

# NUKTA ART

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مسیحی

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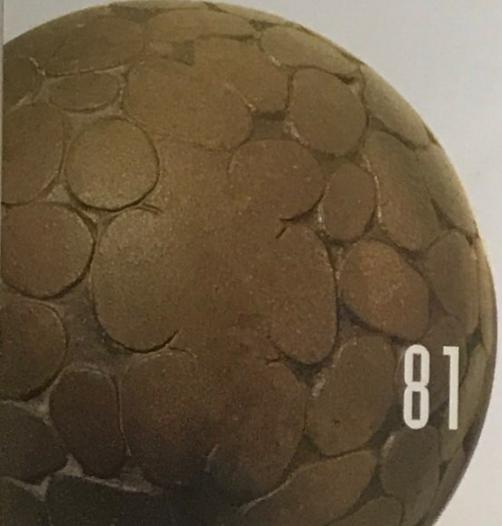
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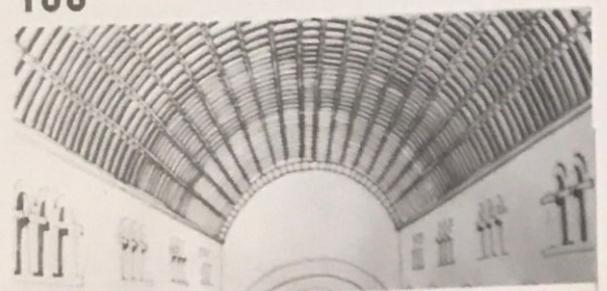
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**NUKTA -E- NAZAR**

Arūnas Gelūnas in conversation with Rein Raud



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**Catherine Kajander**, ceramic artist from Helsinki, Finland, studied at the Industrial Art Institute and then taught there until 1968 as Assistant to Prof. Kyllikki Salmerhaara. She worked at a drainpipe factory in Finland from 1966-71, and during the same time she held her first individual exhibition in Helsinki, receiving the State Art and Design prize for a large terracotta sculpture. She has worked in Tanzania and the Republic of Guinea in Africa, as a ceramic expert. In 2005, Kajander taught at the St. Petersburg University. She has held 28 individual exhibitions in Finland and has participated in several group exhibitions and ceramic symposiums in Finland and other countries.

**Dr Deepali Dewan-Cobb** is the Curator of South Asian Art at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Toronto. An Art Historian of South Asian visual culture, she received her PhD from the University of Minnesota, where her dissertation explored early art education and visual culture in 19th-century South Asia. Her current research project is on the history of 19th-century photography in India. She is co-authoring a book on photographer Raja Deen Dayal.

**Dr Diane Buck** currently teaches Expressive Arts at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji Islands. Over thirty years ago, an opportunity to teach art in Nigeria evolved into a lengthy connection with the interface between traditional and contemporary art that included work and travel not only in several African countries, but also in Papua New Guinea.

**Ian Mc Lean** is a leading art critic who has written extensively on Aboriginal Art. He is an Associate Professor at the University of Western Australia.

**Ilona Selma Yusuf** is an art, music, modern literature and photography enthusiast. In 2004, she became the Editor of *Alhambra Literary Review*, which publishes writings by Pakistani writers, both local and from the Diaspora.

**Kohi Marri** is a Pakistani architect and photographer who graduated from the Oxford School of Architecture (Brookes University), UK. He later took courses in film-making and animation to develop skills and expand the scope of his work. Starting a freelance design company while studying, he collaborated with musicians, dancers and painters on various projects, gaining insight, and developing different skills. This has given him a unique perspective which permeates through his projects.

**Kym Pruesse** is a writer, artist, curator, and teacher. She is an Associate Professor at the Ontario College of Art and Design in Canada and has been active in the area of art and activism for many years.

**Maria. A** is a practicing architect who stumbled into architectural journalism by chance. She is a regular critic of architecture and an editor with *A+I* and *Canadian Architect*. She is a visiting faculty at architecture departments of the Art Institute of Toronto, The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture and the NED University, Karachi. A travel enthusiast, she has gone around the world and is documenting her experiences in a travelogue.

**Mukhtar Husain** earned his B Arch. and M Arch. degrees from the Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. He is a practicing architect and critic based in Karachi. He is author of the book *100+1 Pakistani Architects and their own Houses*, launched in December 2006.

**Mustafa Zaman** is a Dhaka based art critic from Bangladesh.

**Rifky Effendy** was born in Jakarta, and trained as a ceramic artist at the Fine Art and Design Department of the Technology Institute of Bandung. Based in Jakarta since 1997, he has curated and co-curated several exhibitions and has been a freelance contributor for national newspapers and magazines. Since 2001 he has contributed to *Art Asia Pacific*. He established and directed the first Bandung Biennale in 2001. In 2004 he collaborated with Indonesian architects and artists for the project *Imagining Jakarta* sponsored by Goethe-Institut, Jakarta. Effendy worked with Greg Burke on the exhibition *Trans Indonesia: Scoping Culture in Contemporary Indonesian Art* at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth, New Zealand. He is a fellow of the Asia Cultural Council (ACC).

**Saira Dar** has been working as an artist since 1993 and has explored a wide variety of mediums. She has exhibited her work in numerous solo and group shows and has expressed herself on a diverse range of themes. She has also been writing art reviews for the daily *Dawn* on a regular basis since 1999. She is currently Head of the Art Department at Aitchison College, Lahore.

**Samina Shah** is an art critic based in Lahore, Pakistan. Freelancing as 'Bibigul', she also writes on social and women's issues and has more than sixteen years of teaching experience. She has worked with an NGO on a project called Portrayal of Women in the Media and is also pursuing a doctorate in History of Art.

**Sara Mahmood** grew up in Wales and has lived in Pakistan since 1986. She works in Islamabad as a trainer/examiner for the British Council. Her main interests are art and literature. Her book reviews and other articles have appeared in daily *Dawn* and *Libas* magazine.

**Prof. Sevim Çizer** is a practicing ceramist who heads the Ceramic Department that she founded some years ago at Dokuz Eylül University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Izmir, Turkey. She has held five solo exhibitions and has participated in several national and international exhibitions, biennials, workshops and conferences, including shows in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Greece, Albania, USA, Hungary, Egypt, Macedonia, Japan, Argentina, Latvia, Uzbekistan and China. Her research papers on special historical techniques like 'Luster's Techniques' and 'Terra Sigillata' have been published. She has also been a jury member in several national and international organizations.

**Sohail Amir Ali Bawani** has a Post Graduate Diploma in Islamic Studies and Humanities from the Shia Imami Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan (ITREB). He has a Bachelor's degree in Commerce from the University of Karachi and a Bachelor's in Computer Science from Al-Khair University. His major interest and objective is to explore communities and the role of sacred spaces in the devotional life of the Sindhi people.

In the previous issue, Ateeqa Ali's name was missing from her article *13 Satellites, Public Art in Lahore*. **NUKTAART** regrets this omission.



Nilofur Farrukh



Rumana Husain



Amra Ali



Sabiha Mohammed

Pakistan will complete its 60 years of Independence in 2007. With the objective to both celebrate and reflect on the nation's journey, **NUKTAART** has initiated two essay series with this issue. The first is based on the retrospective of art writings in which **NUKTAART** will help its readers to rediscover and explore the critical ideas of eminent art critics. We are reproducing the writings of thinker, writer and activist, Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) and art critic Miriam Habib (1927-2007).

The essays on the art research of leading scholars from countries close to Pakistan in age will help to understand the dynamics of art evolution in similar communities. Indonesian curator and critic Rifky Effendy will be the first to share his documentation.

Taking the theme of art history further, Ian Maclean from Australia looks at UK- based Rasheed Araeen's influential work as the Founding Editor of the *Third Text* and his pivotal role in initiating the compilation of an inclusive *20th Century Art History of Britain* with the voice of non-Western British artists.

We bring an informative article for our readers from the remote islands of Papua New Guinea in which Diane Buck from the University of South Pacific discusses the country's emerging art scene.

Another artist of the Pakistani Diaspora to gain international recognition is the Venice Biennale veteran, Sylvat Aziz, whose works *The Mother of All Postcards* was recently acquired by the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada (ROM). Dr Deepali Dewan-Cobb, the curator of the South Asian Gallery at the ROM, discusses Aziz's multi-layered work in considerable detail. –

*The Temple of Ramapir* in Sindh, where cultural and religious symbols and rituals crossover and are invested with new meaning, is the subject of Sohail Bawani's informative paper included here.

We have devoted a sumptuous spread of photographs by Kohi Marri and multifaceted impressions of two renowned ceramists, Catharina Kajander (Finland) and Sevim Çizer (Turkey) to the Third ASNA Clay Triennial held in Karachi. The coverage acknowledges Pakistan's largest art event in recent times, with its international exhibition, seminar and workshops for ceramists that brought together the art of 50 artists from 12 countries.

This issue's Conservation article, by well-known architect Mukhtar Husain, takes up Pakistan's important architectural conservation initiatives in a comprehensive way.

From Islamabad the writer and photographer team of Sara Mehmood and Ilona Yusuf have covered the collection of John Wall, a friend of the artist Iqbal Hussain and a passionate collector of his art.

With the expert input of Lutfullah Khan, Rumana Husain traces Pakistan's turbulent history of classical music in the last six decades and sees the revival of the glorious days of this genre of music not without pessimism.

**NUKTAART** has started an exchange of articles between *Daile*, a bilingual, Lithuanian art journal, with a wide European circulation. This collaboration aims to promote an art dialogue between two cultures that know very little about each other. *Nukta-e-Nazar* carries an important must-read with a conversation from *Daile*, between a Lithuanian and an Estonian art scholar on issues faced in art institutions and art practice of the post-Soviet Era. Interestingly, it resonates with familiar concerns like over-commercialization and loss of identity in the face of globalization. It also reinforces how the dominant Western influences are implanted like stem cells to radically transform the local host body of art. How international digital dialogue and technology as a medium is responsible for new values that challenge established canons of the way art has been created, perceived and disseminated.

**NUKTAART**'s interface with artistic developments from various locations invites its readership to participate in this global debate of transformation.

Nilofur Farrukh

Editor

April, 2007



## New Silk Route for

The British Council, inspired by the ancient Silk Route that was instrumental in making the East accessible to the West via land, collaborated with local partners to initiate a Central and South Asian project for the promotion of Design. As a part of this project, an Education and Research Conference was hosted in Karachi by British Council Pakistan in February 2007. The seminar brought together design educators, students and researchers, government officials, institutions and industrialists and individuals engaged in the management of design.

After day-long deliberations, the participants agreed that social responsibility and consumer input were imperative for making a design successful and beneficial for the community. An important debate was also initiated on integration of craft in the urban product design, in order to retain design identity and to preserve traditional practices that could benefit the artisans.

Of special interest to the audience were presentations on architectural designs for seismically active regions and their application in the earthquake effected areas of the North and in places along the fault lines in Pakistan.



Silk Route Education and Research Conference, 2007

## Art Conservation **Atelier** in Karachi

Artist Mansoor Saleem, armed with a Master's degree in Archaeology from Karachi University, together with his talent for painting, and his training in the restoration of paintings, has been painting and exhibiting in the city for several decades.

Unfortunately he is now suffering from Parkinson's Disease, which limits his movement. To cope with the changes brought about by bad health, in early 2007, he opened *Atelier MS* - in his house, located in the PECHS area (phone: 92-21- 438 3839), where he displays his paintings, teaches art and carries out art restoration. So far, he has restored several works of old masters of Pakistan, including Chughtai, Allah Bux, Sadequain, Shakir Ali, and Ahmad Pervaiz.

Contemporary Design

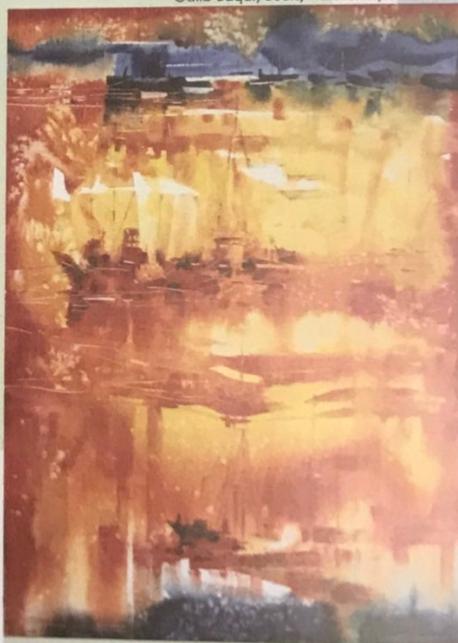
Ghalib Baqar, City, watercolor, 11"x9"



Ghalib Baqar's recent art shown at Zenaini Gallery once again revealed the artist's mastery over his medium. A prominent artist of the Watercolour Movement of Pakistan of the 1980s, Ghalib is known for his experimental handling of material and textural interventions that compels the medium to behave in a new way.

A long time citizen of Karachi - the coastal metropolis on the edge of a desert - his work derives its inspiration from its environs. In his current work, fluid seascapes are seen swelling into amorphous abstractions that suggest tangible forms but holds back from giving it a recognizable image. Light and tone march to a new tune as his brush weaves new colors from layered strokes of the translucent pigment. Working from a small to large scale, his painterly surface remains vibrant and confident.

Ghalib Baqar, Boats, watercolor, 30"x22"



## Desert **Louvre**

On Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Island the Desert Louvre hopes to open its doors in 2012 with four other international museums. However, this import of culture did not come cheap for the Emirates as a hefty sum - anywhere between US\$ 800 million to US \$ 1 billion is being paid to the Louvre to rent its name and art works. The venture is more about economics than

culture, as the museums planned for Saadiyat Island are expected to bring large revenues in Asian tourism. Despite protests by French scholars and artists, the French Government has decided to franchise its hottest cultural property a la Guggenheim. The Guggenheim which already has a string of satellite museums in Europe, hopes to build its first in Asia on the Saadiyat Island which might soon be dubbed as the Museum Island in the Desert. Four renowned architects have been commissioned for the museums and the performing arts centre: Tadao Ando is designing the Maritime Museum, Frank Gehry the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Zaha Hadid the Saadiyat's Performing Arts Centre, and Jean Nouvel is designing the Classical Museum.

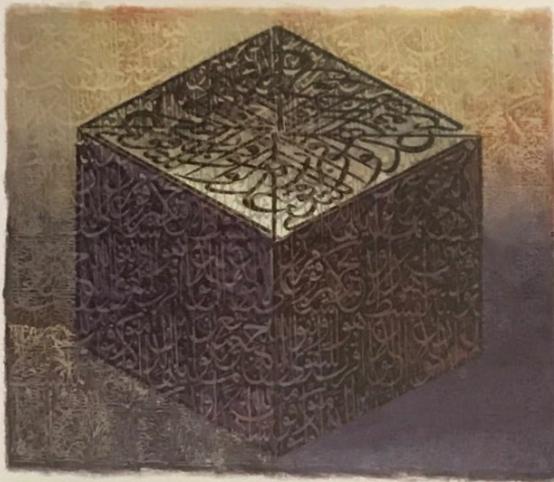
Classical Museum by Jean Nouvel of France



## Interpreting Sindh

Bringing together the fields of archaeology, anthropology, history, Sufism and contemporary urban planning, scholars from Pakistan, France and Germany looked at the many dimensions of the cultural milieu of Sindh. At a seminar hosted by Alliance Francaise and organized by Dr Michel Boivin in Karachi in December 2006, important seminal research was shared on the cultural ethos created by the mingling of religious symbols and rituals at devotional sites in Sindh.

The archaeological evidence presented by Dr Kaleem Lashari dated the environs of Karachi to pre-historic times. This was based on the findings at sites on the periphery of the city, which are fast disappearing under rapid urbanization. Arif Hasan, while presenting the colonial and post partition consolidation of Karachi, stressed on the importance of the relationship between development and demographic reality. Among other significant presentations, a rare study of the four shrines of the Maheshwari Meghwar saints, by Mohan D Thontya, highlighted its complex methodology and symbolism of the Panth that continues to preserve the original identity of the shrines in Southern Sindh.



Dr Ahmed Moustafa

## Art for Healing Auction Held in Pakistan

In December 2006, a well attended and successful auction of Dr Ahmed Moustafa's acclaimed works took place in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. It was conducted by the world renowned auction house, Christie's, to raise funds for Pakistan's earthquake relief.

Dr Moustafa was invited to Pakistan by a Bristol-based Earthquake Appeal Team spearheaded by Adeela and Ijaz Shafi in the UK. The celebrated Egypt-born calligraphist, scholar and leading authority on Arabic/Islamic art and design, responded with great generosity.

At a Gala Fundraising Dinner & Auction in Bristol, his artwork was sold for 4,000 pounds for the cause, and later, inspired by the dedication of the Shafis, he decided to donate 45 of his pieces to help raise further funds for the much-needed housing, healthcare and education units in the earthquake affected areas of Pakistan.



Dr Ahmed Moustafa

## Saudi woman without veil makes Women without Shadows

Haifa Mansour, Saudi filmmaker



Haifa Al-Mansour is the only female movie director in Saudi Arabia - a country without cinemas. Her documentary, *Women without Shadows* or *Nissa Bila Thil*, about the hidden lives of women in the Gulf has begun to create quite a

global stir. Mansour studied at American University in Cairo. She also holds a certificate in management from a British university. Earlier, she made three short films with the support of her family called "Who?", *The bitter journey* and *The only way out*. The films had a big impact in the Saudi cultural scene. She won awards in international festivals such as the Golden

Dagger for Best Documentary in the Muscat Film Festival and Special Jury Mention in the fourth edition of the Arab Film Festival in Rotterdam.

Mansour was a guest at the 28th Festival des Trois Continents of Nantes. Her film, *Women without Shadows* discusses some basic issues about Saudi women, focusing on the impact of traditions and religious thoughts on their development over time. This documentary was widely discussed in the country. She received a mixed response from the Saudis. Mansour opposes using religion to subjugate women. She questions whether women must cover their faces in public or not. "Many don't even realize they are unhappy. They are afraid of showing their feelings, of showing anything. With this movie, we wanted to change the reality for Saudi women because this is a critical and important moment. The times are changing and now there is an opportunity for all women to be more active. If they lose this chance, it would be sad."

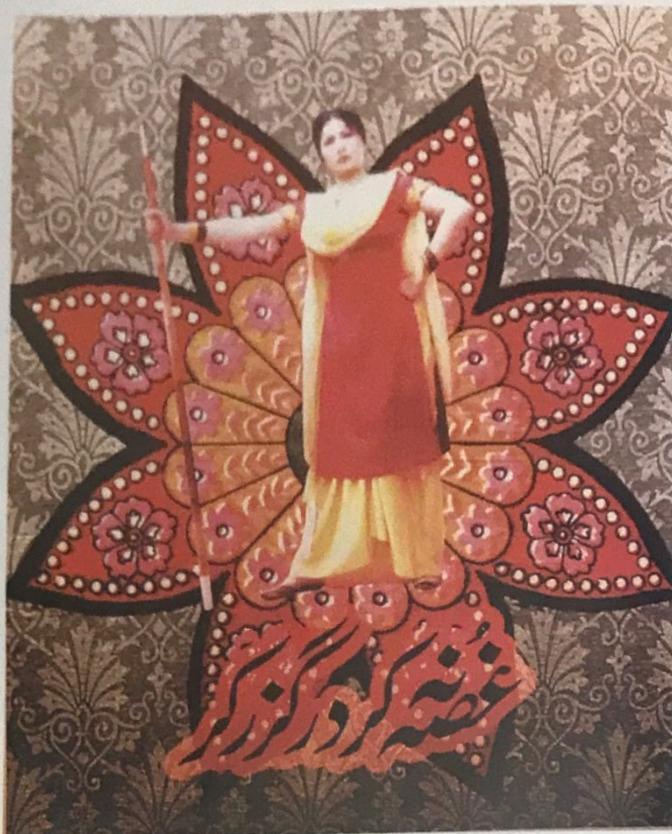
"These days documentaries have become big," she says of her 45-minute long digital beta cam. film. She started out interviewing women street vendors. "They are free and aggressive because they have some economic independence, so they can express more. So many women are afraid to express anything. It is not just a question of religion, but of men taking advantage of the system: within the old tribal system, women did not have a chance, but today, things are opening up. I'm lucky, I got help from his Royal Highness, who is supportive of women," she says, referring to Prince Talal. Mansour is planning her next film, a feature, to be produced by Prince Talal and Rotana International.

*Nae Azadi* (New Freedom) - is a show inspired by Pakistani cinema hoardings - in which some contemporary artists teamed up with billboard painters to create a body of work, which was shown at the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs (PIIA) in Karachi, in December 2006. The lobby of PIIA, where these works were exhibited allowed access to a wider audience, particularly to the cine-goers who attended the Sixth Kara Film Festival at the same venue. The exhibition, specially curated for the event by Green Cardamom, a curatorial and publishing collective based in the UK, was held in collaboration with Kara Film Society, thus the appropriateness and significance of the partnership. The ten day festival showcased over 170 films from 37 countries.

The five participating artists, Naeem Rana, Rashid Rana, Saira Wasim and Mohammed Zeeshan, except Shezad Dawood, who was born in London, have either studied or lived in Lahore at some point in their lives...or are living there now. Therefore the influence of Lahore on their psyche, which is Pakistan's film-city, and the straightforwardness with which they appropriate Lollywood's visual as well as its rhetoric and vocabulary, is quite obvious. Also, by not choosing to display in the ritualized environs of a gallery, the *Nae Azadi* show was successful in evoking certain reactions from more diverse sections of society.

According to a second century sub-continental theory of aesthetics, a superior work of art should stir up and represent nine human emotions namely *the valiant, the furious, the pitiable, the terror-stricken, the disgusting, the comic, the marvelous, the erotic and the peaceful*. This is seen in its exaggerated form in the tradition of dance, drama, sculpture and painting.

This show, with its usage of theatrical images, thrives on the accessible language of less subtle emotions bordering on the



Naeem Rana

## Old Clothes in New Trapping: **Nae Azadi** [New Freedom]

burlesque. However, whether or not the show successfully and suitably evokes the nine emotions, it does represent a juncture of culture, commerce and policy, particularly in the wake of the dying art of cinema hoarding painters of Pakistan. This thought must have loomed over many a viewers' minds while viewing the poster-painting in the hallway on the ground-floor, or while viewing the art-works on the walls of the mezzanine-floor, then finally climbing up into the area just outside the auditorium on the first floor where the films were being shown from morning to dusk. The interaction of the viewer with these paintings was perhaps similar to the experience of going to any regular (run-down) local cinema-house and viewing the stills and posters of either the particular film playing there or of a 'coming attraction.'

*Mark Making* (2006) by Mohammad Zeeshan is a painting of the 'valiant' and 'furious' (late) Sultan Rahi - hero of hundreds of popular Punjabi films (though not posing with his usual



# 'Lahore—

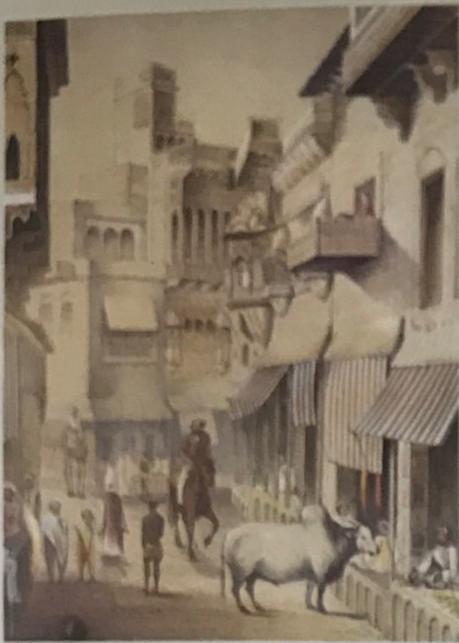
The Fine Arts Research Center, Lahore College for Women University, Pakistan, hosted an international seminar, *Lahore - A Crucible of Influences* which brought together researchers and scholars from Pakistan and abroad to present their papers on the rich art legacy of the city.

Dr Barbara Schmidt spoke on paintings produced at Akbar's court from 1556-1598, while the great Mughal was in residence in Lahore. It was intriguing to see how the artists of his atelier perceived the topography in a way not seen before, though not claiming realism, the pictures showed an insight not seen earlier.

With researchers focusing more on the Sikh period, Jean Marie Lafont, during his postings at Lahore, Lyons and Delhi, spelt out his passion for delving into the activities of the French officers and the 'fauj-e-khas' of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. His paper, *Lahore During the Sikh Period* had a special reference to Imam Baksh Lahori and illuminations of the fables of La Fontaine [1837-1839] and the miniature paintings regarding Punjab commissioned by General Court to illustrate his unpublished 'Memoires'. He went on to claim that 90 illustrations could easily be attributed to Imam Baksh Lahori, in the Punjabi section of volumes 4 and 5. He lamented that any further foray could not be made till the main characteristics of the Lahore school are clearly established. Schmidt agreed with him to acknowledge the works of the atelier of Imam Baksh Lahori and single him out as the artist who illustrated Honigberger's *Thirty Five Years in the East*. Lahori's work emerges as an authentic documentation of the lives of the French army officers at the time, as well as of the mountainous terrain of the north.

From the Center for History of Religions, University of Bucharest, was a young speaker, Dr Eugen Ciurtin, who

# A Crucible of Influences'



has researched into aspects of the Lahore Sikh period, as was done by his countryman, Johann Martin Honigberger, in 1829. According to the speaker, he, 'after 15 years and four months of travels on horseback, entered the fort of Lahore, looking for Maharaja Ranjeet Singh.' Accepted as the best known foreigner, Honigberger wrote and published consistently from 1840 to 1850. Compiled as, *Adventures, Discoveries, Experiments and Historical Sketches relating to the Punjab and Cashmer*, a fervent researcher, Ciurtin became a part of the investigation and corroborated the writings of Faqir Syed Aijazuddin and Lafont. He narrated Honigberger's recording of the episode of the *faqeer*, who kept himself alive while he was buried for a specific time, and was able to resuscitate himself and breathe again. Aijazuddin's paper traced the built-up structures of Lahore and discussed the periods in which these edifices were added to the city, as and when the need of the citizens and administrators arose; he shared his research on the Sikh and post Mughal periods, while Dr Marcella came closer to the present, with her appraisal of the master - A R Chughtai. The members of the faculty of the Lahore College for Women, Dr Khalid Mahmud and Dr Shaukat Mahmud spoke on the paintings of the Sikh period and the art of chronograms under the Mughals. Dr Mussarrat Hasan, the coordinator of the seminar, also contributed a paper.

A question and answer session titled, *Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges*, invited participation from the floor. This session revealed the distance still to be covered in the field of Art History as the audience was seen to struggle with issues

of another dimension. It expressed its concern of whether Urdu should be accepted as the language for doctoral studies and research and the lack of library facilities that stood in the way of scholarly inquiry.

The international speakers confronted the audience to face up to comparisons of the courts of Ranjeet Singh and Akbar, to own up to cross-cultural influences in Indo-Pak history and were

optimistic that these ideas would spark further inquiries. It would be too much to expect just one colloquium to complete a debate, but it would have achieved its objective if it starts one.

By Samina Shah



by Samina Shah  
and Amra Ali

Miriam Habib, Oil on canvas, 2' X3', c.1967-68



# MIRIAM HABIB:

## THE LOSS OF A PIONEER (1927-2007)

Early in the year we lost the last of the pioneers, whose oeuvre defined the earliest phase of transition of Pakistani art to Modernism. Miriam Habib was an integral part of Lahore's artistic and cultural fabric where, in the 50s and 60s, artists like Shakir Ali and others converged to address the challenges that faced the young nation in search for a new vocabulary of art. A student of Anna Molka Ahmed, Miriam Habib was one of the two women painters in the Lahore Artists' Group, in the mid 50s, along with Razia Feroze, Ahmad Pervaiz, Shemza, Ali Imam, Moyene Najmi, and Safdar whose inspiration stemmed from Shakir Ali's exploration of Modernism.

Her close proximity to the early developments both as a participant and observer are documented in her writings, providing an invaluable resource that traces the nuances and turning points of the early years of art-making in Pakistan. She wrote extensively, especially on the work of Shemza. An incomplete project that remained her last: a book on the life and work of Shemza, which she was unable to complete due to a sudden illness that was to eventually take her life. She wrote in depth, also on Anna Molka's life, providing an insight on Molka's personal struggle while battling with the administration of the Punjab University and her tireless effort in trying to break gender-related barriers.

Miriam Habib was an advocate for the propagation of grassroots art and for the integration of art to education. Especially devoted on developing art education for children, she convened the Art Teachers' Forum at the Mayo School (now the NCA), the basis of which was to inject progressive ideas into art education. In 1962, she submitted her dissertation for the Master of Science Degree, State University College at New Paltz, and New York as a Fulbright Scholar. The title of her research was 'Ceramics in Islam' and 'A Plan for a School Program in Pakistan'.

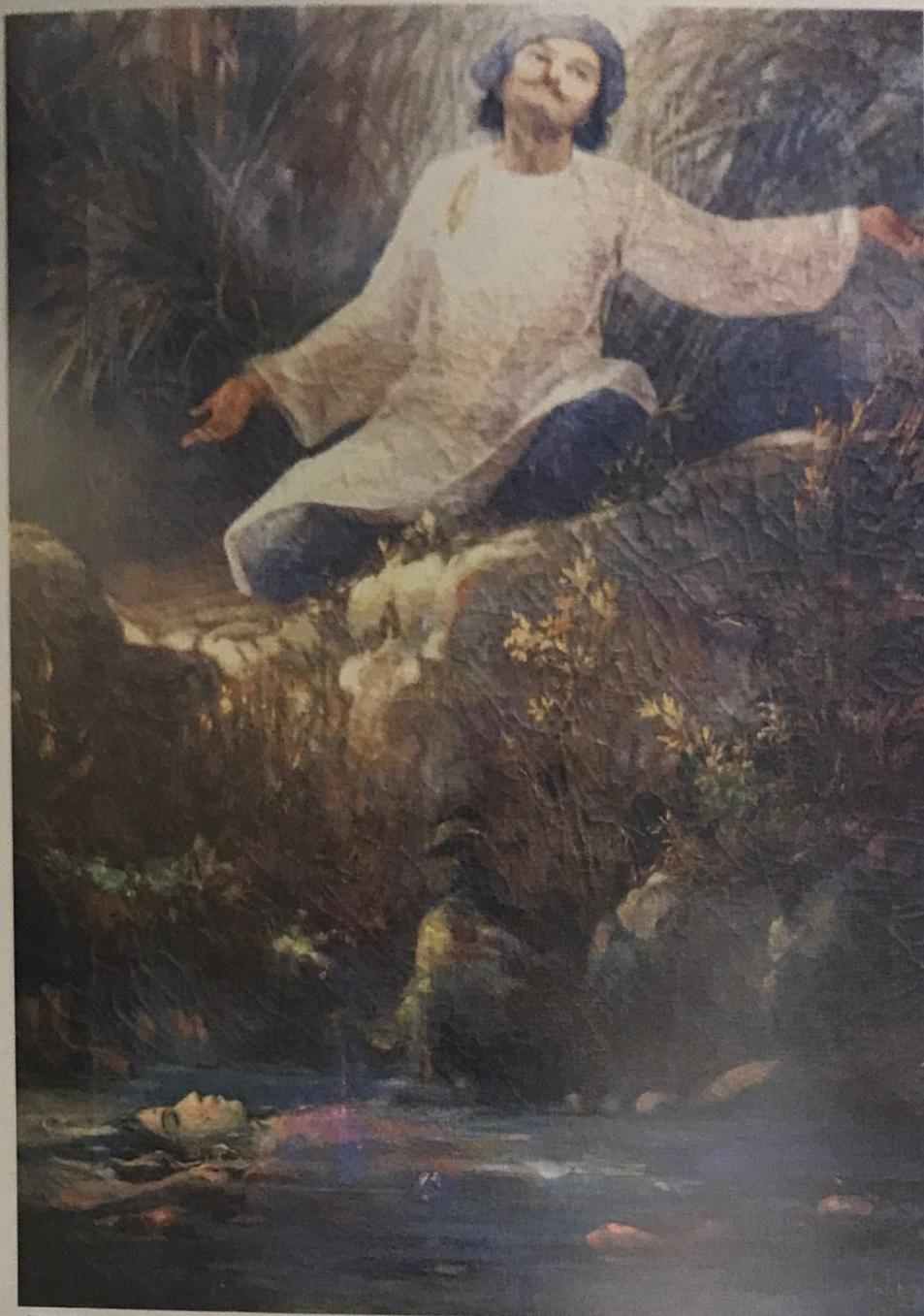
As a founding member of WAF, HRCP and APWA, her passion for human rights was reflected in her deep and continued commitment to human rights, and to social work. The different facets of Miriam Habib's life, her art, art criticism and social activism were interlinked, reflecting the values of her generation who took the responsibility of defining new structures that would reflect the aspirations of generations to follow.

'It seems like an attempt to capture the transitory to manifest it as a theme for higher contemplation,' She wrote for Mary Shemza, before she passed away on January 5, 2007.



Miriam Habib, 1955

by Miriam Habib



Allah Bux, Sohni

# PUNJAB PANAROMA :

A  
STYLISTIC  
DIVERSITY  
IN  
PAINTING  
AND  
GRAPHICS

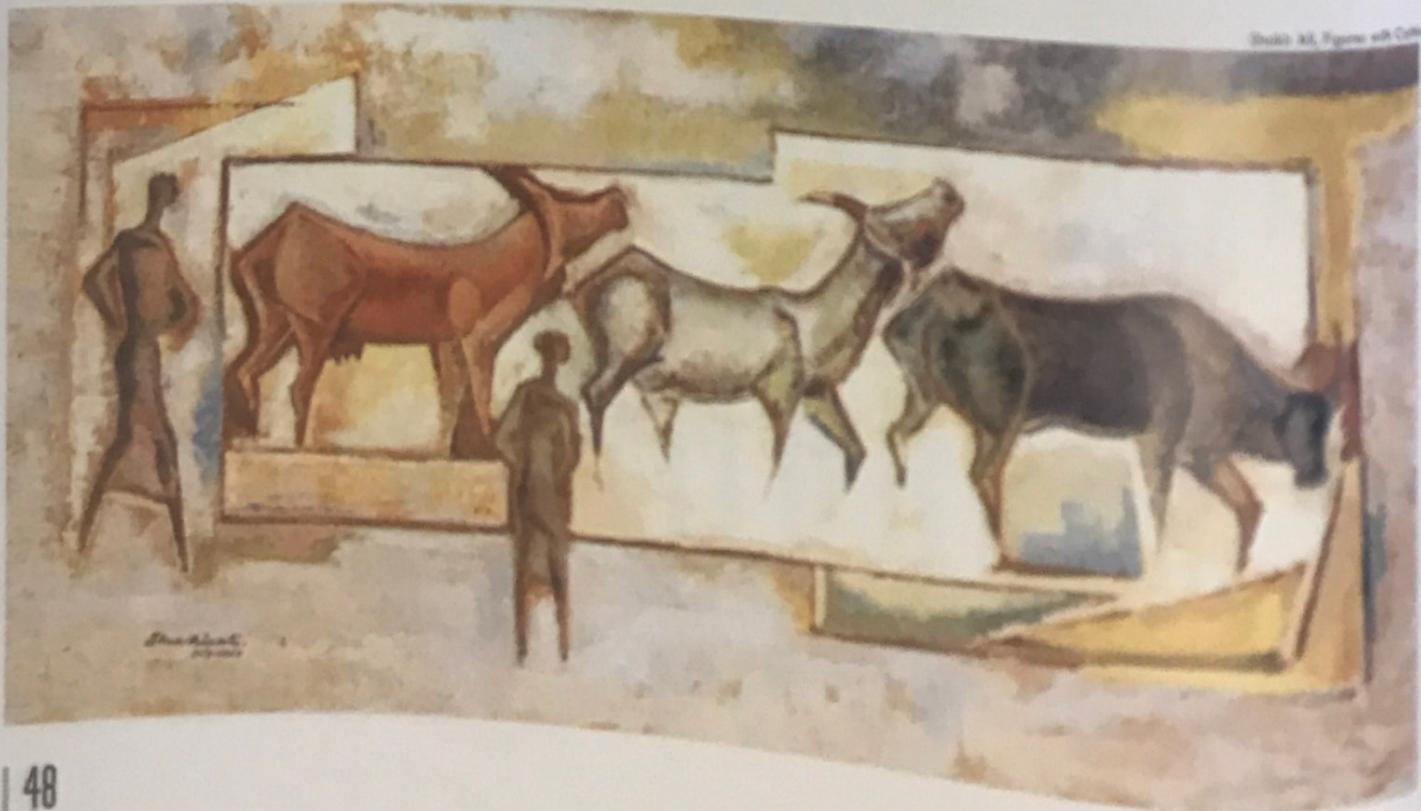
This text was originally written in 1982, some 25 years ago, on the occasion of an important retrospective held in Lahore.

**NUKTAART** is reproducing it as a part of its Art Writing in Retro series.



**NUKTAART**

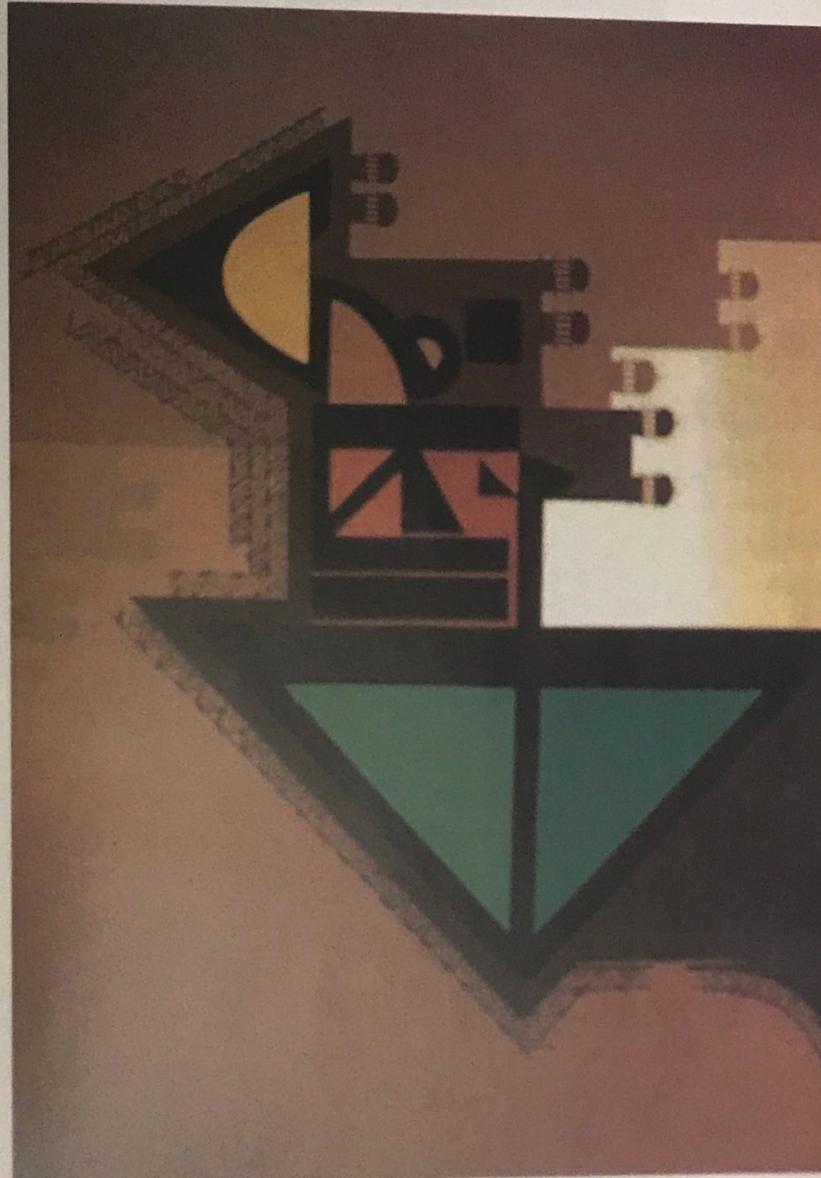
acknowledges the generosity of the late author's son, Ali Habib, and daughter-in-law, Mehjabeen Abidi Habib, for permission to reprint this article.



Lush, fertile Punjab has been mother to many an artist, with Lahore, its ancient capital, serving as a cultural hub. Green plains, clear skies, the quiet pace of rural life are the perennial themes for the brush, rendered in moods of varying perception.

The exhibition season starts somewhere in late September when the fierce summer gives way to kinder temperatures, petering out by May's end as the scorching rays bear down once again. Summer of '82 was an exception, the nation's Independence Day on August 14 witnessed the spring of a grand retrospective-cum-contemporary display of paintings and graphics by Punjab artists during the 35 years since independence. It was possible to survey in chronological sequence, under the high roof of the impressive Alhamra Arts Centre, a panoramic view of the leading personalities, the styles and groups that have given the painting landscape its history and character. One-man shows continue through the viewing season as each practicing artist of significance makes a statement on progress and change in his interpretation of the aesthetic experience. The galleries run by pioneer and art teacher Moyenne Najmi, provides a private outlet for the exhibitor as an alternate to the state-managed Arts Councils, and has in the last several months arranged small shows featuring established artists and new hopefuls. The combination and co-operation of both sectors makes for a happy diversification and pluralism to form the basis for a living art expression. Add to these the presence of two flourishing art schools enjoying distinctive traditions, which frequently open to public view the creations of students and staff, and the art lover has a variegated table at which to feast.

Having said this much it may be admitted that in a young country seeking to enter the contemporary world, old traditions, social and artistic, have been integrated and modified, as influences from West and East make themselves felt in every social concern. Pakistani painting is therefore eclectic, even in its traditional modes. Apart from the Miniature that



Aslam Kamal, Ho-Al-Kafi



Anna Molka Ahmed, *Lahori Gate*

preserves the techniques and themes from the Moghul epoch, there is no pure style exclusively in possession of this Muslim state that looks to both the Islamic hinterlands and Asia for its heritage.

Three departed masters have left a lasting impression on the painterly scene. The diversity of approach can be gauged from the specimens of the female figure. The eternal Master, Abdur Rehman Chughtai, unique in his imagery and the subtle tones of his graduated water colour washes has bequeathed a legacy of several thousand paintings and etchings now housed in a private museum managed by his heirs since his death in the 70s. Lyrical in coloration, his forms are designed in flowing lines, and literary symbols such as the lamp and nightingale impart a depth of meaning. He has many imitators, but no equals in Pakistan. His individualized style goes by the generic term: "Chughtai Art". The late Allah Baksh was another veteran artist, prolific in an altogether different mode, who migrated to Lahore before Independence to set up a studio and found a school. Using oils and gouache, he turned out canvases of rustic life, peasant festivals and typical portraits of beloved folk heroes and heroines; his

treatment in a realistic, somewhat idealized manner.

The phenomenon known as Shakir Ali entered Pakistan in the fifties to eventually make Lahore his artistic base. Trained in India and Europe, a Modernist in the international idiom, and as Principal of the National College of Art for two decades, he has made art history. A circle of friends and admirers worked under his inspiration, as he liberated succeeding waves of art graduates from the inhibitions of academic realism. His technique was Western, his content often indigenous. But in the more imaginative abstracted canvases, space, texture, economy and balance become the predominant elements. Landscapes express different interpretations of the physical environment.

Anna Molka Ahmad, a pioneer art educator and easel painter, employs a light-suffused impressionist language of the brush. Her former pupils, Khalid Iqbal and Ghulam Rasul make their own explorations. The first, trained at the Slade School of Art, uses a fine academic discipline to recreate the mundane landscape into an almost mystical harmony of form, light and colour; the latter juxtaposes flat shapes with satisfying economy.

An entire generation is at work, extending over a wide range of articulation from the avant-garde to those who favour more representational canvases. The credit for keeping the Miniature alive in the Punjab must be awarded to that grand master, the late Haji Sharif and his disciples, who retained the technique of this exacting craft as it were practiced three hundred years ago for the pleasure of the Moghal emperors. A handful of young men have attained proficiency but the problem is one of application and subject matter. A few Miniaturists have experimented with present-day themes, yet the scale and technique seems intrinsically wedded to the content and matter of its heyday - it was a palace-art and today is (more of) a pleasing historical relic than a living (art) form.

By contrast, that beloved Muslim art, calligraphy, has witnessed unprecedented efflorescence. The classical masters of pure forms are coming into their own in a climate of Islamic Cultural renaissance. However, a fascinating development is calligraphy as expressionism, as abstraction, as Modern painting. Classic and free forms embodying Quranic texts are integrated into two dimensional compositions. An entire community of painters has adopted the genre as an artistic vehicle, though not always with aesthetically well realized results. Aslam Kamal is among the best known practitioners of creative calligraphy and winner of awards in this category.

Artists of the Punjab function within an ambience of curiosity and courage, pursuing with vigour the on going process of growth and communication, that is painting.

Ghulam Rasul, Mellon Seller



by Mulk Raj Anand

# Need for objectivity

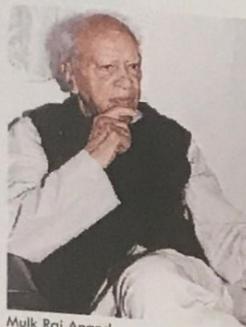
**Mulk Raj Anand** Thinker, Writer, Activist  
1905-2004

Mulk Raj Anand belonged to a generation of writers committed to the ideals of the Gandhian struggle for class equality. Born in a family of hereditary craftsmen in Peshawar, he won a fellowship to study Philosophy at the University of London in 1928, after graduating from the Punjab University.

Back in India, he organized the 2nd Conference of Progressive Writers, chaired by Tagore, supported by such enlightened writers as Allama Iqbal, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, and Ismat Chughtai, among others. His inspirational writings such as *The Untouchable*, *Coolie* etc. gave voice to the agony of the underprivileged. His autobiographical writings earned him a comparison to Tolstoy. Anand also edited *Marg*, and was a fellow of the Lalit Kala Akademi, the Sahitya Akademi and a laureate of the International Peace Prize.

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# in the Study of Art



Mulk Raj Anand

# artasia

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF CONTEMPORARY ASIAN ART

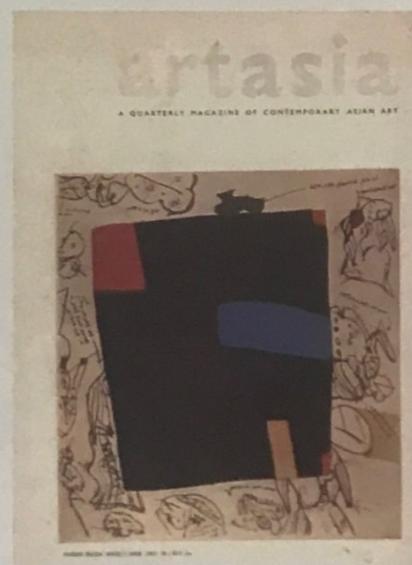
At the moment, all our boasting about the past is largely a compensation for our paucities in the present, and all our partisan quarrels are a series of vicious circles within bigger vicious circles. Are we honest enough to bring some degree of objectivity to the study of art?

**Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, President of Indian National Section of AICA, poses this question, and attempts an answer in the context of the art situation in his own country.**

There has been so much confusion and muddle in the criticism of Indian Art, that it becomes necessary before coming face to face with a painting or a piece of sculpture to clear the rubbish of falsehood, prejudice and sentimentality that we have all to a more or less extent inherited from our forefathers and near-contemporaries during the last half a century. Such an effort at scavenging is bound to make one a pariah, because any attempt at re-evaluating the basis of criticism is likely to be frowned upon by the Pundits. This is one of the penalties of radicalism, and one must accept it as an inevitable punishment for the heresy. Since, however, one is also a heretic against one-self, because one has shared many of the prejudices of one's elders and early teachers, the punishment is well-deserved. So, one

must learn humility and allow oneself to be re-educated. That is the only way in which one can help the renaissance of art and literature, in which we are involved, to be put on a sounder basis.

That a great deal of falsehood, prejudice and sentimentality has indeed accrued to us is hardly in doubt. In almost all art discussions, anywhere in the world, the wildest generalizations are made by the contending schools. But in most free countries these controversies generally tend to be centered on individual preferences in technique, or on differences of emphasis about the nature of the contemporary crisis in human affairs and its relationship to art. In India, however, apart from differences on all these questions, the very basic assumptions about art have been open to violent discussion since our subjugation by an alien people. The imposition of their own nationalism, however genuine in the political sense, has often led to a very unhealthy chauvinism in art matters. But we cannot remain in political subjugation any longer, and it is time we began to cultivate the free mind through which alone we can look at works of art, without 'reacting' to the contempt of outsiders as we have tended to do in the past. Let us first of all analyze the attitude of the English, or rather the



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European nationalism towards Indian art in the past, and study the reactions it caused among us.

The initial reaction and attitude of the English towards us was one of great respect for the wealth of the Indies, admiration for the gold, the precious stones, as well as the spices that abounded in our country. The Address of Queen Elizabeth to Akbar, the great Moghul, is couched in the most gracious and flattering language and the figure of the Indian prince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* symbolizes the early attitude towards India. It was natural that at a time when the East India Company was seeking for privileges to trade in the realms of the legendary Great Moghuls, and while India still seemed from a distance to be one of the triumphant early civilizations of the world, the general attitude of the English towards our culture should have been a generous one.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, however, there came a subtle change from admiration to contempt. This is particularly obvious in that the villain of the piece in a great many plays of the Restoration period is chosen from among Oriental potentates, especially the Indian Moghuls. Ostensibly, the John Company was having a tough time getting concessions from the Moghul court, and the rumor of the autocratic behavior of Oriental despots had begun to travel abroad. Also these potentates offered the Restoration dramatists good cover for lampooning the court in Whitehall itself. Be that as it may, the denigration of these monarchs also led to an under-valuation of Indian culture.

In the eighteenth century the pendulum of appreciation and depreciation swings up and down. The period when the agents of John Company were having their own way was also a time full of encomiums for the ancient wisdom of the Hindus, their art and literature. But soon the British started facing reverses in their intrigues with the various native princes, whom they were at this time keen to embroil in local wars against each other in order to get a foothold for themselves. Their writings of this period understandably reflect hatred for things Indian.

Of course, there were independent Englishmen who recorded what they saw and who applauded the old culture of India, even though they despised contemporary India. There is the example of Warren Hastings who, in spite of the dastardly political role he played in India, was instrumental in introducing the Bhagavad-Gita to William Blake, and in influencing Sir William Jones' translation of *Shakuntala*. There was a spate of literature produced by the more honest servants of John Company, and by the fair-minded English friends of India, including several travelers and visitors to India who were sympathetic to the beauties and glories of this country. The thirteen cartoons by Thomas Rowlandson, illustrating a narrative called *The Adventures of Qon Hai*, are a masterly series which, by satirizing 'The Nabobs', by implication, highlight the values of the culture the Company was destroying. The 19th Century witnessed the same phenomena of alternating blame and praise as the 18th. Only opinions were now sharply divided, as became evident

in the controversy about Indian education. On one side was Macaulay, the Westernist, who thought that the bulk of 'Sanskrit and Arabic literature was only fit for the rubbish bin,' and on the other side were the English Orientalists who had such deep respect for ancient Hindu and Mohammedan learning that they wanted it to be the basis of teaching in the Indian schools and universities. Of course the Westernists won the day, but it must not be forgotten that the isolated Orientalists carried on the great tradition of scholarship set by Sir William Jones, Hayman Wilson, Sir John Malcolm, Stuart Elphinstone, and later by Colebrook, Lyall, Cowell, Max Muller, Edwin Arnold, Birdwood and a host of other honored names who spread the knowledge of India's culture in the academies and universities of Europe and America. The general attitude of the British public, however, was considerably influenced by the horrors of the mutiny of which Britain had received one-sided accounts. Even so, a celebrated critic such as Ruskin spoke ill of Indian art because of the bias engendered by the happenings at Lucknow and Cawnpore. Though there was much talk of 'forgive and forget' after the declaration of Queen Victoria on the transference of power from the Company to the Crown, the mood of the period had been set by the bitter memories of 1857. Also, this was the period during which the Industrial Revolution was maturing, and England, the importer of textiles and calicoes from India, was constrained to restrict, even prohibit the import of these materials. Our countryside was then

producing the finest muslin, the loveliest brocades and the most exquisite silks, and the fame of our craftsmen had spread all over the world. These exquisite fabrics soon came to be bleached with the bones of our weavers and handloom spinners, and the 3000-year tradition of craftsmanship was broken, never to be mended again till almost a century later when Mahatma Gandhi led the movement for Swadeshi home-spun.

Mr. K. de B. Codrington, perhaps the most brilliant English critic of Indian

art now writing, while tracing the history of this period with a fairness and liberality which is to be commended, pleads 'that there is no need to revive cynical gibes as to the mechanism of commercial exploitation.' But surely no historical interpretation can ignore the economic curve, which, though unnoticed by the average consumer of culture, is yet to so large an extent the basic determinant of fashion and artistic taste. It is poor consolation for starving India to know that samples of its beautiful textiles were adequately labeled

and preserved in museums and written about with discrimination, when commercial exploitation destroyed the handicraft industry itself which produced them, thus eliminating its use by India's own inhabitants because the profit motive of the exploiters refused to allow a new machine industry to grow up in place of the old craft.

It is no use deleting or ignoring the facts of history in order to compel a change of heart. Rather, it is necessary, as Freud would say, to acknowledge the sources of one's unconscious guilt in



The British East India Company riding in a procession of Agra II (detail), Delhi, c.1815

order to expiate it. This is even more important now, when all national and racial frontiers have luckily tended to break down, at least among the young intellectuals of the world, that we should not hesitate to analyze the mentality of our prejudiced elders in an effort to understand the psychology of conflict. It is no use over-looking the fact that Britain and India have been politically and economically at loggerheads for several generations now, as the conqueror and the conquered are bound to be. It is inevitable that the general attitude of the ruling race towards the art and culture of the ruled should have been, at its best, a patronizing one and, at its worst, a hostile and contemptuous one.

This is not to say that there were not notable exceptions to the general attitude, for a certain number of independents like Sir Thomas Munro and Prof. Max Muller had the courage to go against the current of 19th century opinion. But they were lone voices among the smug, church-going but mammon-worshipping bourgeois of Britain of that time, whose only concession to Indian art were the cheap and vulgar models of the Taj Mahal, a kind of sentimental fetish which was to become a symbol of the death-wish of Anglo India as well as the lower-middle class. The intensification of Church Mission propaganda in Britain to raise money through charity bazaars, for the conversion of Hindu heathens, popularized a religious terminology akin to that current in the days of the Crusades; and the technical words 'savagery' and 'civilization', used in the new science of anthropology, were

taken over by Victorian journalists and paraphrased, as in Kipling's 'lesser breeds beyond the law'. The outer crust of the three-dimensional material universe was accepted as a norm, and an insular self-complacent middle-class nationalism, which paid lip-service to the Greek and Roman ideals in art and literature, condescendingly dismissed foreigners and subject peoples as 'dagoes' and wags.

Sir George Birdwood, in his *Industrial Arts of India*, published in 1880, wrote that "The monstrous shapes of the Puranic deities are unsuitable for the higher forms of artistic representation; and this is possibly why sculpture and painting are unknown as fine arts in India." B. H. Baden-Powell went one step forward and roundly declared that "In a country like this we must not expect to find anything that appeals to mind or deep feeling." And Christian missionaries frequently warned the public against the gods of the Hindu Pantheon by dubbing their sculptured images as "hideous deities with animal heads and innumerable arms."

Nor was this kind of prejudice prevalent only among the laymen. Even a respectable and conscientious historian and critic like Vincent Smith declared that "After 300 A.D. Indian sculpture, properly so-called, hardly deserves to be reckoned as art. The figures, both of men and animals, become stiff and formal, and the idea of power is clumsily expressed by the multiplication of limbs. The many-headed, many-armed gods and goddesses, whose images crowd the walls and roofs of mediaeval temples, have no pretensions to beauty, and are frequently hideous and

grotesque."

This kind of vilification continued into the early years of the 20th century. In 1910, Birdwood referred thus to a Buddha image in his lecture to the Royal Society: "This senseless similitude, by its immemorial fixed pose, is nothing more than an inspired brazen image, vacuously squinting down its nose to its thumbs, knees and toes. A boiled suet pudding would serve equally well as a symbol of passionate purity and serenity of soul." Actually, the image Birdwood had in mind was, as Codrington has pointed out, a late Javanese Buddhist stone sculpture, and not Hindu. And there was a timely protest against this and similar views which had been current, in a letter sent to *The Times* under the joint signatures of Lawrence Houseman, Walter Crane, W. R. Lethaby and William Rothenstein. "We find in the best art of India", the letter said, "a lofty and adequate expression of the religious emotion of the people and of their deepest thought, on the subject of the divine. We trust that (the school of National Art in that country) will zealously preserve the individual character which is the outgrowth of the history and physical conditions of the country, as well as of those ancient and profound religious conceptions which are the glory of India and of all the Eastern world."

This historic letter led to the foundation of the India Society for the Study of Indian Art and Literature.

More and more, the radical and independent opinions of practicing artists and art critics began to rebut the prevalent stupidity and started analyzing



Abdur Rahman Chughtai, Radha Krishna

the actual content of Indian sculpture and paintings. And there became visible from within India itself certain efforts to evaluate the past heritage in the arts, notable among which were the works of E. B. Havell and Ananda Coomaraswamy.

Mr. Havell, the Principal of the Government School of Art in Calcutta, had found on arrival that Bengali art students were being given, under the then current curriculum of the Education Department, Greek and Italian models to copy for training the hand and the eye. The irony of the situation (that a tradition completely alien to the minds of the students was being badly fostered, while the great indigenous art lay ignored, except by the staff of the Archaeological Survey of India) stung his generous soul to the quick. He gathered a number of Bengali friends like Abanindranath Tagore around him and began to encourage the love of Indian art, and knowledge of it among the students and the cultured public. He brought an artist's knowledge of art, and wrote a number of books on Indian painting, sculpture, architecture and other allied subjects, and campaigned for many years in India and Europe for the recognition of Indian artworks and the ideals which lay behind them.

Ananda Coomaraswamy, a Sinhalese on his father's side and a Western European on his mother's side was similarly struck by the general British contempt for Indian art and, though a chemist by training, gave up his scientific research to devote himself entirely to the uplift of Indian culture. He gathered together one of the finest collections

of Indian paintings and sculptures in the world and after serving in the Colombo museum, carried on an independent research in England. With a sensibility which is rare, because it was guided by a profound scholarship, Coomaraswamy wrote some of the most exquisite criticisms of Indian art for a generation, until he went to work as Curator of the Asiatic Section at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in the USA.

All students of Indian culture owe a deep debt to these two stalwarts for their pioneer research, for between them they built up a detailed survey of the surviving monuments of our art, and supplied commentary by way of explanation on the religious and philosophical conceptions underlying it. The life-work of both these scholars however, coincided with the emergence of the Indian renaissance and the political ferment which is associated with Congress nationalism. As was to be expected, therefore, their writing was considerably influenced by the current nationalism, and tended to become an idealistic expression of the revivalist aims of the Indian middle-class leadership. Mr. Havell was inclined to theosophy and actually wrote a *History of Aryan Rule in India* to prove that in the ancient Vedas and Upanishads, Aryan culture had set the "pattern for all Indian and world development forever." And Dr. Coomaraswamy was so far persuaded of the beauty of everything Indian that he even defended the barbaric custom of suttee or widow-burning.

Those of us who were born in the 'days of contempt' in British-Indian relations

and felt the searing blast of imperialist suppression, as well as suffered from the disabilities and frustrations which the English-dominated system of education in India bequeathed to us, can well understand the kind of defensiveness among our country-men and our sympathizers which justified even the worst aspects of our Indian inheritance. But we, who have now emerged into a new era, can neither condone the open and insidious degeneration of our culture by the ruling race, nor praise the chauvinistic pleadings of our own friends. We have to evolve a position in our aesthetic values and judgment which, on the one hand, ignores the patronage implicit in Anglo-Indian criticism and, on the other, does not degenerate into a rationalization of our own defensiveness against alien opinion.

Apart from the extremes to which our elders were pushed certain tendentiousness entered even in their genuine appreciation of Indian art. In order to defend images with many arms, for instance, they merely explained the religious and doctrinal reasons why these statues had multiple limbs, but they tended to ignore the plastic qualities of these art works, the profound sense of form which is present in the best works of art in our long tradition. The result of this has been to make our criticism more ideological explanation than real appreciation, and the direction taken by our contemporary art under the impulse of the criticism has been so far literary as often to deprive it of any artistic significance whatever.

But what exactly are the kind of considerations which should go to make

an adequate aesthetic for the enjoyment of Indian art and for its future development?

There is no denying the fact that architecture, sculpture and painting were, from times immemorial, the handmaids of a

transcendental religion in India. The pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses was evolved from concepts of reality supposedly inexpressible except through sensuous imagery, so that the symbols employed in Indian art have a meaning both for the Hindus as well as for those who understand the language of art. Since, however, the conception of Fine Art as distinct from the other arts is only a comparatively recent

innovation, and did not subsist in the minds of the makers of the early Indian art tradition, we naturally have no right to apply the arbitrary criterion of Western art criticism to an art born under totally different conditions. Criticism must be internal if it is to be adequate.

But the religious and philosophical ideas in the service of which the artistic tradition of India flourished are not enough to go by in the understanding of Indian art. These are only the background of the artworks, a symbology as it were. While we have the symbols, we also have the artworks themselves into the making of which has gone the technical skill of generations of artists who lived together in craft-guilds but brought individual sensibilities to bear on their work, which is what makes one statue different from another.

A synthesis is thus necessary: a synthesis of the world of thought which is behind Indian art, and the sensitive appreciation of the profound sense of form evident in the best works, provided, however, that the intellectual or doctrinal content is not overestimated, as it is by Dr.

Coomaraswamy, when he says that the object of art is primarily to communicate a gnosis. Of course, Dr. Coomaraswamy derives from his reliance on the abstract statements contained in the scholastic writing of philosophers like Sankracharya (8th Century) who said: 'Even the misshapen image of a man, howsoever excellent.' This dependence on Vedantic commentators shifts the emphasis from the actual art of many centuries to the later Brahminical codes and



compilations explaining the art. And that leads to a fatal misunderstanding of the beautiful works in stone or paint which seem always to have been wrought by men who were open to the sensations of the world about them. For, what do the figures in the lovely carvings of Sanchi and Bharhut indicate if not the love of life and exaltation of the senses in the gayest moods? And what is behind those tree-spirits and snake-gods, and demons and spirits, and men and women, who are grouped around in the most intricate compositions on the reliefs and panels? Surely there are intimations here of a humanism which is rooted in the imaginations of the men of the soil: There are echoes here of a life of feeling from which all art takes its actual impulse, howsoever it may be transformed and shaped by the intellect. Indeed it is only when the heretic conventions begin to be rigidly enforced, when it is ordained that "an image made according to the rule of the Brahmin books is beautiful", that the vitality seems to go out of art. "When art becomes consciously symbolical," says Professor Herbert Read in answer to a number of neo-Brahmin dictums laid down by Dr. Coomaraswamy in his book *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* "as it did in Christian art, and in Indian art, it begins to decay. The trouble about intelligence is that it is 'overweening,' it considers itself self-sufficient, and assumes that it is its own instrument of sensation. It is all very well to dismiss sensation as 'an animal property' and to exalt knowledge as 'distinctly human' and therefore to conclude that art, 'as a department of the higher things of

life,' must have much more to do with knowledge than with feelings. But man is also an animal, and 'the higher things of life' have not suddenly intruded into the process of evolution, but have come as a progressive refinement of sensation and feeling. And these faculties still remain the test of reality, in art as in human relations."

In fact we have to evolve an adequate aesthetic, both to understand the old art of India and to breathe new life into the contemporary moribund tradition. It is on this essential humanism, which has persisted in various forms in the folk culture of India that we have to base ourselves. In the long centuries of the past, as now, the common denominator of all values, in spite of all the spell-binding of the 'priest craft', was the culture of the village folk, of the men and women who sang as they ploughed the land and danced as they gathered the harvest, and in whose lives the skill of the hand mingled freely with melody, rhythm and fantasy; whose imagination was, as it is today, mainly visual, and who appeased the dreaded deities built out of their own inner fears by tracing magical drawings outside their houses and welcomed the gods by painting the thresholds. It is, in the heartbeats of these people that we can trace the rhythm that is in their poetry. It is through the pleasurable and painful excitements of their lives that we can realize the excitements of their music and dance. It is in the coordination of their great skill with the intense moments of their lives to which we can trace their art. And if their songs and dances and paintings and sculptures are spiritual, it is because these are the

expressions of their life, of control by the inner world of the outer, of the synthesis of the undertones and overtones of experience, lit by the spark of human imagination.

Always what is alive in the art of India is this vital element, the impulse to stimulate and control the life process, to make life really human; to breathe into its stagnant waters the ripple of some movement whether it is a sigh, a line or an exclamation. And it is this movement which, when realized in form or colour by the hand of the artist, has its own sense of rhythm, its own harmony or inner coherence, and constitutes the real language of art, which is part of the universal language of art and its world symbology, and which anyone who has eyes to see can understand whether he is a Western European, a Chinese, a Russian or an Indian.

A knowledge of the heretic symbolism which is behind classical dancing, for instance, may help. But ignorance of it is not a very great hindrance to the direct response of the visual imagination to the lovely lotuses formed by the hands of an Indian dancer or the arabesques into which his/her body weaves and unweaves itself. And it is universalism of this direct response of the eye to the form of the work of art that has today rendered possible a continuity of culture from one end of the world to the other, and has created an internationalism through which it is possible for a Bengali artist like the late Gogendranath Tagore to understand Picasso and the Cubists, and for the English sculptor Henry Moore to absorb Black sculpture. It is true, that

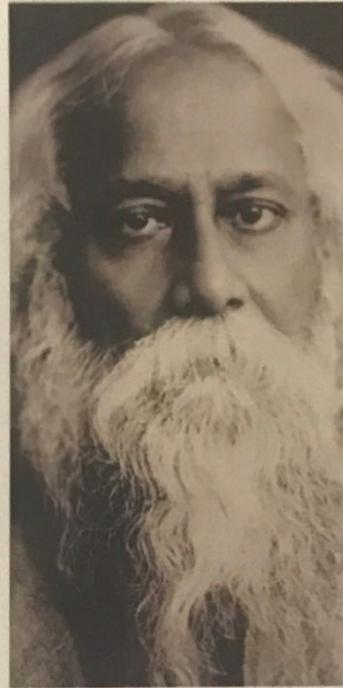
the internationalism of art is not yet as widespread as that of science, but in those metropolises of the world where there are adequate museums, with collections gathered from the main art traditions of the world, it would be found that especially among artists, there is a growing understanding. Even the barriers erected by politicians tend to break down where the works of art have become freely visible.

Of course, this is not true about our own country. Not only is there not a single museum in India where the world arts are represented, but also such conditions have unfortunately prevailed here which make for self-consciousness in cultural matters and which breed chauvinism. Now that we have seen the historical pattern and are in a position to understand the reasons why this situation has arisen, we have to remedy the present state of affairs. We cannot be indifferent to the complete chaos of opinion and taste which exists in the art world of our country, the feeble imitation of ancient techniques, the spurious literariness as well as the vulgar representation which is creeping in the wake of Western commercial art. But what is to be done?

Obviously, the first answer that comes to anyone's mind is education. But that only suggests a further question. What kind of education? For whom? And by whom?

For, although E. B. Havell reformed the system under which Indian students were asked to copy Greek and Roman models in our art schools, he himself fell into a vicious circle when he enjoined his students to paint in the manner of Ajanta

and Bagh. Because, while under the first impulse of the discovery of the frescoes in the Buddhist caves our painters began to feel a certain enthusiasm, it was a spurious feeling in so far as it was essentially a form of revivalism. The group of painters who looked at, and worked with Lady Herrington, on the copies of Ajanta, became the most influential body of artists in India, some of them being appointed as heads of art schools in the various provinces. The revivalist idea was thus sedulously spread all over the country, and what was already highly formalized in the gestures and poses of the figures of Ajanta (a school of art which had flourished at the end of a period rather than at the beginning) became in the hands of our contemporary art masters and their pupils, a series of sterile stylizations, elongated fingernails and arched eyebrows. Besides, bookish elements in the Bengali renaissance gave these painters a literary bias, so that their content generally remained illustrative, and experiments in colour and form as such were



Portrait: Rabindranath Tagore



Painting by Rabindranath Tagore



Painting by Rabindranath Tagore

precluded by the demands of prevailing taste.

The two Tagore brothers, Abanindranath and Gogendranath, escaped to an extent from the meretriciousness of this revivalism, that was because they had looked at life a little more directly and studied the techniques of the Far Eastern and Western European artists. Later, Jamini Roy and Amrita Sher-Gil brought vitality to their work, the former by exploring the colours and forms of the surviving folk art of Bengal as well as of Van Gogh, and the latter by synthesizing all the elements of her European education with her reactions to the Indian landscape. And Rabindranath Tagore, in his old age, experimented with linear rhythm and produced a series of interesting sketches and water-colours, truly primitive in feeling.

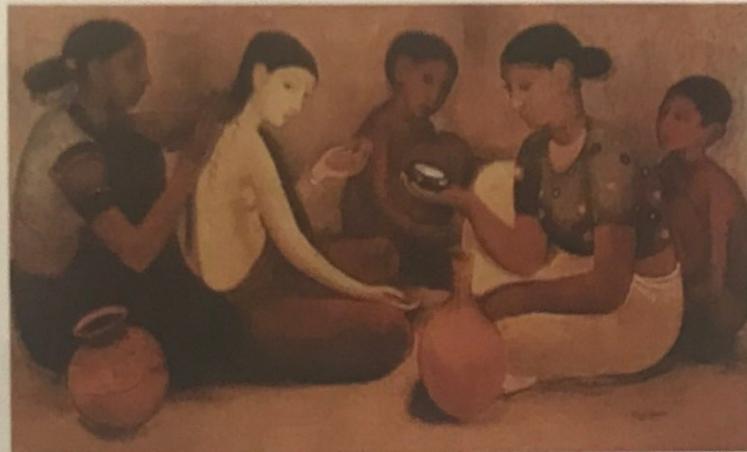
Today the young band of artists of the Calcutta group is experimenting boldly with new forms, with new modern eyes. But apart from these, the bulk of art activity in India for the last quarter of a century, sponsored by those whose avowed aim is to usher a revival of the Gupta or Magadha or Moghal periods, has resulted in pictures which look like the feeblest copies of each other, because they repeat the old and dead formulas ad nauseam, in pretty, pretty pictures about Puranic deities only a shade above the aesthetic level of Ravi Verma's sickly oleographs. European influence, though consciously rejected, is unconsciously assimilated by way of the dirty-picture postcard, so that lifeless breasts and vapory pudenda is left discreetly veiled in silken sequins in order to obviously vitiate the whole

sex-represented Indian nation while at the same time claiming to preserve Shastric decorum and respectability! And the aura of neo-Brahmin and neo-Sufi mysticism is spread all over by means of luscious colour wash and sentimental thematic emphasis. As this revivalism informs all the schools of the country, the whole art education of India is poisoned at the source.

The crisis in art education is not confined to India alone, of course. It is not infrequent to come across people in all parts of the world who say in a tone of mock-humility: "I don't know anything very much about art. But, really, must we have all this ugliness about? Look at Epstein's *Day and Night*!" And there are even quite serious, but conventionally-minded artists, schooled to copy nature, who assail that none of the avant-garde artists know how to draw. I remember at least one politician, with liberal sympathies, who held a Picasso picture upside down and began to auction it for a charity with the mock-humour phrase "I don't know which way it should hang except that he may be exonerated for helping our fund." Public taste has been so far corrupted by the education given in the schools and the universities of the world that art has come to being "a queer thing." Just let any young person announce to his parents that he wants to be an artist and, in nine cases out of ten, the loving father and mother will consider that their child has gone mad. At the most, they will concede that he should become a commercial artist. And then the young person will go about, pursuing his inspiration in an attic, underfed and humiliated at every step, until the society

gets him and he becomes a hack, turning out cheap posters to advertise Bovril or MacLean's toothpaste.

Just as, in spite of the freedom movement in our country, mentally we have remained provincials of Western Europe, so also we have tended to take on the philistinism and vulgarity of the West without sorting out the ideas we have imported. Our education system, once a forcible imposition on us by the West, is still under our national regime a compromise between a third-rate imitation of the English system and Gandhiji's "earn while you learn" child-serf idea. And nowhere in the new schemes, whether of Zakir Hussain or Sargent, does one feel that the aim of education has been conceived on the basis that every man and woman is potentially a special kind of artist, and that the real aim of education is not classrooms and syllabi but freedom, the real freedom which comes from the free mind, the mind whose fears, hates, guilts and anxieties are released, so that the dynamic energy latent in the person expresses itself creatively, through pleasurable arts and movements. Until we begin to rear our children from the very earliest age by conceding that childhood is 'play hood' and not a business of categorical imperatives, until we get into the habit of tracking down the inner motives of the child and not the ulterior motives, we shall not be building a nation of free men but a generation of vipers whose suppressions will bring their own nemesis in hatred and war. In order to evolve a wholesome education system, we have to drop the catchwords and slogans of the platform and set up



Amrita Sher-Gil, *Bridetoilet*, 1937

bodies of experts to analyze the new methods of education which have been propounded by people like Tagore, Bertrand Russell, A. A. Neil, Maria Montessori, Herbert Read and the Soviet teachers. The outcome of such research will be to stimulate an appreciation of our great life-concepts, and a fundamental awareness of our human needs. The emergence of our life-concepts will, in turn, reveal the real function of art in a modern community, by showing that it is the core of all civilized living, the warp and waft of human existence, and not a mere luxury. If there is to be any nationalism about one art, then it will not be political nationalism but the bias of our environment. Although aeroplane and television have already reduced the distances so that most places in the world are only a day's distance from the others, it will be found that literature and art tend to be rooted in the sense of 'locality,' in so far as language is kinetic and goes to make every dialect uniquely different from

another, and the visual imagination is more intensely active before adolescence, and colours and forms felt during childhood in one landscape affect a person's style permanently.

Indeed differences in style give the literary and artistic works of different parts of the world their peculiar charm, so that here is no need to iron out the 'local sense' in the interests of a superficial cosmopolitanism. It may, indeed, be necessary to feed the imagination of students upon those monuments of the culture of their countries or regions which are the distinctive heritage of those places. With the mother-tongue, and its daily idiom, the child must be given the myths, the legends, the folk tales, the folk songs and folk dances of its birthplace. And then it must be encouraged to get to know the culture of other places through a new kind of encyclopedia written by the nationals of each country, as far as possible without bias or contempt. The museums of the world should also be seen by more people

and with greater discrimination. In this way the artists of the future may emerge, strongly individual in inspiration and yet cosmopolitan in technique, and we may be saved from that vague phrase 'national spirit', which covers so many sins in art, even as it growingly hides so many sores in the body-politic of the various states of the world.

When we realize that the emergence of a great new art tradition in our country is contingent upon the evolution of a great life-concept (and what could be a greater life concept than that which faces us every time we see our lowly and down-trodden humans), it may be possible for us to talk of art with some degree of honesty. At the moment, all our boasting about the past is largely a compensation for our paucities in the present, and all our partisan quarrels are a series of vicious circles, within bigger vicious circles. Are we honest enough to bring some degree of objectivity to the study of art?

by Ian McLean

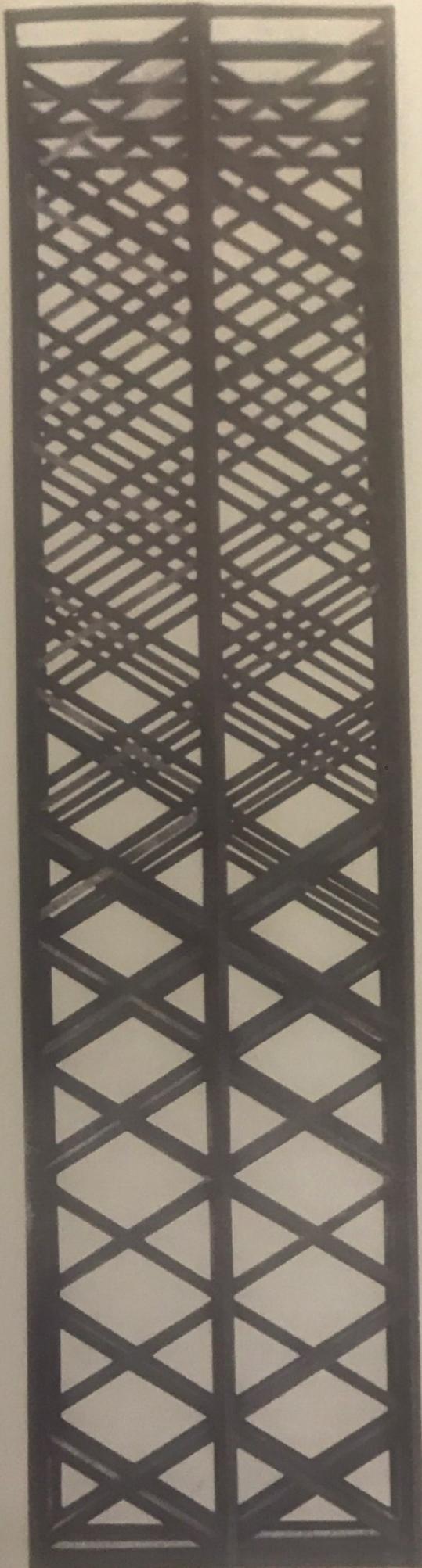
# TWO DAYS

More than any other city, Paris invests an enormous amount of energy, commitment and money into visual art as if to shore up its cultural capital from fears of deflation. This formidable cultural capital derives from Paris's formative role in the Enlightenment, its aspirations to be the center of a universal culture, and the stamp it put on European modernism. The fears are also reasonable: before the end of the nineteenth century even French modernists were fleeing Paris for the provinces once their careers were established, and modernists were rapidly losing interest in things Parisian. Indeed this trend had been evident since romantic sensibilities began to erode the Enlightenment's self-confidence. How long can Paris sustain itself on past grandeur and its self-proclaimed destiny as the capital of the Universal?

When, in 1989, the Centre Pompidou held the exhibition *The Magicians of the Earth*, it looked as if Paris was again positioning itself for a leading role in the emergent globalization of contemporary art. While the momentum Paris gained from this seminal exhibition quickly dissipated in the 1990s, in the new millennium

# IN PARIS

The Idea, the Universal and the Global



Rang Baranga 1969

a concerted if somewhat belated attempt has been made to address this global turn, especially regarding the new histories it demands. This is evident in new displays at the Louvre, the new musée du quai Branley, and the Institut national d'histoire de l'art - a new and ambitious research institute a few blocks from the Louvre, which is taking a determined interest in issues of postcolonialism and globalization. I discovered this when, on November 15 (2006), I dropped in for a seminar on the work of Rasheed Araeen and the journal he founded in 1987 (and still edits), *Third Text*.

At the seminar Hans Belting pronounced that the two most important artists in the late twentieth century were Rasheed Araeen and (the recently deceased) Nam June Paik - both Asian-born artists (though, I wryly noted, ones whose careers were made in Europe and the USA). These two artists, before any other, foreshadowed the global turn of contemporary art, and Araeen in particular had since the 1960s set the agenda for both art and art history after Western modernism. This agenda, Belting suggested, was not just prophetic, it also asked new questions about the past: in particular, do we need new genealogies of modernism, and how Western is Western art anyway? Ironically, especially given that we were in Paris, Belting claimed that the idea of 'European' modernism was the invention of New York's MOMA, and that the triumph of mid-twentieth-century US art had created the necessity for the idea of 'Western' (as opposed to European) modernism. The new MOMA galleries, said Belting, drive home this point. On the first floor is the history of (pre-WW2) Paris-centred European modernism, while on the second floor is the story of the triumphant post-WW2 New York-centered Western modernism. Belting's point was not that the initiative had shifted from Paris to New York, but that just as the origin of European modernism was elsewhere so too might be the origin of Western modernism. For him the current globalism of contemporary art makes MOMA's grand narrative misguided and anachronistic.

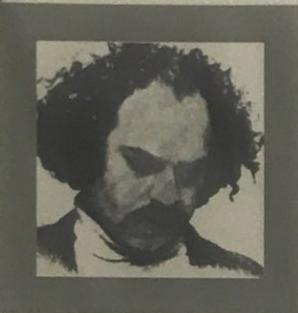
As Araeen made clear in his talk, ideas of the Western and European diminish the scope of modernism - or what he calls in Hegel-speak, 'the Idea'. The story of his art is, he said, one thread in the journey of the Idea towards the freedom of its self-awareness. This journey proceeds, as Hegel theorized, dialectically: that is, it struggles against what Araeen called the Obstacle. The Obstacle has many historical forms, and is produced by the Idea as part of its self-critical

function. Its various modern forms, said Araeen, include the individualistic ego and the institutions of modernity, and his job as an oracle of the Idea was to identify and resist such formations.



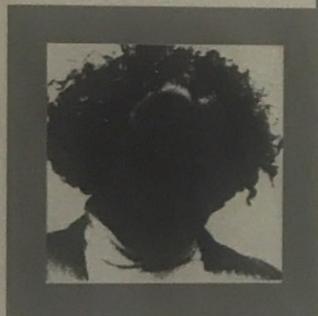
Detail, Colored 1979

Araeen's talk on the Idea was the greatest and most breathtaking irony (as well as challenge) of the seminar, for the Idea was until recently the theoretical justification of modernism that *Third Text* has so successfully interrogated - especially its colonial agenda or Eurocentrism that



Detail, Colored 1979

still shapes the historical narrative of contemporary art. Western modernism consistently sought to be the avant-garde of the Idea, and Paris has been preoccupied for nearly half a century with the fear that the Idea may have eloped to New York - as Hegel predicted. But with postmodernism the idea of the Idea lost



Detail, Colored 1979

all credence. So why does Araeen, the prophet of postcolonialism and globalism, proclaim the universal mission of the Enlightenment that founded modernism?

Araeen, who never had much time for postmodernism, is today's most prescient advocate of modernism: he identifies the Idea's journey with the path of modernity. The globalism of his project is an effect of the Idea, through modernity, inaugurating a world history. He knew that modernism was all along a world art even if Europe had jealously appropriated it for itself. In this, Belting argued, Araeen had the advantage of not being European: unfettered by the Eurocentrism of European modernism, which reduced the universal to narrow European values, Araeen's Asian heritage gave him a better perspective from which to appreciate the universal project of the Enlightenment and its dialectical course.

When he arrived in London from Karachi in 1964, Araeen believed the Idea was then most evident in the formalist sculpture of Anthony Caro. Jean Fisher, in an illuminating paper, demonstrated how Araeen then proceeded to counter the Obstacle in Caro's sculpture - this Obstacle being that peculiarly European obsession with the ego, evident in Caro's capricious composition held within an open but centered structure. Against Caro's grand symphonies of steel, Araeen built a serial lattice structure that was in tune with the emerging Minimalist art of the time - though in 1965 Araeen did not yet know that US artists such as Judd and André were also self-consciously engaged in a similar dialectical interrogation of formalism.

If Araeen was at the forefront of this Minimalist dialectic, he was also, as Fisher argued, ahead of it. Araeen quickly became aware of the formal rigidity of Minimalism (including his own) and its easy descent into a style. The implacable rectangular boxes of Minimalist sculpture, despite their purported inner emptiness and lack of composition, retain a sense of weight and with it a relatively centered and singular identity, an ego. This is even the case when arranged serially, as in Judd's compositions - which reiterate the same rectangular structure rather than interrupt or dialectically counter it. On the other hand, Araeen's answer to these difficulties, his latticework sculptures of the late 1960s, created a fluid field. As if graphically transposing the fugitive and purifying elements of fire and water that always interested him, Araeen dissembles the hard rectangular language of Minimalism.

Much like Arnhem Land bark (which was at this very same historical moment being appropriated from ceremonial body painting and incorporated into 'outside' bark painting),

Araeen's latticework emulates the shimmering effect of light on water, thus alluding to the invisibility yet implacable presence of the Idea at work in the mundane world of things.

At the time, British critics dismissed Araeen's dialectical engagement with formalism and Minimalism as an ethnic Islamic misrecognition of modernism, as if the Idea was an entirely European affair. If the ethnic was at play here, it was in the British artworld's orientalist desire for immigrant artists like Araeen to remain in his box - to remain other. Araeen's art has since been vindicated by the global turn of contemporary art: thus this seminar in Paris.

In his talk, Araeen said that the Idea was more at home in the collective than the individual ego. Certainly the collective

which in modern times has been primarily the nation state, has been the most contested site of the Idea. Globalization has affirmed not diminished the nation-state (everywhere it is being buttressed). Interestingly, unlike settler expatriates (eg Australian artists), Araeen (who began his career as an artist in the late 1950s doing fluxus-like performances in Karachi) does not have a place in the story of Pakistani modernism: he is a British artist - or as the Institut national d'histoire de l'art described him for this seminar: 'l'artiste conceptuel anglais'. In this respect the very success of Araeen (as a British artist) and the London-based *Third Text* has not dispelled the shadow of Europe and the West in the globalization of contemporary art - which now is readily absorbing (policing) non-Western artists into this new global stage in the advance of Western modernism.

This was evident in the seminar. Despite Belting's questioning of the westernness of Western art, audience questions to him focused on the relationship between European and Western modernism as narrated by MOMA. It was also the question at the Centre Pompidou, which hosted two exhibitions side by side: one of Robert Rauschenberg's New York combines of the 1950s and early 60s, and the other of Yves Klein's contemporary Parisian work. The message seemed clear to me. Rauschenberg's art looked dated and old-worldly. Trapped in the egoism of American Abstract Expressionism, his compositions demanded to be looked at for their formal virtuosity. Even the most mundane things, like postcards and reproductions of pin-up girls, became, Duchamp-like, absorbed into the discourse of fine art and museum culture. By contrast, Klein's quirky minimalism before Minimalism, its pigments seemingly as fresh as the day they were made, spoke of the New World, a post-European culture without any discernable nostalgia for either the Enlightenment or modernism.

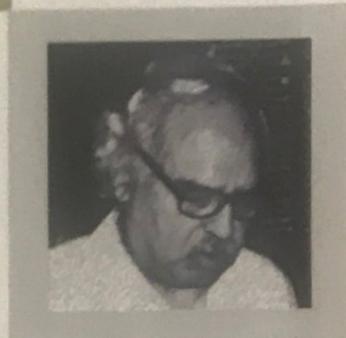
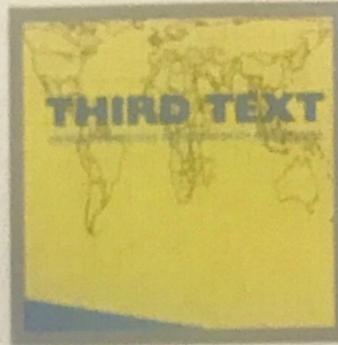
Absent from this very French obsession with Americanism is any inkling of modernity's and modernism's world history, as if the Idea never made it across the equator leaving Africa indeed the whole southern hemisphere a dark zone (as Hegel also unfortunately professed). Nowhere is this more evident than in the musée du quai Branley, which is billed as an imaginative rethinking of the former ethnographic display of tribal art. Imaginative it is: one enters from a large light-filled white hall via a winding ramp into a dark womb like structure as if into the belly of some large beast, into the

heart of darkness itself. I felt trapped

inside a kitsch Victorian diorama. Here the 'other man', as the museum calls it, is revealed in all his hilarious otherness. A gloomy forest covers the windows and spot lit African masks rear out of black cave-like rooms; the floor banks and walls curve as if in a 1920s Expressionist film. The Idea is nowhere to be seen unless one visits the museum's bookshop in the adjacent

building. Here, on the ceiling, is a large modernist design by John Mawurndjal, the famed Kuninjku artist: a wonderful web of rark that, like Araeen's lattice sculptures, transforms the flat rectangular surface of the room into a shimmering plane.

The musée du quai Branley is the expression of the will of France to grant its just place to primitive arts in the world of museums. Further, it is a witness of the fact that hierarchy no longer exists between the arts no more than it does between peoples.<sup>1</sup> Lacking in this vision is a sense of the place of non-European cultures in the culture of modernity and what Araeen would call the journey of the Idea. The only place in Paris where such a vision can be glimpsed is in the new rooms (opened in 2000) of the art of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas in the Louvre. Here work of magnificent quality from these countries is displayed with all the care and attention of other art in the Louvre. Display, it seems, is enough to see the footprint of the Idea. But it is not enough to map its journey or its global and universal reach. Thus the Institut national d'histoire de l'art is a timely intervention: my quick reconnoitre of Paris's art institutions may have confirmed many of my expectations, but they were also happily disturbed by the Institute's seminar. Perhaps even the Obstacle of Europe cannot stop the Idea; it certainly did not stop Rasheed Araeen.



Dr Rasheed Araeen

#### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> Notice in the Louvre, in the rooms devoted to the art of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas, announcing the aims of the musée du quai Branley.

by Sevim Çizer

# MY Karachi Diary



The third ASNA Clay Triennial was organized from November 9 to 24, 2006 in Karachi, Pakistan.

I was extremely pleased when I got an invitation last summer to participate in it and I was excitedly looking forward to see Pakistan where real Eastern culture can be found and which has had a very long friendship with my own country: Turkey.

Details about the program and activities were provided to me by the hosts before I arrived in Karachi. The solution for accommodation was perfect as the family that volunteered to host me in their house made me feel like a family member. I later learnt that other visiting participants also had similar feelings about their host families.

**November 9:** We spent the day setting up the exhibition of the Clay Triennial at the Ahmad Pervaiz Gallery. There was over 50 artists' work from 12 countries, including Canada, Finland, India, Indonesia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Spain, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, USA, and of course Turkey and Pakistan.

**November 10:** The first day of the Triennial activities. The opening of the Ceramics Exhibition, which was held in collaboration with the Arts Council, Karachi, and was attended by an extensive group of art lovers and exhibitors. The show reflected different cultures from East to West and from traditional to contemporary. I wish the exhibition hall had some more space, as in the end, the crowd made the place very congested. I also wish that the city of Karachi could have an appropriate exhibition hall for this sort of international show, as it truly deserves proper facilities.

**November 11** These two days were devoted to the Seminar held at the Art Council's auditorium. The Seminar, which was exceptionally interesting, began with the speeches of the representatives  
**& 12:** of the two host organizations. Nilofur Farrukh, the co-founder of ASNA and Rumana Husain, Senior Editor of NuktaArt, welcomed the participants and made presentations about ASNA and NuktaArt respectively.

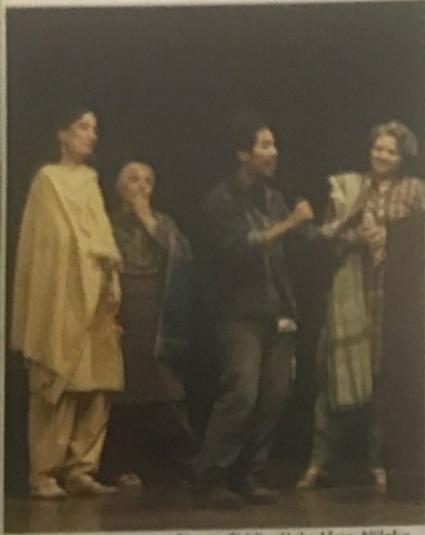
Sheherezade Alam, Pakistan's eminent ceramist, the keynote speaker, was introduced by well-known art critic Marjorie Husain. This was followed by illustrated talks by participating artists and scholars. The artists mostly spoke about their work and their country's traditional and modern ceramics. Some shared their experiences with different techniques with their colleagues and art students. The speakers, who were either ceramists, architects, archaeologists, art historians and researchers, presented their point of view with some examples, to underline the exceptional place of ceramics in their cultures.

For two full days, students, colleagues and art lovers participated in the Seminar with great interest. The art and ceramics' students got an opportunity to gain exposure to different cultures and different artistic experiences.

- My own paper was entitled: *Ceramic Art in Turkey from Prehistory to the Present*, the other participants were:
- Dr. Asma Ibrahim (Pakistan): *Ancient Pottery in South Asia*
- Fauzia Minallah (Pakistan): *Potters of Saidpur, Margallah Hills, near Islamabad*
- Gwyn Haunsen Pigott (Australia): *Porcelain Makers of Australia*
- Sonia Rashid Jamal (India): *A Tribute*
- Sadia Salim (Pakistan): *Searching for Answers*
- Shazia Mirza (Pakistan): *Untitled*
- Dr. Ponimin (Indonesia): *Contemporary Ceramic Art and Craft of Indonesia between Present Day and Old-World Culture*
- Michael Rice (N. Ireland): *My Pots*



Sevim Cizer, Turkey



Founders, Asno-Shanoz Siddiq, Mehr Afroz, Nilofur Farrukh with Dr Ponimin (Indonesia)



Shaherezade Alam, Canada



Catharina Kajander, Finland

- Dr. Elona Lubyte (Lithuania): *Contemporary Ceramics of Lithuania*
- Catharina Kajander (Finland): *Contemporary Ceramics and New Buildings*
- Reyaz Badruddin (India): *Visit to Japan*
- Kaif Ghaznavi (Pakistan): *Not Only Pots*
- Sonia Dhingra (India): *Journey into Pottery*
- Kristine Michael (India): *The Empire and Indian Craft Ceramics in Early Art Schools of the Sub-Continent 1845 to 1900*

- Dr. Kaleem Lashari (Pakistan): *A Comparative Study of Tiles from Sindh and Punjab*
- Architect Ayesha Noorani (Pakistan): *Islamic Tiles*
- Manisha Bhattacharia (India): *The Terracotta Temples of Bengal*

**November 13** Workshops took place at the spacious studio of ceramist and painter Tariq Javed. They included demonstrations by an experienced ceramist from Finland, Catharina Kajander and Dr. Ponimin, a very colorful personality, who was rooted in his Indonesian cultural tradition. The energetic potter, Michael Rice from Northern Ireland and Shazia Mirza from Lahore gave demonstrations on the second day. The workshop included Raku firing and experimental ceramic techniques by Michael Rice, Tariq Javed and Nabahat Lotia. Catharina Kajander's stamp applications on clay reminded us of the famous Pakistani block print textile, the Sindhi Ajrak, and this reminded us of the interaction between arts and crafts and their support to each other.

**November 15:** An excursion day to the rural areas around Karachi. This trip was organized by the Sindh Ministry of Tourism and the trip included a visit to the Shahjehani Mosque at Thatta, a lunch by the waters of Kinjhar Lake and a visit to the historical Makli cemetery. This graveyard, with its traces of Indian, Middle Eastern and Iranian architecture enchanted all of the guests under the orange sky of a beautiful sunset.

During the Triennial, every evening, art lovers and sponsors gave a dinner reception at their homes. These exceptional gatherings gave the visitors not only a chance to taste the



Gwyn Hanssens Pigot, Australia



Speakers during the Q&A session



Workshop conducted by Dr Panmin

specialities of Pakistani cuisine but also to mingle with the local artists' community.

**November 20:** This day was reserved for a local potters' festival - the Kumhar Mela. This fantastic exhibition of the potters' products included all four provinces of Pakistan and it took place at the Arts Council. It was certainly a sight to see: geometric painted pieces with black slip and terracotta toys from Harappa, Badin and Thar. Polychrome and blue-white decorated vessels and tiles from Nusserpur, and the impressive stone-paste pieces from Hala. I was astonished to witness the living traditional pottery-making of Pakistan as being both functional and decorative compared to the turmoil of traditional pottery making in my country. I would like to say that if the pottery products of Pakistan, which have existed since several thousand centuries, can find a place for themselves in modern urban life then they stand a better chance of preservation.

When the third ASNA Clay Triennial 2006 ended, a group of guests traveled to Lahore - a city which is considered a living architectural museum - while the other group of guests traveled back to their countries with plans to return and visit Lahore and Moenjodaro some day. The Triennial thus ended, but it will always stay strong with me with its memory of a real Eastern world and the smell of a mysterious Asian country.

In the last decade, I have been a part of various similar organizations as an artist or as a member of selection committees. The ASNA Clay Triennial 2006 had an exceptional and efficiently organized seminar and workshop. They went beyond the sharing of the artists' knowledge and experiences; it also created a ground to bring professional presentations from



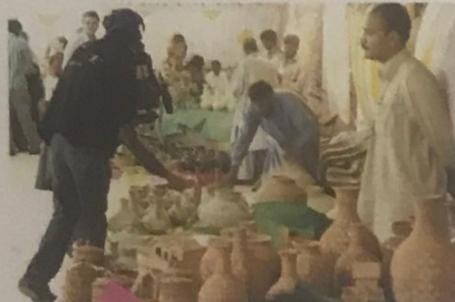
Demonstration by Micheal Rice



Demonstration by Nabahat Latia



Pottery from Badin, Sindh



Kumhar Mela

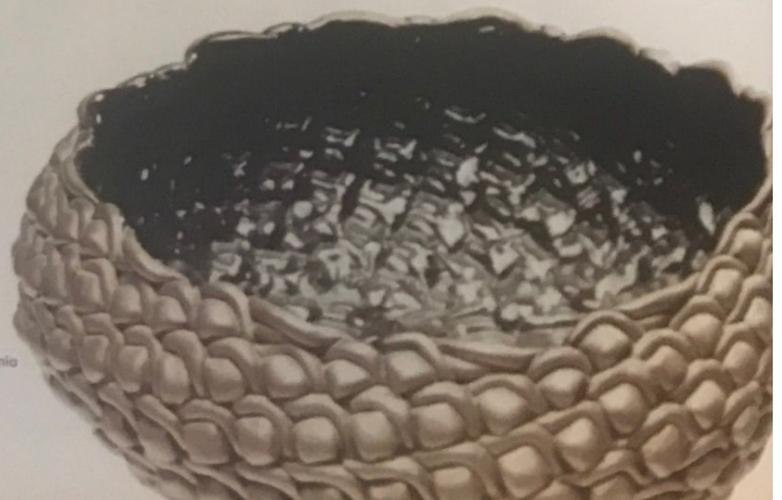


Reyaz Badaruddin, India

researchers to the participants. As an example of practices to be emulated, I want to say that at the Cairo Biennale that I had attended, the participants were classified according to their experience. Also, a category and a prize for the Young Artists offered encouragement to new entrants.

I would like to see these kinds of classifications at the ASNA Clay Triennial in the future. Organizing a competition for young ceramists will give them an opportunity to bond themselves to the art world and ASNA will be an appropriate organization to showcase their art. As a matter of fact, in Izmir, Turkey, we organize a competition for young ceramists and students every two years.

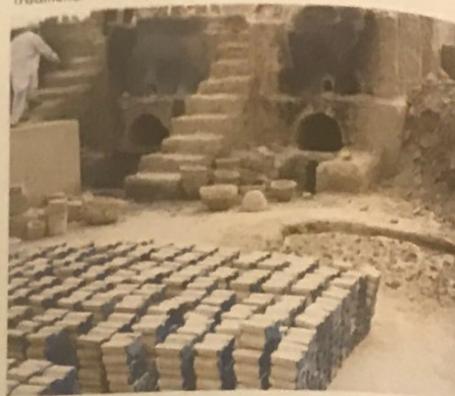
I would like to thank the founders of ASNA and the Working Committee for organizing this magnificent art event. I hope this organization will continue for many years and it will embrace the art and culture of different countries and take the ceramics of Pakistan to the art world. I see a continuation and success of this event in the future with the support of international institutions.



Rimantas Sahalaushas, Lithuania

by Catharina Kajander

Traditional workshop of Ustad Mushtaq



The excursion

to the

# 'BLUE TILE' workshop

in Nusserpur, Sindh



Visit to Nusserpur, Sindh

November 15, '06:  
November 15:

To have the possibility to visit this 400 year old family enterprise which took me back into a tradition which has stayed intact for many generations was a fascinating excursion.

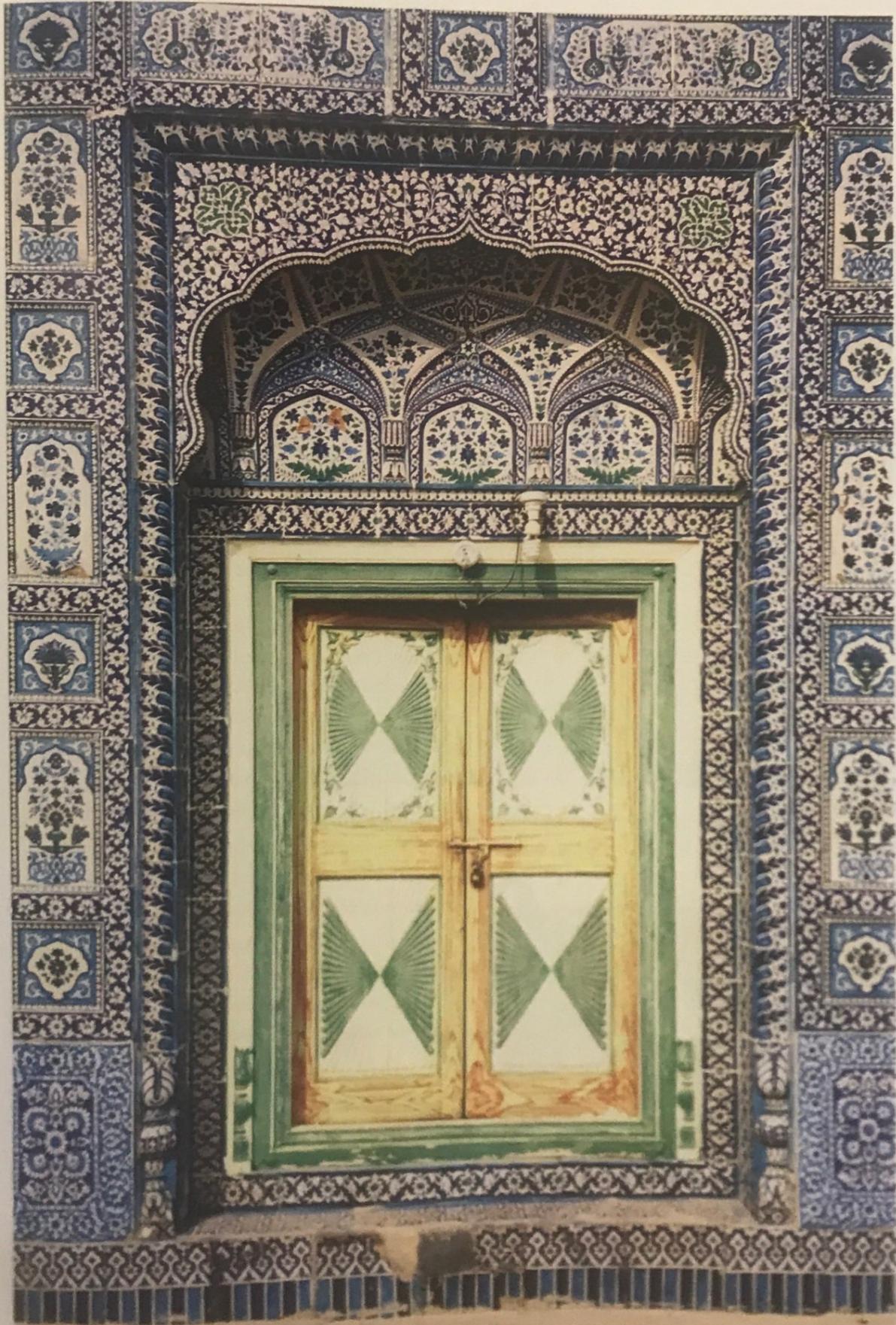
At the ASNA conference in Karachi, we had the pleasure of listening to very enlightening lectures. The traditional mosque and temple buildings to tile decoration, as well as joining the artists' workshops at Tariq Javed's atelier gave a historical view of art, architecture and craft life in Pakistan.

It is important for ceramists, members of one of the oldest profession on earth, to meet internationally to discuss professional matters and exchange know-how and see other artists' work.

The ASNA Clay Triennial fulfilled all of this and was professionally planned and organized by energetic and active women.

When I graduated from the ceramic department at the Industrial Art Institute in Helsinki, I felt a tremendous need for knowing more about the traditional pottery

in my own country. With the help of a grant, I traveled around my home country of Finland to visit and interview as many potters as possible to gain an insight into their works and lives. To understand tradition and history is essential for being able to create anew. In Pakistan, it was humbling to stand in the courtyard of the Kashigar family's blue tile workshop. To experience the original work



© Kashigar family

that had the same techniques as in ancient Egypt. It made me feel very small and at the same time very grateful.

All over the world the skill of preparing stones, clays, and pigments, are used to transform these materials into something beautiful. Not only for just decorative, but practical purposes such as coverings for ceilings, walls and buildings on the inside and outside.

We also visited the 100 year old mosque of Nusserpur and a Sufi shrine in Hala that gave us a chance to admire the beautiful patchwork of blue tiles covering the ceiling as well as the interior and exterior. It was fantastic to see the care which is taken to preserve the mosque and shrine. Ustad Mushtaq (the master craftsman) showed us the remarkable ongoing process of replacing the broken tiles with new ones and his family's input of tiles through the generations.

It made me question, what gives us the right to destroy a culture like this and such building traditions and beauty with dull and expensive concrete modernism. A good example of misplaced development was the big Industrial Training Center in Nusserpur, which had been implanted without consulting the local potters. It stands there like a ghost of dust and machinery for industrial ceramic ware. The result of not including the local community has resulted in failure. We could see a room full of assortment of badly made ware, too poor for the urban middle class market and too impractical and expensive for the rural market. After seeing it I felt very happy that I never allowed myself to agree to run anything like that in my days in Africa, working there for rural development. We can feel happy and optimistic that workshops like Kashigar-blue tiles have not died out as a result of political and economical stupidity, as similar ones in Europe have. As this was my first visit to Asia, I must say I was impressed by the energy which created the whole ASNA clay event. Perhaps sensible supporters of culture are all alike in the world and they work together for a peaceful world.

To arrive in a country where people throw rose petals over their beloved ones, on their return to their motherland - a sight I saw on my arrival at the Karachi airport - I knew that I had come to a warm and hospitable place.



Tile work at Nusserpur



Contemporary Bricks