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Clothes: Florence

A SEASON OF MAJOR EVENTS

Major art events took place in quick succession recently, beginning with the Seventh Exhibition of Visual Art, arranged by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in Islamabad, then the annual exhibition of paintings by the Punjab Artist's Association followed in Lahore, while in Karachi, Jamil Naqsh held a solo exhibition of his artworks after a gap of twenty-five years.

The exhibition in Islamabad, in which artists from all provinces showed their work, was preceded by a two day seminar in which topics pertaining to art in a local context were discussed. Most interesting was a paper contributed by Tereza Wagner of UNESCO on the diverse legal and moral rights of the artist. Distinguished ceramicist, Dr. Nabil Darwish from Egypt, contributed a paper, 'Civilisation and Ceramic Art', but was unhappy with the English translation of his paper. Throughout the seminar, Dr. Darwish indicated his frustration at not being able to address the company directly. He was happier showing a small collection of his beautiful work, explaining a unique personal method of glazing to artists and students in his field.

Inaugurated on April 24, the exhibition held many beautiful artworks in a variety of media. Paintings, prints, sculpture and ceramics ensured a visual feast. National awards were conferred on Zubeida Agha, Hajra Mansur and Ahmed Khan. Prizes were awarded to Akram Dost Baluch, Dabeer Ahmed, Ghulam Mustafa, Meher Afroz, Rabia Zuberi, Subah Husain and Unver Shafi.

At the Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore, the exhibition organised by the Artist's Association, Punjab, was inaugurated by the Federal Secretary, Culture, Sports and Tourism on May 15. Four prizes were awarded to younger artists, three of them women. The lone male was sculptor was Jabbar, a fourth year student from the National College of Art. Mussarat Nahid Imam, whose stunning mixed media lithographs drew attention in the Islamabad display, was awarded a prize; other winners were Durre Wasim and painter Tanveer F. Rahman. The

exhibition of over two hundred art pieces was followed on May 17 by a symposium on 'Art Traditions and Contemporary Pakistan'.

In Karachi, the exhibition of artworks by Jamil Naqsh, held at the Momart Gallery, was by invitation only.

There were no prior announcements in newspapers, yet the gallery was jam-packed with people coming and going. Organised by a few collectors close to the artist who have formed a group, Friends of Jamil Naqsh, it was a rare opportunity to see a large body of the artist's work. Over one hundred and sixty pieces, produced in 1995 and 1996, were almost too much to absorb in one session. Unfortunately, the exhibition was a one evening affair which, the Friends announced, would be exhibited in September in Lahore, Islamabad, then in Delhi, Calcutta, England and the U.S.A. During the evening, a spontaneous burst of applause met the announcement of the Friends' plan to establish a Jamil Naqsh Museum to house a permanent collection of the artist's work by 1997. Director of the Gallery, Shammie Ahmed and her daughters greeted the huge crowd with equable charm.

This may prove to be the most important development in art of recent times, with far-reaching effects. It is the private sector which



Top: Enthusiastic students at the Fine Arts Festival, Karachi
Centre: Aftab Zaffer makes a quick charcoal sketch
Bottom: Mahbubul Amin's work at Kunj

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has the means to be effective in preservation of the country's heritage and culture. A concerted effort by the rich and powerful, seriously motivated and organised, could lead to a long dreamed of National Art Gallery, for Karachi.

There is a joyful exuberance prevalent at the functions of Karachi's Fine Arts Society. A spirit which encompasses young and old alike. Whenever the association's members get together, there is an infectious cheeriness in the air. It's always a birthday with coloured balloons, cakes, an exchange of souvenirs and gifts, and smiling faces everywhere. The association's latest Art Gala was no exception. One entered the gates of the Karachi Arts Council and was immediately drawn in. There was music, hustle and bustle, and people of all ages taking part. Stalls displayed books and art materials while scattered over the Art Council grounds, artists gave public painting demonstrations. Charcoal sketches were done on the spot, while Tariq Javaid explained the intricacies of pottery and ceramics to interested students.

Tariq suffered a tremendous disappointment recently when the collection of work he had carried to the M.E. for display was swept away with the entire display area, in a freak gale. Putting the loss of months of work behind him, Tariq, in great form, was already planning future work, ideas - as he said - popping into his head.

The association members are disarming in their approach, each encouraging the other. Seemi Piracha was proudly showing off her student's work; Aftab Zaffer, Chairman of the Society, spoke of

Nusrat Azmatullah's recent prize for flower arrangement at an international event abroad, while Nusrat lauded the organising committee



for their hard work and cooperation. Everybody praised Aftab Zaffer. Wandering through the grounds, one came across Aftab, sleeves rolled, working on a charcoal portrait; Hamida Sajjad, oblivious of onlookers, worked on a painting of a dancing figure; and throughout were exhibited the work, paintings and attractive prints by members of the association and art students. The event was arranged to encourage young students and artists,

who certainly appeared to be having a good time. Overall, there was a refreshing ambience of goodwill.

Back to his wistful dream girl, Mansur Aye has moved away from the Clifton Beach series to continue his search for an ideal. A review of last year's exhibition held in France says: "...His paintings depict magic sensations — the full moon, melodies, beautiful faces of women, her body, her perfume, her hair torment him until he gives them form which is his way of seeing life."

The artists from Dhaka who recently showed their work at the Kunj Gallery, spent an energetic few days in Karachi, visiting art galleries, art schools, shops and markets. Aminul Islam, the senior member of the group, was an active member of local art activities in the '60s, winning third prize in the National Art Exhibition held in Lahore in '67. He was delighted to meet his old friends.

Professor Masuda M. Rashid Chowdhury, leading the group, is well known in Bangladesh as a cultural activist. A watercolourist and printmaker who has written six books on art, she is currently involved in the development of the traditional arts and crafts of Bangladesh.

Youngest of the group, Jamal Ahmed, is an artist worth attention. He has spent several years studying art in Japan and Poland, and has exhibited his work in America during a period of residency. We will see more of Jamal's work when he returns to Kunj Gallery, Karachi, for a solo exhibition in early '97. ♦



Clockwise from top:
'Melody' by Mansur Aye;
Ceramics by Dr. Nabil Darwish;
'Running Horse' by Jamal Ahmed;
Unver Shafi's artwork