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KARACHI OFFICE

New Central Block, 2nd Floor
Hockey Stadium, Liaquat Barracks
Telephone: 512544 / 512766 Fax: (021)5673968

Editor
Zuhra Karim

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LAHORE OFFICE

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3 Temple Road,
Telephone: 6303191

Contributing Editor **Moneeza Hashmi**

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Advertising Manager **Humayun Sultan**

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TOWARDS THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

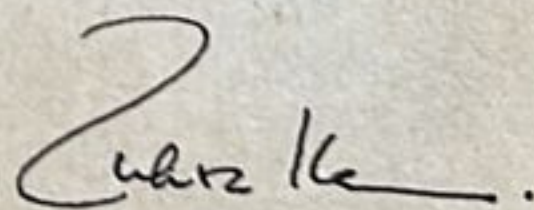
The need for an International Women's Day is as important now as it was first in 1911. The objectives drawn out then: to achieve the right to work and vote, the right to education and vocational training and an end to discrimination, are just as essential today, as they were then, for the development and empowerment of women in Pakistan.

International Women's Day has been celebrated in Pakistan since 1952, without government approval, in circumstances of fear and martial law. Women workers together with NGOs have striven, nonetheless, to achieve the realisation of their aims.

Last year saw an important landmark for the women of Pakistan. After years of apathy and indifference, the government officially sanctioned International Women's Day, promised to ratify CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all kinds of Discrimination Against Women) and adopted a positive stance in favour of the agenda set forward at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. According to this, the Government of Pakistan is obliged to set its sights on the empowerment of women through removing the burdens of poverty, eradicating violence against women and the girl child in particular, providing women equal access to health care and education as well as to decision making.

Brave words indeed and a tall order in a country where years of distorted customs, discriminatory ordinances, religious intolerance and lack of accountability have virtually annihilated women's human rights. What Pakistani women will seek in the years to come from its government and its people is a commitment to these ideals, an improvement in the quality of their lives and a guarantee of social and economic equity and justice. Though this is not and can never be an enforceable warrant, it provides a blueprint to what the future should be.

This year, International Women's Day will be celebrated with more fervour and zest than ever before. With the will to change, the march towards progress is clearly on the horizon...



CROSS CULTURAL INFLUENCES IN ART

Japan has an ancient history of woodcut printmaking, which originated from ukiyo-e paintings. Such was the demand for the artworks depicting kabuki actors and beautiful models, that artists began to use the technique of printing with wood blocks in order to meet public demands.

In the 1850s, Japanese 19th century woodcuts began to arrive in Europe. Often they were used as wrapping paper for delicate porcelain imports. An exhibition held in Paris in 1867 attracted many artists, drawn to the simplified forms, stressed outlines, flat areas of colour and unusual perspective. Many of the artists were influenced by the great Master Hokusai including Van Gogh, Whistler, Degas and Monet.

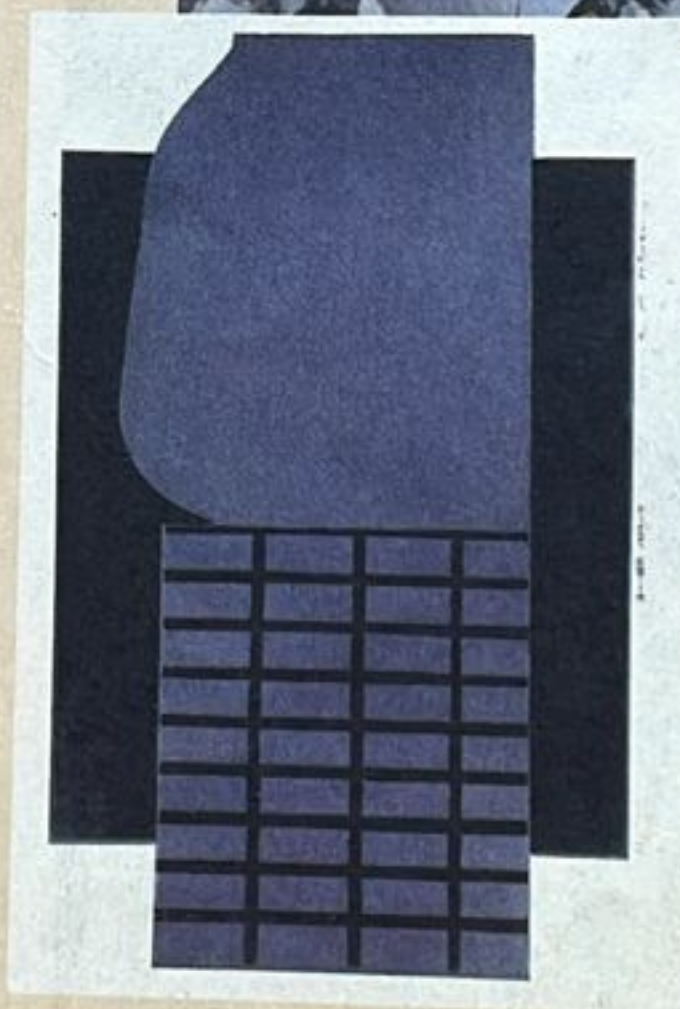
With the increased popularity of photography as a means of reproduction, the demand for ukiyo-e wood block prints declined. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that wood block prints were revived as an art form in a creative print movement.

In the '50s, a group of artists led by Shiko Munakata won international acclaim with their wood block and copper plate prints. They proved that prints were more than a mere substitute for paintings, and not simply means of reproduction, but a definite art form, a way of expression utterly unique. Prints had finally come into their own. In Pakistan there was a tremendous revival of interest in printmaking in the 80s, when the National College of Arts, Lahore, set up a well equipped department of printmaking. Students graduating from the department became teachers of printmaking at schools in Karachi and the interest intensified. Although several distinguished artists were well versed in the art of printmaking, facilities for the artform were scarce, even in art schools. Now all that is changed and local artists are showing their work in international print exhibitions.

That Japanese printmakers are still hard to equal was proved at an exciting exhibition held at the Karachi Arts Council in February. Twenty accomplished printmakers from

various cities of Japan exhibited an exciting collection of eighty-one 'mouth-watering' prints. Using the techniques of silkscreen etching, lithograph, serigraphy, and aquatint, they offered a priceless opportunity for local printmakers to understand current trends amongst printmakers in Japan.

Since Jamil Naqsh planned to show a collection of paintings in Karachi, in which the artist paid homage to sculptor Marino Marini, art enthusiasts have been curious to know more about the painter who became one of Italy's leading sculptors of the 20th century. Marini (1901-80) trained in Florence and Paris but worked mainly in Milan. Around the mid 1930s, he began to explore the theme of rider and horse, producing many sculptures in bronze and wood. Jamil's scheduled one-evening showing of his work was unable to take place due to local



Top:
Jamil Naqsh
pays tribute to
Marino Marini

Bottom:
'Traces on the
sea' by Noriko
Kiyozuka

MARJORIE HUSAIN

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disturbances and that was a great pity. Now scheduled for display abroad, the artist generously allowed two of his paintings to be exhibited in the group show held in New Delhi in January. One may modestly state that they created a stir. Whether using oils or watercolours, the artist's sublime technique, creating a mosaic of fragmented textures and tonal variations cannot be matched.

Riffat Alvi, enjoying a cold cultural spell in Berlin recently, was fortunate enough to find an exhibition of Marini's work showing at the Kunstforum. Over sixty paintings, drawings and thirty pieces of sculpture, belonging to the artist's

widow Marina, were displayed.



Studying the German language in a two month programme, Riffat's class of twenty-five students represented seventeen countries. Between studying and visiting galleries, she found time to lecture and give a workshop on the earth pigment medium to local art students from the Welde Schule who thoroughly enjoyed the experience of creating pigment from the soil.

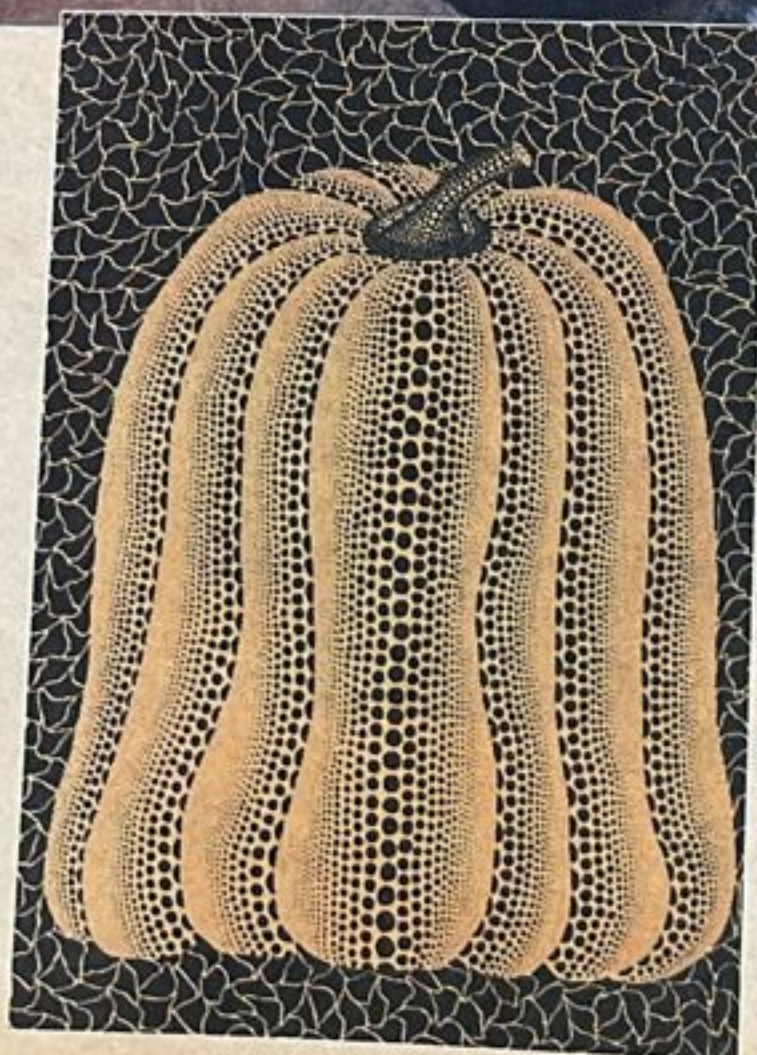
Returning briefly to Karachi, Riffat was soon off again, this time



to display her work and lecture at Breton Hall, the University of Leeds. On the first of March, a preview of her exhibition 'Dust to Dust', was held at the Laurence Bartley Gallery. After the closure of the exhibition on March 27, Riffat is due to fly off with her work for a week long exhibition in Bonne.

The Alliance Francaise is contributing greatly to the cultural life of Karachi. Exhibitions, films, and now a full fledged Festival of Jazz, KARAJAZZ '96, with two famous French Jazz bands, les Freres Ferre and Antoine Lisolo Barka Concept. The festival will include films on Jazz, a rare treat for Jazz fans. The music which originated in New Orleans in 1912, uses syncopated rhythms against a strong beat. An improvisatory art, the now legendary musicians of the great Jazz age in America would hold audiences in thrall with their brilliant spontaneity. Primarily dance music, jazz is now broadly divided into traditional and progressive schools. As with most of the Alliance Francaise programmes, the festival is likely to draw large, enthusiastic audiences.

Enjoying Karachi's sunshine, Tasadaq Sohail exhibited a large collection of over one hundred and thirty art pieces at his long time friend, Sayed Ali Imam's, Indus Gallery. Art enthusiasts who remember the artist's earlier works will find him moving on to other mediums and moods. His larger works have proved popular with galleries in London and while the underlying philosophy is unchanged, changes are evident in the use of space and colour and academic handling of perspective. There are lots of birds in evidence, my favourite is a brilliant green and red polly which dominates the canvas. It looks as if it is about to speak. ❖



From Top: 'A season of Birds' by Tasadaq Sohail

Centre: Riffat Alvi conducting a workshop on 'Earth Pigments' at the Welde Schule Berlin

Bottom: 'Pumpkin' by Yoyoi Kusama

Top right: Sculpture by Marino Marini