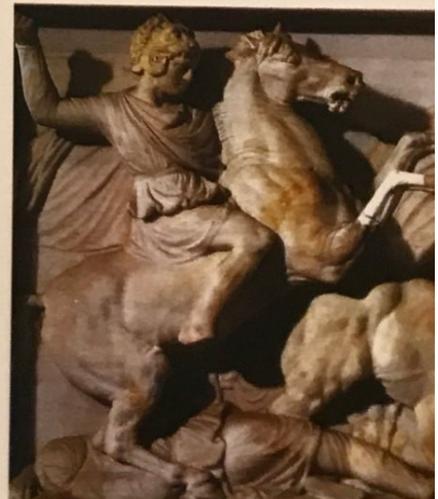
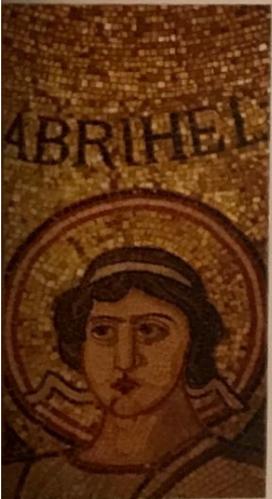
A NATION'S ART



I have already discussed certain traits which characterise works of art, and mentioned that one national art differs from another according to the ends it intends to achieve and that one therefore can never maintain the superiority of the art of one cultural group over that of another. I have attempted to show that Greek art, perfect as it is in its own way, cannot be taken as a standard by which to judge the art products of countries for whom beauty meant movement, exquisiteness or monumentality. Now, the ends that a nation strives to attain result from certain conditions under which its particular civilisation has grown. These ends are limited by geographical factors, among others. For instance, in regions where there are stone quarries, sculpture is always to be found. Form, thus, is always conceived in relation to the material at hand and with regard to the difficulty or ease in the manipulation of that material. Hence, problems of technique are ever present in an artist's mind limiting the vagaries of his phantasy. The creative artist is hemmed in and by other factors, equally important. He is a member of a society and, like other member of it, a product of its evolution. He has the same preferences and prejudices as they. Whether impelled by a pure urge for artistic creation, by vanity or by commercial interest, he has to take into account those standards of taste, which are embodied

in a society's art traditions. Even when he is an innovator, as many modernist artists in Europe are today, he cannot escape the shackles, because he either experiments in the traditions of other countries in a spirit of eclecticism, or he attempts to create newer interrelations of lines and masses, sometimes in utter disregard of natural forms. But he is always subservient to aesthetic doctrines which are authoritative in certain social milieus composed of patrons and admirers in his own cultural group or in other groups outside with which he has affinities and in the traditions of which he participates.

The most revolutionary creative painter in his most sensational phases, when he is striving to impose on us new traditions by forcing apparently incoherent elements into a pictorial whole, is as fettered by the nature of his material and by prevailing social and economic considerations as any traditional artist. He is like those bold legendary warriors in Chinese annals who cover their faces with frightening masks and paint their bodies over with dragons in order to terrorise their opponents and affect their rout; but behind all this horrible paraphernalia there beats a delicate Chinese heart. What can be claimed for the modernist artist, whether he be a cubist, a supremacist, a naivist, a dadaist that he is perhaps more sensitive than others

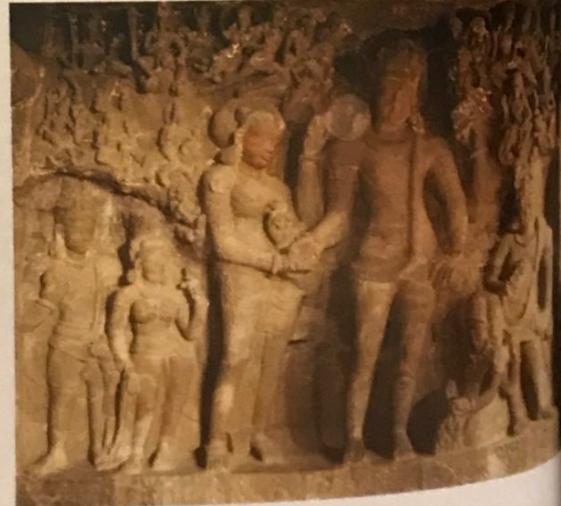
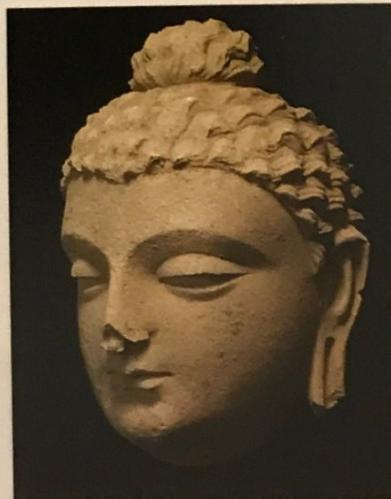
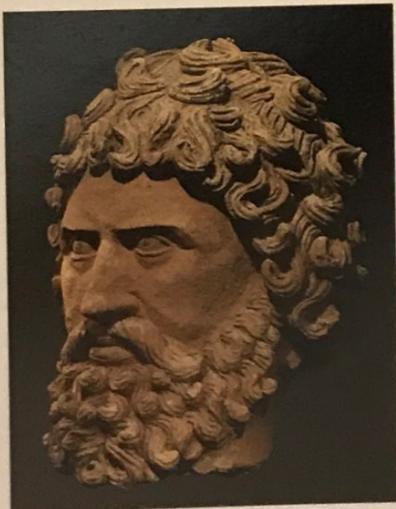


to the changes that imperceptibly are often taking place in the national taste. In this he is not so different from that much-despised philistine, the businessman, who is equally alive to the commercial advantages of newer demands. In fact, the world of art at any given period in all countries may be compared to a large furniture workshop where new shapes for chromium-plated chairs, with the seats in unexpected angles to suit the vagaries of the man or woman's figure, are being fabricated side by side with sofas in an ancient style appropriate to the period of crinolines and good manners. The contrast, thus, between the modernist and the traditionalist is not so very marked as is often made out to be. Both types have always existed at one and the same time in a nation's art history and both have produced works in order to supply aesthetic demands. Only one tendency has represented a more prevailing current of taste with a larger appeal, whilst the other, perhaps a more vigorous cross-current, accepted and sensed by a select few. The thing to notice is that both kinds of artists in their creative moments cannot but repose on the flowing stream of a nation's cultural life.

There is a common misconception, encouraged by modernist theorists of arts, that the so-called traditionalist is not free in his creation. But a nation's artistic tradition is of many kinds and variety and an artist always does exercise his freedom of choice in

taking only that which is most suited to his temperament. You will see that within the lines laid down by tradition he can fully exercise his individual creative powers producing thereby variations of current forms. It is not necessary to roam all these as to discover the marvels with which the world abounds; there is enough in a flowering lane to content the heart of man. The limits of traditional art have never stood in the way of a great creator impressing his individual genius on his works. You have only to look at Early Christian art, which flourished in the courts of Byzantium, to find how hieratic forms, sanctioned by religious usage, undergo variations in objects of silver, ivory wood and chiefly in painting and mosaic, notwithstanding the decorative rigidity of their contours. You can see in the Hindu sculptures at Ellora how the dictates of iconographical texts have been observed and at the same time violated by masters who have made of these caves one of time's most marvellous temples of human talent.

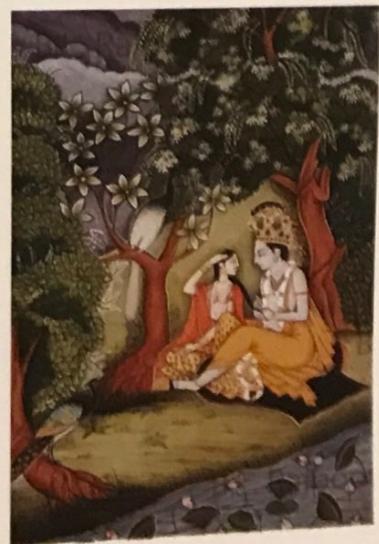
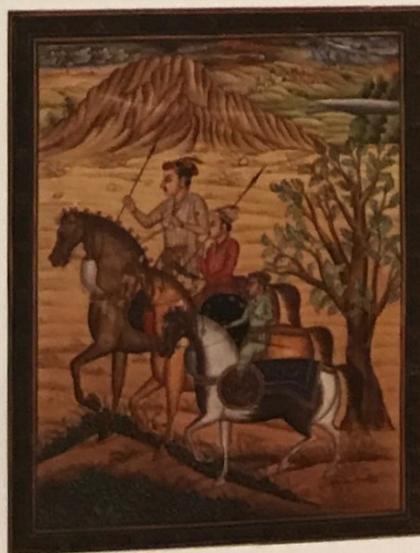
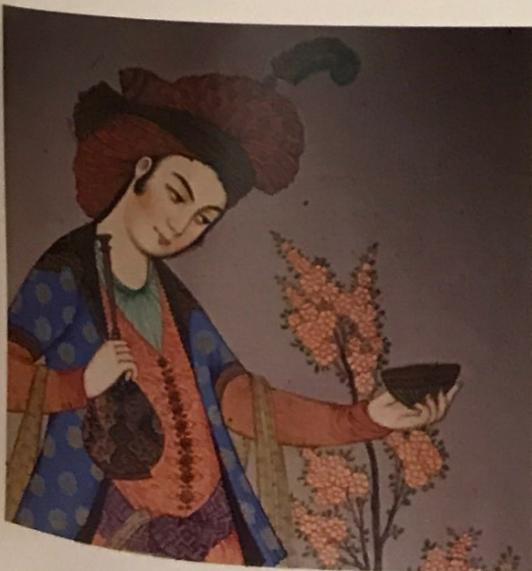
We have seen that both the innovator and the conservative artist depend on national traditions and contribute to national art. I have tried to show that traditions of art do not necessarily hamper creative freedom, nor do they interfere with individual expression when it is forceful and bears a message of its own. National taste in a vital society is never static; it is always changing and is being modified by internal and



external influences. The thing to remember is that changes in artistic tradition in a living society do not bring about fundamental modifications of those characteristic forms, which reflect the national vision of beauty. They are more in the nature of adaptations or adoptions freely made without constraint of any kind. If the adoption takes place at a time, when society is lifeless and therefore certain art forms can be forced down on it from above, because they are invested with the glory of military conquest, they never become integral parts of a national heritage, but remain foreign and irrelevant. Take the case of Hellenistic art which, after Alexander's conquests, spread over the whole of Asia. In Gandhara and north-western Punjab it was wholly unsuccessful despite the fact that it dealt with Buddhist themes, that is Indian, because these traditions never touched the Indian imagination. The technique and forms of Hellenistic art were adopted because it enjoyed a great prestige in Indo-Greek courts but the society that accepted it was uncreative. In Chinese art, on the other hand, where these very traditions were freely incorporated as a part of those influences, Iranian, Nomadic and Indian, which infiltrated from Central Asia, they gave remarkable results in the marvellous sculpture of the Tang dynasty after about four centuries of Gandhara. In India itself these very Hellenistic traditions were imported to the South from Alexandria by the sea-route and accepted by a living society. The

result was the stone-reliefs at Amaravati, vibrant with life and ingenuity, contrasting so favorably with the dull stereotyped work of Northern India.

It does not deprive an art of its virtue if modifications are brought about in it by foreign influences. In fact the greater the number of influences in an art, the larger its human appeal. There are periods when national art reaches a point of deadness and debases itself into formalism. At these moments foreign conquests, bringing in their train the possibilities of international contacts, revivify it. India has been extremely fortunate in this respect. At the beginning of the Christian era when it was degenerating into discursiveness and monotony, the Kushans, a nomadic Iranian dynasty that had ruled in Bactria, appeared on the scene with a baggage of Central Asian nomadic and Hellenistic traditions and, with the help of a new set of Buddhist symbols, helped to create a continental art of Asiatic significance, which was founded on indigenous forms that had been overlaid by Hellenism. In our middle ages, likewise, the Mughals infused the apathy and dryness into which Indian traditions of painting had fallen with a magnificent urge and contributed to the birth of Indo-Persian art, Mughal and Rajput. It is my belief that a national art can be vigorous and effective only when it has the courage to accept freely adaptable foreign influences, and is vital enough to assimilate them to its own artistic needs.' ●



● NILOFUR FARRUKH



Rana Rashid, *Dis-location 1 (Safanwala Cowk)*, C print + DIASEC, 270 X 212 cms, 2007

MAKING CONTRADICTIONS COHERENT

In the last two decades simultaneous critical acclaim and art market triumph has made Rashid Rana a new archetype of success in the region. The list of his institutional exhibitions spans much of the globe and the galleries' keenness to dedicate solo booths to him at major art fairs, attest to a growing confidence and interest in his art.

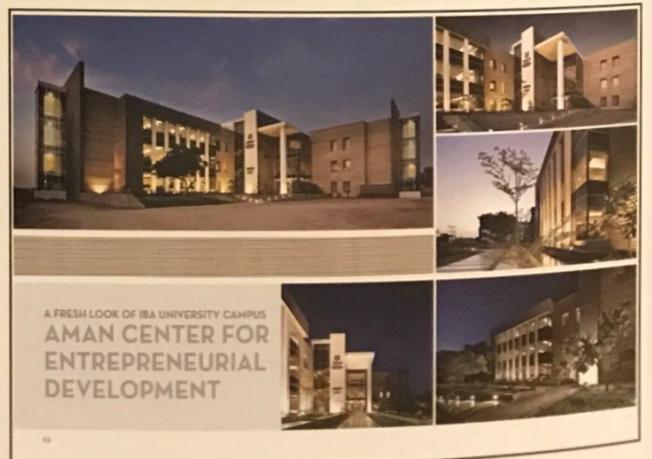
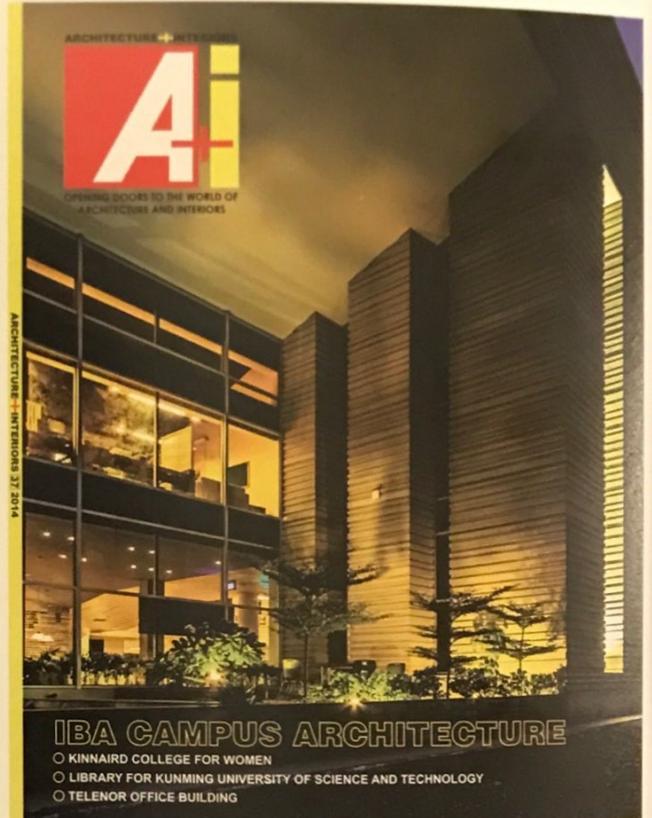
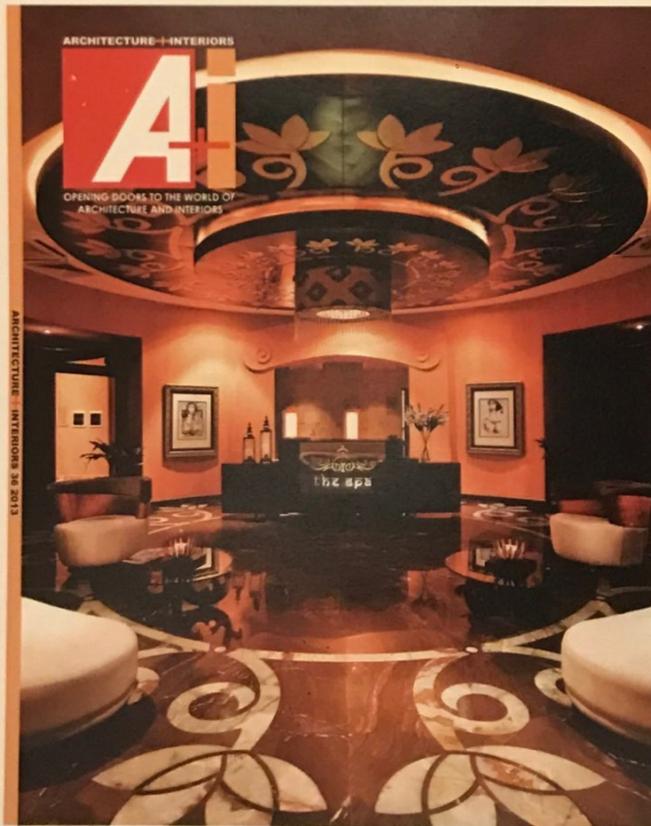
Rana is very much an artist of his time who has never seen limitations as a handicap and taken risks. In the mid 1990s by looking at popular imagery and increasing the scale of his work, an inspiration that came from Karachi Pop, rather than the overwhelmingly popular Neo Miniature around him, Rana set out to reach a greater audience. This steered his work in an independent direction better suited to conceptual exploration. While other artists were looking to galleries in the West for shows he hitched his star to the Indian



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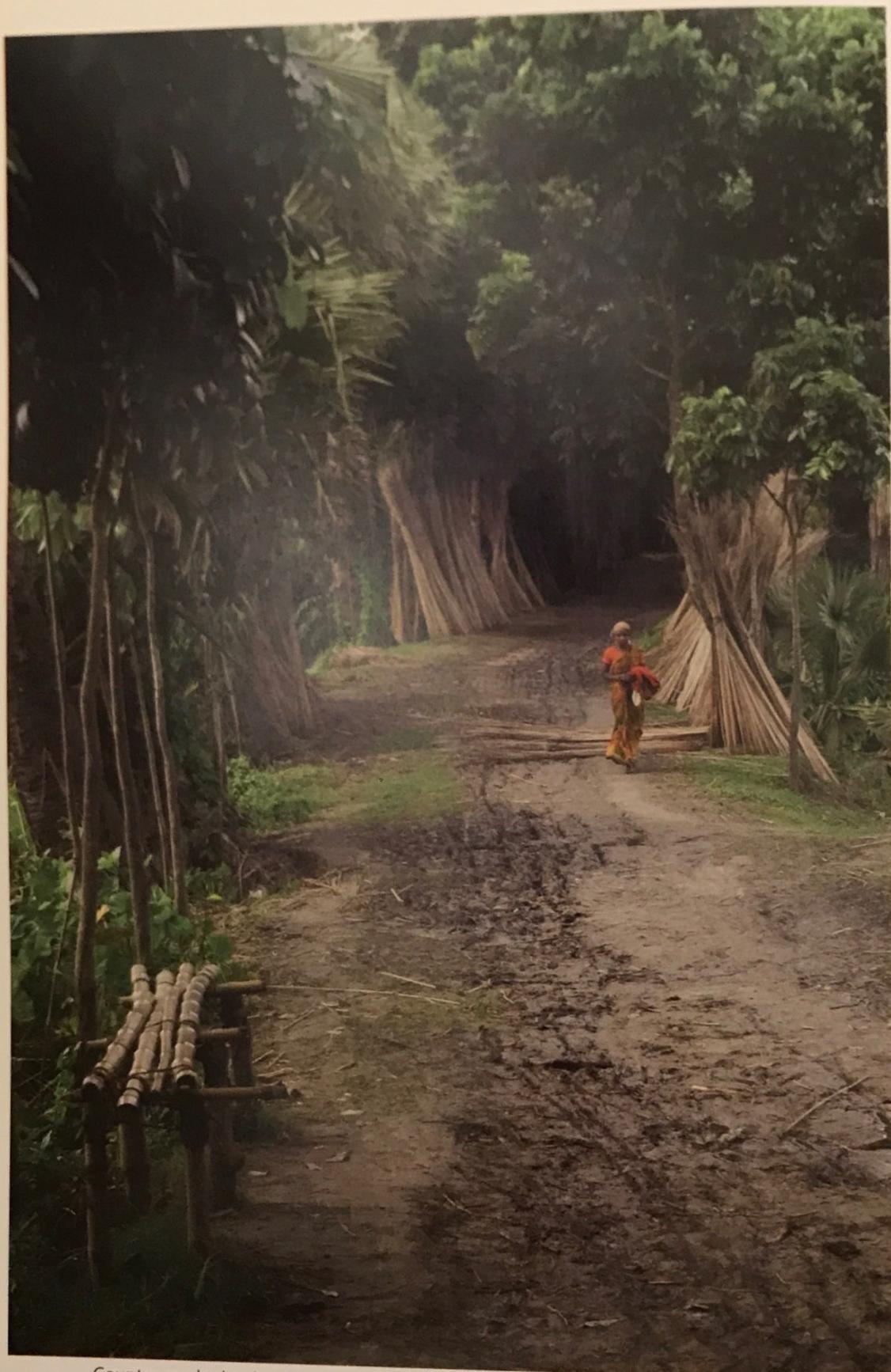
SHONAR BANGLA



Baked Earth

How did I end up behind a camera in Bangladesh? I've worn a bewildering variety of hats through this life. Studying Psychology at school, then becoming a copywriter, quitting advertising for journalism, becoming a writer, and then an editor; teaching at an art school, setting up its Liberal Arts curriculum; helping to start up and edit a magazine, taking to documentary production. Translating poetry, writing it...

Through all this, the camera was a constant, although it lurked behind the scenes for long intervals. The International Photography Club of Karachi was the place where I first found kindred souls to share this secret love, where it first came out into the open.

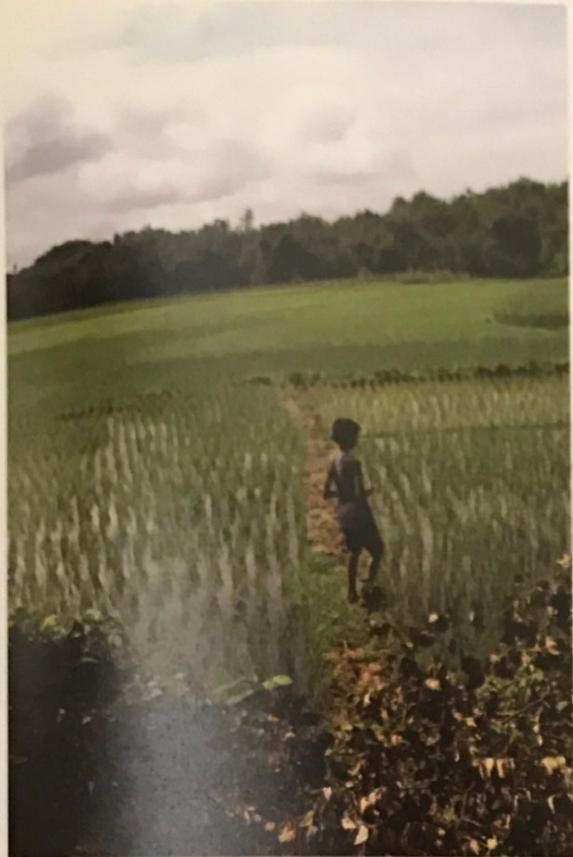


Country road takes her home

I worked for many years in Black and White, no frills; a totally manual camera to test the limits of one's judgment. With the coming of the digital age and the fading of roll film and darkrooms, color did seep into the image.

Travel has always played a part in my work, not so much the physical contours of the unfamiliar, just an eye set free from the everyday to explore what comes its way.

Shooting documentary, one moves at a bruising pace. On the road early morning to late evening, a thousand glitches along the way. But there are intervals of quiet, when one's attention is drawn to the way the light falls at a particular moment, in a particular place.



Traversing the paddy field

Driving out of Dhaka on one such trip, rural Bangladesh beckoned with its full complement of magic moments. Taking the highway out, one reaches the banks of the Padma river (the lower Ganges); the road runs out for a while and the river takes over with its ferry crossings.

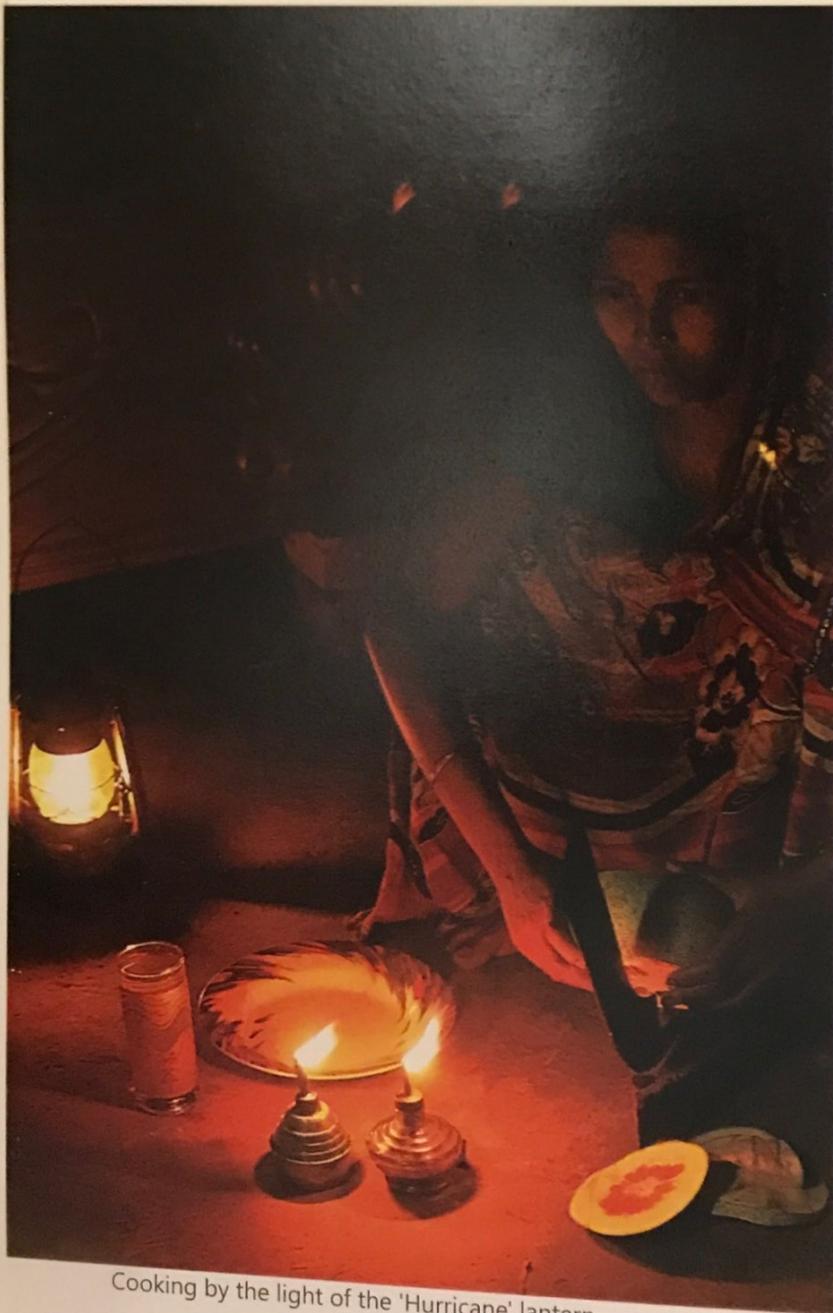
The jewel green radiance of the paddy fields comes as a revelation. We are now close to 'Tagore country.' Rabindranath Tagore's family had an estate on the banks of the Padma, where he lived and wrote for several years. It is these fields and river that inspired some of his best-loved poems and stories. Journeying through the landscape with its ancient banyan trees and dazzling harvest, one realizes that it is only fitting for Bangladesh's national anthem to be the Tagore poem, *Amar Shonar Bangla*, "My Bengal of Gold."



Waiting for the jute to dry



The Zamindar's wife

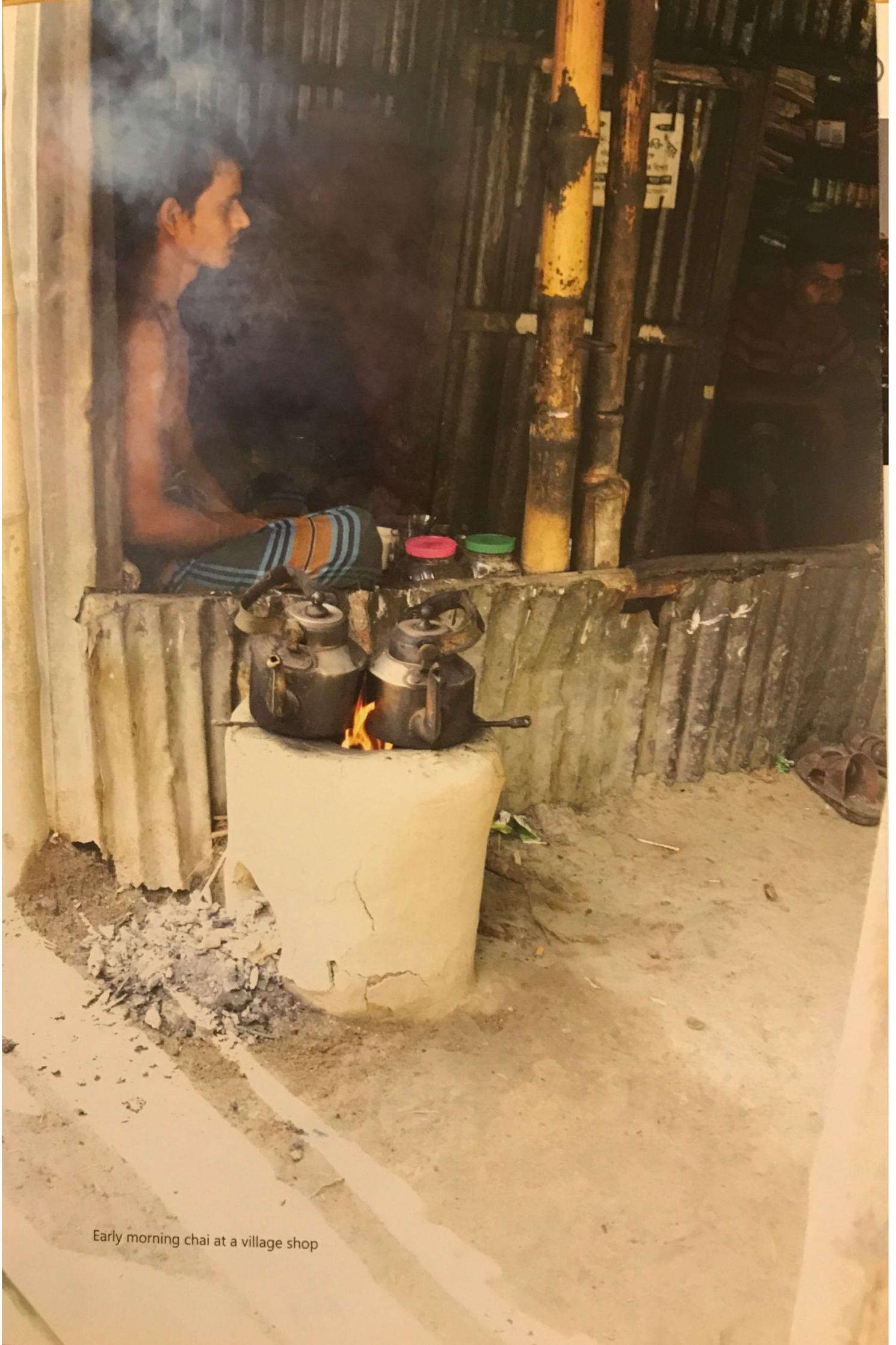


Cooking by the light of the 'Hurricane' lantern.

Tehmina Ahmed combines her practice of photography with filmmaking, writing and editing. She has had solo shows of photography at the Nomad Gallery, Islamabad, Rohtas2, Lahore, and the VM Gallery, Karachi. Her work has featured at group shows at Koel Gallery, Karachi, Chobi Mela, Dhaka and the Twelve Gates Gallery, Philadelphia.

Starting out with a Masters in Psychology, she trained in filmmaking at the New York Film Academy and in Photography at the Brooks Institute, California.

Tehmina is one of the founding editors of monthly *Newsline* magazine, published from Karachi.



Early morning chai at a village shop

Collector Shirin Niazi surrounded by traditional Burmese furniture, old Chinese scrolls and rural Burmese landscapes.
Photo credit: Rumana Husain





Untitled landscape by Burmese artist



Untitled paintings by Burmese artists

Myanmar is known to most people due to its political turmoil whereby the art and culture of that country hardly surfaces.

An exhibition titled *The Land of Golden Pagodas - Myanmar* was held at the VM Art Gallery in January this year, which showcased selected pieces from Shirin Niazi's collection. Myanmar is extremely rich in gems and jade and other mineral resources.

Understandably then, Shirin has a penchant for gems, and some of the furniture in her house, e.g. two striking chairs, which have been crafted in Pakistan, are based on old Burmese designs and are inlaid with gems, creating beautiful sceneries depicting a garden in Myanmar. A rectangular side table's top is laid out with an indomitable jade dragon and another table top is encrusted with mother of pearl, on which a large silver bowl with figurines attracts attention. On the same table stands a jewel-studded sword. When we tried to loosen the blade from the scabbard, it couldn't come off; prompting the Collector to say that this was deliberate so that her grandchildren could not fiddle with it.

In a large wall-to-wall book cabinet with glass doors, as well as on her coffee-table, one finds a number of small artifacts created entirely from mother-of-pearl. As we know, from the Indus Valley to Aztec cultures, mother-of-pearl has been among the first materials used by craftsmen from ancient times for ritual purposes as it is an easily



Photo credit: Rumana Husain

accessible resource available. In Moghul India too, following the tradition of the Ottomans, compounded with a bounteous supply of pearl oysters from the Indian Ocean, a rich tradition in the working of mother-of-pearl was developed.

An interesting collection of over a dozen antique 18th century opium smoke-pipes are kept in the same cabinet. These are fashioned in bronze, and have fascinating animal figures such as elephants and monkeys (a few are with human figures as well) at one end, which has the container for keeping the opium or the tobacco.

Two portraits occupy a wall on which two Burmese landscapes are also displayed. Shirin's mother's picture has been painted as a joyful young bride on her wedding day, and her great grandfather's portrait in all his regalia, sitting on a chair in his traditional clothes. "Artist U Soe Tint, who had studied sculpture in Dresden, Germany for 12 years and was one of the greatest artists of Burma painted these two portraits," said Shirin. According to her the artist went over from Germany to teach in the UK before returning to Burma where he headed the Fine Arts Department at Yangon University. One of the first Burmese artists to study western art was Ba Nyan.

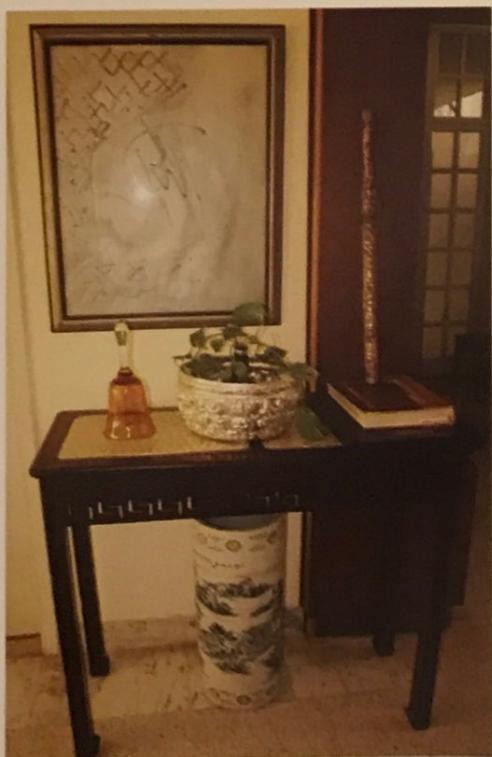


Photo credit: Rumana Husain



Photo credit: Rumana Husain



Portraits of Shirin Niazi's great grandfather (left), and her mother (right), painted by Burmese artist U Soe Tint.

Painting of a woman giving alms to Buddhist monks.



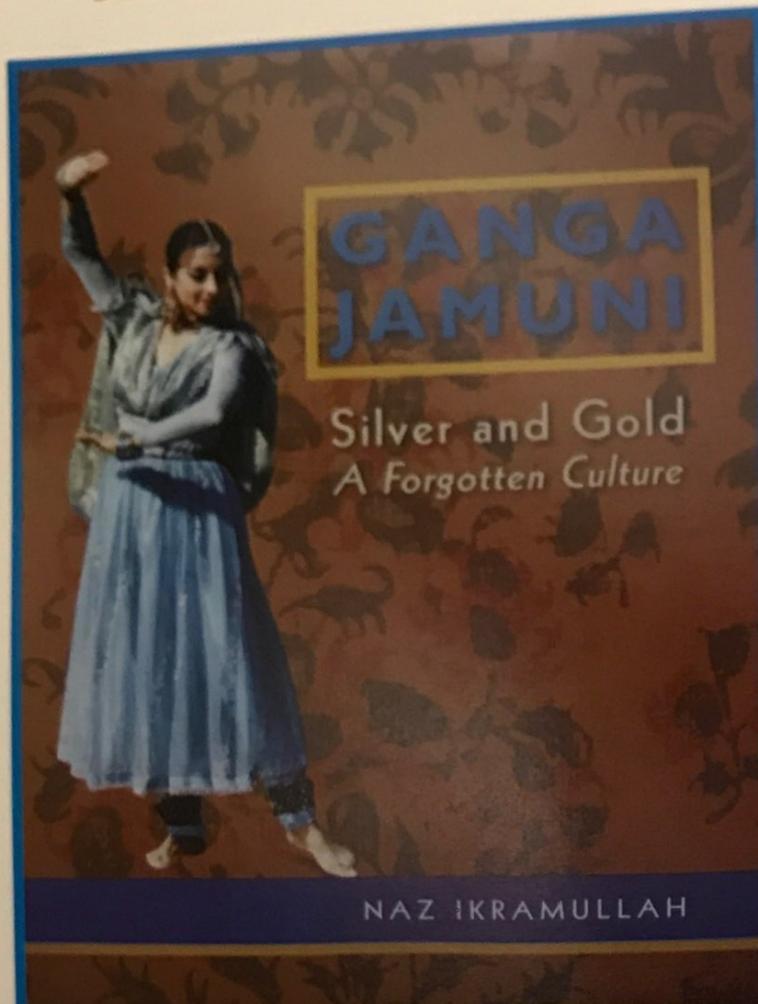
"Together with Ngwe Gaing and a handful of other artists, they were pioneers of western painting style in Burma. Later, most of the students learnt from masters through apprenticeship." (Wikipedia).

There are ancient and magnificent Buddhist temples in Myanmar, and some of the water colors collected by Shirin Niazi beautifully depict those, as well as Buddhist monks with umbrellas, food trays or bowls. The Collector also has antique lacquered wooden bowls that the monks used for begging food. The two of these displayed in her home are of completely different shapes but both have lids to keep the food warm and protected.

Large white and blue Chinese ceramic urns and large Chinese scrolls with paintings of royalty are also a party of her collection. These were bought during her visits to mainland China.

An excellent cook, Shirin prides in her expertise of cooking Burmese dishes. "On the occasion of the Burmese New Year, Thingyan water festival, which usually falls around mid April, I cook for around hundred to hundred and fifty people! All the dishes are cooked by me at home. I never order in anything," she says smugly.

● BOOK REVIEW BY MUNEEZA SHAMSIE



WHERE THE TWAIN MEET: CELEBRATING SOUTH ASIA'S SYMBIOTIC CULTURE

Title: Ganga Jamuni: Silver and Gold: A Forgotten Culture

Author: Naz Ikramullah

Published by: Bayeux Arts Calgary Canada and Bengal Publications, Dhaka

No. of Pages: 66p+CD A Celebration of South Asia's Muslim Women

ISBN 13: 978-1-897411-74-2

ISBN 10: 1-897411-74-x

Price: 17.95\$

Naz Ikramullah has been a prominent figure in Pakistan's art circles for many decades and her work is now in the permanent collection of art galleries in India, Pakistan, Britain, Canada, the United States and Jordan. She grew up, as a diplomat's daughter in different lands and graduated from the Byam Shaw School of Art. In Karachi during the 1960's, she created collages and worked as printmaker: both mediums were rare and unusual for Pakistani artists at the time. She moved to Ottawa, after her marriage but has continued to exhibit in Pakistan and keep in close touch.

A distinctive aspect of her work is her skilled welding of past and present together with a suggestion of the many cultures she has inhabited. Often she achieves this in a single work, by creating a series of images which are almost like windows, each opening out into different worlds. Sometimes these frame a woman's face, or a bird, or tree that resonate with elements of miniature painting, an art form integral to a culture known as *ganga jamuni* which flourished prior to Partition and was forged across the centuries by the intertwining of Hindu and Muslim influences.

The fusion of cultures reflected in Ikramullah's oeuvre can be simplistically defined as 'a blending of the East and West'. But the very concept of 'East' and 'West' as polarities is but an artificial idea, created by a political, imperial enterprise, predating the British Raj and traceable to ancient Greece. In Europe, the advent of modernity was heralded by the Renaissance and the Reformation during which religion - Catholic vs Protestant - became a central issue in the quest for nationhood and statehood which led to Europe being divided along sectarian lines. This narrative ignores the symbiotic Euro-Arab culture which flourished in Muslim Spain for 800 years and was crushed, marginalized and denied after expulsion of the Moors from Spain in 1492 although it had a profound influence on the Renaissance and modern Europe.

Ikramullah's uncle, Shahid Suharwardy traced the enduring legacy in Europe of that repudiated Euro-Arab in his posthumously published book *The Art of the Mussulmans in Spain*. His wonderfully erudite