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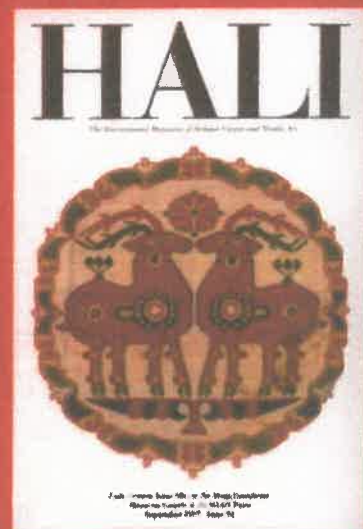
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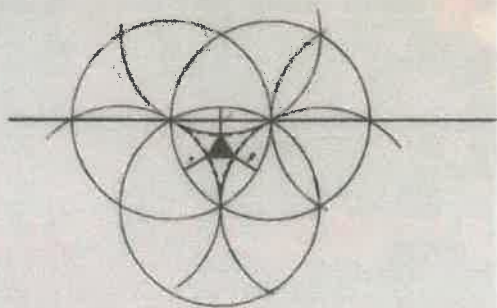
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What is Islamic Art?

Wijdan Ali



A Publication of Al al-Bayt University,
Mafraq, Jordan.

1996

What is Islamic Art?

Dr Wijdan Ali

What does the term "Islamic art" mean, and what does it convey? There are several publications which deal with this subject in a most explicit and scholarly manner, some of which the author, who is President of the Jordanian Royal Society of Fine Arts, has used as reference for her essay. However, this short and precise monograph discusses various interpretations. It argues that there should be a review of the definition for Islamic art; and attempts one from a Muslim point of view and according to Islamic aesthetics.

A publication of Al al-Bayt University
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editorial

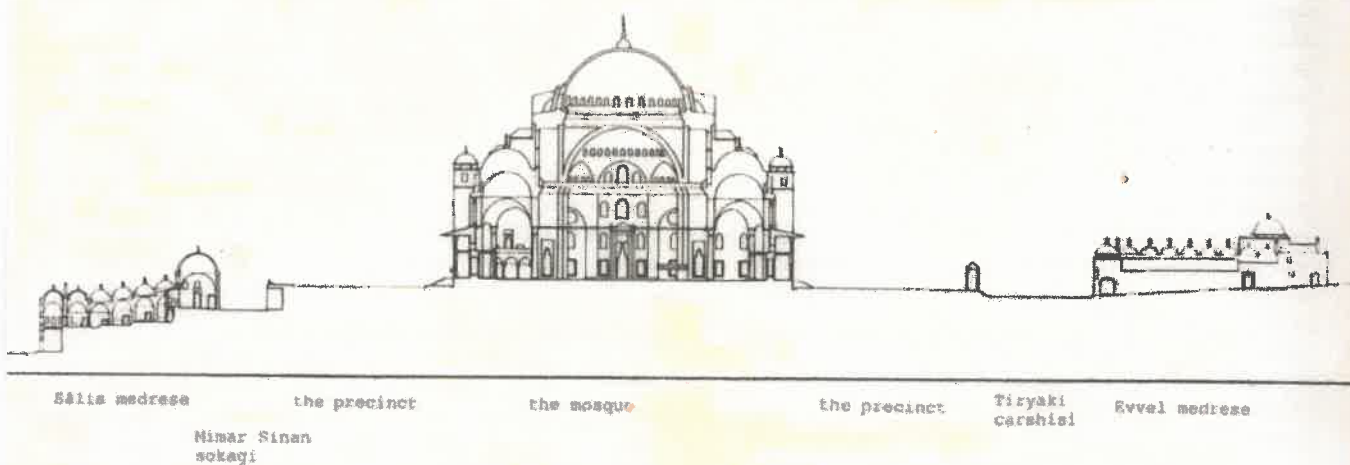
This volume of the journal *Arts & The Islamic World* brings to our readers a special report on Iran by Contributing Editor James Parry, who visited the country at the invitation of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran earlier this year. He looks at the Museum – “one of the most compelling modern structures” – as well as its treasured collection of national and international contemporary art. He also reports on his attendance at the International Calligraphy Festival in Tehran, evaluates calligraphy as an art form, and reviews some of Iran’s antiquities and architecture. Another recent visitor to Tehran was Rose Issa, already familiar to our readers as a highly innovative curator of contemporary art of the Islamic world and an authority on Arab and Iranian films: she brings a perceptive account of a seminar in Tehran on the “Presence of Women in Contemporary Cinema”, organised by the Women’s Solidarity Association of Iran (WSAI).

.....

We are happy to announce that negotiations have been finalised with the State Museum of Oriental Arts in Moscow for the publication of a selection from its superb collection of Islamic art objects. These have been specially photographed for reproduction in full colour in *Arts & the Islamic World*, and cover an amazing variety of material including Turkish fabrics, Pre-Mongolian glazed pottery of Afrasiab, traditional Uzbek and Tadjik dress, Iranian medieval pottery and painting, Kaitag embroidery, jewellery and fabrics of Crimean Tartars, Kazakh, Kirgiz and Karalpak rugs and felts, and decorative metalwork from Uzbekistan. There are also some excellent specimens of Dagestan art and 20th century fine arts in Azerbaijan. The accompanying text has been carefully researched by some of the most distinguished scholars and curators with intimate knowledge of this remarkable collection which we hope to be able to present to our readers before the end of this year.

.....

Meanwhile the forthcoming volume of the journal (No 32) coming out later in the Autumn will be reviewing 50 years of Pakistani painting 1947-1997, to mark the country’s 50th Independence Anniversary. Included in the present volume is a special supplement on “Design and Crafts in Pakistan” which looks at various contemporary elements enriched by tradition, both rural and courtly, in sectors such as furniture design, hand-knotted rugs, the treasure trove of jewellery and the transnational heritage in pottery.



Urban Spaces and Design of the Süleymaniye Complex in Istanbul

BJÖRN ENGDAHL

The Süleymaniye mosque has a strong impact on the view of Istanbul. The choice of the site, its visibility from a distance, the dominance of a city and the strength of composition makes it an outstanding example of Ottoman architecture at its height. The mosque is a monument in its own right, to which the surrounding complex gives formal and architectural support.

The complex can be described in a social as well as cultural context. Architecture interprets both of these aspects, and visualises the daily life of Istanbul in Ottoman times. It tells us about society, about hierarchies and values. In Süleymaniye it also exhibits the wishes and expressions of a sultan in a rising empire. Situated in the centre of Istanbul, the Süleymaniye is an important piece of the urban fabric, with intricate connections to the surrounding city. A new, regular pattern is integrated in the külliye-design, creating a dualistic tension between tradition and novelty. The complex is developed into a city district of its own with spatial sequences within the complex, and between the city and the complex. I will focus here on questions regarding this new urban pattern, its themes and its involvement with the activity of the visitor.

The Külliye Design

The basic organisation of the complex is rectilinear, and buildings and spaces are rectangular. A monumental mosque is placed centrally in an open space, surrounded by dependent buildings. To the east and west four medreses, two on each side, stand almost symmetrically to

the mosque. On the north side three buildings confine the open space of the mosque. The mosque dominates the scene, both in siting and volume.

While the west corner constitutes a densely built area, the north has been left without constructions. South of the mosque some buildings are placed at a 45 degree angle to the others. The rectangular organisation is chosen, but not entirely fulfilled. Steep slopes, already existing streets or other individual characters of the site might have influenced the design. Is it probable that such obstacles restrained Sultan Süleyman or his architect Sinan from creating the complex they had in mind? We only know that, by intention or not, they did accept that the rectilinear site planning was unbalanced in several aspects.

The systematic plan is most obviously contradicted by the softness of the section. The symmetries used in plan are disintegrated and not fulfilled. The four medreses no longer stand as counterparts. The western medreses limit the open, central space. The ones to the east are built at the street, four meters beneath the precinct, on the slope towards the Golden Horn, seeming not even to participate in the unity of the complex. Seen from the mosque they make no spatial limit. Instead they underline the open

space, the view of the city. They step down along with the slope. The block of a closed rectangle is thus transcended to an irregular structure of descending domes that are adapted to the landscape and surrounding quarters.

The informal attitude of the section, and the deviation from a rectilinear organisation are in accordance with traditional Ottoman *külliye* architecture. Early *külliyes* are loosely organised gatherings of buildings. Formal relationship between buildings is weak, and the mosque is not an emphasised or central monument. The modular building principle, the domed square is used for every single building. Attention is focussed on the visibility from a distance. In mosques a progress towards spatial integration under a central dome is discernible in the Bursa mosques (Dogan Kuban 1987), culminating in the imperial mosques of Istanbul.

The Fatih complex is the first *külliye* organised in a rectilinear plan with centralism, axuality and monumentality, all novelties in Ottoman architecture. The *medreses* are symmetrical on each side of the mosque. The walls of the *medreses* define the edge of the flat precinct. A street system is not involved in the open area around the mosque, but is kept outside. The relationship between different buildings and spaces and with the adjacent city are kept uncomplicated and distinct. The section of the Fatih complex adds little of interest to the plan.

The Süleymaniye mosque strives towards a structural lightness with the internal space integrated under the central dome. It repeats the scheme of the Beazit mosque, but the structure and spatial rhythm have been

hamams are no invention. Obviously no effort is made to develop new fashions in the individual buildings, nor does the innovative approach lie in construction or detailing.

The basic unit, the individual cell, the domed room, is situated around the courtyards. The basic unit has its own gravity. It is also used as an individual building in the *Türbedar odası* and the tombs. The cell of the peristyle building relates externally to its neighbouring unit by duplication of its dome. The single building relates to the others by the same repetitive features.

The dependencies are integrated in a hierarchical system, grouped around the mosque. The many domes of the dependencies visually support the central dome of the mosque.

At the same time each individual building is a building in its own right. Just as the complex on a large scale is organised around the mosque, the peristyle dependencies have their own centre located in the middle of their courtyard. As individuals they could participate in another type of urban design, standing solitary or as parts of a loose complex. In Süleymaniye they function separately from the totality at the same time as they form an integrated part of the larger system.

The modular system works on different scales and unifies smaller parts with the bigger. The most insignificant room, a kitchen or the storage has something in common with the mosque. Differences are reduced through resemblance. One room echoes the other, a single space becomes a little brother of the peristyle building or the entire complex.

The entrances of the peristyle buildings are located suitably in relationship with the individual building. An entrance can be found in a little alley or on a larger street. Little account is taken of axial or frontal placement. The buildings become objects, independent of the totality.

Often the buildings have irregular external shape, as is the case with all dependencies placed at the open space of the mosque. Their cells are projecting from the rectangular form. One building - courtyard + cells - differ in form from its neighbour, depending upon what is suitable. Practical needs of each building are fully expressed in the design.

An outer wall, closed, austere and straight along the street, surrounds the irregular building, and creates an

intermediary space between building and street. The space is closed from the outside street, which permits the cells of the peristyles to take light and view from it. This means that the irregularity of the individual building does not interfere with the rectilinearity of the public spaces. The rectilinearity becomes the major criterion for the design of the complex, but does not impose itself on the individual building. The tension between the two opposing needs has found its balance.

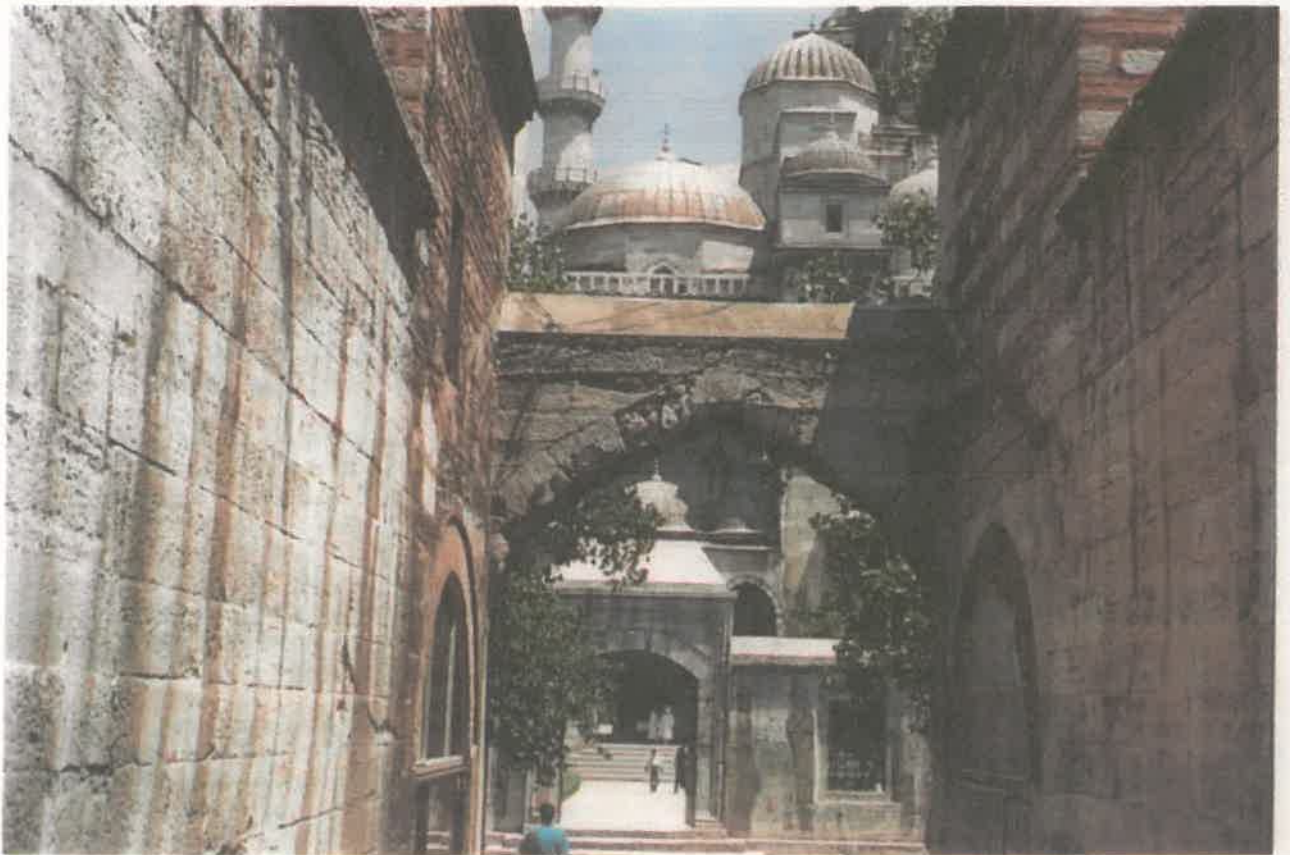
Sequences of spaces

A visitor has to pass sequences of different spaces before reaching the mosque. Nine entrances, none of special dignity, connects the complex in all directions. From

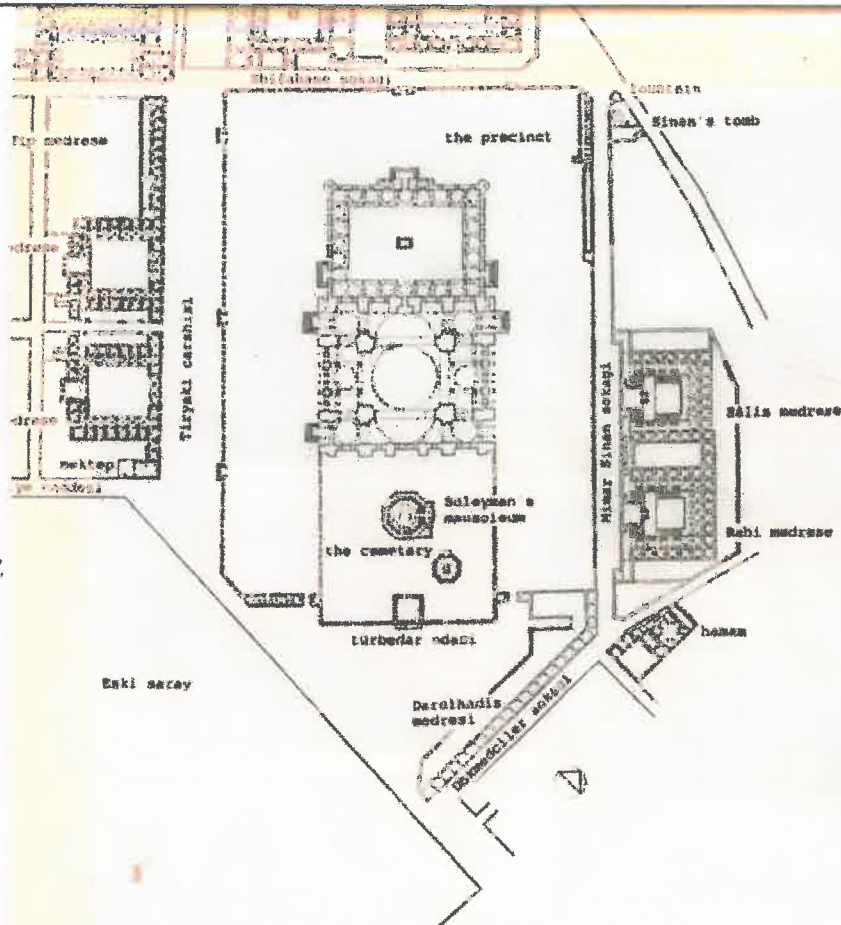


developed away from a heavy, rudimentary stage. The structure and plan of the church of Hagia Sophia is developed within an Ottoman context. The voluminous exterior rises high above the dependent buildings, and the central dome establishes the centre of the complex as a whole.

The dependencies of the Süleymaniye are of traditional Ottoman building types, with roots in earlier Mediterranean cultures. The four *medreses* are almost quadrangular peristyle structures with student rooms grouped around the courtyard. The classroom, *dershane*, is a larger room centred on one side of the court. The medical school, public kitchen, hospital and the *tabhane* are likewise peristyle buildings of a conventional type. The



Title page: Cross section of the Süleymaniye complex. Previous page: View from the west – "the regular complex meets irregular town. Top: The Qibla axis at the possession-taking point, where the rank of domes and semi-domes hide the view of one other. Above: The alley that empties from the east to Tiryaki carsisi and view further on to precinct and mosque.



outside one reaches the *küllîye* by meeting the back of a dependency. From here simple streets, without events, link to the open space around the mosque.

Walking the winding streets from Beyazit, lined by wooden houses, the visitor reaches a plain, straight stone wall. This is the back of a *medrese*. Taking the alley between the closed walls of two *medreses*, one can catch a glimpse of the monumental mosque. The alley empties on to the large oblong square of *Tiryaki carsisi* alongside the mosque. The mosque becomes fully visible behind the wall that separates the precinct and the square. Ahunbay (unpublished) describes the contrast between alley and square as a tension and the climax of a dramatic procession. In the square a street passes from one district of the city to another. The visitor can turn left or right, or he can choose to take a step aside and enter the precinct. The gateway is small and narrow. Entering the precinct he can go forth to the mosque leaving the busy life of the city behind him.

Coming from the bazaar district to the south one experiences a similar sequence from the city to the heart of the complex. An interesting feature is the visitor's involvement with the qibla axis just before entering the plain ground of the open space. At the moment when the mosque is in full view, the visitor is passing the qibla axis. At the possession-taking point of the axis the rank of smaller domes and semi-domes hide the view of one other. They form one single volume which steps down from the central dome of the mosque behind. The dome of the *Türbedar odasi* is closest, and has exactly the same measurements as the following dome of the sultan's mausoleum, and the semi-dome of the mosque. Once past the axis, this visual phenomenon is discontinued.

The qibla axis is strongly articulated in the open area of the mosque by a row of architectural elements. Except for the central dome, the semi-domes, the sultan's

mausoleum and the *Türbedar odasi*, three porticoes follow one other on the north side, as if they revealed a possible path from the street to the mosque. This directness is blocked by the wall of the *tabhane* which abruptly ends the axis to the north, the position of the fountain at the court centre, which blocks the path, and the obligation of the believers to do ritual washing, which takes place along the outer walls of the long sides of the mosque. Everyone must deviate from the axis due to the fact that ablution takes place in another location.

The architecturally underlined axis is a visualisation of the qibla axis, but not related to the actions of a visitor. The visitor approaches the mosque in an indirect, non-axial way. In this respect, the separation of the mosque from other buildings by placing it on an open space, does not alter tradition. In relation to the activity of the individual, the mosque remains an integral part of the surrounding urban system, while the built form takes up new patterns with an axial placement of a free-standing monument.

At the Open Space

Upon entering the open space, the mosque, which was previously hidden, suddenly dominates the view. The open space around the mosque consists of streets, the precinct, the *carsi*, the cemetery and the wrestling place. It is the contained space of the entire *küllîye* and a public space of the city. It is formalised and dignified. Different functions meet and find their place: the market, the games, the informal meeting. The presence of the official power is expressed in the adjoining buildings: schools, justice and religious centre. It is an urban square of which the praying room and the courtyard of the mosque are parts.

On the west side a street participates in the oblong square of *Tiryaki carsisi*, alongside the mosque. It is the most urban place in the complex, limited by buildings and with the imposing pyramidal form of the mosque visible behind the wall of the precinct. The square duplicates the eastern space of the precinct, as the two spaces are back to back to one other.

The longitudinal section of the place is pronounced by the low horizontal walls of the dependencies and the precinct, and the aligned trees. This is successfully counterbalanced by the volume of the mosque, its entrances, the roof of the ablution fountains and the huge tympanum vault. The *Tiryaki carsisi*, with its connecting streets, street life and coffee-houses, joins to the surrounding city. The city is invited to the heart of the complex. From here it is possible to contemplate the mosque from proximity.

Along the streets passing the open space, the precinct is surrounded by a wall, which dramatises the relationship between the mosque and its vicinity. The wall is not closed, but acts as a framework. The mosque is visible through the frame. The wall connects, but also separates an inside from an outside. The inside is protected from the busier outside. The wall also gives structure to the directional street, which the presence of the mosque only partly neutralises.

North of the mosque the *Shifahane sokak* passes. It is

flanked by the wall of the dependencies and that of the precinct. Both walls become equal to one another when one stands in the street. The street turns out to be a negative shape of the building masses. This is the normal Islamic street, with a wall sealing the back of the building, the building itself open to its inner sphere. Upon entering, direction gives way to staying and being.

Inside, with some distance from the surrounding wall, the wall visually coincides with the walls surrounding the dependencies, as if the precinct was encircled by buildings. Once inside the precinct, the street is obliterated from the visual composition, and the visitor stands in a courtyard enclosed by buildings. The street is well defined and visible only from within itself.

The Precinct

Hypostyle mosques with huge rectangular courtyards, placed in the irregular building mass are common in the Islamic world. The courtyard serves as an open air part of the praying room. In classical Ottoman architecture this courtyard, as the praying room, has been given an exterior, that integrates in the building of the mosque. It has taken the form of a building part. The precinct as the space around the mosque, is not a place of prayer or conferences, but serves as an independent urban space. In Süleymaniye one ritual function, the ablution, is moved outside the mosque to the precinct.

Ultimately the precinct of the Süleymaniye is a vast, flat space upon which the mosque is constructed. This ground is not natural, but a built structure, even partly underbuilt. Combined with its enclosed feature it assumes the character of a building in its own right. It becomes the outer shell of the mosque, essential for the monumentality of the mosque. Furthermore, it complements the official public space of the mosque with an informal one, which has no regimented use, but is a grand meeting place in the city.

The mosque stands in the middle of the precinct and creates three combined areas, forming a u-shape. To the north-east, the vista of the city opens to an infinite space. With its panorama it connects the complex with the city, and makes the dominating quality of the site visible. This way of connecting is contradictory to the means by which the *Tiryaki carsisi*, on the other side of the mosque brings the city into the complex. The *carsi* refers to urbanity, and the vista to rural calmness. The eastern and western side of the mosque have contradictory characters. The western place has spatial limits and visual accordance with the plan in a rectilinear system. The eastern vista has no limits, the section opposes the plan and the main visual forms are, when looking out from the precinct, the landscape of domes of the dependencies down the slope. These pairs of opposition are a basic theme in the whole complex, each one representing its own tradition integrated in the design.

While the dependencies are buildings with a central courtyard, the precinct is a courtyard with a central building. The precinct is an inverted building where mass and space have exchanged places. The means are the same for these opposite phenomena, the vocabulary limited within the same family of conception, the central courtyard or centrally placed building, the wall limiting a courtyard or a building.

Like the other open air inner courtyards of the complex, the precinct is a garden. We find the gardens of the peristyle, of the intermediary spaces between peristyle

building and the street, of the cemetery, of the *Tiryaki Carsisi* and of the courtyard of the mosque. It is as though the rural past is recalled, the camping sites of early Ottoman reign evolve and are transferred into a new cultural situation.

About the City and the Complex

The Süleymaniye puts up walls to the surrounding city and opens towards its own centre. It breaks with the winding street system of the city. It stands out with its buildings lined along straight streets, the vast open and rectangular spaces, its centralism around a monument, its domes. The complex has grown to become a district of its own, designed by other means than the rest of the city. It is an enormous block implemented in a small-scale environment. Through contrast, not through connecting, its importance is shown. The stone construction of the complex contrasts with the historically wooden city. While the city is submitted to change, the complex is intended to survive. The complex achieves an abstract and 'eternal' quality.

The spatial structures are emphasised with a succession of spaces near and within the complex. The spatial differentiation involves the actions of the visiting individual. One walks through one space to another. The sequences complement and depend on the developed structure of the mosque: the elaborated volume which is emphasised in the open space.

For a visitor it is not always clear when one is entering the realm of the complex. Walking in the vicinity one meets a street flanked by a wall. One walks along this wall, another wall is met, and a glimpse of the mosque can be caught. Continuing straight forward, the wall ends, and one leaves the complex.

The *kulliye* intermingles with the surrounding quarters. Entering streets pass through, without leading axially to the mosque. The mosque remains hidden behind ordinary houses until one is close by, and appears when entering the open space.

The outer straight walls of the complex that meet a looser urban form house different activities. The manufacture - area finds its place in parts of the complex adjacent to the bazaar. The austere form of the complex, which is seemingly erected around its centre, interferes practically with daily life activities. It is a traditional setting for a mosque, intimately adjoining the city.

The institutions of the complex are central to the function of the society, while its formal expression does not clearly correspond to the role of the civic centre. The streets leading in and passing through the complex are no major arteries. They pass at a distance and are not immediately connected to the complex. The formal isolation contrasts with its central function, even though its central significance is certainly expressed in its visibility from a distance, the vicinity to the *mese*, the harbour and the bazaar.

The spaces of the Süleymaniye create a walk from the city to the mosque by creating a series of spaces. Spaces like the *Tiryaki carsisi* and the precinct do not axially lead to the mosque, they counterbalance its centralistic impact. But they represent different stages in a walk from the busy city to the protected space of the mosque. The movement of a visitor is not directed, but becomes an individual process of passing and being in a number of sovereign spaces.

The mosque is visible from proximity, when being in

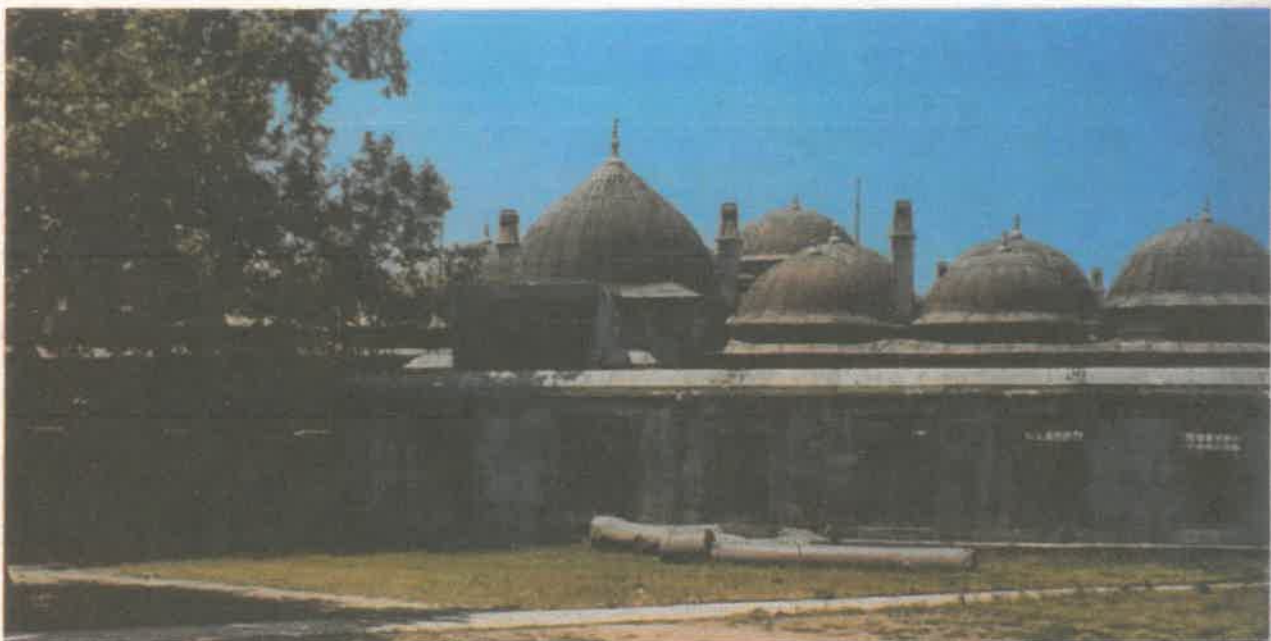
the open space, and from a distance. At a moderate distance, from the bazaar or the harbour edge, the mosque was not to be visible in Ottoman times. The view of the Süleymaniye from distant places in Istanbul shows the pyramidical mosque, resting on the domes of the dependencies. Domes descend on either side of the mosque, wander out and seize the neighbouring landscape. The view does not tell us about the urban spaces within, about sequences or open places, but shows an entity of volume and mass. A pole is created between an inside and outside.

Antique and Renaissance Influences

The reign of Fatih Mehmet II meant the defeat of the Byzantine empire and the conquest of Constantinople.

The claim to succession to older empires of the region followed. The victorious Ottomans take up the fallen mantle of Byzans and Rome. Through conquest and interchange the architecture of antiquity becomes well-known. Pergamon, Miletus and Priene show examples of antique architecture in the area of the new empire. In Istanbul the monuments of the new regime, like the Fatih complex, take classical schemes.

In his formative years Sinan participated as a janissary in the military campaigns. Kuran (1987) points out Sinan's direct knowledge of major cities in Asia and Europe, and that it would not be unrealistic to assert that Sinan would have examined the historical buildings along the campaign routes. He also assumes the possibility that Sinan later used the information for future reference.



Page 12: Plan of the Süleymaniye complex. Top: The domes of the tabhane at the other side of Shifahane sokagi, seen from inside the precinct. The wall of the precinct visually coincides with the wall surrounding the tabhane, as if the precinct was encircled by buildings. Above: The Shifahane sokagi, flanked by the walls of the dependencies to the left and of the precinct to the right. The walls are equal to one another when one stands in the street. Opposite page: The vista of the city from the east side of the precinct

The form of the new complexes can be associated with the direct knowledge of antiquity as well as the cultural inflow of ideas from renaissance Italy. Sultan Mehmet II's contacts with Italy have often been mentioned. Goodwin (1971) compares Sinan and Alberti, and concluding similarities as well as the differences in their cultural background. Goodwin states that Sinan may have been aware of the Renaissance. Kuban (1987) stresses that Sinan's architecture is not an expression of a new theory of society and man, as was renaissance architecture of Italy, and Kuran (1987) concludes that Sinan based his theory and rules of Ottoman classical architecture on Ottoman building practice and complemented this knowledge by his Byzantine experience.

But at the same time the Renaissance is likely, for other reasons, to have evoked interest in Istanbul. It put interest in preceding

empires of the region. The free-standing monument is a concept in renaissance architecture, an idea of Alberti. In Süleymaniye this renaissance quality is even more clearly and strongly realised than in Italy. In the Islamic tradition the free-standing Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem also refers to Byzantine architecture. Moreover, in Süleymaniye an urban square is created.

The empire was in need of new symbols connected to ancient glory. It was also in need of constructed socio-cultural centres that would form a nucleus for urban expansion. Those necessities co-operate in creating the sultan complexes. Unlike other European regimes the centralised power was able to gather the economical and material means for major complex constructions and for this reason no effort was spared. Here in Istanbul a

meeting and superimposing of different traditions in one form. On the one hand it is a traditional approach where the mosque finds its place among other constructions. Spatial organisation is loose. The dome-on-cube opens to a variety of solutions, and equalises different rooms, spaces and buildings. It emphasises unity between places. On the other hand new influences from renaissance Italy and the antique tradition are revived. The integration of these dualities creates the ingenious architecture of Süleymaniye.



renaissance of antiquity is practiced in its own way.

Conclusions

The complexity of design in the Süleymaniye is obvious. Opposing phenomena coexist in the design. The kulliye shows a clear concept, and this concept is repeatedly contradicted. Spaces and buildings may be described in one way, while simultaneously forces within them enable the opposite interpretation. It is an ambiguous and dualistic design, where adverse meanings are integrated to achieve formal unity. Rectilinear order is counterbalanced with informality, axiality with non-axial movement, centralisation to the monumental mosque with the independence of modular dome-on-cube unit. An urban pattern is established, but with a garden theme in every open space.

The Süleymaniye is a civic centre with an urban square, but deprecatory of the city. And this deprecatory tendency finds its counterpart in a contrary movement, a close intermingling with neighbouring quarters. Streets are connected with the surroundings, but the choice of site does not favour communication. The inner open space is divided in sequences and distinct parts of the whole, opposing each other, but at the same time creating one single urban unit.

The duality omnipresent in the complex is basically the

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Further details from:

Zand Harirchi, M Arch

General Director & Head of Architecture Department

Flat 12, No 167 Khaled Eslaboli St

Tehran 15168, Iran

Tel: 021-878 1309; Fax 021-888 5114

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reception and detail tile design: Court of the Myrtles, northern porch, Alhambra, Granada

Contemplating Al-Andalus

DAVID KUBRY

There is on each square inch of wall in every interior of Paradise a decorative relief in alabaster carved to the same variable depth, and with the same finesse, as the lobe of the human ear. The sound to which the hearing of the craftsman who carved these alabaster surfaces was turned still echoes: it enters through the eyes of the tourist who passes through. Those who hear what they see become pilgrims. This is the experience which, in Arabic, is called *baraka*.

In this Paradise, the decorative motifs in each repeating frame, horizontal or vertically oriented, in every belvedere or niche, on every monumental wall surface, vary endlessly. An abstract and formal geometry in some, in others natural forms: lotus, pointing canelle, coquille St Jacques, pine cone, palm, fill or embroidery surfaces which are frequently defined by a calligraphic frame of kufic. Many surfaces are at heights defying scrutiny, but still bear witness to the same persevering accomplishment in time of the human hand attuned to the ear of the heart. Where the pattern is elaborated in ogee or other repeating vignette forms, the content of each unit joins across adjacent borders to cluster organically, the geometry of the underlying scheme which unifies the decorated plane,

still being clearly perceptible.

Thus both the intertwining and consolidating reference to nature, whether abstract or figurative, and the underlying architectural structure containing it, alternate harmoniously in pre-eminence, the minutiae of the pattern seeming, in one surface, to dominate and overflow the structure of the formal boundaries; in others, to be muted and contained within them. Just as, in ordinary human experience, the wall undulates or dances between the direct perception of concrete, natural variety and the abstract conception of spiritual forms within it, so the relief-decoration of this architectural paradise expresses the inseparable union of matter and spirit, and of the sacred and secular.

The expression of this union is the essential attribute of the Andalusian civilisation which flourished from the mid-eighth to the mid-fifteenth century, and which derived from the colonisation of the Iberian peninsula by the survivors of the Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus. It began with the building of the Mesquita-Mosque in Cordoba and culminated in the architectural achievement whose decorative surfaces have been described above: the Alhambra in Granada.

When Muhammad first urged his followers, among whom pagan desert dwellers and Jews, to abandon the religious and tribal allegiances which divided them and establish what Rafiq Zakaria has called "a welfare state" in Medina, his intention was to situate the religious claim to divine revelation in the moral context of secular life; in effect, to provide what we would recognise today as a political context for the message of The Sermon on the Mount. Henceforth, following the revelation of the Qur'an, civilisation should reflect consciously, not merely intuitively, the notion of an harmonious created order.

This intuition had, hitherto, been expressed variously in the antecedent traditions of Christians, Jews and pagans throughout the Middle East. The Judaic-Christian scriptural tradition and its creation epic were the written expression of far more ancient oral traditions of which Abraham's migration from Ur in Mesopotamia is a symbolic reference point in memory, corresponding to the beginnings of literacy. The Qur'an refers to all the peoples who shared this tradition as "The Peoples of the Book", and Muhammad's purpose was to incarnate the divine, not in the life of a representative individual whose union with God is 'vicarious' for others, (for this had been accomplished) but as a moral imperative within a civic community. This would then underpin a secular order in which the Divine was manifest.

The recollection of a divine origin belonged to an oral tradition preserved principally among bedouin, whose utterances were not compromised by the institutional habit of the urban mentality. Moreover, the ways of nomadic life had been conducive to poetic utterance; the *Jahiliyya*, the composite oral expression of this tradition in Arabic as it stood in the time of Muhammad, therefore found its purest form of utterance in the Arabic of the Quraesh tribe, and this was the mother-tongue of Muhammad.

He spoke knowing that the pure simplicity of relations between the individual and the divine expressed in the life of the desert bedouin since the time of Abraham, might be translated into a civic order embracing both the sacred and secular dimensions of human experience without contradiction. He did so, furthermore, being clearly aware that, following the utilitarianism of the Roman civilisation which had dominated the Middle East, the tendency of the Greek intellectual inheritance, which was still alive in centres of learning patronised by Christians and Jews alike, was to polarise the human soul between rational and sensual experience, between abstract thought and hedonism.

This polarisation was to breach the initial simplicity of Islam under the Umayyads in the more sophisticated civilisation of their successors, the Abbassids, whose brilliant Caliph Harun al-Rashid consciously cultivated the restoration and recovery of Greek learning. Since neither the pleasures of sensual experience nor the rewards of intellectual enquiry have any sense or perspective without the intuitions of the heart, Muhammad recognised the heart as the instinctual centre of empathy and perception through which the human species is united with the rest of nature, and from which it is separated in cognitive experience.

The essential message of the unity of sacred and secular experience was the driving force of creative expression during the Umayyad Caliphate; and this, the Prince Abd' al-Rahman, who survived the Abbassid assassinations, took with him to Spain.

The Alpujarras, through which one passes en route from the Mediterranean coast to Grenada, bear a remarkable resemblance to the Judean hills west of the Jordan Valley; and from Grenada to Cordoba, the undulating vistas of cultivated desert evoke the Umayyad homeland of the Syrian plains between Damascus and Aleppo. Through this landscape the Umayyad survivors and their retinue passed, protected by defecting Abbassid armies who so recently served the last Umayyad Caliph, in search of their new Damascus, enlisting the support of communities through which they passed; communities with long-standing cultural and trade connections, via the Mediterranean, with the Middle East; communities which had previously been deprived of their autonomy by several centuries of Visigothic catholic autocracy.

Abd' al-Rahman arrived in Cordoba in 756. Typical of that remarkable tolerance towards other faiths which distinguished Umayyad rule in Spain, he is said to have purchased one half of the existing Visigothic cathedral site from the Cordoban administration for use as a Mosque, commencing construction of the Mesquita Mosque in 785.

This remarkable architectural feat was accomplished with astonishing ingenuity: columns in marble, porphyry, granite and alabaster were collected from Roman and Visigothic sites far and wide in Spain, and others, including Byzantine columns, were shipped from the Middle East. These columns, with the radically differing iconography of their capitals, were set in a rectilinear plan which was oriented to an existing wall of the original Visigothic cathedral. This wall was incorporated because it was more or less oriented towards Makkah. The misalignment was a matter of 17°, and the "more or less" of this approximation typified the flexibility of thought expressed throughout in the construction. A flexibility of thought which is characteristic of Islam as Muhammad conceived it; as a counterbalance to the doctrinal dogmatism which successive Christian Synods had imposed on the simplicity of a single prophetic tradition. As far as Muhammad was concerned, it was his task to re-establish the tradition within an essential perspective from which both Christians and Jews had departed, and the revelation of the Qur'an was given for that purpose to serve the interests of all the People of the Book. Muhammad therefore eschewed all rigid conceptual practices, and nowhere, West or East, is the architectural expression of this spirit better exemplified than in the construction of the Mesquita Mosque.

The columns which had been salvaged for the construction of the Mosque from distant locations were naturally of varying lengths; so that, in order to permit the alignment of the vaulting they were to carry, the pedestals were recessed into the floor at varying depths in niches which exposed their bases. As the vaulted arches which then surmounted the columns would still not all achieve the required uniform roof height (unless the bases of the longest columns were to be obscured in the depth of the niches), the arches were furnished on both sides, above the capital of the supporting column, with a flat pier, cut from the masonry of demolished or derelict buildings elsewhere. These supported a second tier of arches, the pier heights being adjusted to absorb any remaining variations in the tier below to permit a uniform height at roof level. Each pier removed from a site in the source building was so chosen that it terminated in a sculpted form. Set between the piers were blocks of masonry cut to

form with them a vertical plinth which rose from the junction of the arches above each column to carry the second tier of arches which supported the roof. The selection and choice of the pier material was of course, determined by availability. This apparently random combination of ornamental elements from derelict Visigothic, Byzantine and Islamic buildings or ruins, unified within the overall architectural conception, is unprecedented in monumental architecture. It anticipates the pluralism of post-modernity but outshines it. In post-modernity there are no unifying epistemological and unitary concepts because the notion of their existence has been identified with the moral imperatives of what is taken to be religious idealism. As far as the Umayyad builders of the Mesquita Mosque were concerned, the unitary perspective was given by an epistemology which repudiates the definition of absolutes, and which is the cornerstone of Islam.

The monumental simplicity of the construction is based on two uniform vistas of receding columns, each at 90° to the other, with daylight penetration only from the north front, which opens onto the Patio de los Naranjas. Communion between the individual presence and the mysterious space, originally lit by some 300 chandeliers and 1,500 lamps, is given, not diminished by, the multiplicity of the columns, and enhanced by the tension between the overall architectural simplicity and the variety of ornamental detail, the latter being perceived only at close quarters during the slow and attentive passage of the observer.

A single architectural focus complements this schematic simplicity in an intensely concentrated and richly decorated geometry of spatial forms, and this is the prayer niche (the *Mihrab*), constructed by al-Makam II two centuries later as part of his extension (following those of Abd' al-Rahman II and al-Mansur), and aligned at the end of the central aisle. Of this niche, Titus Burckhardt wrote:

The design of the prayer niche in Cordoba was used as a model for countless prayer niches in Spain and North Africa. The niche is crowned by a horseshoe-shaped arch, enclosed by a rectangular frame. The arch derives a peculiar strength from the fact that its central point shifts up from below. The wedge-shaped arch stones or *voussoirs* fan out from a point at the foot of the arch, and the centres of the inner and outer circumferences of the arch lie one above the other. The entire arch seems to radiate, like the sun or the moon gradually rising over the horizon. It is not rigid; it breathes as if expanding with a surfeit of inner beatitude, while the rectangular frame enclosing it acts as a counterbalance. The radiating energy and the perfect stillness form an unsurpassable equilibrium. Herein lies the basic formula of Moorish architecture.

According to Marianne Barracand and Achim Bednorz:

The volume of this mosque cannot be perceived as a whole ... Each nave or aisle can only be perceived simply as a homogenous unit ... By contrast, the spatial sensation in the Umayyad basilicas of the Near East is striking precisely because of their self-contained immensity. The multiplication and the extreme length of the aisles in Cordoba rob its hall of columns of (this) spatial impression.²

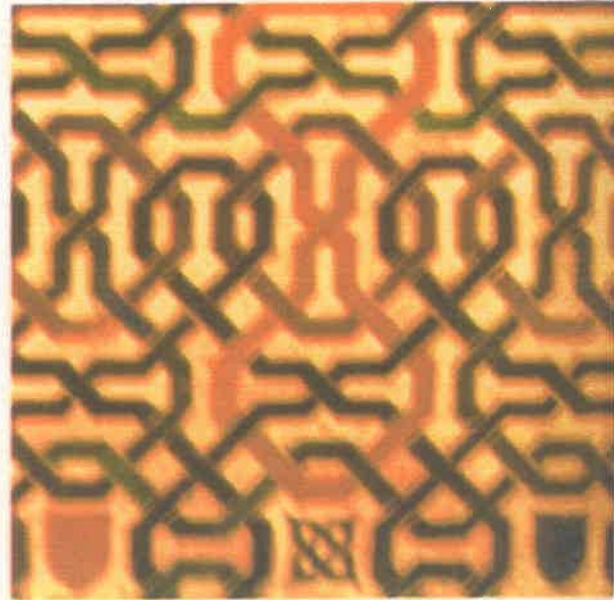
It does not; neither does the static viewpoint which justifies this assertion exist in creation except as an unreal abstraction. It was in the abstraction of a static observer that the vanishing-point system of perspective had its origins during the Italian Renaissance. The introduction of a static, hypothetical reality within the undulating flux of living, moving experience severs the imagination from its sources in sentient experience; but it also serves to concentrate the intellect in understanding the abstract principles governing the behaviour of matter, and these form the hidden structures of the visible world on which sentient experience depends. However, the proven knowledge issuing from this understanding tells us nothing we can prove (and call, in occidental terms, 'knowledge') about the relational whole within which we exist defining the parts. Thus in Europe a majority of individuals has come to suppose that reality consists only of such verifiable processes and entities, and that a personal existence as author of the story is illusory. The social status accorded by the product environment therefore becomes the index by which individuals learn to experience the personal dimension of existence. This may not apply to the articulate operators within the system but it does to the majority of users, and therefore creates social problems among those who are relatively deprived of material assets. Among the articulate operators however, a majority rationalises the system. In consequence, public architecture today, in Europe, creates spatial forms which dominate or demean the individual.

The Palestinian writer Izzat Gazzawi had this in mind when he observed that "the individual is an invention of Satan".³ If the individual is not the compound of all his relational experiences he has nothing to say. He is "a void at the heart of the world of objects", as the anti-hero in Alain Robbe-Grillet's novel "La Jalousie" was described, three decades before liberal post-modern philosophers invented the idea of the 'authorless' text.

Just as, in reality, the human being experiences many perspectives by literally passing through them as their focus, so the unitary quality of the space in the Mesquita Mosque is experienced by movement through it. Just as a static observer having a single viewpoint is the invention of academic abstraction, so the space in a building is not given by the existence of the architectural fabric alone but by its relation with an observer who moves through it, and by the light, which penetrates in varying degrees throughout. The perambulant observer unifies the whole and offers it back to the Creator, for whom alone unity is given without effort.

We may consider this edifice, which has stood from the eighth century to this day, as the exemplar in architecture of a creative spirit which seems oddly in tune with the most recent intimations of contemporary mathematics and physics, concerning the interplay between minute structural patterns which appear to be random, and the grander designs to which, in greater mass and over longer periods of time, they are seen to answer. Such a creative spirit, which inheres in tensions between the particular and the universal character of human experience, is of particular relevance to Europeans whose political institutions are bedevilled by incompatibilities between sacred and secular, and between bureaucratic edict and the communal traditions in localities to which they apply.

We are not surprised therefore to find that, in fifteenth century Spain, the European progenitors of our contemporary conceptual malaise, following the re-



Top, left: Entrance Generalife, Granada. Right: Court of the Lions, Alhambra, Granada. Above, left: Detail, facade relief decoration, Alhambra. Right: Detail, the Mexuar, Alhambra. Opposite page, top: Interior, Cordoba's Mesquita Mosque. Bottom: Detail, tile design on outer wall of a house in Albaicin, Granada. Page 24: A small niche at right of the entrance to the Hall of the Ambassadors. Photographs by Khalida Rahman.



conquest of Andalusia and the expulsion of the so-called Moors, intervened in the architectural synthesis of the sacred and secular with a heavy hand in the case of both the Mosque at Cordoba, and the Alhambra in Grenada.

In 1527, the Emperor Charles IV, a grandson of Ferdinand III, to whom Grenada surrendered in 1492, demolished a series of buildings in the centre of the Alhambra to accommodate an Italian Renaissance-style palace, a martial edifice, whose lower external elevations boast massive block-work fascias. Their belligerent forms, which one encounters when passing along the south façade on leaving the Court of the Lions via the Portal Gardens, are a shock to sensibilities which have recently attuned to the phenomenal craftsmanship and architectural refinement of the Alhambra. This act of sacrilege betokened the growth of a civilisation prizing the pursuit of rationality and sensuality as ends in themselves; a Europe whose regional distinctions of culture, and their related communitarian traditions, were to be eroded in the interests of the nation state. A rupture in that union of sacred and secular which characterised the Christian civilisation of the Middle Ages; a rupture which Muhammad foresaw in that melting-pot of juxtaposed traditions his background provided.

If it is true that, within the Mesquita, the individual may contemplate and experience himself in relation to a space which his presence unifies; that in movement he may experience the dimension of his own body as a coherent and active part, this is, in itself, a religious experience. That is, a form of knowledge which is essential to human life, proceeds from it. This knowledge is wholly inaccessible to any rational enquiry designed to validate truth in objective terms. It is nevertheless the product of empirical experience. It therefore needs no explicit creed or faith, and here it is expressed in the architecture. The meaning of religious experience is perceived instinctively if one's mental preoccupations are simple. Those who are more articulate may elaborate on the experience. They may even imagine how the simplicity of the relations between one's own space and that of the whole might be translated into harmonious principles governing the conduct of secular life; for, 1,000 years later, these principles still elude us. Neither were they necessarily perceived at that time in their architectural form: after nearly 500 years of enlightened restraint by the Catholic administration following the re-conquest of Cordoba by Ferdinand in 1236, the Emperor Charles V sanctioned the erection of a cathedral in the heart of the Mesquita Mosque. This commenced in 1523, in spite of protests from the elected council of Cordoba, and from Queen Isobella. The building took 243 years to complete, and entailed the eventual demolition of some 100 columns of the original Mosque built by Abd' al-Rahman I. Its architecture lacks the refinement of conception apparent in the buildings of the Italian Renaissance from which it derives. The cold, mechanical austerity of the nave, and the lofty space of the vaulting above which it fails to contain, expresses the intrusion of a rationality which is as inimical to the spirit of Christianity as were the theological doctrines being defined by the Church in the time of Muhammad. There is no incarnation; no physical embodiment of the sacred.

A few minutes walk from the Mesquita is the Cordoba Synagogue, built in 1315, and reflecting the same

devotional spirit in the craftsmanship of its decorative wall reliefs which is visible in the Alhambra. They bear witness to the reciprocal cultural exchange between Jews and Arabs in al-Andalus which the contemporary Sepharad community acknowledges as the foundation of a "Golden Age" of Jewish literary creativity.

Instrumental in the decline of this cultural flowering among Spanish Jews was the influence of Ashkenazi Jews in Europe. Sharing European anxiety towards the Arab world engendered by the Crusades, and the fear in intellectual circles of "Averroism", Ashkenazis saw the openly-acknowledged influence of Arab literary forms in the writings of Spanish Jews as a threat, both to the interests of their own, more conservative, forms of Judaism, and to their political security as a minority ethnic group in the European diaspora. And not without reason: for example, in the city of Toulouse, an objective of the infamous Abigensian Crusade, the following custom was practised: "On the eve of the Passover a Jew had to present himself at the Cathedral door and offer thirty pounds of wax for the lighting of candles in the Church. The Bishop stood at the Cathedral door, and when the Jew presented his offering, the Bishop slapped his face. On one occasion, the Bishop hit the Jew so hard that he died." Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (b. 910) pharmacologist, diplomat and Minister for Jewish Affairs at the Umayyad Court of Abd' al-Rahman III, sent letters on behalf of the Caliph to King Otto I, the Holy Roman Emperor, protesting against this practice; which evidently fell on deaf ears, since it continued for a further 150 years.

According to Carlos Carrete Parrondo: "The Spanish Jews, for many reasons (not least the geographical location of Sepharad, its unquestionable Arab influence, and its traditional use of the Babylonian Talmud), differed from Central European Jews (in that they) were of a stricter orthodoxy, and used the Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud." Firm intervention was therefore needed, and in the mid-twelfth century prominent members of the Ashkenazi diaspora moved to Toledo in order to monitor the legal and religious conduct of Jews in Christian Spain.

In the same period, commentaries and texts of Greek and Neoplatonist philosophical works, in particular of Aristotle, which had been preserved in the Schools of Jundi-Shapur, Hairan and Alexandria, and were unknown in the West, were being translated into Latin under the aegis of the Archbishop Raymond I in Toledo, to the north of al-Andalus. Among his translators the Jewish convert, Ben Ezra, contributed Latin translations of works on arithmetic, astronomy, medicine, philosophy and astrology. The dissemination in Europe of these works caused considerable controversy in established centres of learning; a matter with which the expulsion of Jews in mid-twelfth century France was not unconnected. To the further consternation of Ashkenazis, the great Cordoban philosopher Maimonides, who was also active at this time, wrote two of his important works in Arabic, and was considerably influenced by Averroës' commentaries on Aristotle and by al-Farabi. According to Osman Chahine, al-Farabi saw the philosophy of Plato as compatible with that of Muhammad, except that the City of Virtues "was not Greek but Islamic".⁸

For Maimonides, who later became physician to the Egyptian Sultan Salah al-Din (Saladin), this simply implied the same consonance of tradition between Jews and Arabs as is assumed for all the Peoples of the Book by Muhammad in the Qur'an, whose relevant purpose was to

re-establish the principles which distinguished monotheism, and its attendant consequences for human progress, from the conservative and pagan traditions of desert dwellers. The Qur'an also implies a critique on the one hand of Christian and Jewish assimilation with the utilitarianism of Roman civic virtues, and on the other of the moral compromise in secular life which inhibited the creation of political practises answering to an understanding of the sacred. To do so was a binding requirement on all the Peoples of the Book. Muhammad not only observed the failure of practising Jews and Christians to achieve this; we may suppose that he took it to be a fundamental principle of the Sermon on the Mount.

The linguistic formulas of the Qur'an are not discursive but poetic, and its utterance therefore eschews intellectual argument, appealing to the heart, from which intellectual formulations should proceed in the moral context of consultative structures within the community.

It is the historical circumstances in which the Qur'an was conceived which entitle us to suppose that Muhammad absorbed the essential message of the philosophical schools of his time and intuited their tendency: for once the Islamic message became effective, its adherents established a civilisation which then became the focal point for an intellectual and creative enterprise assimilating cultural influences from every territory it embraced, from Spain to India and Persia. Umayyad Islam permitted, by and large, the plurality of existing traditions to continue, practising that enlightened tolerance towards religious and ethnic minorities which is specifically enjoined in the Qur'an. (It did not tolerate pagan heresies, but that is another story). The universality of the Arabic language throughout the empire, and a declaration of the moral unity of form and content, were the causes of cultural practises which endured throughout Islam on the premise that they comprehended sacred and secular experience in a unified perspective. However, today they stand in an unresolved relation with concepts of modernity and of the state which issue from the West.

In Christian Europe, by contrast, the rise of the nation state ensured the demise of Latin. As the *lingua franca* of Christian spiritual endeavour during the Middle Ages, its use excluded the participation of the common peoples of Europe, for whom Latin was inaccessible, from the evolution of Christian practise, the definition of whose principles therefore became the strict province of theology. Unlike Latin, the language of Christian debate, the language of the Qur'an became the vernacular throughout the territories of the Arab conquests. This difference has had important consequences for the comparative evolution of literary forms within Islam and Christendom and their consequent relations with the evolution of political structures which are relevant to the confrontation of Europe with Islamic renewal in our time.

Today the Qur'an (as also the essentials of the Jewish and Christian traditions) confronts a civilisation of uniform and utilitarian materialism which has developed within Christian Europe as a consequence of the nominalist philosophies underpinning its progress. These philosophical tendencies developed in the context of a conspicuous failure on the part of western Christianity (for the story of Orthodox Christianity is another matter) to practise the expression in secular conduct of the vision of the sacred enshrined in the life of Christ.

The obfuscation of the original tradition which is common to Jews, Christians and Muslims, in the divergent understanding of it which separates Sepharad and Ashkenaz among Jews, mirrors and compounds the confrontation of nominal Christianity with nominal Islam; this confrontation was already evident, as we have seen, in al-Andalus and in the confrontation in late Medieval Europe between Christian scholasticism and the Aristotelian doctrines transmitted from the Arab world via Spain.

The doctrine of Averroës concerning the universality of intellect, though proscribed by the Church, appealed to the rationality of Christian philosophers in the University of Paris in the mid-thirteenth century. Among them, Siger of Brabant, whose philosophy circumnavigated the difficulty (as it seemed to the Church) of reconciling a universality of intellect with the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ which, by faith alone, was held to reconcile the fallen nature of mankind with the divine. He achieved this by positing a "Double Truth Theory" which permitted the co-existence of rational enquiry and religious belief: the object of the former being knowledge and the object of the latter being faith. Thus rational enquiry could adduce conclusions (and cause consequences) which might not be reconciled with belief, while the objects of belief were divine and inaccessible to intellect. As we have seen, the nascent origins of this opposition were already apparent to Muhammad in the Middle Eastern schools within which the knowledge of Greek philosophical works, lost to the West, was preserved. However, within a century of the dissemination of this philosophical tendency to the West via the civilisation of al-Andalus in Spain, the Umayyad Caliphate in Cordoba succumbed to the Christian North (1236), and the Abbassid Caliphate in Baghdad was crushed by the Mongol Prince Hulegu (1258). The first edict of the Church against "Averroism" was issued in 1270).

Although Islam has survived into the twentieth century and has been adopted widely in Asia and in South East Asia, the political practise of various forms of the nation state deriving from the European model dominates the Islamic world; irrespective of whether those plural forms, which the West calls 'democratic', exist or not, the social product which the population consumes is (as J K Galbraith puts it in *The Industrial State*) effectively determined by the corporate institutions of industry and state. This practise is contrary to the spirit of Islam.

It is due to the fact that various forms of what might be called "corporate paternalism" have been the general rule in the contemporary world East and West, in societies which are nominally Christian, Islamic or Communist, that dissenting communities and their leaders which have attempted to define social practise to suit human needs rather than corporate aims (in other words, to unite sacred and secular aims), have been marginalised by Islam and ridiculed or de-stabilised by the West. Neither Nicaragua, Cuba, Libya, nor Haiti (as Aristide hopes it will be), may represent paradise on earth, but in one form or another, and in the teeth of external interference, they have attempted to determine a form of political and economic infrastructure which serves the human needs of the community. A brief glance at the contemporary crisis of political institutions will suffice to show that we have more to learn from the failures of such dissenting communities than from the achievements of the vested interests East or

West, religious or secular, against which they have fought to survive. The political structures within which these vested interests operate are so far from exemplifying a social order reflecting the unity of sacred and secular to which all three monotheisms point, that the existence of any state which dissents from either Islamic or Western preconceptions of democratic orthodoxy, is perceived universally as a threat to internal security.

With regard to what is meant by the term 'religion', no revelation has been given which determines the specificities of secular practise, for

structures are in decline. Religious fundamentalisms which seek to impose a so-called Islamic order are the mirror image of the reductive functions performed by an increasing legislative bureaucracy in Europe.

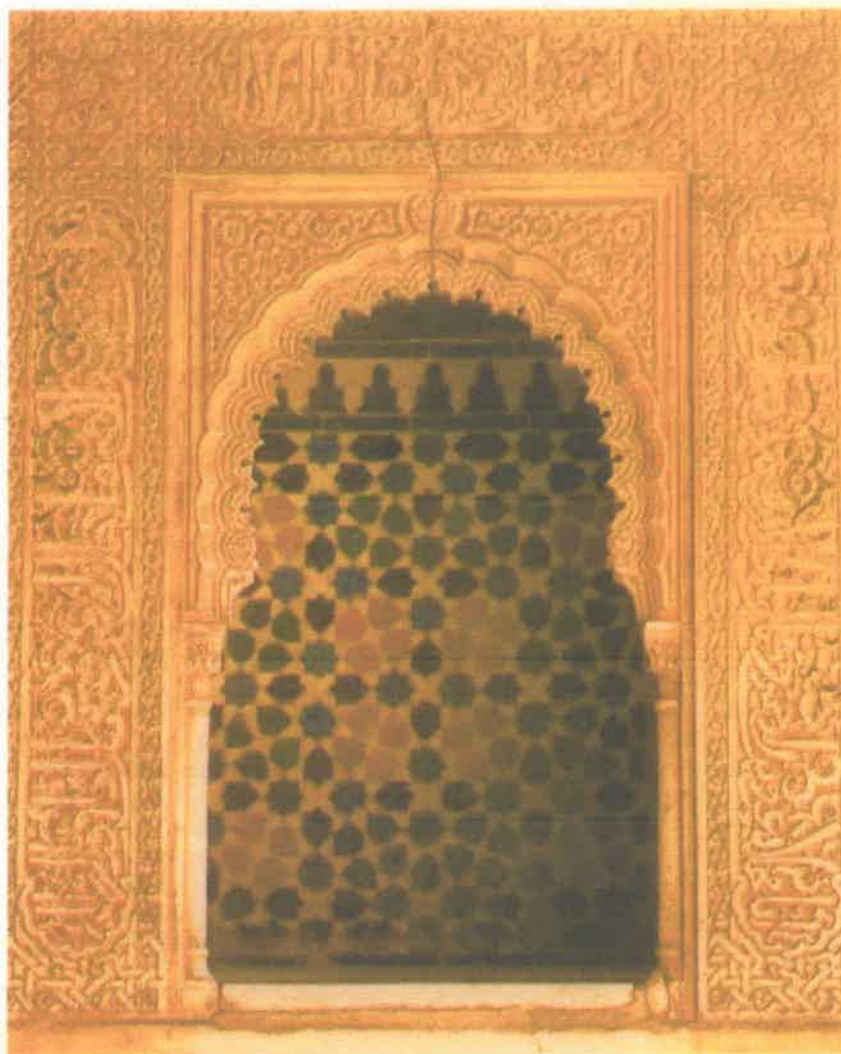
We have no blue-prints for the structure of a social order which unifies the sacred and the secular, but if survival depends on mutual support and the renewal of communal (and consultative) structures in the community, then the belief that the idea of Paradise might signify at some time an existing secular order must be dissociated from

religious obfuscation. If it inspired the architecture of the Alhambra and the Mesquita Mosque, no one who has not given up hope could do worse than make a pilgrimage to Grenada and Cordoba. A traveller who is lost cannot do worse than retrace his steps to a point he recognises. Without such humility, there is no way forward from an impasse.

There is on each square inch of wall in every interior of Paradise a decorative relief in alabaster carved to the same variable depth, and with the same finesse, as the lobe of the human ear. The sound to which the hearing of the craftsman who carved these alabaster surfaces was turned still echoes: it enters through the eye of the heart.

Without this perspective of the heart, the unenlightened intellect staggers toward the future, claiming authorlessness for every act which proceeds from it. In the eye of the heart, the synthesis of a single tradition can be seen; and if Jews, Christians and Muslims are not subject to it, a future determined by fragmented knowing, and which has no perspective, will engender those social upheavals which issue from the marginalised passion of the heart; for within the heart, creation has concentrated an undifferentiated perception of its being within the whole of nature. If intellectual

enquiry fails to accommodate the passage into consciousness of this undifferentiated relation with the whole of nature, intuited in the heart before the first thought is formed, that nature, the whole thing, must erupt.



these are subject to a moral consensus which is unpredictable. The determination of this practise by any agency (I would say, even legislative bodies, if by those we mean the kind of constrictive legislation now being applied to European infrastructures by Brussels) is the mark of a society whose communal

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- 1 Rafiq Zakaria: *Mohammad and the Qur'an* (Penguin, 1991).
- 2 Marianne Barracand and Achim Bednorz: *Moorish Architecture in Andalusia* (Taschen, 1992).
- 3 Izzat Gazzawi: *A Letter from Prison* (Mediterraneans 6; Paris, 1994).
- 4 Jesus Pelaez del Rozal: in *The Jews in Cordoba* (Edic. eAlmendo; Cordoba, 1985).

- 5 Carlos Carrete Parrondo: in *The Jews in Cordoba* (op. cit.).

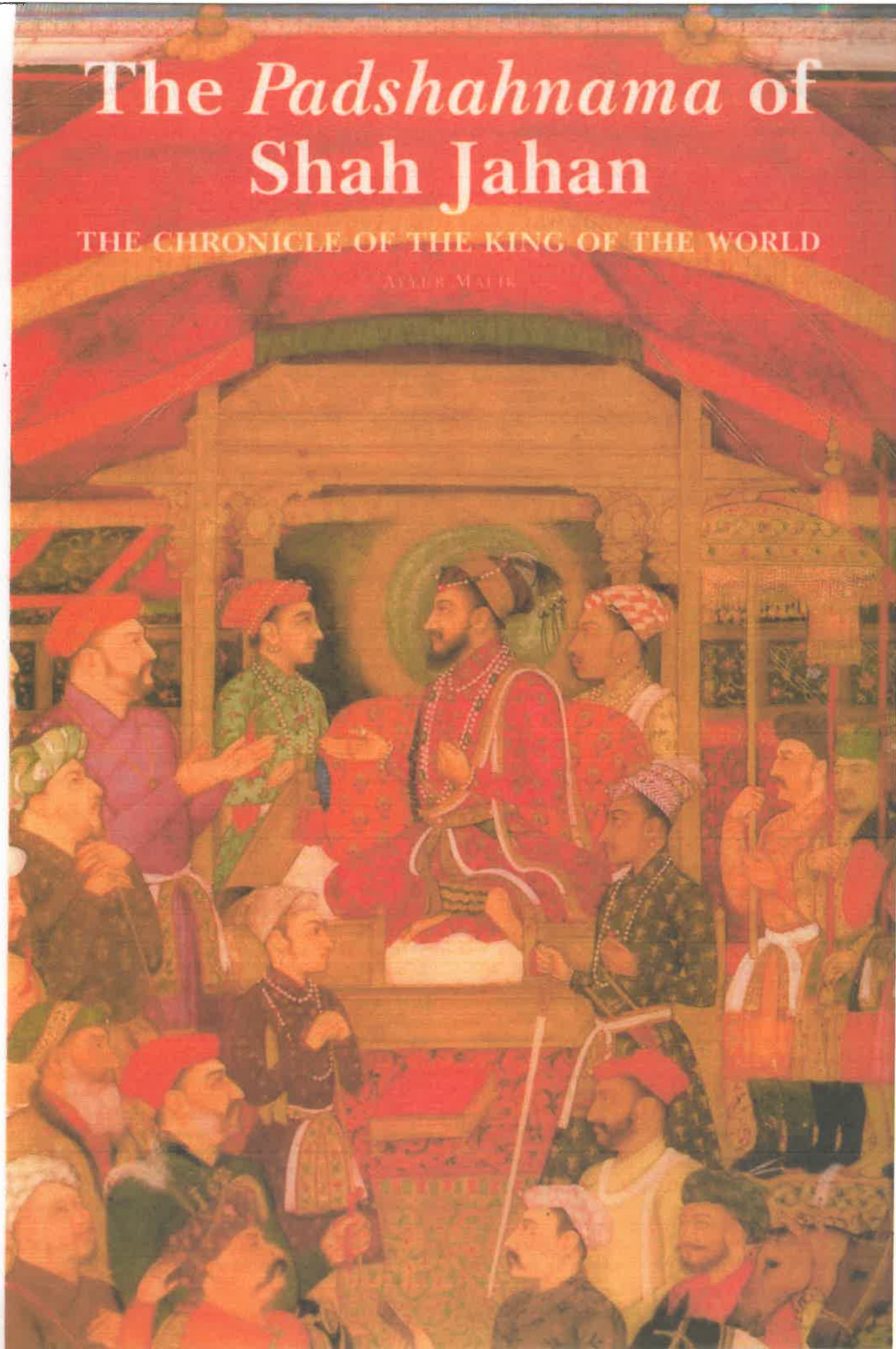
- 6 Osman Chahine: *L'Originalité Creatrice de la Philosophie Musulmane* (Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient; Paris, 1972).

- 7 For a definition of knowledge as a social product generated by the whole community which then determines the nature of political power, see Michael Chamberlain: *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (CUP, 1994).

The *Padshahnama* of Shah Jahan

THE CHRONICLE OF THE KING OF THE WORLD

AYYER MATR



Among the Mughal Emperors of India, Shah Jahan, the builder of the Taj Mahal, Delhi and Agra Forts, and of Shahjahanabad itself was perhaps the most outstanding patron of the art of architecture.

Although his interest in illustrated manuscripts was not quite matched by his passion for buildings, he nevertheless commissioned many portraits of himself and his court. These were later bound into albums – the *muraqqas* – in which the illustrations were placed on double-page spreads facing an explanatory text in fine calligraphy. In the tradition of his predecessors, he also commissioned the *Padshahnama*, a compendium of text and fine paintings, as an illustrated history of his own reign during the period AD 1627-1659.

In the turmoil which followed the decline of the Mughal empire during the 18th century, the *Padshahnama* was added to the library of the Nawab of Oudh. It was from here that the Nawab presented the manuscript to Lord Teignmouth, the Viceroy of India "as a most splendid specimen of oriental manuscripts" and as later recorded by Teignmouth, that "its acceptance was pushed upon him". The quality of the manuscript so astonished and impressed Teignmouth that he "declined receiving it with the observation that it was fit for a Royal Library" and that "as a literary curiosity it might be acceptable to the King of Great Britain".

Finally, the British Minister of Lucknow selected the *Padshahnama* together with five other manuscripts from the Nawab's library "as elegant specimens of Persian writing", and sent these to King George the Third in June 1799 with an explanatory note for the 'Description of Persian Manuscripts designed by Lord Teignmouth as a present to His Majesty'. The note listed the five manuscripts and gave a description of the *Padshahnama* which reads:

Shahjehan - Nama.

The History of the reign of the Emperor Shahjehan - Son of Jahangir, & Father of Aurangzebe.

*This is the most splendid Persian Manuscript that I ever saw. Many of the pages are well painted & some of them are portraits. The first is the portrait of Timur or Tamerlane, & the second that of Shahjehan. This was the Book which was shown to me at Lucknow, & I was there informed that the deceased Nabob Asophuddoulah purchased it for 12000 Rupees, or about £1500."*¹

From the library of Buckingham House, later Buckingham Palace, the *Padshahnama* was later moved to the new Library at Windsor established by William IV. The Windsor volume is incomplete as it only covers the first decade of Shah Jahan's reign, but it is the only known version which includes the illustrations.

Both as a chronicle of history and a work of art, Shah Jahan's *Padshahnama* is an extraordinary artistic achievement. Among the 40 or so Islamic manuscripts dating from the 15th to the 19th century retained in the Royal Library at Windsor, it is one of the most exceptional documents of an important period of Mughal history. The quality of each of its 44 paintings which illustrate and narrate major events of the reign of Shah Jahan make this manuscript one of the finest works of its period. Until recently, the entire work remained bound in the original volume so that only one page could be viewed at a time. Recent need for conservation required the volume to be unbound, thus making it possible for all the paintings to

be exhibited at once.

This unique opportunity coincides with the 50th year Golden Jubilee celebrations of the independence of India and Pakistan. As a part of the events to mark the occasion, the *Padshahnama* was first exhibited in the National Museum in New Delhi earlier this year. Without a corresponding display in the neighbouring Pakistan, it was exhibited at the Queen's Gallery in London during March and April. From here, the exhibition will travel to Washington, New York, Los Angeles, Fort Worth and Indianapolis before the folios are rebound and returned to the Royal Library.²

Despite the fact that the exhibition in London was not at all well promoted, it was exceptionally well attended and offered a unique opportunity to observe not only the sumptuous elegance of Shah Jahan's court but also get a glimpse into the many ceremonies and celebrations of the time. It was equally compelling to see at first hand, particularly when viewing the details through a magnifying glass, the excellent quality and refinement of the arts and crafts which existed in pre-colonial India. The *Padshahnama* exhibition was indeed a profound experience unlikely to be forgotten by the visitors who often waited for more than an hour to gain an entry.

The Windsor *Padshahnama* consists of 239 folios of gold-flecked tan paper of uniform thickness and texture. It contains 44 illustrations and text, written by Abdul Hamid Lahawri, to record a number of significant events of Shah Jahan's reign. At some stage, the original text was trimmed out of its original margins and re-mounted on the present creamy paper. A note on the last page indicates that the copying of the text was completed by the calligrapher Muhammed Amin of Mashhad in AH 1067 (AD 1656-7).

As was customary, the text was written as a continuous narrative on both sides of the leaves, with blank pages left for single or double spread illustration of the text. The immediate proximity of the illustration to the text was naturally important although it appears that this was not always followed in the Windsor copy and that while many illustrations do relate to the adjacent text by Abdul Hamid Lahawri, a few are only generally appropriate.³

The opening double-page spread establishes the captivating mood and quality of the work. They depict a double 'shamsa' – the image of the sun, as an intricate representation of the Divine light transferred to kings. From a luminous centre representing the sun, the delicate design continues to radiate outwards to assert the belief that Shah Jahan's birth was marked by "a flash from the world-pervading sun".⁴

Next comes the exquisite frontispiece, another double-spread showing Timur and Shah Jahan sitting on their thrones facing each other. Both illustrations are set in beautiful frames joined by a common border of an extremely delicate design. The illustrations show Timur handing over the imperial crown to Shah Jahan whose imperial lineage is recounted as follow:

"HIS MAJESTY IS the illustrious heir of *Jannat Mahani* [he whose place is in the heavenly garden], the Emperor Nur al-Din Muhammad Jahangir; son of *Arsh Ashyami* [he whose nest is on the divine throne], the

Emperor Jalal al-Din Muhammad Akbar; son of *Jannat Ashyani* [he whose nest is in heaven], the Emperor Nasir al-Din Humayun; son of *Firdaus Mahani* [he whose place is in paradise], the Emperor Zahir al-Din Muhammed Babur; son of Umar Shaikh Shah; son of martyr king Sultan Abu Sa'id Shah; son of Sultan Muhammed Shah; son of Mirza Miran Shah; son of Great Lord and universal conqueror, the Pillar of the World and Religion – Emperor Amir Timur Gurgan, the first *Sahib-i-Qiran* [Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction].¹

The prestige and pre-eminence of Shah Jahan is emphasized in all subsequent illustrations. He first appears as Prince Khurram on his victorious return in 1614 AD from the Mewar campaign to be received and honoured by his father Jahangir enthroned in the *Divan-i-Amm* [Hall of Public Audience] in Ajmer. The quality of this illustration – the designs and decorations on the wall, the accuracy of marble *jalis* (carved screens), the details on the turbans and robes of the courtiers, the design of the carpet, the bejewelled elephant and the gold studded railing in the foreground – all give a foretaste for the rest of the illustrations. Holding a painting under his arm, Balachand, the artist himself can be seen surveying the event from the bottom left corner.

There are further scenes of military exploits, conquests and hunting expeditions: *The submission of Rana Amar Singh of Mewar; Jahangir receiving Prince Khurram on his return from the Deccan; A'zam Khan's capture of Fort Dharur; the death of Khan Jahan Lodhi; the siege of Qandhar; the capture of Port Hoogly; Prince Khurram attacking a lion; Shah Jahan hunting; the siege of Daulatabad; the capture of Orchha; the surrender of Fort at Udgir; and Shah Jahan hunting lion at Burhanpur* – are all breathtaking illustrations not only for the particular scenes and events but also for the details of landscape, hamlets and the everyday life visible in the background.

There are a number of scenes relating to the Emperor and the Royal Household which show *Shah Jahan receiving his three eldest sons and Asif Khan during his accession ceremonies; the weighing of Shah Jahan on his 42nd lunar birthday; Shah Jahan receiving the Persian ambassador, Muhammad Ali Beg; Europeans bringing gifts to Shah Jahan; Jahangir presenting Prince Khurram with a turban ornament; and Shah Jahan visiting the shrine of Khwaja Mu'inuddin Chishti at Ajmer*. Every illustration is rewarding for its study in detail, be it the jewellery adorning the elephants and horses or richness of designs on the saddles.

A number of paintings show the weddings of the Princes Dara Shikoh, Shah Shuja' and Awrangzeb; a royal procession travelling from Agra to Lahore; and the arrival

of Prince Awrangzeb at the court at Lahore. It is in such scenes of celebrations that a wealth of delicate and delightful details of the most minute kind, particularly when observed through a magnifying glass, becomes breathtakingly alive. Rows of decorated elephants and horses, lines of bearers carrying wedding gifts, fireworks and the musicians of the *naqarkhana*, robes of the dignitaries and their ornate jewellery showing every pearl and cut stone highlighted – all provide a cacophony of visual delight as well as a testimony of the skill of the artists and the extraordinary perfection of their eyesight.

Although fourteen different artists were responsible for the illustrations in the *Padshahnama*, the work as a whole is remarkable in its consistency of approach and visual unity and the different artists' ability to compose ceremonies of extraordinary complexity and detail remains always overwhelming. Time and again, one feels compelled to marvel at the masterful perfection of their work – be it in the wall decorations and delicate *jalis* to the royal gallery, the intricacy of designs on the wedding gift baskets, the usual impishness of the musicians, and many other incidental details which cover the entire surface of the painting.

The Artists of the *Padshahnama*.

Generally little information is available about the lives of the artists. Nevertheless, it is known that the Mughal emperors employed many artists who were given space within the palace *harkhanas* or workshops and whenever required, travelled with the emperors on important expeditions. Akbar visited his artists' studios weekly to inspect the progress of work. Jahangir himself was extremely proud of his own ability to recognize the variety of styles and works of different artists and expressed it with such confidence:

"I derive such enjoyment from painting and have such expertise in judging it that no work of past and present masters can be shown to me, without the name being mentioned, that I do not instantly recognize who did it. Even if it is a scene of several figures and each face is by a different master, I can tell who did which face. If in a single painting different persons have done the eye and eyebrows, I can distinguish who drew the face and who made the eyes and eyebrows."²

Although Shah Jahan's passion for paintings was not the same as for architecture, fourteen different artists, some of whom had already achieved distinction at his father Jahangir's court are known to have worked on the *Padshahnama*. For a brief note on each of the artists and some of their works³ see box on pages 30-31.

1 All preceding quotations are from the letter from Lord Teignmouth, dated June 1799, in the Royal Library, Windsor Castle, as quoted in the Exhibition Catalogue.

2 Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Washington: 18 May - 15 Oct 1997

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: 18 Nov - 8 Feb 1998.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art: 26 Feb - 17 May 1998.

Kimble Art Museum, Fort Worth: 31 May - 23 Aug 1998.

Indianapolis Museum of Art: 6 Sept - 29 Nov 1998.

3 For a more detailed account, see Introduction by Milo Cleveland Beach in the Exhibition Catalogue, Azimuth Edition, Sackler Gallery, London, 1997.

4 According to Persian literary convention, each of the alphabets have a numerical value. This line was composed by a poet at the court of Emperor Akbar, Shah

Jahan's grand father, to celebrate the Prince Khurram's birth on the 10th of Rabi'II, 1000 according to the Muslim calendar (January 15, 1592). According to the convention, this phrase adds up to one thousand.

5 *Shah Jahan Nama*, p.4.

6 *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*; translated by Wheeler M Thackston.

7 For a detailed commentary, see 'The Artists of the *Padshahnama*' in the Exhibition Catalogue.

8 *Padshahnama*; translated by Wheeler M Thackston.

9 Manrique 1927, quoted in the Exhibition Catalogue.

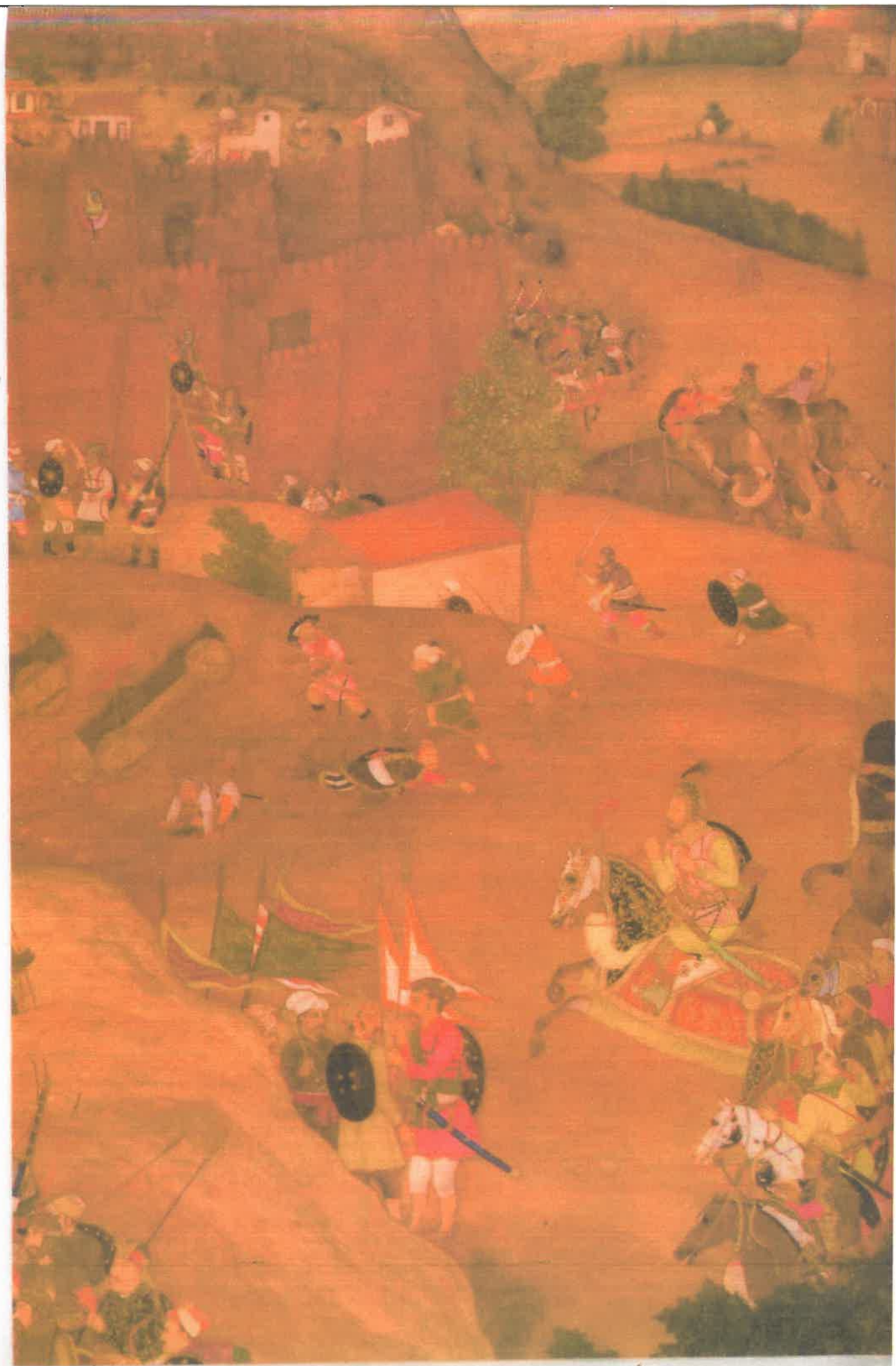
10 Roe 1967, quoted in the Exhibition catalogue.

11 *Jahangirnama*; translated by Wheeler M Thackston.

12 Professor Bonnie Wade 1995



Page 25: Shah Jahan receives the Persian ambassador, Muhammad Ali Beg, Burhanpur, Diwan-i-'Amm, March 1631. Folio 98a attributed to the 'Kashmiri painter', circa 1633. This page, top: Detail. Shah Jahan receives his three eldest sons and Asaf Khan during his accession ceremonies. Agra, Diwan-i-'Amm, 8 March 1628. Folio 50a painted by Bichitr, circa 1630; Folio 51a attributed to Ramdas, circa 1640. Above: Detail. The delivery of presents for Prince Dara-Shikoh's wedding. Agra, the Riverfront, November-December 1632. Folios 120a-121a attributed to Bishandas, circa 1635. Opposite page: A'zam Khan captures Fort Dharur. Dharur (Deccan), January 1631. Folio 92a painted by Balchand, circa 1633. Photographs of the Windsor Padshahnama manuscript Copyright Royal Collection. © 1997 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



Methods and Materials of Miniature Painting

Some basic information about the materials and methods used by the artists may help in the better appreciation of miniature paintings.

Paper: Chinese art of paper making reached the Muslim world after the Battle of Atalakh near Tashkent in AD 571. Chinese craftsmen first established its manufacture in Samarkand which later became an important centre for making high quality paper as noted by Babur (d.1530) in his memoirs. Till then, vellum was used for the writing of Qur'ans, and this continued for another two hundred years before it was replaced by paper.

Paper making was introduced by Muslims into India though it did not altogether supercede the use of palm leaves till the late 14th century. Paper pulp was made from rags, hemp fibre, bamboo, flax, jute, and cotton which were pounded by a hammer worked by a water wheel. By

the sixteenth century paper was extensively produced in India and used for most Mughal manuscripts and miniatures. Early Mughal artists also painted on cloth, another Indian tradition, and some of the *Humzanama* miniatures (circa 1562-77) were painted on cloth backed by gold-sprinkled paper. Often two or more layers of paper were pasted together to obtain a suitable thickness for painting. Kashmir soon became famous for making the thin white paper widely used for manuscripts. Although thin, paper produced in Kashmir was very strong and durable and extremely popular because of its neutral background. Its consistent thickness and highly polished surface provided an excellent background for calligraphy and for illuminated 'unwans' - the decorated titles or chapter headings. Flecked and polished paper was also available in a variety of colour such as indigo, purple, bright mauve, lavender, apricot, sage green, light brown and yellow ochre. By the sixteenth century, high quality

1 **Abid.** Abid was the son of an Iranian artist who became a master painter at the Mughal court. He also was the brother of Abu'l Hasan Nadiruzzaman who began his career at the end of Akbar's reign and later became Emperor Jahangir's favourite artist. The two works ascribed to him in the *Padshahnama* are 'the death of Khan Jahan Lodhi' (Kalinjar, February 3, 1631) and 'Jahangir receives Prince Khurram' (Diwan-i-amn, Ajmer, April 1616), both are admired for the technical skill, artistic maturity and intensely powerful realism.

2 **Balchand.** Balchand also came from a family of artists. He was the brother of the Bamboyan Payag, another artist whose work is included in the manuscript. *Padshahnama* contains four works by Balchand, including 'Jahangir receives Prince Khurram on his return from Mewar campaign' (Diwan-i-amn, Ajmer, February 20, 1615) in which the artist himself can be seen at the bottom left of the painting. His work is full of exacting details and movements as evident in the skin texture and jolliness of the elephant and in the details of the railing in the foreground. Even the small pox marks on the face of Raja Bikermajit, waiting on the gallery to be presented to Jahangir, are clearly visible.

3 **Bichitr.** 'Shah Jahan receiving his three sons and Asaf Khan' (Diwan-i-amn, Agra, March 8, 1628) by Bichitr is his most famous work. It is

much admired for technical brilliance, superb portraits, precise architectural details, and for the use of light to lend his figures a sense of physical mass and weight.

4 **Bishandas.** One of the most delightful works in the *Padshahnama*, that of 'the delivery of presents for Prince Dara Shikoh's wedding' (the river front, Agra, December 1632), to the home of his future bride is attributed to Bishandas. The double-page composition is arranged in parallel rows. There are lines of musicians riding on elephants and horse carriages, garlanded guests, and bearers carrying gifts. They are followed by the Emperor, Prince Dara Shikoh and the courtiers and yet more musicians. Altogether, the work convey a joyous spirit of fun and excitement and Bishandas's particular skill in portraiture of women is so vividly evident.

5 **Bhola.** Only one of the five works in the *Padshahnama* ascribed to Bhola is signed by him. Contrary to the normal convention of evenly distributing interest and artistic skill over the entire painting, Bhola displays a highly personal style of concentrating on the figures close to the royal circle and remains rather indifferent to the secondary elements. This is evident in his signed work, 'the weighing of Shah Jahan on his 42nd lunar birthday' (Diwan-i-khas, Agra, October 23, 1632), which depicts the Mughal royal custom of weighing the emperor twice a year in gold, silver and in

as many as twelve other items - once each at the end of the lunar and solar year. The value of weights was distributed to the poor 'since alms are beneficial for repelling of bodily and psychic harm and for attracting spiritual and corporeal benefits.' It is also recorded that 'all the articles included in the final weighing are, it is said, at once distributed amongst the poor... but with much secrecy that, save those who actually gave the gifts and those who received them, no one saw them...'

6 **Bulaqi.** The double page spread by Bulaqi, son of Hoshang, is excellent not only for the quality of its details but also for showing the grandeur of Mughal architecture. His work, 'Shah Jahan honouring Prince Dara Shikoh at his wedding' (February 12, 1633), shows the marble exterior and carved screens of the *Draan-o-khas* (Hall of the private audience) in the Agra Fort. On the *darshan jharoka* of the palace, the prince is being presented a neckless made of strands of lustrous pearls, brilliant rubies and emeralds, which Shah Jahan himself received from his father Jahangir on the eve of his own wedding. In the background, the firework display from the illuminated boats on the river Jumna and floodlit buildings on the opposite bank are clearly visible.

7 **Dawlat.** The only work attributed to Dawlat is 'Shah Jahan hunting lions at Burhanpur' (July 1630). Much attention is paid to the

rather relaxed hunt attendants in the foreground two of whom are wearing European hats. The picture is remarkable for the sensitivity with which the landscape and vegetation has been treated. A major painter of portraits in the historical style, Dawlat is also known for some of the excellent decorative margins in the albums of Shah Jahan's period.

8 **Dhola.** An interesting feature of Dhola's only work, 'the surrender of the fort at Udgir to Khan Dauran' (Deccan, 1636), is the unusually large area of unrelieved ground visible in the painting. There is far less precision and attention to detail in the far away elements such as the army on the ramparts and the hurriedly sketched sky in background. Dhola remained active well after Shah Jahan's reign and thus represents changing of style in Mughal paintings.

9 **The 'Kashmir' Painter.** Five of the works are ascribed to an anonymous 'Kashmir' painter who, not unlike Bhola, also paints the main figures with great skill and perception but leaves the minor figure lightly finished as can be seen in his work 'Shah Jahan receives the Persian ambassador Muhammad Ali Beg' (Diwan-i-amn, Burhanpur, 26 March, 1631). In this context, an interesting episode relates to a similar arrival of the Persian ambassador to the court of Emperor Jahangir in October 1616 which was witnessed by Sir Thomas

paper was also being made in Iran, particularly in Tabriz, and was used for the *Tahmasp's Shahnama*. Paper making was introduced into Italy by the Arabs towards the end of the 13th century from where it spread to the rest of Europe.

A variety of substances were used for the sizing of the paper, particularly albumen in the form of egg-white in Iran and a starch solution such as rice-water in India and Kashmir. Polishing was achieved with different materials but with the common aim of producing an ideal surface for the calligraphers and artists. Crystal in Iran, agate in India, and onyx in Ottoman Turkey were used for this purpose. To ensure that the gold flecks blended well with the paper, the specks were evenly applied while the sheets were still wet from size and then immediately burnished.

Reed Pen 'qalam' and ink: Calligrapher's pens were made from specially selected reeds. Particular skill was required

to apply the sharp cutting knife to form the width and angle of the nib to suit the type of calligraphy. Ink was usually manufactured from lamp black mixed with water and gum arabic and a variety of other ingredients such as rock alum, or a solution of gallnuts and vitriol. Some Indian recipes also included the use of pomegranate rind and rice or barley powder.

The *qalamdars*, elaborate boxes designed to carry pens, pen knives, scissors and ink pots became an indispensable part of the calligraphers' equipment. The boxes were often beautifully painted and lacquered and soon became objects of art in their own right.

Artists' Brushes: Brushes were made in a variety of size and thickness to suit the diverse needs of the artists and calligraphers. Different brushes were used by the artists for preparing an outline, for applying colour, and for stippling and finishing. Mughal artists used the velvety

Roe, the British representative who noted that:

"He (the Persian Ambassador) brought for Presents 3 tynes 9 homes of Persia and Arabia, this being a Ceremonious Number among them, 9 mules very fayre and large, 7 Camells laden with velvet, two suites of Europe Arras (which I suppose was Venetian hangings of velvet with gould, and not Arras), two Chestes of Persian hangings, on cabinet rich, 40 Muskettes, 5 Clocks, one camell laden with Persian Cloth of gould, 8 Carpets of silk, 2 Rubies ballist, 21 Camelles of wyne of the Grape, 14 Camelles of distilled sweet water, 7 of rose water, 7 daggers sett with stones, 5 swords sett with stones, 7 Venetian looking glasses, but these so fayre, so rich that I was ashamed of the relation".

Roe was particularly alert to these ceremonies, for he had been acutely conscious that his own gifts had not been successful. As he wrote back to the East India Company in January 1616:

"...He (Jahangir) accepted your presents well, but after the English were come away he asked the Isietye whether the King of England were a great Kyng that sent presents of so small value..."

10 Lalchand. Admired for his rather calm but intense portraits such as court scenes and holy men, comparatively few works by Lalchand are known. In the double-page spread 'the submission of Rama Amar Singh of Mewar to Prince Khurram' (Gogunda encampment;

February 5, 1615), only the right illustration is by him; the left being provisionally attributed to the 'Kashmir' painter. Watched by the soldiers on the left, the open air *darbar* shows the Rana's formal surrender to Prince Khurram. The left hand page shows the royal *Nagarbhana*, playing under the canopy and the tribute for the Prince brought by the Rana. Prince's own gift to the Rana, a splendid grey horse and an elephant, are visible in the foreground. All the tents are Red since this was the imperial colour; permission for its use by the princes only being granted by the emperor as a special favour.

11 Murar. Known for his meticulous drawing and exactness of detail, six of Murar's works are contained in the *Shahnama*. Of the double-page spread, 'Jahangir receives Prince Khurram on his return from the Deccan' (Diwan-i-Amm, Mandu Fort, October 10, 1617), the illustration on the left page showing Jahangir embracing Prince Khurram is by Murar. After the Mewar conquest, Prince Khurram was given charge of the expeditions against the sultanates in the Deccan, and it was because of his successes there that in October, 1617 he was awarded the title of Shah Jahan at the young age of twenty five. Murar himself can be seen in the painting in the bottom right corner carrying a folio with his own name clearly visible. On the first tread of the steps in the centre of the picture, the artist has again signed the

work as 'Amal fakir bay kus Murar' - the work of the humble fakir Murar; the word 'fakir' in this context being the customary expression of humility.

12 Payag. In contrast, Payag, brother of the artist Balchand, was perhaps the least humble. Flamboyant and fashion conscious and, having seen the sketches, prints and paintings brought into India by the European traders and missionaries, well aware of the new styles being developed abroad, *Padshahnama* contains four of Payag's works which include 'Jahangir presents Prince Khurram with a turban ornament' (Diwan-i-amm, Mandu Fort; November 30, 1617) where a bearded young Payag can himself be seen at the bottom left of the picture. The turban ornament being awarded to Shah Jahan in this illustration was "a flawless ruby weighing nine 'tanks' and five 'surkhs' (184 carats) set with two pearls, worth 125,000 Rupees".¹² This was the ruby which Akbar used to keep in his turban band for years before it was passed on to Jahangir at his birth by his grand mother. In his turn, Jahangir himself kept the ruby in his turban band for good luck.

13 Ramdas. There are two works by Ramdas, both part of double-page spreads in which the main picture is painted by another artist. His work is technically solid though perhaps a little lacking in artistic imagination. Both of his works, 'Jahangir receives

Prince Khurram on his return from the Deccan' (1617) and 'Shah Jahan receives his three sons and Asif Khan during his accession ceremonies' (1628), include similar scenes of the tower with *nawbat* balcony for the royal orchestra. The musical instruments of the orchestra have been identified as the *nagara*; the kettle drums played in pairs; the *harpa*, a long straight trumpet; and *surna*, a short double-reed aerophone - the fore runner of the modern *shehnai*.

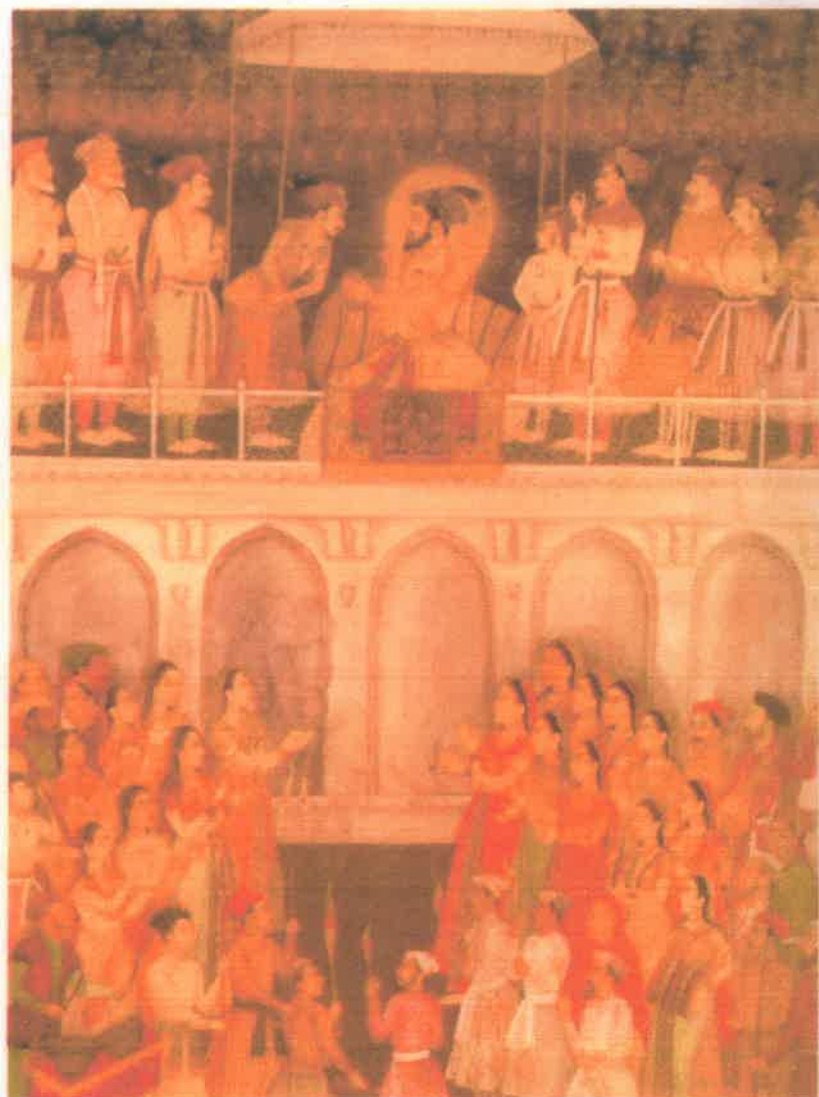
14 Tezdust. The 'Capture of Orchha by imperial forces' (October 1635), the only known work by the artist Tezdust, meaning the fast hand, shows three of the greatest commanders of Shah Jahan's Deccan campaigns: Abdullah Khan, Sayyid Khan Jahan Burha, and Khan Dawran all of whom were under the nominal command of the 17 year old Prince Aurangzeb. The capital fort of Orchha was built by Bundela Rajputs a few miles south of Jhansi in central India in the area known as Bundelkhand. The background to the fort, particularly the soldiers and an elephant storming through the Bundelkhand forest show the mastery of Tezdust's work which was not to be seen again till the work of the European impressionists in the nineteenth century.

In 1526, Zaheeruddin Babur, a princeling from Transoxiana descended from Tamerlane and Chingiz Khan invaded India and founded the Mughal dynasty. Babur died soon after in 1530. Whilst his turbulent life and short reign hardly allowed him chance of indulging in painting and calligraphy, he nonetheless left behind a remarkable volume of memoirs, the *Babur Nama*, which records his observation of man and nature and reveals an original and enquiring mind.

Mughal Emperors:

- | | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Babur | (1487-1530) r. 1526-30 |
| 2 Humayun | (1508-1556) r. 1530-40;
1555-56 |
| 3 Akbar | (1542-1605) r. 1556-1605 |
| 4 Jahangir | (1569-1627) r. 1605-27 |
| 5 Shah Jahan | (1592-1666) r. 1627-59 |
| 6 Aurangzeb | (1618-1707) r. 1659-1707 |

Detail *Shah Jahan honoring Prince Aurangzeb at his wedding*, Agra, Diwan-i-khas, 19 May 1637. Folio 218a attributed to Bihola, circa 1640



hair from the tails of the young grey palm squirrels for their brushes. Selected hairs were tied together and fitted into a quill often made from a pigeon's wing. Coarser hair for large brushes were taken from the inside of the calf's ears. For medium thickness, hair was obtained from mongoose and the tail and under belly of a goat. In Iran, in addition to using squirrels, long-haired white cats were specially bred to provide the finer quality of hair.

Colour and Pigments: Unlike the generally transparent vegetable dyes made from dried flower petals, turmeric and bark, metal and mineral pigments were used to achieve the brilliance and opacity required for miniature paintings. The skills required for the preparation of pigments and colour were considered to be as important as those of the artists themselves. Selected minerals were ground on stone to prepare a soft powder which was then sifted, washed, and mixed with albumen, glue, or gum Arabic. The viscosity of albumen was thinned out with vitriol or alum, both extremely important in producing the enamel like surface so well preserved in earlier miniatures.

Lapis lazuli and azurite were used to make blue pigments and a variety of shades were obtained by adding ceruse white. Vermilion was obtained from cinnabar; yellow from antimony; carmine from insects; and malachite green from a changed form of azurite. Earlier,

greens were also obtained from verdigris, prepared by treating copper with vinegar, which has seriously damaged so many earlier works by brown staining the manuscripts and also by making the paper brittle.

Gold was the most valuable and luxuriant colour and a vital part of miniature paintings. It was extensively used in calligraphy, headings and verse divisions, illuminated title pages, border designs and manuscript decoration as well as in the design of books, book covers and colophons. There were many ways of preparing gold. To start with, pieces of gold were placed between layers of deer skin, which were then wired together, often in a pile of two hundred or more, and the bundle was then pounded until thin sheets of gold leaf were formed. Using gum as a moistener, gold leaf was rubbed between the fingers or mixed with dry glue and pounded again until it turned into consistent paste. This was then put into a basin of water. The sediments were collected and mixed with saffron and dry glue and were then ready to be applied with a brush and burnished with agate. A little silver was added to gold to obtain the greenish tone often used in miniature borders. Otherwise, silver by itself was only of limited use, mainly for depicting water, armoury and weapons. Oxidization often turned silver into black, hence the black patches in many Indian and Iranian miniatures where originally weapons and water features had been painted.



The Islamic Monuments of Homs

GEOFFREY KING

Of the major cities of Syria, Homs is one of the least well studied as far as its Islamic monuments are concerned. There has never been a comprehensive study of its main monument. The town has been attributed to Seleucos Nicator (301-281 BC), one of Alexander's generals who became ruler of Syria. However, examination of the lower parts of the archaeological stratigraphy of the tell beneath the citadel of Homs at the SE corner of the town suggests that the tell could predate the Hellenistic period.

A local Arab dynasty ruled Homs from 81 BC until 96 AD after which the city was absorbed into the Roman Empire: a tomb dated to 78 BC belonging to a ruler of this local dynasty still existed early this century on the outskirts of the town. Like so many other places in Syria, Homs was reorganised under its Roman rulers and its square city plan from this period is recognisable in the layout of the mediaeval Islamic walled town.

Under the Romans, the town acquired the name Emesa which it

was to retain up until the coming of Islam in the 7th C AD. During the Roman period, the temple of the Sun at Homs became a cult centre of such prominence that it rivalled Baalbek in Lebanon and in 217 AD, Heliogabalus, high priest of this great temple became Roman Emperor as Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. Some scholars suggest that the temple of Homs stood on the site of the present Nuri Mosque in the old walled city although other opinions suggest that it was located on the top of the

citadel. No trace of a Roman temple appears on the surface at either the Nuri mosque or at the citadel mound, but there is Roman decorative masonry at both sites.

With the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity a church dedicated to St John was established on the site where the Nuri Mosque now stands. When Islamic forces entered Syria during the conquest in 634-5, Emesa served the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius as his base in the last stages of his unsuccessful



campaign against the advancing Muslims, and it was from Emesa that he finally withdrew to Byzantine territory in 637, abandoning Syria to the Caliph 'Umar.

With the coming of Islam part of the enclosure of the church of St John was converted into a mosque, half of it remaining in the hands of the Christians as a church and the other half becoming a mosque. The sequence then, from temple of the Sun to church to a site shared between Muslims and Christians, and finally to a mosque alone is identical to what happened elsewhere in Syria; the process is best known at Damascus, where the temple of Jupiter became the church of St John the Baptist and after a short period when the site was shared between Muslims and Christians, it was rebuilt as the Great Mosque of the Umayyads.

At Homs, the division of the site of the former church between Christians and Muslims continued

until 340/950-1 according to al-Istakhri who refers to this division. Shortly afterwards in 358/969, Homs fell to forces of the Byzantine Emperor, Nicephorus Phocas, in 358/969. The mosque was used as a church until the Hamdanid princes of north Syria retrieved the city in 362/973. By the time that Yaqut wrote of Homs in 622/1225 the site was taken up completely by the mosque built between 544/1149 and 549/1154 by Nur al-Din Mahmud b. 'Imad al-Din, the Zangid Sultan who unified Syria and led the counter-Crusade. As it presently stands, the mosque is essentially that of Nur al-Din with its magnificent *mihrab* in gold glass mosaic still intact.

The most famous Islamic site of Homs is the mosque of Khalid bin al-Walid on the north side of the old city, outside the walls. Nothing remains of the original building built over the tomb of Khalid, the conqueror of Syria, for it was rebuilt by the Ottomans in 1326/1908. The

present mosque contains a domed tomb chamber of Khalid inside the prayer-hall, and a sword associated with Khalid is kept in the mosque's museum. The tomb of Khalid is mentioned by Ibn Jubayr in 580/1185, by Yaqut in 622/1225 and by Ibn Battuta in 756-759/1355-1358, and covered by a magnificent wooden *tabut* donated by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars in the 13th C. which now stands in the National Museum at Damascus. Another site associated with the early Islamic period is the *mashhad* of Ka'b al-Akhbar situated on the eastern side of the city, but the building is of much later date.

When the Crusaders seized the coasts of Syria and Palestine, they did not take Homs, and the city became a major mustering point for Muslim forces during the campaigns of the 6th/12th century, when it was known to the Crusaders as "La Chamelle". After two inconclusive sieges of the citadel by the Zangids, Homs finally fell into the hands of 'Imad al-Din



Page 33: The mosque of Khalid bin al-Walid, Homs. Opposite page, extreme left: The gateway of the citadel, Homs. Left: The north walls of Homs citadel. This page, left: Tomb of Khalid bin al-Walid, Homs. Above: Painting on the mihrab of the tomb of Shirkuh II at Homs.

Zangi in 531/1137. His son, Nur al-Din Mahmud undertook major building at Homs after 544/1149, which included the Nuri Mosque as we have seen. His work included constructions on the citadel where he constructed a mosque which was also lost in the 19th C. The Ayyubid Sultan Salah al-Din gave the city to Muhammad b. Shirkuh al-Asadi in 570/1175, who effectively founded a local petty dynasty at Homs which endured until 661/1262. The regime repaired the citadel and the walls of the town. The tomb of Shirkuh II is located in the middle of the town in a former church converted into a mosque, with contemporary painted decoration on small *muqarnas*-like features on either side of the *mihrab*.

When the Mongols invaded Syria in 658/1260, they took Homs as they marched south to meet the Mamluk army from Cairo. With the defeat of the Mongol army at Ayn Jalut in Palestine, Homs passed under Mamluk authority and the Mamluk

Sultan Baybars restored the Homs citadel, where there is an inscription of 669/1271 in his name, although no longer *in situ*. Under the Mamluks, Homs became a dependency of Hama, with the city under an *amir* and the citadel under an independent *amir*. A fine 14th C. Mamluk house still survives in the centre of the old town, the residence of a governor of Homs.

One of the most important sites in the city is the citadel, resting on a natural outcrop that raises it above the River Orontes flood-plain. Water from the river once fed a moat that surrounded the citadel until some 25 years ago. It has been suggested that it was formerly a military anchor point of the Roman city. It was also mentioned by the Palestinian geographer, al-Maqdisi in ca 375/985 who says that the citadel rose high above the surrounding countryside. It underwent a major transformation in the Zangid and Mamluk period, and Ibn Jubayr in 580/1184

commented on the strength of the fortress. The earliest archaeological remains are masked to a large degree as a result of these 12th - 13th C. constructions, of which stretches of wall survive on the summit of the tell. Other building work included the construction of an enormous glacis that required the dumping of tons of earth against the face of the tell to form a steep ramp, faced with stone. Around the tell at its base, a moat was dug to some 6-7 m. depth which drew its water from the river Orontes.

Of this Islamic fortification system, walls and towers are mainly preserved on the northern side of the tell, where they stand in several places to over 3 m. However, nowhere do the walls stand to their original height. In most other places, the superstructure has entirely vanished, but examination of the surface of the tell makes it clear that much of the substructure of the walls survives below the surface and archaeological excavation would reveal the outlines



Top: The mihrab of the Nuri Mosque, Homs. Above: Roman masonry in the Nuri Mosque courtyard, Homs.

of these walls or their foundations.

The present point of entry to the citadel modern: the original gate faced towards the city to the east and was in the form of a great tower with a bent entrance. Although damaged, substantial parts of it survive and excavation and comparison with other Syrian fortresses of similar date should clarify the design of this gateway.

The now vanished mosque on the top of the citadel is dated to the reign of Nur al-Din, and inscriptions from

the fortifications record work on the towers and walls by al-Malik al-Mujahhid Shirkuh in 594/1198 and 599/1202 and by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars in 669/1271. However, detailed analysis of the site is required to establish the chronology of the extensive structural remains.

After the Ottoman conquest of Syria by Selim I in 1516, Homs was made a *liwa* of Tripoli, and the Ottomans used the citadel as a military command post just as the Mamluks had before them. It was still in quite good condition when Volney drew it in 1785, although the Ottomans had destroyed the gates of the city below. However, after a revolt

in Homs against the invading forces of the Egyptian general Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Muhammad 'Ali, the citadel was blown up in the 1830s and the severely damaged condition of the citadel at present is the result of this episode.

Today, there is growing interest in the antiquities of Homs and their preservation, and the Homs citadel is the subject of a joint Syrian-British archaeological investigation, involving co-operation between the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums of the Ministry of Culture of Syria and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

Islamic Art at V&A

DALE EGEE INTERVIEWS DR ALAN BORG

London's Victoria and Albert Museum, with its Boilerhouse extension project making museum headlines worldwide, is the repository of one of the finest collections of Islamic art, reviewed here by the Director, Dr Alan Borg, in a wide-ranging interview with Islamic art consultant Dale Egee, who has been travelling extensively all over the Arab and Islamic world for the best part of the last two decades.

"The museum public is like an onion, with many layers", said Dr Alan Borg, the Victoria and Albert Museum's Director. "Museum visitors have different needs; an institution like the V&A must be prepared to deliver different levels of information, in depth and on the surface. I am sure that within the next few years, we will all have palm top computers guiding us from object to object. One of the things we are working on is three-dimensional imaging. This way one would have a sense of handling the objects, turning a pot over to read the marks on the bottom for instance".

Dr Borg went on to refute the idea that the internet approach to a museum's collection would mean the end of museum visits. He pointed out that the Mona Lisa is the most reproduced image in the world but that "the magic of the real object can never be reproduced".

For the far flung Islamic countries, computerisation via the internet is very good news indeed. Imagine that you are a student in Jeddah, Kuala Lumpur, or Khartoum. You lack a local museum with a broad range of Islamic Art. You will eventually be able to tune into the V&A on the World Wide Web



The Luck of Edenhall, Syrian, mid 13th century, H.15.9 cm.
Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum

and request anything from snik pottery to Persian Carpets. You will be able to view it in colour and three dimensionally. You will see the entire object or a detail of it. The text accompanying it will give you a brief account and indicate where to go for

further research. You can do this at three in the morning and in your own home! This will be a superb way to introduce Islamic culture to non-Moslems. It will be a wonderful reinforcement to the isolated Muslim communities scattered everywhere, from Mauritius to South Dakota. Digitally, the layers of the onion will be catered for, and can give us a reason to go to London to see the real thing.

Dr Borg's enthusiasm for sharing knowledge is engaging. "We still go back to our roots as a home for the training of students and others in the decorative arts. One of the great pleasures of the galleries here is finding students sketching, sitting on the floor. From that point of view the Islamic collection is extraordinarily rich. The repertoire of pattern is without parallel. It is a treasure chest for people to work from".

I mentioned to Dr Borg that I have many times sent artists to the V&A to make studies of objects from the Islamic collection. We are pleased to have introduced them in the Arab Gulf and elsewhere in the form of fine art prints.

I asked Dr Borg what he felt were



Isnik tile panel, Turkish, c.1575. W. 109.3cm. Opposite page: Pottery Jar, Syrian, 14th century, H 38.1 cm. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum.



the strengths and weaknesses of the Islamic collection. "Our main weakness is in the arts of the book – antique Qur'ans and calligraphy. There are two major strengths, textiles and carpets. There is also a vast collection of ceramics – Persian, Turkish, Syrian. Additionally there are some spectacular one-of-a-kind objects such as our minbar which we recently lent to the Royal Academy for their *Africa: The Art of a Continent* exhibition."

I reflected on the fact that during visits to that exhibition, I hadn't recognised the fabulous minbar, a finely carved and inlaid pulpit, as the one I was familiar with in the V&A's collection. It isn't an easy piece to forget, over three metres tall with seven steps built into it and a dome on top! Then I realised that the beautiful installation and lighting at the Royal Academy made me see it freshly in all its splendour. At the V&A it is badly lit and dingy looking, over against a wall amongst too many other things. I asked Dr Borg if there were plans to renovate the Islamic collection.

"Yes," he said, "for over ten years, this has been planned." He then explained that the museum has no proper Islamic department, and needs at least two more Islamic specialists on staff, to research and catalogue the entire collection. The collection falls under individual departments such as ceramics, glass, textiles and so forth. Additionally a complete renovation of the room, (one of the best and most prominent locations in the museum), is badly needed. There is structural as well as cosmetic restoration to be done. The roof over the room needs attention. This will cost millions and like many museums, the V&A is hard up. I wonder, is there a worthy donor out there in the Islamic world?

Is there someone in the mould of the great Sultan Qa'itbay of Egypt who ordered the lovely minbar to be made in the late 15th century? If so, please get in touch with Alan Borg so the minbar can give another five centuries of beauty, instruction and awe to the world!

Finally I asked Dr Borg what his favourite pieces in the Islamic collection were. He mentioned the



Christopher Harrison, *Spouted Jug* from the V&A Collection.

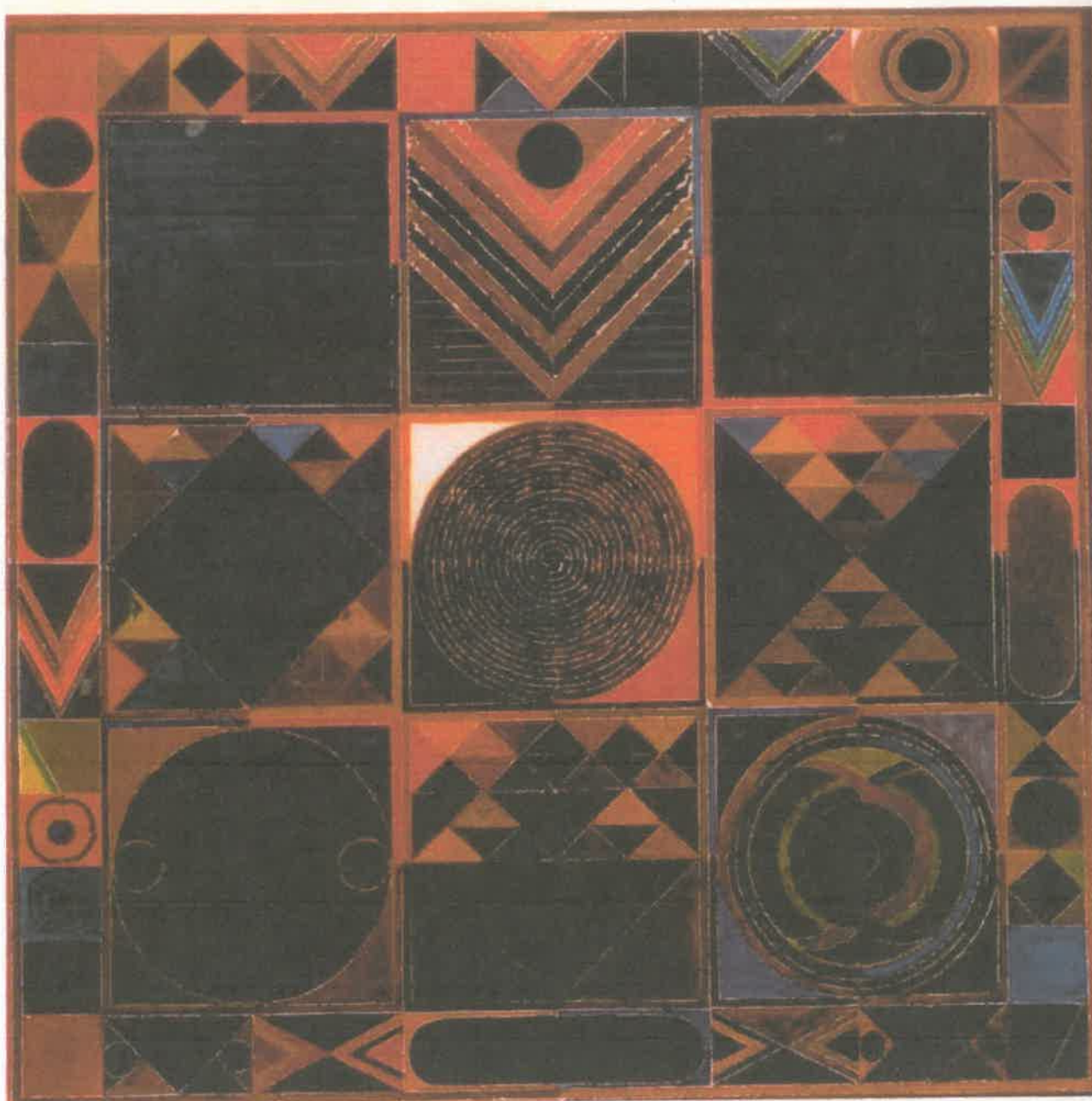
Persian and Iznik pottery. This is not surprising considering his background: for his doctorate he concentrated on twelfth century Jerusalem and Romanesque art. His other favourite is the great Ardebil carpet. "This is one of the greatest treasures in the world," he said, "and you can't see it. Whenever you stand in front of it, you see yourself reflected in the glass".

Let us hope that this lovely piece, another royal commission, woven in royal workshops in Persia less than 100 years after the minbar was made, will benefit from continued sponsorship, royal or otherwise.

Dr Alan Borg is enthusiastic about the Boilerhouse addition to the Museum. The dramatic architecture

underscores the contemporary purposes of the area: it will house the information technology, and contemporary art exhibitions. Dr Borg says there are plans for exhibits of the work of living artists and craftsmen from the Islamic world. "Will you accept Arabesque crafts still being made in harmony with the centuries old traditions?" I asked, "Or will you concentrate on the 'splash-and-dash' school of late twentieth century art?"

"Either," was his answer, "quality will be the determining factor." Well said, Dr Borg!



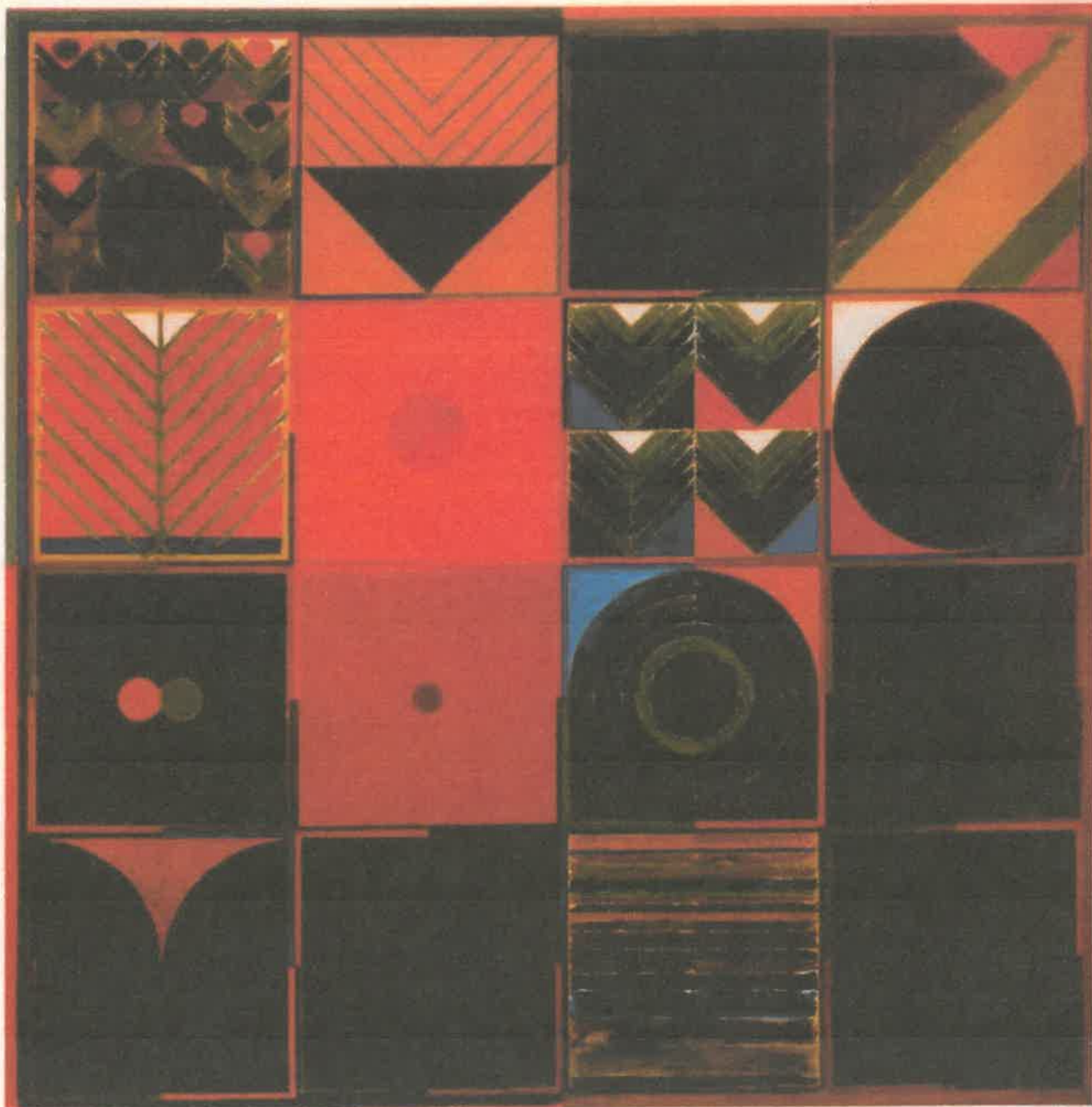
The Time is Such

ASHOK VAJPEYI

Born 1922 in a village in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, Sayed Haider Raza is among the most distinguished artists from South Asia living and working in the West, constantly revisiting the land of his birth "to establish tangible relationship with Indian concepts, contemporary art and life." His 75th birthday was marked by a retrospective exhibition of his works, here introduced by Ashok Vajpeyi, himself a well known poet.

The time is such that one may say that leaves are falling, the colours are fading, the resonance is getting dull, the scene blurred. The time is such that one may say there is withdrawal from time and desire, from the fury of the colours and anxiety. The time is such that one may say there is fatigue in the feet on the descent, search for respite from action – a desire to be lost in the unknown.

However, such a time or such details of it are not Raza's time nor its details. We discover with surprise that the Raza-time is intense and pulsating – endurance and courage still reside there. There is no withdrawal but participation, we have vast spaces of colour before us: If there is the unknown it is manifest in all its hues. The colours have folded beneath themselves; they are present



Previous page: *Ankuran*, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150cm. 1994. Above: *Germination*, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200cm. 1986. Opposite page: Detail, *Kundalini*, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150cm. 1994.

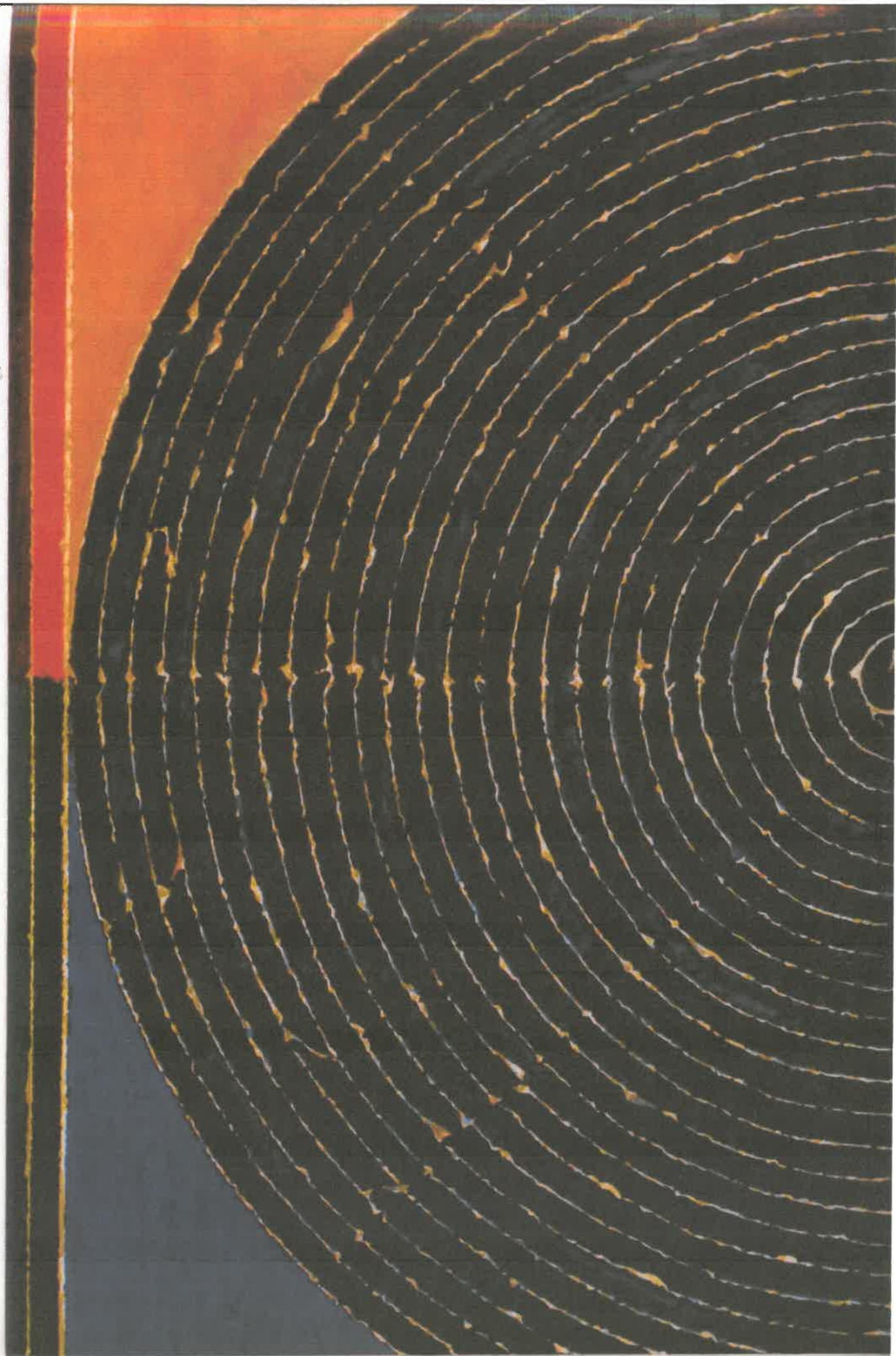
through their absence. In this space those colours also resonate which aren't there. There is a happy play between being and non-being. That alone is, which is not.

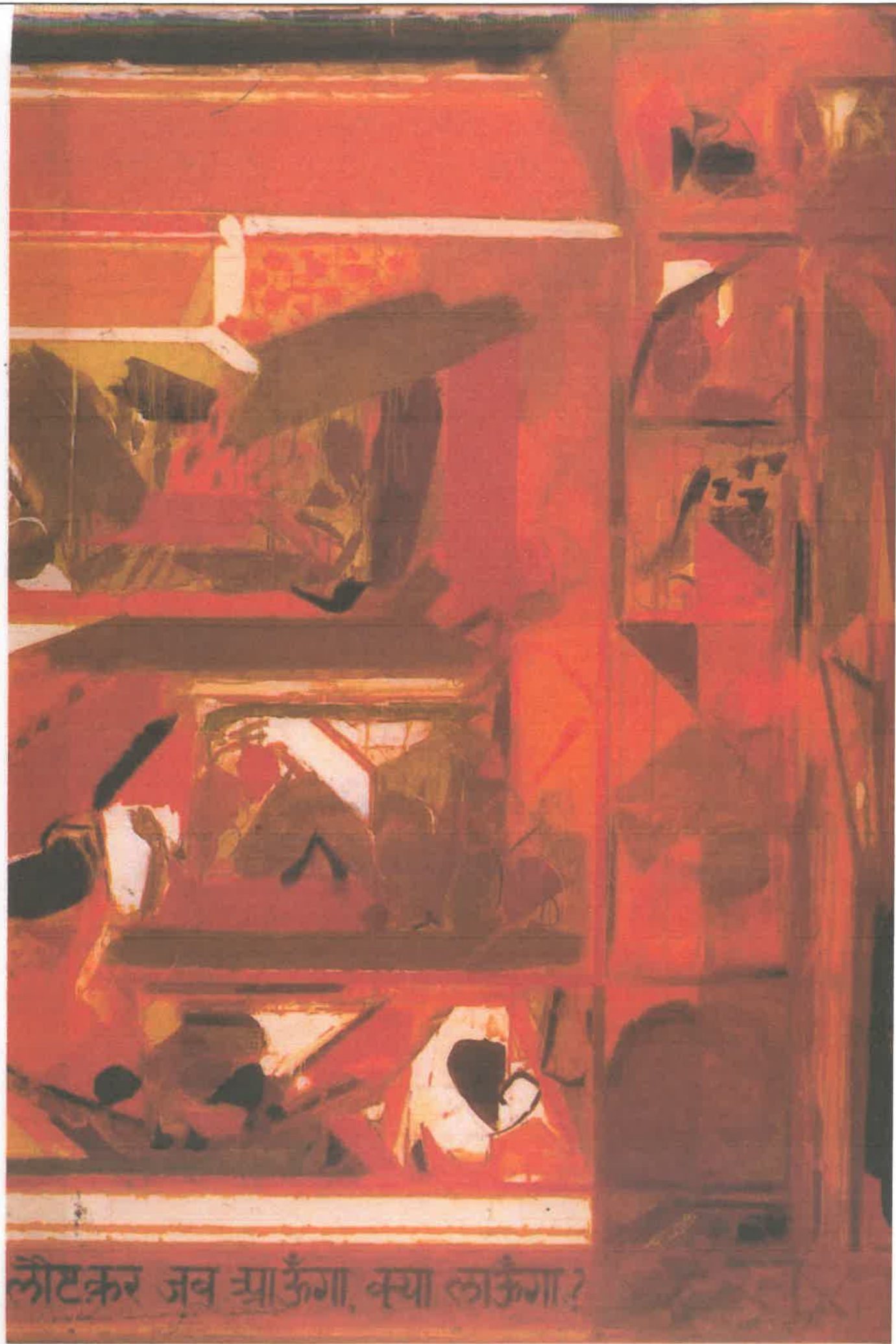
From the woods and alluvials of his childhood to now, Raza has been seeking the sacred on his canvasses and in a way consecrating it. The motifs are, therefore, in spite of their irrepressible colour-sensuousness, essentially spiritual. memory brings sacredness: as if the colours render the space they enclose sacred. There is no nostalgia. This is not an escape into memory either. But this is to recall: to reinscribe one's being with all its resonances. This is not achieving and reaching - but continuing to go on in the expectation of reaching.

Beyond the Habitat of the Sacred

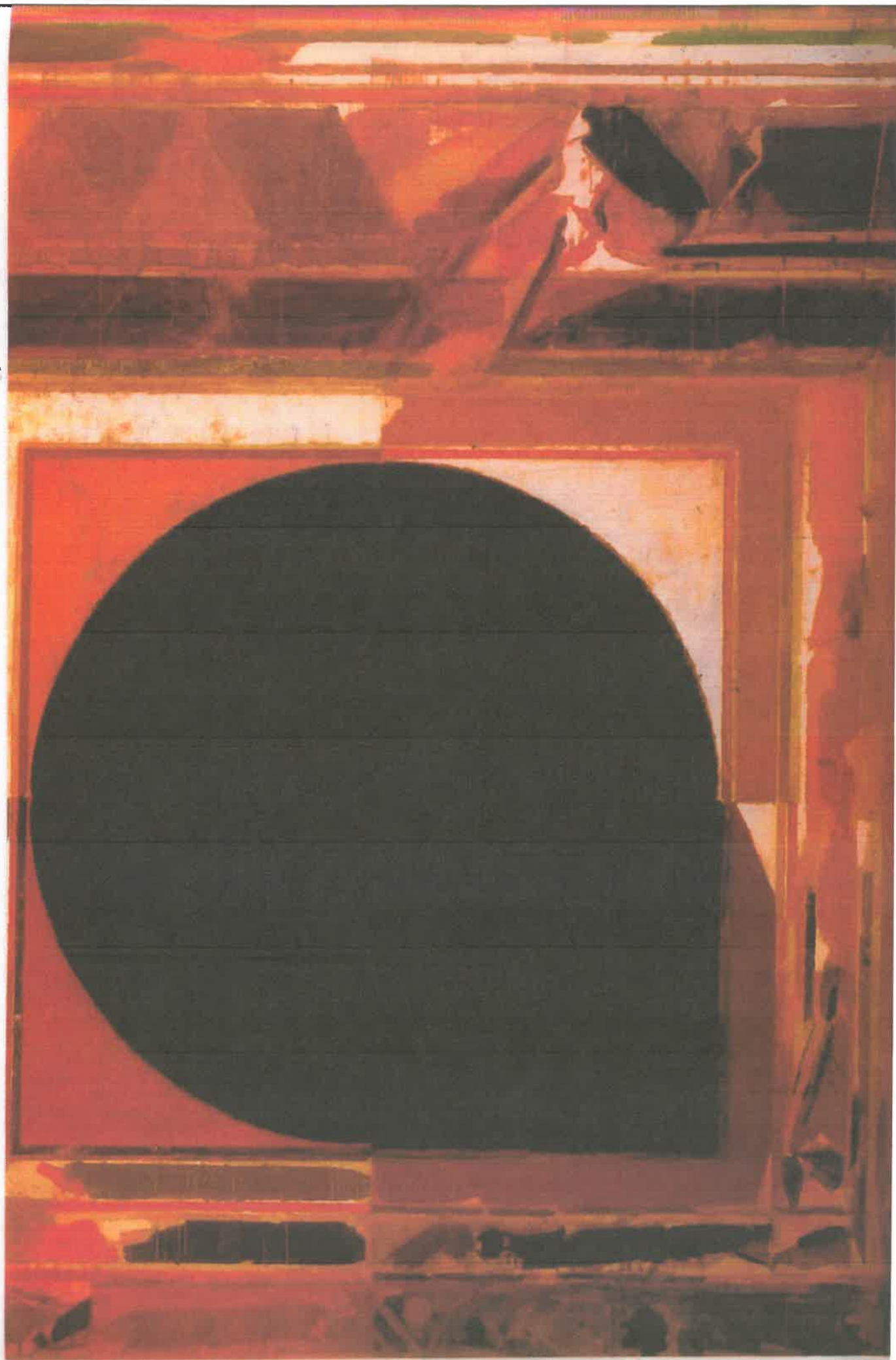
The signs of the already known time of ours do not show up in Raza. As if what is happening around does not

concern him, He is, on the other hand, the painter of what keeps on happening. He is not an artist embroiled in the socio-political turmoil and hustle-bustle. His time is the other time - a kind of anti-time in which there is vibration and scintillation, joy dense in its essence and sadness collected in its simplicity. There is the earth, there are seeds. There are the world, the sun, the snakes, the sound and the zero. It has an eternal geometry of the spirit: a permanent algebra of consciousness. It is not picking up what has been left behind. It is also not trying to bring back that which is past. It is a celebration of being. It is like choosing a place, consecrating it, leaving flowers and leaves, grains of rice with some green grass and a few ritualistic marks and moving ahead. It is reaching a residence of the sacred and moving towards another while keeping it and its sacredness unsullied. Something gets left behind but not abandoned: the new residence is in the





लौटकर जब आऊँगा, क्या लाऊँगा?



same row as the previous one. New configurations get articulated: a new mysterious glow and yet a refiguration of the same colours. The sacred does not have a single colour, it is not confined to one colour or configuration.

Lines Like the Tree-Leaves

Raza in his home-cum-studio in Paris once mentioned that lines in his geometrical configuration are not straight but like tree-leaves. They also quiver like leaves. As a painter Raza is known not for his lines but colours. It is colour

colours have given up these trappings and now glow on their own – as if they have nothing else to state but themselves, nothing else to remember except themselves. Colours do not make love, they pray. If there is an erotics of colours, there is also a metaphysics. The colours have not given up their passion but they are spiritually inspired. The colours are no longer colours of nature or objects, they are the very tints of the spirit.

Raza said that he wished to be alone but to be alone was very difficult. There is loneliness in his recent work –

The rock turning into its essence

We have come far away
from anguish and seams,
from the blazing desolation of the alleys of anxiety,
from the throng of places untouched by the sacred,
We have come far away.

Centuries have pressed time flat,
dissolving in the ceaseless flow
the rock has turned into its own essence,
the sun in the courtyard is humming the green
as an old Raga –

We have come far away

That which has been, has come to pass or fallen,
That which has gone away from here,
That which has trickled itself empty
All that is now unstable
in the hollow of the hands
like petals
like time
like words.

We have come far away

We are summoning that which is not,
We are touching that which would be,
We are seeking that which resides inside.

We have come far away.

There is no window to peep from,
no stairs to carry us somewhere,
no door to be knocked at.

We have come far away.

We have reached close
going far is like coming close to distance,
disappearance is like nearing the unknown,
looking for names is like identifying the colour of
the voice.

We have come close to the divine sound,
stand close to the zero,
We are engulfed in the triangle of the void.

In this remote architecture of closeness
adjacent to the seed,
in the layers
throbs the simple truth.

Truth which has no figure
only a form.

We have come afar,
We have come close,
We have come,

We are –
We neither went,
nor came.

which gives the line its unmistakable quiver. These colours do not lie coiled beneath the layers: they are alive, vibrant and restless. The earlier fierce battle, the combat, if not over, have at least receded. There is a certain directness which at the level of statement has a self-realised but complex clarity. As if the perplexity of the multiple is over: a pulsating concentration. The lines have the curvature of the leaves: you would notice only if you look intently. They have the sap and life of the leaves.

Raza was saying that he was turning to pure geometry, towards the white canvas. This return to simplicity, this endeavour to reach the original form, this not too easily discernible quiver like that of leaves – all these are not expressions of any philosophical attitude or commitment. These constitute the painterly vision, the accretions of visual imagination. One feels that memories and images, their imprints have disappeared from the canvas. As if the

not only colours and lines, even the painter is now facing himself: there is no other now. But this is not a denial of the other or otherness – this is going beyond the other, daring to cross the impediment of otherness. There are no histrionics in this daring – only true and deep humility. The paint of daring, the plainness of modesty. The other is neither abolished nor does one assert oneself. A somewhat pure sense of synonymity that there is no other.

Raza is a poet of energy. There is a void in his work but not as a withdrawal from energy but as its radiation. Implicit in it is a 'world-investigation', to use a phrase from Muktibodh. It is not an epilogue: it is an unembellished marking of the essence. Raghuvir Sahay has said, in a poem "what use is chaff to Kabir/he has picked up only the grain!" At this stage Raza is picking up only the grain as it were. The redundant is being eased out. Neither the artistic vision nor the form needs any



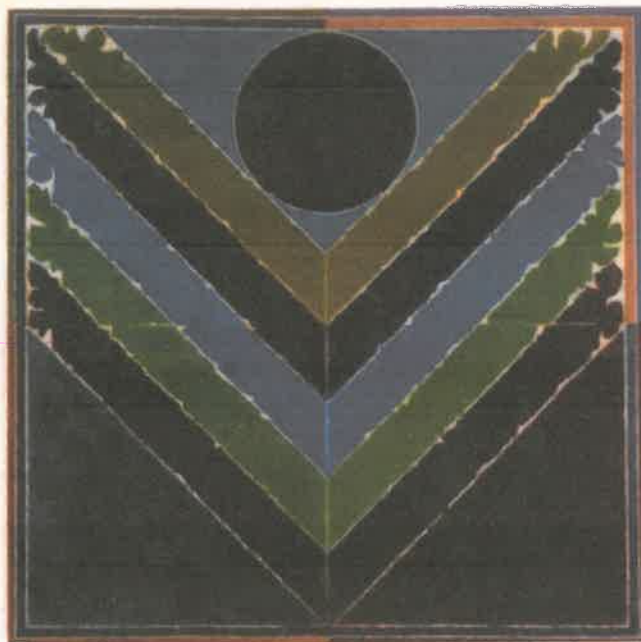
Pages 44-45: *Ma*, acrylic on canvas, 175 x 260cm. 1991. Above: *Sansara*, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150cm. 1994.

surplus. There is no agitation in the energy, only a surge. There is no regret in being alone, only a wish to be so. The energy now emanates from acceptance. As Ajneya has said: "All creation is merely grateful acceptance".

Seam in the Expanse

Each painting encloses some space; Raza's paintings as well. But what remains outside the circumference, or that which is not so engulfed, also invisibly but unmistakably enters into the painting. We see a painting not only as a space that is there so irrefutably but also as a space of that which is not there. The meaning of the painting is generated by the dialectics of the space and the non-space. The painted space is only to focus attention on the effort and not for either abandoning or forgetting the unpainted. The painting is an intervention in the continuity of space, in its unbroken sequence which is not

to divide the continuity but, more often than not, aimed at making us perceive the continuity through the intervention. So that we see the expanse because of the seam. It is because of this intention that forms recur; there are configurations of lines and colours to which Raza keeps on coming back. As if eternity is being moulded and designed into several times. The recurrence is the imprint of this grand design. It keeps on reiterating the process and the objective so that we do not get held up in the intervention rather than at the continuity nor get stuck in time rather than in eternity. The same line curves to become a tree, another curve blazes as the sun, yet another curves rhythmically as snakes and the fourth curves into a seed returning to the earth. In his life and career Raza has reached a point where he could say what he wants to by moulding his painterly language in the manner he wishes and without diluting its characteristics



Tree, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150cm. 1994

idiom. There is no complexity or obscurity in his statement. He seems to be saying some very simple things - that there are layers in the earth; the seed is springing forth; the tree is shivering; the soul has circles; the point dances; the sun is saluted; the rhythm has no beginning, no end.

The Colourscape of Sound

The precinct is still quite large - 'all the world is produced by the touch' also emanate out of touch is produced by the touch'. Not only the world but colours also emanate out of touch. The touch is, at some places, so deep and profound

that it appears like a fierce battle of colours - the colours have an impatience that cannot be contained. Elsewhere, the touch is very light the colours are subtle like sound, almost vanishing. We are able to witness colours in a tranquil and gentle moment. In the Raza universe we can see the entire spectrum of colour, from anguish to withdrawal.

The world is brought into being with unfailing restraint and refined skill. There is no doubt or uncertainty. On the other hand, there is self-confidence coupled with humility - between the soul and the outer world, between colours and the personal spirituality there is a relaxed dialogue - a conversation, without any tension, carried on in mutual trust. The zero in Raza is manifest not in its minimality but in its vast energy. It is a centre from where creativity and energy, meaning and expansiveness radiate. Raza listens to be primeval sound; his forms provide colour-visibility to the listening. We see and hear the sound - in fact we hear by seeing. The sound has its own hue - the sound can be seen.

When the world is changing almost daily in its fast and unexpectedly varied panoramas and we are constantly oppressed by the countless images of this change confused in our search for suitable metaphors to cope with it, Raza is creating a different but unique world. He is beckoning us: in a voice which is noble, with the simplicity of prayer and intense like love, revealing joy in being and a sense of mystery. To be able to hear this voice is to participate in an ancient celebration of being, where there is no hiatus between life and art: both are unabashed celebrations of being.

Now there is no turn ahead. As if the path visible upto a distance merges into a point. As if the path is coming towards us from this very point. The wonder is that this point is Raza, the path is also Raza and the eye is also Raza which is gazing the path upto the point and the point onto the path.

Photograph: Sumit Kaldore



Sayed Haider Raza studied painting at the Nagpur School of Art and the Sir J. J. School of Art, Bombay; Founder member of the Progressive Artists Group, he presented several exhibitions of his paintings in India, before leaving for France on a French government scholarship in 1950. He studied painting at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris from 1950 to 1953.

Raza was awarded the Prix de la Critique, in Paris, in 1956. He has presented numerous individual exhibitions of his paintings and has participated in group shows and salons, including the International Biennales at Venice, Sao Paulo and Menton and in the Triennale at New Delhi. In 1959 he married the French artist Janine Mongillat. The University of California invited him as a Visiting lecturer at the Art Department of Berkeley, in 1962. He revisited India in 1959, 1968, 1976, 1978, 1984 and 1985, and since then, every year, to establish tangible relationship with Indian concepts, contemporary art and life.

In December 1978, the Madhya Pradesh Government invited him to his native state for a homage and an exhibition of his works in Bhopal. He was awarded the Padma Shri by the President of India in 1981 and was elected Fellow of the Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi in 1983.

Recently, he received a national award, the Kalidas Samman, from the Madhya Pradesh Government. A retrospective of his paintings will be presented at the Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal.

Raza lives and works in Paris and in Gorbio, in South France.



A SPECIAL REPORT

IRAN

- Calligraphy Festival
- Museum of Contemporary Art
- Iran's Spectacular Heritage
- Women in Contemporary Cinema

Earlier this year, James Parry visited Iran at the invitation of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran. His report covers several aspects of the current arts scene in Iran and is supplemented by a review of a recent seminar on Iranian women and film by Rose Issa.

The first global festival of Islamic calligraphy opened in February at Tehran's showpiece Museum of Contemporary Art. Organised jointly by the Museum and the Iranian Calligraphers' Association, with the support of the Ministry of Culture & Islamic Guidance, the festival attracted participants from all over the Islamic world (see list).

The objective of the festival was to introduce and promote the creative talent of both Iranian and foreign calligraphers, as well as encouraging an interchange of ideas, techniques and experience. Entries

very important and that beauty is central. The Qur'an tells us this is so and supports the creation of beauty, criticising those who do not use the beauties provided by God. It is not a waste to create such things, especially as the eyes and soul are relaxed by art. This includes music! Art is not an item of luxury".

After his speech the President met some of Iran's most senior calligraphers and then toured the exhibition. Although the Museum of Contemporary Art was the chief venue for the festival, parallel exhibitions and events also took place at

First International Calligraphy Festival in Tehran

James Parry reports on a ground-breaking festival and on other aspects of the current arts scene in Iran.



Previous page and above: Posters advertising the Festival. Cover poster design by Bijan Jenab, Persian calligraphy at top of poster by Seyed Mohammad Ehsaii, Arabic calligraphy at the bottom by Mohammad Madoveih. Above right: President Rafsanjani touring the exhibition with the Minister and Deputy Minister for Culture & Islamic Guidance. Opposite page, top: Calligraphy by Afzaloddin Azarbad and below by Mrs Elahe Khatami. All photographs by Ms Hangameh Fahimi.

were invited for six different categories: single piece composition, *siah mashq* (the art of strict, classical calligraphy which also attains high artistic value), epigraphy, book-writing (prose text), coloured ink calligraphy on canvas or other material (such as pottery, fabric or metal) and graphics (logos, signs, titles etc). Over 400 individual works were received from 25 countries and were judged by a jury panel made up of some of calligraphy's most celebrated names.

Many of the entries went on public display at the Museum in early February and the festival proper was opened there on 8 February by Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, to an invited audience of over 200. In his opening address, the President drew attention to the deeply personal nature of calligraphy: "I have benefitted much from your artistic work and express my gratitude to all calligraphers. We consider the arts as a gift from God and the language of art is complicated, covering as it does the different ways in which people express their feelings to God. Art must make a relationship between the outside and inside worlds and in calligraphy, art and knowledge combine".

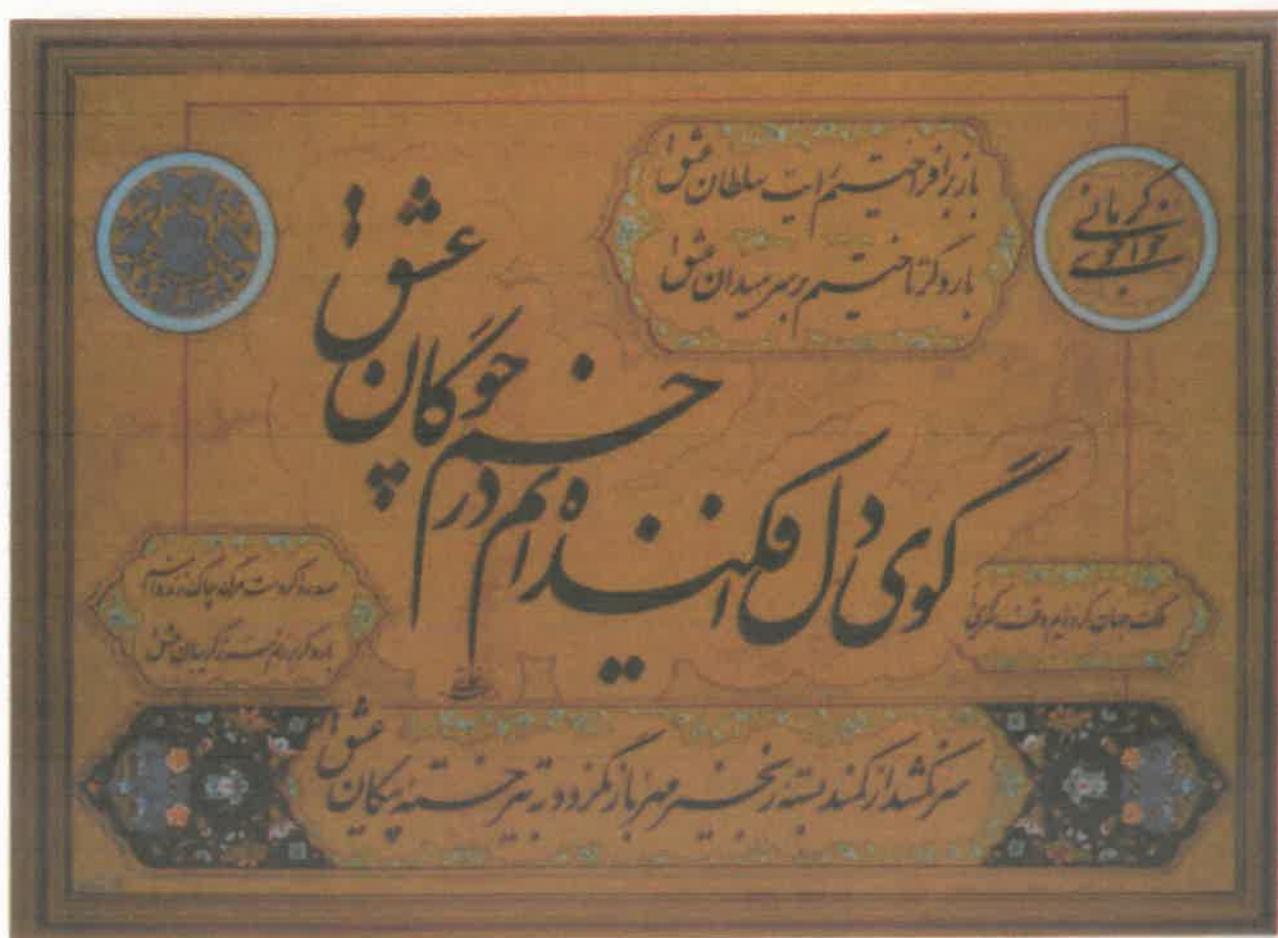
The President also highlighted the critical role of beauty in art: "Remember that the decoration of our environment is

three other venues in Tehran: the Niavaran Cultural Centre, the Azadi Cultural Complex and Vahdat Hall. Exhibits included a wide range of contemporary calligraphic art, as well as selected historical works (including some exquisitely decorated miniatures from the 17th century). Particular interest surrounded the display of antique 'tools of the trade' - pens, knives, brushes and equipment boxes of rare quality and beauty.

Calligraphy in Iran is undergoing something of a renaissance at the moment. Supported by the Government as one of Iran's traditional art forms, there are twelve calligraphy teaching centres across the country, with several thousand students (both boys and girls) currently enrolled on courses at all levels. This compares with just 500 prior to the Islamic Revolution, with the number of 'grand masters' having grown from 70 to 200 over the same period. This development has been accompanied by technological advances in the fields of printing and graphics and by the increasing use of computer science in calligraphy. As in other artistic spheres, the world of calligraphy is fraught with dissent and disagreement over how far the boundaries of true calligraphy can go and to what extent modern intrusions should be permitted.



الحق مصلح
وال محمد صالح



The festival also focused on the academic and research aspects of calligraphy, with a series of lectures and seminars in April. These included papers on subjects as diverse as 'Calligraphy at the service of Islamic civilization' (Ali Nada Al Duri, UAE), 'Makkah - source of script and writing' (Ahmed Al Mufti, Syria), 'The use of calligraphy on Islamic period fabrics' (Mrs Zohreh Roohfar, Iran) and 'Inkpots, inkpot-keeping and their importance in the Islamic civilization of Iran' (Dr Sussan Bayani, Iran). On the

Countries Represented at the First Global Islamic Calligraphy Festival

Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bosnia, China, Egypt, France, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates

MEMBERS OF THE JURY

Hassan Çelebi	Turkey
Ahmad Albani	Syria
H M Bukhari Lubis	Malaysia
Gholam-Hossein Amirkhani	Iran
Seyed Mohammad Ehsaii	Iran
Abbas Akhavein	Iran
Abdol Samad Samadi	Iran
Jalil Rassouli	Iran
Yadollah Kaboli	Iran
Keikhosro Khoroush	Iran

SELECTED FESTIVAL PRIZE WINNERS

Arabic-Islamic SECTION (overseas):

First	Davoud Bektash	Turkey
Second	Mohammed Ozjai	Turkey
Third	Seçkin Durdo	Turkey
Fourth	Jamal Bostan	Syria
Fifth	O H H Ebrahim	Egypt

Nasta'liq SECTION

Javad Bakhteyari, Sedaghat Jabari Kalkhoran, Karam-Ali Shirazi, Hoseein Gholami, Ali-Reza Madai, Nasser Nowrouzi Manesh (all from Iran)

Qata'i SECTION

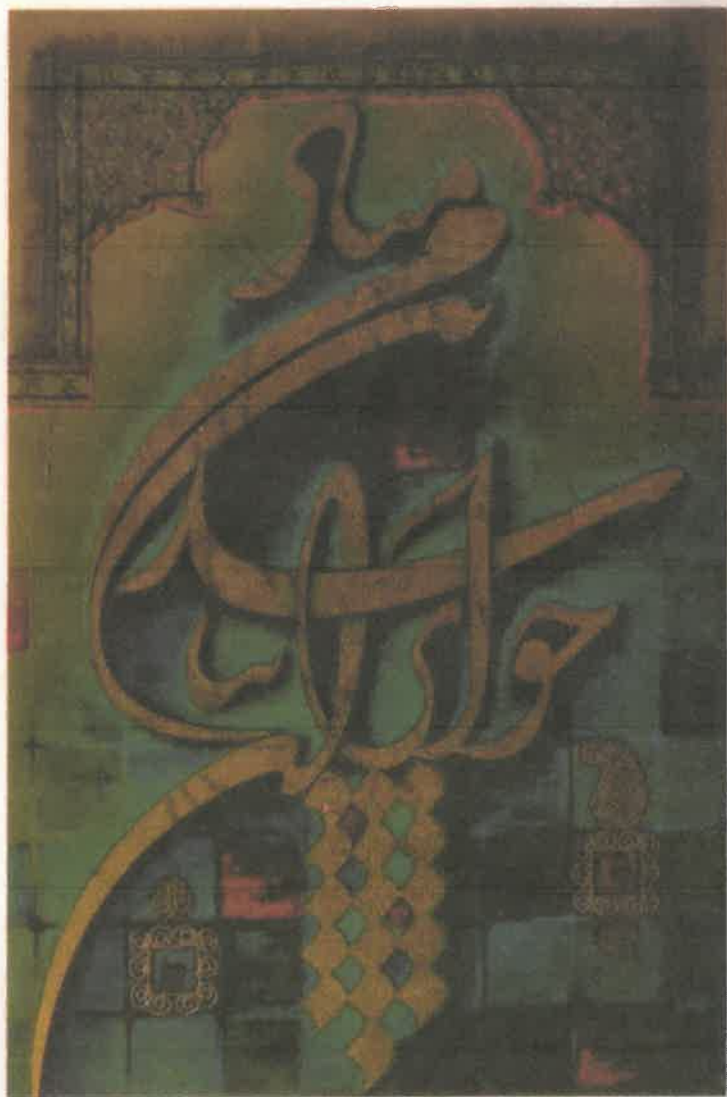
Ali Jaddi	Iran
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Shekasteh-Nasta'liq SECTION

Mohammed Heidari Madoveih, Mojtaba Malekzadeh, Mohammad Hossein Attrachian (all Iran)

Calligraphy Painting SECTION

Mahmoud Ghanoum	Syria
Ali-Akbar Mikhak	Iran
Massoud Nejabati	Iran



final day, several of Iran's grand masters participated in an open dialogue on the application of innovation in calligraphy, with the

festival proceedings brought to a close by Seyyed Mostafa Mir-Salim, Minister for Culture & Islamic Guidance.

The success of the festival, both in terms of the artists and professionals who attended and the numbers of visitors who came and enjoyed the



Opposite page, top: Calligraphy by Jalil Rassouli. *Let not me be there if there's no Iran*, 1992. Painting-Calligraphy. Shikastah Nastaliq, oil on gold plate and cashmere and silver work collage on silk. 100 x 70. Below: Calligraphy by Gholam-Hossein Amir Khani. This page, left: Calligraphy by Davoud Razmjou and below by Mahmoud Rezaei.



exhibitions, has encouraged the organisers to consider making this an annual event. The universality of calligraphy makes it an ideal medium

for an international forum and as Iran continues to look outwards and extend cautious hands of friendship through her artistic achievements, so

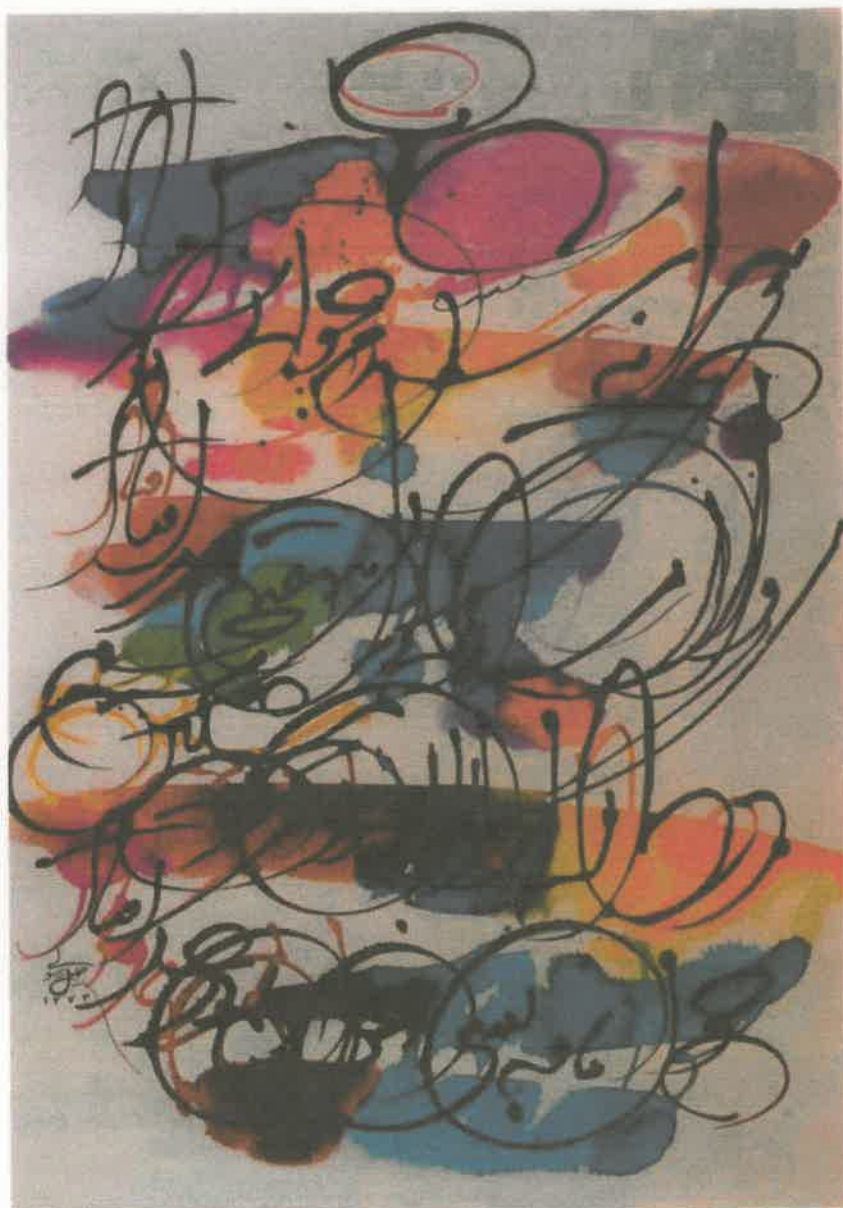
we should support and encourage this development.



Calligraphy as a Contemporary Art Form

Calligraphy is a complex and demanding art. Strict rules govern both form and technique and in Iran years of dedication and experience are required before acceptance may become possible into calligraphy's 'inner sanctum' – the Association of Iranian Calligraphers. The Association is responsible for the nomination of the 'grand masters', of whom there are currently twelve (with a further eleven waiting in the wings) and for encouraging the development of calligraphy as an art form.

Recent years have witnessed a tremendous upsurge in public interest in art generally and calligraphy has ridden this wave well. The number of art galleries, both in Tehran and outside, is increasing rapidly and the Iranian middle-classes are eager to buy innovative and avant-garde pieces with which to adorn their homes. However, the appeal of calligraphy is perhaps rather less elitist in nature and some local commentators are keen to point out the way in which many ordinary Iranians are drawn to calligraphy – and equally to traditional music – as a way of rediscovering their roots. Whether this is entirely accurate or not, there



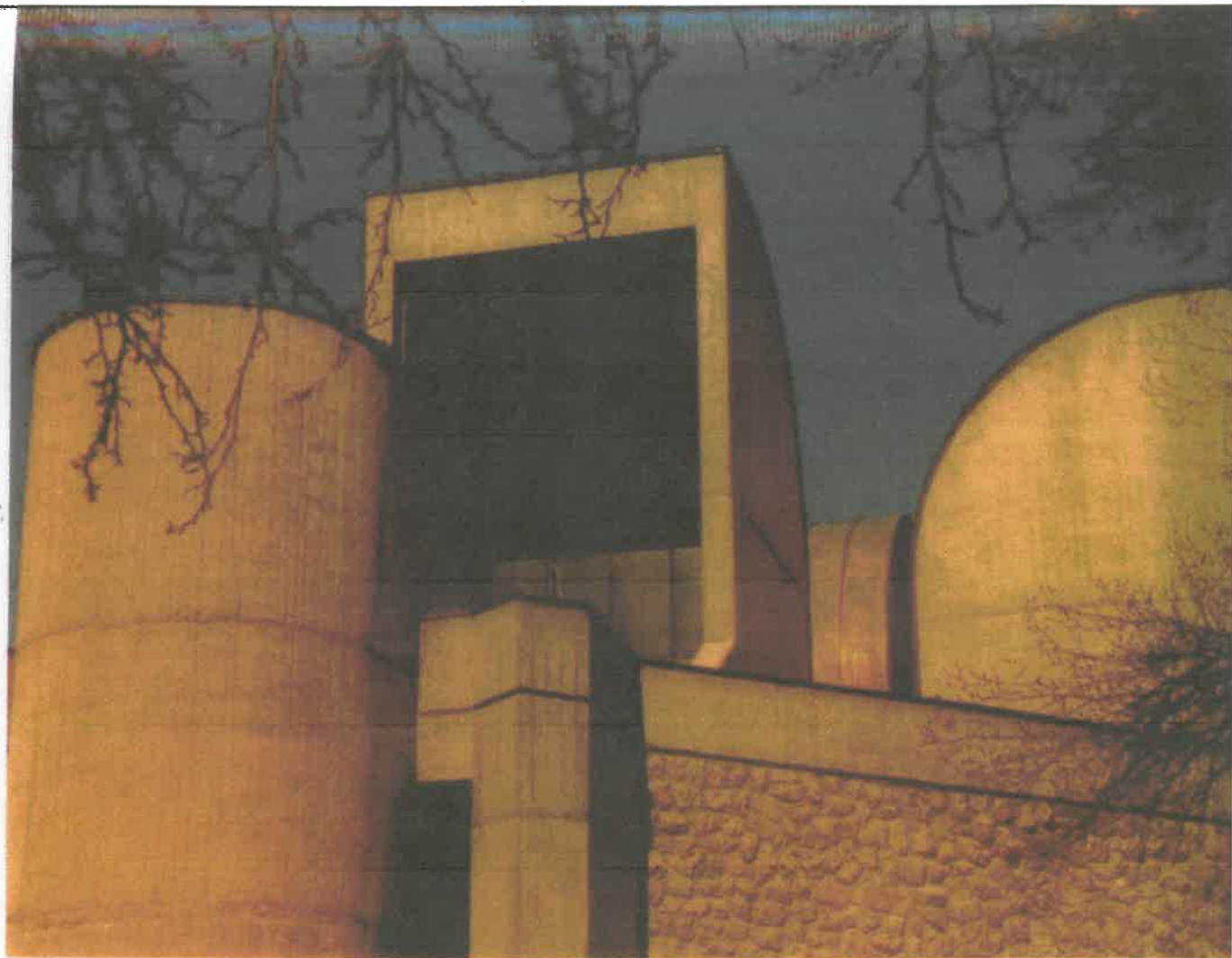
Opposite page: Mahdi Rowhani, *Jihad*.
Left: Jalil Rasouli, *painting-calligraphy*.
Above: Grand Master Mohammad Ehsai,
with *The Echo of the Word* in the
background.

are definite egalitarian trends in the contemporary Iranian arts scene, as seen in the wonderful social commentary of the paintings of Morteza Katouzian and in Iran's extraordinary 'war art' – spawned during the Islamic Revolution, but which reached its apogee during the war against Iraq (see opposite). The immediacy and relevance of such art forms guarantees large exhibition audiences and helps fire buoyant commercial demand.

As far as calligraphy is concerned, the artistic challenge is how to develop a sense of the contemporary with an art form which, superficially at least, appears so rigid and restricted. The religious significance of calligraphy – as the means of conveying the word of God – has been used in the past to discourage movement away from core principles. However, new directions and trends have been emerging for some years now and two separate schools have now appeared in Iran. The first, known as the *sakrahaneh* school, insists on the presence of a set of traditional key elements in calligraphic art and shies away from innovation. However, young artists are increasingly

inspired by the 'abstract' school, of which one of the early pioneers was Mohammad Ehsai (now a grand master). Ehsai's work features sequences of calligraphic letters that make no sense. Rather, they are welded into shapes solely for their artistic value and impact, with no literary meaning.

He works by covering the canvas first in gouache and subsequently with an oilbased layer, which he then scrapes off with a palette knife, thereby 'revealing' the letters underneath. He regards this process as a journey of rediscovery, of finding the shapes once more under the cloak of oil. Although not welcomed by the traditionalists, this free approach is increasingly gaining favour, both with artists themselves and with the public as a consumer of art. An equally imaginative hand is shown by Jalil Rassouli, another grand master and chief exponent of the art of 'painting calligraphy', which is perhaps the most contemporary meeting-place of calligraphy with mainstream art. His works feature bold colours and dramatic use of the letters, with exciting results.



The Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran

Tehran's Museum of Contemporary Art was one of the last great art projects of the *ancien regime*, the brainchild of ex-Queen Farah Diba. Completed shortly before the Islamic Revolution swept the country in 1978, it remains one of Iran's most compelling modern structures and is firmly established in the cultural and social heart of the capital city, attracting many thousands of visitors.

Located on the edge of Laleh Park against the stunning backdrop of Mount Demavand, the main museum building is an intriguing blend of modernist architecture and traditional Persian motifs. The roofline is inspired by the windtowers found in the towns bordering Iran's Kavir Desert and the interior boasts a stunning *chahar su* (four-way) vestibule and circular concourse. The internal spaces are neatly linked by ramps and winding corridors and the vestibule itself is rooted around an enigmatic work by the celebrated Japanese artist Noriyuki Haraguchi. A rectangular 'pond' of oil within steel banks, *Matter and Mind* draws on the traditional Persian motif of water whilst acknowledging

the importance to modern Iran of 'black gold'.

Designed, constructed and equipped at huge expense almost twenty years ago, the Museum boasts no fewer than nine separate gallery spaces, which with ancillary curatorial and administrative departments amount to approximately 2,000m². There are 60 staff, including 10 curators (nine of whom were trained in-country), handling a busy schedule which often involves exhibitions running back-to-back.

Originally conceived as a showpiece for international modern art, the objectives of the Museum have since been refined to meet more accurately the needs of contemporary Iran and to reflect the changes that have taken place since the late 1970's. The Museum now comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture & Islamic Guidance and has the following objectives:

- to increase awareness of Iranian art on an international level
- to enhance the quality and quantity of Iranian art
- to protect the ideals of Iranian art as a means of strengthening national identity
- to encourage the development of new artistic ideas and of interest in art by young Iranians

The Museum's collection comprises some 1500 pieces of essentially Western provenance (mostly acquired at the time of the Museum's creation) and roughly 2500 works of Iranian art. Acquisition funds are now directed exclusively



Opposite page: The striking wind-tower design of the main museum building. **Left:** JP with Max Bill's sculpture *Multiply in Space*. **Above, top left:** René Magritte's *Le Therapeute*. **Above, top right:** Cartoon by Hooshyar Mitra, exhibited in the 1995 Tehran Cartoon Biennial, Iran. **Above:** One of the museum's main galleries.

towards developing and expanding this latter category and most of the Museum's Western pieces are not on public display. These number several internationally-renowned paintings by Monet, Gauguin and Picasso, as well as provocative and contentious works not now considered appropriate for showing in modern-day Iran. However, the Museum does consider lending items from its Western collection for overseas touring and several Miro pieces were loaned recently for an exhibition in Paris.

The Iranian collection is unique in its variety and quality. For a country with such a rich cultural heritage, it comes as no surprise to find a lively and diverse contemporary arts scene. This is reflected in the range of works shown by the Museum recently: paintings in oil, water colour and acrylic; pottery; sculpture; calligraphy; miniatures; photography; even 'pop art'. Regular exhibitions have been held on each of these media and although public reaction to some of the more abstract shows has been mixed, one of the most successful events of recent years was the Second International Cartoon Biennale, held in 1995. The humorous and perceptive skills of the caricaturist and cartoonist clearly strike a chord with the Iranian public. As many of the exhibitions carry an international banner, they are an invaluable means through which local artists can gain greater exposure for their work and ideas.

Under the present Director, Sayyed Mohammad Sohofi, the Museum continues to expand its field of

interest. Potential new initiatives include a show on contemporary jewellery and an exhibition on the history and design of the Islamic garden. Meanwhile, a continuing and central part of the Museum's work is the development of a cadre of young Iranian artists. The annual Youth Artists' Festival, held in a different part of the country each year by the Association of Visual Arts (a non-governmental body), regularly turns up youngsters with enormous artistic potential and last year's event in the western city of Kermanshah attracted entries of an exceptionally high standard.

The Museum also maintains a prominent academic and scientific profile. There is a range of links with the national universities and with artists themselves. In particular, the Museum works with the Visual Arts Centre – affiliated to the Ministry of Culture & Islamic Guidance – to support artists in their work by sponsoring workshops and arranging loans. A varied programme of lectures and seminars at the museum attracts large audiences, often drawn from Tehran's huge student population, which increasingly looks to the Museum to take a lead in the artistic and cultural debate which is now part of contemporary Iran. Proceedings and papers are published regularly and exhibitions are accompanied by high quality, fully-illustrated catalogues. The work of the Museum in moving forward the frontiers of art in Iran is clearly seminal and although the circumstances have changed since its inception two decades ago, the reasons for its existence are as compelling now as they ever were.

Few countries in the world can boast the fabulous wealth of cultural heritage that is Iran. Centuries of invasion, counter-invasion, empire and trade have combined to produce a uniquely varied and sophisticated cultural landscape. Rich archaeological sites, well-preserved historic towns and vibrant crafts and arts-related skills present a fascinating environment for scholar and tourist alike.

The management and presentation of this wealth began in earnest during the 1970's, partly as a government-directed initiative connected with the aggrandisement of the Pahlavi dynasty, but also in response to the growing number of tourists that were visiting Iran at that

beginning to pick up after years of decline and the next few years are likely to see an expansion in 'cultural tourism', providing much-needed employment and revenue for historic centres such as Isfahan and Shiraz.

Tehran may not win any prizes for being Iran's most beautiful city, but it certainly contains some of the most outstanding museums to be found anywhere in the world. Immediately next to the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Laleh Park is the stunning Carpet Museum, built in a contemporary style similar to the MCA and designed specifically to display its very fine collection of carpets and kilim from all over Iran. Most date from the 19th- or 20th-centuries, but there are also some

Iran's Antiquities and Architecture: An Embarrassment of Riches?



time. One of the problems faced by the authorities was the sheer volume of sites and objects deemed worthy of preservation, as well as the logistical problems involved in managing the cultural heritage of such a large country. By virtue of their very nature, many heritage sites are in remote areas poorly served by communications and so are difficult to protect and investigate.

Almost twenty years on, many of the practical issues remain, even if the official objectives for preserving evidence of Iran's past have undergone a subtle repositioning. There is now renewed focus on promotion of the cultural heritage as an integral part of the Islamic Iranian identity, with increasing attention to the more traditional cultural aspects, many of which were actively ignored during the modernising years of the country's 'White Revolution' under the last Shah. The global context is also changing – the international tourist trade to Iran is slowly

exquisite antique pieces.

Equally impressive is the Abgineh Museum, specialising in ceramics and glassware. The museum is accommodated within a grand 19th-century villa once owned by a Prime Minister to the Shah, and the ostentatious European-style architecture has been used to maximum effect as a setting for the exceptional collection. Particularly noteworthy are the innovative Italian designed showcases housing a fantastic series of glass items, with many dating from the 11th- 13th centuries, Iran's golden age of glass-making.

Perhaps most striking of all is the Reza Abbasi Museum. Located within an undistinguished building, this museum contains the most fabulous array of high quality objects, drawn from all over Iran and including many of the prize artefacts unearthed at Persepolis. The several galleries cover three floors and there is also a library containing 6,000



books, periodicals and papers on Iranian history and culture. Of particular interest is the pre-Islamic collection, which includes the famous 'Lorestan bronzes', as well as an outstanding series of illuminated manuscripts and miniatures of the highest quality (including folios from Firdowsi's exquisite *Shahnama*), exquisitely decorated lacquerware, engraved metalwork, Qashani ceramics and, most dramatic of all, a host of objects from the Achaemenid and Sassanid eras. Drinking horns, beakers and bowls, all in solid gold and adorned with images of bulls, rams, ibex and prowling tigers, form the most striking centrepiece to the museum collection.

The objects in the Reza Abbasi were brought together in 1978, at a time when several of Iran's key museums were being established.

Many different sources provided the artefacts and 90% of these are in storage at any one time, although efforts are made to rotate those on display. Like most other museums in Iran, responsibility for management and maintenance lies with the Organisation of Cultural Heritage (part of the Ministry of Culture & Islamic Guidance), which maintains a conservation workshop at the museum. Curatorial training is provided on site and there are link courses with Tehran University.

The conservation of Iran's architectural heritage is an awesome task. Thousands of individual monuments and sites are in need of maintenance and repair, for which the total bill is certainly beyond the ability of the authorities to pay. However, in the main historic towns at least, the buildings seem generally

well-maintained. In Isfahan, the most renowned and visited of all Iran's historic attractions, conservation work is currently underway on several of the chief sites. Although there is some evidence of a heavy-handed approach at times, the general attention to detail is commendable, as is the use of traditional techniques and materials.

Isfahan remains one of the world's most remarkable historic cities. The sheer wealth of monuments within the city boundaries, many of which are of international importance in their own right, create a unique

well-maintained. In Isfahan, the most renowned and visited of all Iran's historic attractions, conservation work is currently underway on several of the chief sites. Although there is some evidence of a heavy-handed approach at times, the general attention to detail is commendable, as is the use of traditional techniques and materials.



sheer scale and beauty of monuments such as this are a potent reminder of both the richness of the Iranian cultural heritage and of the challenge that faces the Iranian people as they strive to protect and interpret their past.

Left: The Chahar Bagh School in Isfahan, dating from 1714 and currently under repair. Middle, left: Khaju Bridge in Isfahan, built by Shah Abbas II in 1650. Below, right: Section of Khaju Bridge, one of Iran's architectural masterpieces. Bottom, left: The approach to Tehran's Carpet Museum. Bottom, right: Inside the Carpet Museum.



venue. This is all the more refreshing when one understands that Isfahan is very much a working urban centre and blissfully free of the contrived feel of a open-air museum. Its location on a river gives it a particularly attractive atmosphere and the stunning bridges (dating back to the Safavid era and beyond) are popular with strollers and visitors to the bridge pier tea-houses, as well as a means of getting from one half of the city to the other.

However, the focal point of Isfahan is Imam Square, the symbolic centre of the Safavid dynasty. Faced on three sides by the magnificent Imam mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque and Ali-Qapu Palace, and defined by interesting tilework, decoration and vaulting, it is one of the world's great urban spaces. Also of note is the Hasht Behesht Palace, a beautifully-decorated octagonal pavilion set in lush gardens and restored to a high standard. The

James Parry is Director of Research and Planning at AIW and a specialist on the conservation of architecture in Islamic countries.

The author acknowledges the kind hospitality and support of the staff of the Museum of Contemporary Art during his time in Tehran.

The First International Seminar on the Presence of Women in Contemporary Cinema, organised by the Women's Solidarity Association of Iran (WSAI), was a dream opportunity for me to discover and meet Iranian women artists, at a period when Iran is undergoing many imperceptible changes. My paper on "Arab Women Filmmakers" was meant to introduce other cultural approaches and their diversities to a country with similar religious background.

I was far from knowing what to expect: strict rules, conventional and official talks, or a genuine exchange of ideas and experiences?

The latest recommendations for 'Islamic dress' were less strict than expected. 'Modest dress is required for women, but this does not mean that one

its shortcomings. Yet, once there, most of the clichés are shattered, for Iranian women participate massively in various fields of social and economical activities. And one of these culturally productive areas is the film industry.

The four-day Seminar, which took place at the end of February '97, immediately after the annual Fajr Film Festival, happened to be a true eye opener. This impression was shared by most of the guests, if not all. For Iran's policy, sometimes criticised by both the Arab and the European press, has been covered mainly for its extreme positions and shortcomings. This image was to change drastically during our stay.

The first surprise came with meeting the organiser of the seminar, Mrs Fatemeh Hashemi, a bright, young, energetic and

Rediscovering Iran through its Cinema and Women Filmmakers

Rose Issa

has to wear a chador. Loose trousers, long skirts, dress with sleeves or manteaux plus a headscarf will be sufficient.' It made interpretations possible and can hopefully open new doors to young Iranian designers who can surely do better than the black chador. In Tehran itself, one notices that the majority of the women in the streets were wearing black or grey covers – whether scarves, chadors or manteaux. These colours are not specifically recommended in any religious Islamic scriptures, so one wonders whether the choice of black is related to the Abbasid or Fatimid flag, or whether it represents simply a tendency to general standardisation of appearances. Whatever the reason, I was to discover that the limits of this covering were unable to conceal the real identity and role of some of the most interesting women that I was to meet during the seminar.

The contribution of women to the different spheres of art, literature, religion, politics and economics is hardly known outside Iran; their status in present day Iran – mostly seen with critical eyes for those living within the national borders – is often mentioned with emphasis mainly on

tolerant character, whose long-standing efforts as the Secretary General of WSAI had made the event possible. Mrs Hashemi happens to be also one of the outgoing president Rafsanjani's daughters! Her sister, Faeze Rafsanjani, a member of the Iranian parliament, has built up a solid political reputation too, supporting the 'liberal' candidate, Ayatollah Khatemi, in the recent elections.

Mrs Hashemi, a well travelled scholar and mother of three, was assisted by Parvin Dadandish, Mahtab Mansour, a team of young hard working women and Dr Ahmadi, Director of Cinema Research Centre and former Rector of National University of Iran. UNESCO was the other co-partner in the seminar.

The Women's Solidarity Association of Iran, which was founded in 1992 to realise women's deserving roles and create links and solidarity between Iranian and foreign women, is one of the burgeoning associations aimed at improving the contribution and recognition of women. Their activities are related to state and international organisations inside and outside Iran.

The topics of the lectures and panel



discussions covered the following subjects: The presence of women in cinema as filmmakers; the image of women in contemporary world cinema; women and superstition in cinema; women and morals in cinema; promotion of violence against women in cinema; physical exploitation of women in cinema; women and national identity in cinema.

The Iranian participants, producers, scriptwriters, film-makers, actresses, and journalists came in large numbers, despite the fact that the festival took place in a hotel away from the city centre, overlooking the old prison, and was publicised discreetly. Among the participants were Mahasti Badieli, a scriptwriter,

the image of women as a commodity or helpless young girls.

A mixture of constraints and hazards in the last decade paradoxically transformed Iranian cinema into a very productive and inventive cinema, recognised worldwide. The fact that Iranian films have been awarded and appreciated by so many international festivals, with the recent top Golden Palm award in Cannes to *The Taste of Cherry* by Abbas Kiarostami, provokes contradictory reactions in Iran itself. The 'hard' fundamentalists and some extremists swallow with difficulty what they consider as a 'compromise with the West'. Yet it is these same filmmakers who helped to radically change the unfavourable image of

- policemen and soldiers badly dressed or having an argument

Films should also preferably include a prayer scene (added at the last minute in Darius Mehrjoui's film *Leila*) and should exalt religion, heroism during war and denounce Western cultural invasion.

This can only increase our admiration for the poetic and imaginative films that some filmmakers in Iran are producing today, despite the restriction and the temptations of going abroad!

While visiting the jewel-like Museum of Islamic Ceramics just next to FARABI, the main Iranian production/distribution house, and the newly built Museum of



director and producer; Fariel Behzad, the director of *Kakouli*, *Valley of Butterflies*, and *Invisible Man*; Tahmineh Milani, who directed many films for children such as *Children of Divorce* (1990), *The Legend of Ah*, (1991), *What Else is New* (1992), and *Kakadu* (1994); Mahvash Jazaeri, script writer and director; and Yasmin Malek Nasr, actress, director and producer, who was showing her first feature *Common Plight*. Some of the most talented actresses, such as Fatemeh Motamed Aria, Niki Karimi, and Homa Rosta, came almost on daily basis to participate in the debates.

However, the most noted absentee was Rakhshan Bani Etemad, the leading film director, whose films (*Off the Limits*, *Canary Yellow*, *Foreign Currency*, *Nargess* and *The Blue Veil*) have been shown on many occasions at international festivals, including that in London. I was told that she was preparing her next film.

All the same, it was a true discovery for all of us to hear the active voices of these women who work under difficult conditions and with such limitations, breaking the mould of stereotyped dialogues, and

Iran. The censors are going to have a difficult task!

The crisis and the dilemma resulted in many changes in the leadership of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (Ershad), torn between a more liberal attitude and political intransigence. The laws of censorship are themselves variable and imprecise. In the Summer of 1996, the Ministry of Culture published, in a little booklet, the Rules for Iranian Cinema, with a detailed code of censorship, of what is legal or not. At random, the following are forbidden:

- tight feminine clothes
- showing of any part of women's body except the face and hands
- physical contact, tender words or jokes between men or women
- jokes either about the army, police or family
- negative characters with a beard (which could associate them with the religious)
- foreign or coarse words
- foreign music.
- showing favourably a character who prefers solitude to collective life

Photography created by the Jalali brothers, with the famously talented actress Motamed Aria, I was very impressed by the way, whether in the streets or in the museums, she was received with a warm welcome from the general public and students who were delighted to discover that she had not 'emigrated', a rumour that hovers around many free spirits who may at some stage encounter professional difficulties. The way they approached her, admiringly expressing their pleasure and gratitude in seeing her attachment to her home country, produced some very moving moments.

Another impressive encounter was that of Zeinat Darpayi, a poet and a colourful head nurse, and an outstanding character whose life inspired Ibrahim Mokhtari's beautiful film, *Zeinat*. I discovered how this woman, who comes from a remote village in the south of Iran, assumes and imposes her personality while wearing her traditional colourful dress, all the while bursting with happiness! She not only continues to live with her husband, who was portrayed as on the edge of divorcing her in the film, but has three

children, while working as a midwife and managing five nurseries for local women. Listening to her was a constant source of delight.

She read her poems while travelling or eating. She has also written real life stories, inspired by her daily encounters, as scripts for films. All that was lacking was a publisher or a producer!

This is why I was delighted to meet the publisher and critic Shahla Lahiji, who presented a well-prepared text on the portrayal of women in Iranian cinema and its evolution from doll-like immoral creatures to passive roles where women are banished to the attic and kitchen as virtuous and shapeless mothers and wives.

Institute, were all present. As a half Iranian-half Lebanese, I was pleased to see the meeting of these two cultures at such an occasion. This was partly due to the perseverance of the Iranian film critic Hameed Reza Sadr.

As for Western participants, they included film-makers and film critics such as Claire Clouzot, whose talk on the representation of Jeanne d'Arc in decades of cinema was very well appreciated, Françoise Piot, from the film magazine Cinemaction and Louise Carre, a Canadian film maker and critic, who directed *My Heart is a Witness*, which relates her journey to understand what Islam is about, all meeting women from Black Africa, the Maghreb and the Arabian

and doing their job! When she added that the only valid moral is the one that comes free, without any social pressure or censorship, most of the journalists were pressing their hearing aids wondering whether they were hearing the correct translation! When she concluded that art and cinema are by definition perpetual heresies, one felt that it was a pity that time was up and other questions would remain suspended and unanswered.

When at the end of the seminar, the organisers generously offered a day trip to Isfahan – a city which has kept, despite all the changes, times and regimes, its magic, charm and beauty – one was strongly reminded of Iran's rich cultural past, continuing



Outside the seminar, from the sheer number of women students, teachers and professionals seen in different parts of Tehran, it also became evident that women seem to play an active role in study and research, a tendency observed in most developing countries (such as in neighbouring Pakistan or India) with the possible result of creating a gap in communication between men and women.

Among the many foreign guests and speakers who were invited to this seminar were film-makers and film critics from Europe (Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, and the UK), Canada, Bosnia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Sudan, and for the first time in recent history, guest speakers from the Arab world.

Though Arabic has become the second language taught in Iranian Islamic schools, this was the first time that Arab artists were invited to participate in a seminar! Salma Baccar from Tunisia, the Egyptian documentary filmmaker Attiyat el Abnoudi, the Moroccan film-maker and script writer Farida Bennlyazid, and Magda Wassef, in charge of film programming at the Arab World

Peninsula. Another speaker, Salam Khan, Chairperson of the UN Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, was intrigued by the contradictions between laws, rights and reality for Iranian women, and expressed her bewilderment strongly.

During a refreshingly animated moment at a press conference, Catherine Breillat, the French filmmaker known for her outspokenness, integrity and the daring subject of her films, attacked the notion of censorship and admitted that she finds it both funny and disturbing that politicians should be so preoccupied with women's morals, instead of defining their own

through the efforts of its present artists. This trip to the heart of the old capital came as a moment of delightful relaxation during which more informal discussions and exchanges between speakers and participant continued.

With the recent elections in May 1997 one can only hope that the politicians will finally understand that their best ambassadors are the women and film-makers that we met in Iran.

Rose Issa, an independent curator of contemporary arts from the Middle East and North Africa, was consultant to many festivals such as Rotterdam Film Festival, London International Film Festival and Glasgow Film Theatre on Arab and Iranian films.



Page 13: Rakhshar Bani-Eternad, Film director. Opposite page, 1-4: 1: Actresses Homa Rosta and Niki Karimi. 2: Magda Warsif, Catherine Breillat, French director and Rose Issa in Isfahan. 3: Selma Baccan (Tunisia) and Farida Benjlyazid (Morocco) smoking waterpipe. 4: Attiyat El Ahmoudi (Egypt) talking to Mahvash Jazaeri, producer. 5: Parviz Kirmavi, film director and Yasmin Malik Nasr, actress and director. 6: Rose Issa and Fatemah Motamed Aria, actress of *The Blue Veiled*. Left: Elma Hadziredrepovic, actress and journalist (Bosnia) and Louise Carre, film-maker (Canada).

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Suad Al-Attar: New Work

When Suad Al Attar opened her second solo exhibition at Leighton House this summer (9-21 June 1997), she was retracing steps she took in 1993. Then, she arrived on the scene with her first show at Leighton House, a virtual unknown in this country. But she was already a significant, revered and important artist in her home country of Iraq.



Suad Al Attar. *Once Upon A Time*, oil on canvas, 14 x 18in. 1996.

In 1964, she had become the first woman ever to hold a solo exhibition in Baghdad. Since then, she can count seventeen other one-woman shows in not only the Middle East, but also in venues as far apart as Washington, Los Angeles and London. Countless works of hers are in private collections throughout the world, including that of the late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and in modern art museum collections in places as varied as the Gulbenkian in Barcelona and institutes in Morocco, Syria, Jordan and Kuwait. Her earlier

exhibition at Leighton House was every bit as astounding as her reputation had led us to believe it would be, and she harvested a great deal of new found popularity and respect as a result of that show.

In 1993, Suad was on a new path which saw a major attempt by her and by those at Leighton House to establish her in Britain (despite her having lived here for over two decades). Things had gone very well indeed. Many people visited her exhibition and she was acclaimed from every quarter. But such good fortune was perhaps bound,

on reflection, to desert Suad at the critical moment. In one of his first actions as US President, Bill Clinton sought to make a point - and sent a cruise missile hurtling towards Baghdad city centre. Regardless of the purpose of that act or the intended target, Suad's home in that city was the actual final unintended destination. Her home, her family and her life were shattered in seconds. Her adored sister and her sister's husband, were killed outright as the house dissolved into rubble. Unable to look after herself, Suad's mother demanded her

daughter's attention and presence and so it was, that as things were beginning to happen for Suad, away went her paintbrushes and with them a great part of her spirit. Considering the great efforts made in trying to interest the media in her work, it was a deep and bitter irony when *The Guardian* newspaper in London reported the missile attack. It published a photograph of debris - what used to be Suad's home - and from the dust walked a rescuer, carrying a Suad Al Attar painting.

Now Suad was back in her

London home, feverishly working on a whole new collection of paintings, getting ready for her June exhibition at Leighton House. One look at her new work and one could see a return to her earlier, darker style, influenced by the tragedy of her recent life and

misunderstandings.

Themes *grip* Suad. They are not just there for a moment and then disappear, they hold her attention forever it seems – sunsets, trees and, perhaps paradoxically, cities figure strongly as well. And of course, women are there too.

you. Suad's paintings are still very familiar. What changes that have occurred do not destroy the link with her past achievements. Her latest version of 'Once upon a time' is familiar to those who saw a similar series back in 1993. But this time, there is a difference. Whilst the

psychoanalysis is best left to the viewer alone.

Her colour sense remains vivid, despite the toning down of recent developments. Her style has regained its detail; faces have that astounding nobility again (not self-portraits she insists) but this time there is a little more pain.

In the hallway of Suad's London flat one is faced by huge canvases created in the early Eighties. Even today, she is offered fortunes by collectors for these works (she wishes to pass these pictures on to her daughters and refuses to sell them). It is not hard to see why people want them so much; confronted by the timeless quality of the paintings of legends and lovers, the viewer is often left stunned. These are truly museum pieces. But the collection in this private gallery includes a small and beautiful picture. It is a landscape – a forest so rich and illuminated that it is almost three dimensional. It is paradise, Suad's paradise. Three tiny birds can be seen in the branches of trees. These birds of paradise appear regularly in her paintings and I often ask her what they mean but she will not tell me, or maybe she can't. Perhaps they are an expression of the goodness within the woman – she wants us all to be happy. She wants herself to be happy.

In the preparations for her June exhibition, I believe Suad turned to that early picture for inspiration. She is on a comeback, so to speak, and it is going to be difficult – being a painter of great distinction does not get you noticed that easily. It doesn't stop a cruise missile from slamming into the side of your home and killing and injuring half of your family either. But being that painter did help her depict paradise – one look at that painting might remind her of what it was like when last she was there.

Michael Volpe



Suad Al Attar. *Once Upon A Time*, oil on canvas, 14 x 18in. 1996.

the misery she still feels at the loss of her sister (she only recently accepted that her trauma had penetrated her pictures). The references to Sumarian legend and early Mesopotamian poetry are still there but now, very prominent in her work, are two figures, very serene, often intertwined. This is not, she says, an attempt to portray literally her sister and brother-in-law, but it is a reflection of her mood and thoughts.

Over recent years, before the tragedy, Suad's work had become freer and more colourful. There has been, and still is, a strength to her pictures; a strength that almost defies her position as a Muslim woman in society. The women in Suad's pictures are powerful and beautiful (but, as she puts it, "tormented by unknown forces"). It has been said that her pictures are "dreamlike" and whilst this is true, it can lead to some

Suad says that she values, more than anything, the importance of the inner spirit. After all, it is this that defines Suad herself.

Many problems have beset Suad Al Attar since 1993 and yet she is indomitable. Her spirit, the place whence all her visual sense comes, is returning – has returned. Perhaps it is older, wiser, somewhat bruised and hurt, but it is still there. Since her return to work her pictures are sombre with mute greens and darkness, with heavy strokes and heavier use of paint. It is not an angry brush but one is not sure what it is; perhaps the repetitions, reworking, small flashes of colour amidst the darkness, perhaps by her method she is hoping that each effort will reveal the answers to questions she has of 'God', of mankind? It is of little doubt that luck has turned its face against her recently.

But do not let this deter

Bouraq is the main subject, it is not framed by a landscape or cityscape as in the past. Then it seemed as if the legend had power over Suad and her fellow citizens – it meant something to all. By focusing on the Bouraq (and one cannot ignore its significance in mythology), emotions turned exclusively to it, maybe we are seeing a more selfish painter. This is not to condemn Suad. In these latest paintings the Bouraq fills the frame in ascending to Heaven – but now it has company, those two figures sit astride the beast's back. It is impossible for me not to feel that these new pictures represent a subconscious attempt to soothe her soul. Would it not be of comfort to know that departed loved ones are in such good hands? In saying this I am making assumptions of course: Suad herself has never expressed such intent and it is certain that this pseudo-

Jordan in Paris: IMA Exhibition's Tour Through History

Despite its rich heritage and long history stretching back to the beginning of civilisation, Jordan still remains in many ways the world's 'best-kept secret'.

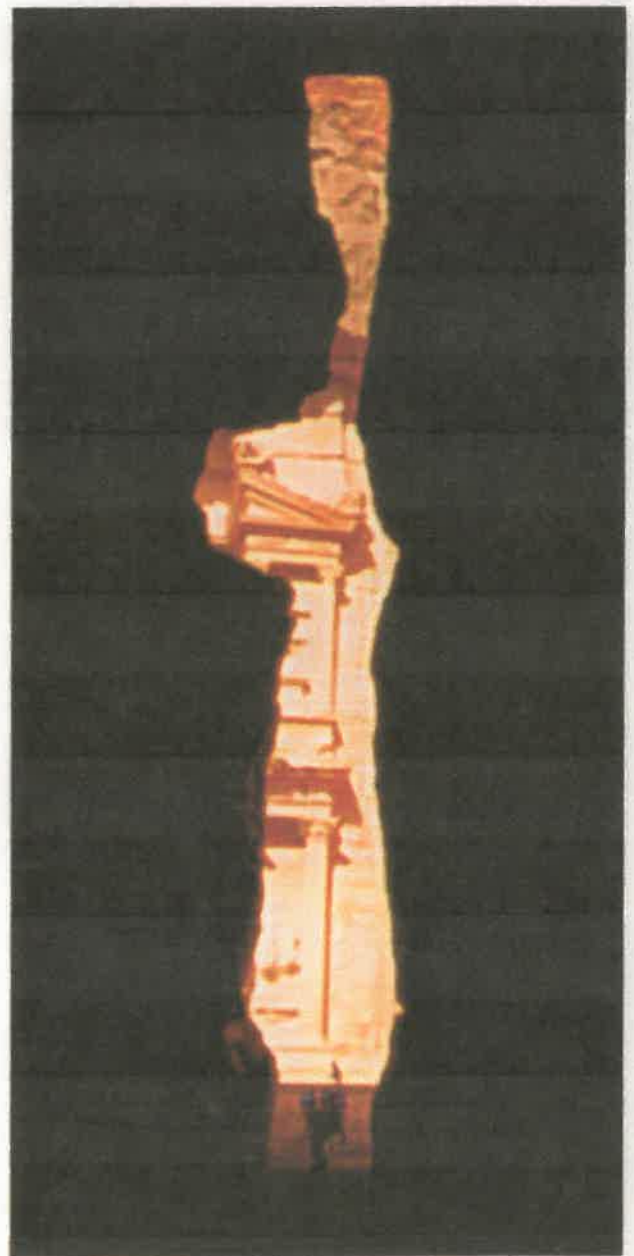


Top: Anthropomorphic idol found in the Temple of the Winged Lions, Petra. Above: Facade, Street Tombs. Right: Striking view of the Treasury - Al-Khazneh from the Siq.

Jordan has the 2000 year old Nabatean secret city of *al-Betra* or Petra with its rock hewn hillside tombs and necropolis covered with wild herbs and fig trees growing through the crevices of its steep cliffs; its elaborate and richly carved shrines and temples; its ingenious water channel system weaving its way through the towering picturesque canyons; the rustic hill climbs to the monastery and *Jabal Haroun* to the tomb of Aaron, brother of prophet Moses - all provide a spell binding visual experience as well as a unique insight into the mystery of Nabatean life and

creative skills- Passing through the dramatic valleys and mountains of *Wadi Mousan* and *Wadi Rum* - valley of the moon the approach to Petra itself presents some of the most breathtaking views of dramatic vistas and landscapes.

A few kilometres north of Amman is the most complete and the best preserved Eastern Roman Empire city of Jerash with its colonnade streets, shops, piazzas, temples and theatres. Located in the beautiful Jordan valley, there are the impressive sites of the 'Decapolis', the ten Greco-



Roman trading cities including *Pella* and *Gadara/Umm Qais*. The salty Dead Sea itself, the eastern shores of which are reputed to have been the location of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, is unique in being the lowest spot on earth - 400 meters or 1312 feet below the sea level.

Along the major historic routes, there are the famous mosaics in Madaba including a 6th century AD mosaic map of the Holy Land; prophet Moses' tomb on Mount Nebo; Herod's palace where Salome once danced; Crusaders castles at *Ajloun*, *Kerak* and *Shobak* and a variety of Muslim forts,



earliest of the orientalisists perhaps, set out all that long ago in their search for the mythical 'happy Arab'. They visited Syria, Mesopotamia, Persepolis, Bombay and, returned via the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, Jiddah and Egypt. The astronomer Carsten Niebulur, the sole survivor of the expedition, published his account in 1774, which was later

who traveled in 1826 through Smyrna, Constantinople, Anatolia, Syria and as far as Baalbeck, Damascus, Hauran, Jerusalem, Jerash and Amman. Linant de Belfonds himself was an excellent draughtsman and engineer and had traveled with Comte de Forbin's expedition of 1817 to Greece, Egypt and the Holy Land.



towers, *qasrs* and caravanserais, including the vaulted 8th century *Umayyad* hunting lodge and baths of *Qasr al Amra* with its ingenious water supply system and the famous paintings of bathing and hunting scenes still mainly intact.

The exhibition *Jordanie, sur les pas des archeologues - 'In the Footsteps of the Archeologists'* was organised to coherently display the country's unique historic treasures and lure the visitors to take a step back in time, and in the adventurous spirit of the many explorers and archeologists past and present, share in the excitement of their discoveries and interpretations of history.

Covering the period from the Neolithic age of 3300 BC to the present, the exhibition included artifacts from the iron and bronze ages, the Byzantine, Roman and Hellenic periods - the astonishing statues of *Ain Ghazal*, and displayed the abundance of fascinating objects from the *Umayyad* period. Particular attention was paid to emphasize the techniques used to preserve the fragile artifacts and monuments.

The exhibition also considered the lives and times of the many early explorers and archaeologists. The Danish expedition of 1761 included a mathematician, a doctor, a philologist, an engraver and an astronomer who, as the

translated into French in 1780.

The Swiss born Johann Ludwig Burckhardt left England in 1809 and, dressed in oriental costume as Sheikh Abraham, traveled to Malta, Antioch, Aleppo, Palmyra, Baalbeck and Damascus eventually reaching Petra in 1812 to spend some time sketching and taking notes. He died in Cairo in 1817 and his accounts based mostly on his encounter with the various tribes, were published a few years later and constitute the first study of the customs and habits of the desert people.

Also among the earlier explorers were the two Frenchmen Leon de Laborde and Louis Linant de Belfonds

The exhibition opened on 13 June and continues until 15 October between the hours of 10 to 6 daily except on Mondays, at the Institut du Monde Arabe, 1, rue des Fosses St Bernard, 75236 Paris.

Ayyub Malik

Top: Frescoe paintings, interior *Qasr Amra* - 8th century Umayyad Desert Hunting Lodge. Above: View of the South Theatre, AD 8196, Jerash.

Cairo Newsletter



Area Conservation in Medieval Cairo

Area conservation not only cleans, repairs, and upgrades streets and clusters of buildings, but also provides infrastructural stimulus and support for the inhabitants of a neighbourhood. It has been advocated for many years, but until recently no agency has been able to implement plans drawn up by UNESCO in the early eighties. Now the Egyptian Antiquities Project (EAP) under the auspices of the American Research Centre in Egypt in cooperation with the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities has taken on an ambitious project involving the Bab Zuweyla and its immediate surroundings under a grant from the US Agency for International Development.

The effect is already visible at the nearby Wakalah of Nafisa al-Bayda, where work on the adjoining fountain/school (*sabil-kuttab*) has been going on since December 1995, and has aroused keen interest among

the local inhabitants.

Architect Agnieszka Dobrowolska and stone-specialist Theo Gayer Anderson are there everyday caring for their ancient patient, which until lately, was swathed in green netting. They have applied poultices to every square inch of masonry, a process that leeches out the destructive salts seeping up through the foundations. It also involves removing two centuries of grime, a process that reveals the original warm honey-gold of the Muqattam limestone. Every joint has been repointed and missing stones and fallen mortar have been replaced.

Twisted stainless steel pins now reinforce the walls. The upper storey is getting a new floor and the whole building a new roof. Truckloads of debris were removed from the upstairs room and the roof, which had been piled high, Cairo-style, with all manner of detritus.

Among the old boards and rubble, Agnieszka Dobrowolska was excited to

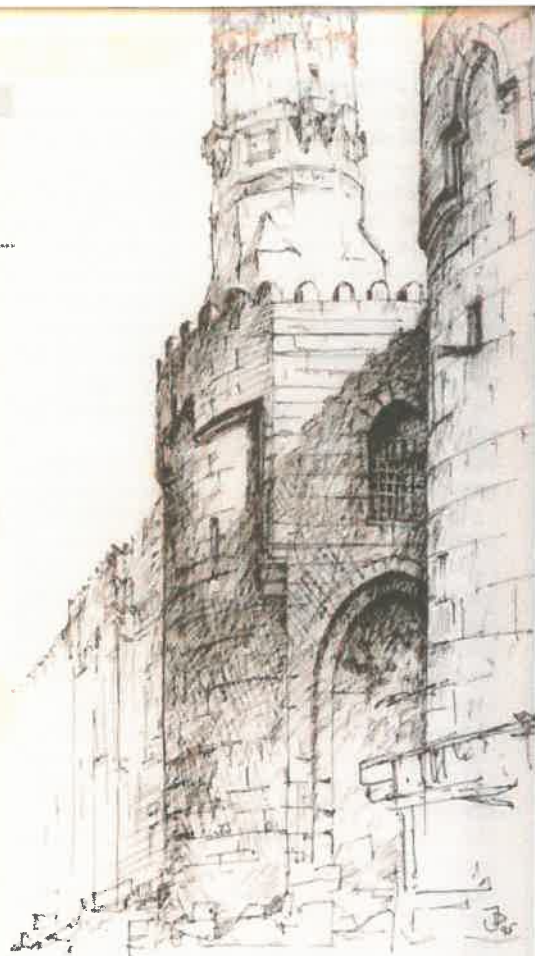
Above, left: The *Sabil-Kuttab Nafisa al Bayda*. The arch to the right leads into Sugar Street after which one of Naquib Mahfuz' books is named. Above: *Bab Zuweyla*, the southern gate of the Fatimid City of Al-Qahira. Drawings by Jaroslaw Dobrowolski

discover a decorative panel, measuring one by two meters, painted pink and blue in eighteenth-century Turkish style. She carefully rescued it. For the storage of such objects and for use as an atelier she rented a little room behind the *sabil*, where fighting, running water and an adjoining toilet have been installed. Funding for this part of the project has been forthcoming from the Local Cultural Fund (Egypt) of the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands.

Work on the Bab Zuweyla, the 11th-century fortified gate that marks the southern limit of the Fatimid enclosure of Al-Qahirah, is about to get under way. Though it has withstood the wear and tear of the years well and is in comparatively good condition, it probably needs the same type of poulticing treatment as the *sabil*. Some of the pavements on top of its towers need replacing. Nairy

Hampikian and her team have been engaged to do the cleaning, consolidation and restoration.

Another team under the leadership of Dr Saleh Lamei has been engaged by the EAP to supervise the conservation of the small chapel (*sawiyya*) and fountain (*sabil*) that stand right outside the Bab. This complex dates to 1404 AD, around the height of the Mamluk empire, during which royal masons had almost unlimited access to types of decorative stone, including precious recycled materials from previous Pharaonic, Roman and early Christian buildings. Dr James Harrell of the University of Toledo was engaged by the EAP to study the stone in the decorative panelling of the qibla wall, and has identified over 90 different types including porphyry and various varieties of marble. Their provenance from all over the ancient and



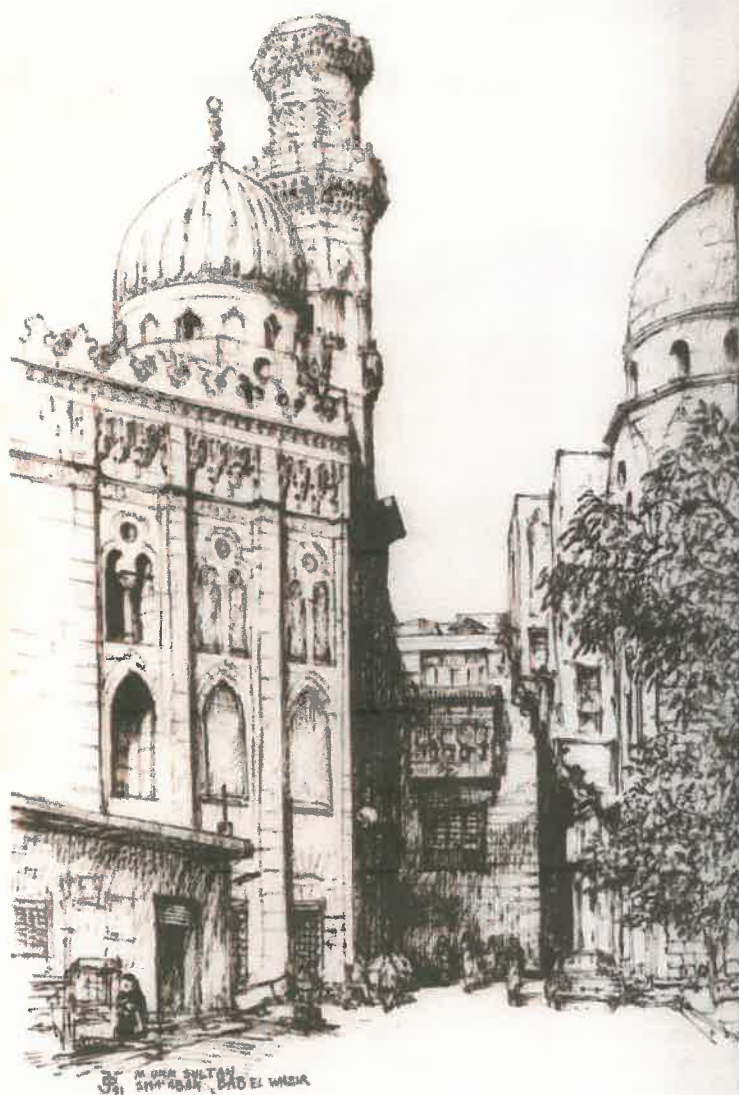
medieval Mediterranean world makes a fascinating study in itself.

Another treasure of this small building is the ceiling of the *sabil* which is a honeycomb of wooden panels, some with still recognisable gilded patterns, which will be reconstructed and restored. Lighting and new paving will be installed, and the hole in the roof, which lets in the occasional disastrous shower of rain, covered.

The *sawfiya* is fortunately at street level today as it was moved to its present position in 1923 by the Comité de Conservation, (a quasi-international body which saved many Islamic monuments from decay between the 1880s and 1952). Its masonry is therefore relatively safe from damage by groundwater. The same cannot be said, however, of the Fatimid mosque of Al-Salah Tala'i across the street, the foundations of which are several meters below street level and have been standing

knee deep in filthy water for decades, with the resulting catastrophic effects on the masonry. This mosque forms part of the area conservation plan, but restoration of the whole building is unfortunately not feasible until the water can be permanently drained off.

The drains in this part of the old city were laid down in 1915 and are today, eighty-two years later, riddled with leaks and fissures. A whole new drainage system is desperately needed. An astounding and tragic concatenation of circumstances allowed this particular area, only 250 meters from Cairo's huge main sewage drain completed in the 80s, to be omitted from the master plan. That



Above, left: Bayt al Razzaz. Above: Darb al ahmar. The facade in the background is that of Bayt al Razzaz. Drawings by Jaroslaw Dobrowolski.



billion-dollar project inexplicably failed to include the drains in most areas of Cairo's medieval zone.

The fourth building to be restored is the vast tumble-down palace of al Razzaz, several hundred meters to the south-east of the Bab Zuweyla. It dates partly from the 15th and partly from the 18th century and an existing conditions report and conservation specification have already been completed by the American Research Center under its USAID funded Egyptian Antiquities Project. The palace contains many priceless features including two courtyards, a vast ground-floor reception hall or *Ka'a*, an outdoor

maq'ad or loggia, two or three upstairs reception rooms with incomparable *mashrabiyya* windows, window seats, panelling and Turkish painting, in the same style as the panel retrieved from the debris in the *sabil*. Restoration of such a vast building will be undertaken in stages.

Elizabeth Rodenbeck

UAE Newsletter

The 3rd International Sharjah Biennial, which has now become one of the most important events on the cultural calendar of the UAE, opened on 1 April 1997 at the Sharjah Expo Centre with works of more than 300 artists from the Arab world as well as other Eastern and Western countries.

The Biennial was inaugurated by his Highness Dr Shaikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Member Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, and a great patron of the arts. He spent over two hours going around the exhibition and later said: "We hope to enhance the love of art among our children, the youth and our people with such events."

This year there were works from 44 countries, which included entries in painting, photography, sculpture, graphics and 3D art. A jury comprising members from the UAE, Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, France, England, and China selected 24 winners each of whom received cash prizes ranging from Dh.10,000 (St.£ 1666) to Dh.25,000 (St.£ 4166).

The Biennial Grand Prize went to Palestinian artist Jaafar Al Khaldi, while the judges' prize was given to Japanese artist Masako Kano. The first prize in graphic art went to Susan Fantiese from Romania, and the second to Rajwa bint Ali from Jordan. The first three prizes in photography went to Abdul Latif Al Samoudi and Thaer Hilal both from Syria, and Abdur Rahman Al Sulaiman from Saudi Arabia. The first prize in sculpture was awarded to UAE artist Hussain Sharif, while Fathi Sobhi from Egypt received the second prize. The painting prize went to

Egyptian artist Emad Abu Zaid. Besides these there were 14 distinction prize winners.

The focus of attention this year were the four artists who were honoured for their outstanding contribution, with their works displayed in



Top: Hussein Sharif. UAE. First Prize in Sculpture. Above: Khalil Abdul Wahid. UAE. Distinction.

a special pavilion at the exhibition. They included the first painter in the UAE, Abdul Qader al Rais, who concentrates on the architectural and local heritage of the UAE. Abdul

Qader is considered the pioneer of the modern art movement in the country. Another artist honoured was Mohammed Melehi, one of the pioneers of the Moroccan plastic art movement. Salwa

Shukair from Lebanon, the third artist, specialises in abstract geometric compositions; and the fourth artist Yousuf Ahmed from Qatar excels in Arabic calligraphy with materials ranging from ink on canvas and paper to silk screen.

The Distinction prize winners were: Ali Moqawas and Mostafi Ali from Syria, Dr Ahmad Baqar from Bahrain, Rabina Mahmood from Oman, Ahmad Haylouz from Palestine, Ofi Rayan and Mohammed Fathi Abu Al Naja from Egypt, Bu Janawi from Morocco, Vivek Vilasini from India, Khalil Abdul Wahed from UAE, Salah Sawli and Bassam Dahdouh from Lebanon, Leila Milani from Tunisia, and Fadel Akrafi from Iraq.

A number of well known artists from around the world also sent their works to the Biennial. Among them were Dr Wijdan bint Ali from Jordan, John R Harris, Spencer Tart and John Haynes.

The Biennial concluded on April 23 with a solo art exhibition of Egyptian artist Mustafa Khider at the Sharjah Art Museum. Programmes were arranged at the Sharjah Cultural Centre, exhibitions at Sharjah Art Museum, the Special Arts Group Association, UAE Fine Arts Society, an open air exhibition of sculpture at Al Shoiheen Zone, the New Arts House, Al Serkal House and the Emirates Plastic Arts Association. Sharjah lived up to its reputation as the Cultural Centre of the UAE.

The Warehouse Exhibition Indonesian colonial-style furniture, blue glassware from Lebanon, and paintings by two Arab artists were the

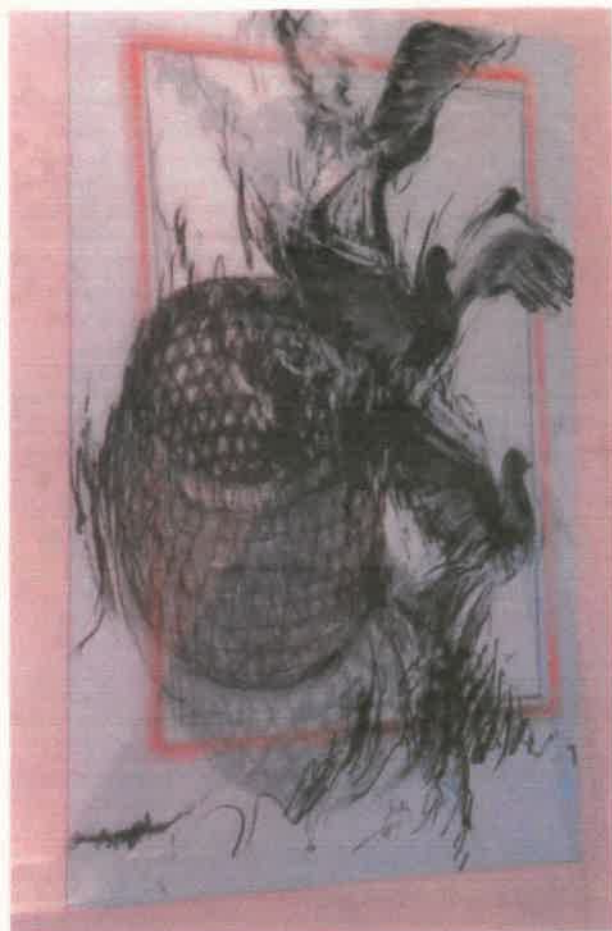
highlight of 'The Warehouse Exhibition' which opened on April 2 at the Dubai World Trade Centre. "I don't just like to show furniture or artefacts in isolation. I believe in presenting a complete picture of the home, with both complimenting each other as they do in our homes", said Therese Foot.

awash with colours merging into one another. This Lebanese artist said she derives her inspiration from nature and light. "I love to paint in natural light, and I often paint outdoors. I believe that all the answers I am looking for are in nature," she said. The paintings of the two

Qasimi, Shaikha Badour Sultan al Qasimi, Maha Abdulla al Mazroui, Khulood Mattar Rashid, Sarah Majid al Futtaini, and the guide and mentor of the group, Tina Ahmed.

Tebra means a shimmer on the sea that guides a pearl-diver to the glistening pearl-laden oyster-beds

UAE, and in Paris, Monte Carlo, London and Amman. Her works are well known and her paintings at the Tebra exhibition conveyed her mood of the moment with hidden meanings in all of them. The paintings included a new series titled 'Paradox' and in these as in others, the faces of the men,



Left: Dr Ahmed Baqer, Bahrain. Distinction. Above: Tina Ahmed, Bangladesh. Opposite page, top, left: Rabia Mahmood, Oman. Distinction. Bottom, left: Wijdan Ali, Jordan Bottom, right: Bodour Sultan Al Qasimi, Member Tebra Group

managing partner of 'The Warehouse', which she explained is not an outlet but a firm which organises exhibitions of art and furniture.

The highlight of the exhibition was the work of two Arab women artists. Hania Marrash, a British-Lebanese artist based in London, exhibited about 40 of her paintings depicting Arab architecture and heritage in collages. Marrash said, "I paint places I have visited. I have to breathe the place, to feel and live it, and then it inspires my work." Compared to Marrash's fine lines and attention to detail, Rana Raouda's canvases are

artists were set against a backdrop of colonial furniture in mahogany and teak with Indonesian influence, the furnishing touches being added by blue glassware from Lebanon. The exhibition was held in Al Multaqua Suites of the Dubai World Trade Centre.

Tebra Group

The Al Ghurair Centre sponsored an exhibition of seven women artists at the Al Multaqua Suites of the Dubai World Trade Centre during the Dubai Shopping Festival from April 24 to 26, 1997. The artists included Shaikha Hessa Maktoum al Maktoum, Shaikha Sawsan Abdulaziz al

below. Showcasing the talents of the seven Tebra members, the exhibition provided visitors with an insight into the artistic diversity that makes up Tebra today. The exhibition was aptly titled with another Arabic word 'Maqqabis', meaning windows. The exhibits were displayed in seven alcoves and it was like opening several windows in a home and looking into the mind of seven talented women.

Shaikha Hessa (b.1972) took up art as a discipline in 1991 after completing her 'A' level. She has exhibited in a number of art events in the

women and children say everything. Other titles included 'Reunion', 'Chrysalis', 'Celestial Rays', and 'Serendipity'.

Shaikha Sawsan (b.1972) is a graduate of the Higher Colleges of Technology in Dubai, majoring in Information Systems. She took up art as a hobby and got involved with art activities in her College. She has participated in most art exhibitions in the UAE since 1993. Her six paintings were based on astronomical signs, an unusual subject, worked with oil on canvas using a palette knife in a unique style conveying the essence of each

sign in harmonising colours.

Shaikha Badour (b.1978) studied art in school and took it as a subject in her 'A' level. She is studying Anthropology at a university in England but continues to take a keen interest in the art scene in the UAE. Her paintings at the exhibition

she attended a number of courses at the Dubai International art Centre followed by a 3-month course at the Guildford Adult Institute in Surrey, England. She was commissioned by a friend to do a three-piece oil painting as a backdrop to a wedding stage incorporating earthen pots. Besides this her

several courses at the Dubai International Arts Centre. Her exhibits included seascapes "that speak of a longing to explore forgotten frontiers." She says, "I love nature and keep going back to the sea. I love it's dreamy, romantic feel, and yet it has an element of danger and mystery."

Sarah (b.1976) had titled her collection 'Mindscapes' with swirling blues and browns, and as Tina Ahmed, her teacher described it, "She paints what she sees in her mind." The paintings conjured up images of tranquillity and loneliness. Sarah has been exhibiting since 1995 in the UAE, and



are mainly portraits done in a simple style reminiscent of the classical school. She had collaborated with Tina Ahmed on the book "A Child's Guide to the UAE", which was on sale at the venue.

Maha (b.1971) took up art seriously four years ago when

exhibits included her experiments with light and shade inspired by her visit to Venice.

Khulood graduated from the UAE University in Al Ain where she studied business Administration. She now works as an arts teacher for children. She also took





Top: Khulood Mattar Rashid. Middle: Sarah Majid Al Futtaim. Above: Maha Abdulla Al Mazroui. Right: Sawson Abdulaziz Al Qassimi. These artists are Members of Tebra.

Monaco and Kuwait. Her work will also be published in the Encyclopedia of International Women Artists later this year. She will participate in the Women's Art Library touring exhibition which will take place in London in 1998.

Tina graduated in fine arts from the University of Punjab, Lahore. A highly accomplished artist she has participated in a large number of exhibitions in the UAE, Gulf, Bangladesh and Europe. She has resided in the UAE for the past 20 years and has also taught art extensively including at the Dubai Women's College. Tina's exhibits showed a strong Islamic calligraphic element with collagraphs dominating. A panel designed by her for the Mughal Tent Project of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and executed by a group of ladies in the UAE, went on display on June 24, 1997 at a ceremony in London.

The Tebra exhibition was inaugurated by Shaikh Saeed bin Maktoum al Maktoum, brother of Shaikha Hessa and son of the Ruler of Dubai. Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair, President of the Al Ghurair Centre, the sponsors of the exhibition said, "We shall be supporting art across the Emirates in a big way in the future as we approach the millennium and beyond."

Malik Omer



KL Newsletter

Malaysian art is making its presence felt in other parts of the world. Over the past few years Malaysian artists have been exhibiting their works abroad. The exhibitions were either organised through their own initiative or through the National Art Gallery.

It is reassuring to note that artists are not dependent on organisations like the National Art Gallery to have their works displayed overseas. They have managed to get partial sponsorship from corporate bodies, multinationals and banks to help cover costs like freight and accommodation. Malaysia's national carrier, Malaysia Airlines offers discounted fares and government agencies such as the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism and the National Art Gallery provide some funding. Through their own efforts, they are networking with other artists, fostering goodwill and cultural understanding and at the same time promoting Malaysian art outside Malaysia. They are the artistic ambassadors for Malaysia.

Last December a group of six Malaysian artists put together 60 paintings for an exhibition in Germering, near Munich, Germany. They were there on hand to explain their works to visitors. Accompanying the artists was Malaysian musician, Valerie Ross, whose avant garde music is well-known locally as well as internationally. For this exhibition, Ross had specially composed two compositions, Web 1 and Web 2, in response to wide-ranging artworks exhibited. This is the first time that music has been incorporated into art exhibition and apparently it worked out well. The artists participating in this exhibition were printmakers Juhari Said and Lise Noor, painters Ismail Latiff, Khalil Ibrahim and Sharifah Fatimah Zubir, and sculptor Raja Shahrman Aziddin. The group then took the exhibition to Berlin, Tula and Dubrovnik early this

year. The artworks are back in Kuala Lumpur for a show at Hilton Galleria from 16-31 October.

Some of these artists had taken part in other exhibitions held at the Jordanian National Gallery of Fine Art, the Seychelles Biennale, and the Esposition Art Actuel in France. Two years ago nine Malaysian artists had their works exhibited at Al-Fann Contemporary Art from Islamic and Islam-influenced Countries in Kassel, Germany. This exhibition was organised by the Project Stoffwechsel group under Professor Hamid el-Attar, University of Kassel. This summer another group of nine Malaysian artists participated in the major Stoffwechsel quinquennial art exhibition in Kassel and Erfurt.

The Malaysian Watercolour Organization (MWO), established in 1992, has been active in not only organising annual shows in Kuala Lumpur but also getting its members to participate in the annual exhibitions organised by the Asian Watercolour Confederation. Last year MWO was invited to participate in the Asia-Pacific Watercolour exhibition in Taipei. Twenty-one members took part in this exhibition alongside artists from Australia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Taiwan and Singapore.

In October 1996, twenty members participated in the 11th Annual Exhibition of the Asian Watercolour Confederation held at the City Hall, Hong Kong. It was held in conjunction with the 16th Festival of Asian Arts with the support of the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Hong Kong Urban Council. For this exhibition the Hong

Kong Modern Art Society of Watercolours was successful in getting the American International Assurance Company Limited to be the main sponsor with the support of John S Wadsworth, Jr. and D.H. International (Hong Kong) Limited. A total of 133 artworks from 7 member organisations in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand were exhibited. Artists from China and Japan were also invited to participate in this exhibition.

The MWO organised an art exhibition entitled "Beautiful Malaysia" at the Malmo Konstmuseum, Malmo, Sweden from June 8-August 3, 1997. Dr Goran Christenson, Director of Malmo Konstmuseum had personally visited Kuala Lumpur to select artworks submitted by members for this exhibition. Over 80 works were selected for the show by 22 members. This exhibition was made possible through the effort of Malaysia's Ambassador to Sweden, HE Ambassador Choo Siew Kioh who is a watercolourist himself and a member of MWO. It presented some of Malaysia's beautiful landscapes and greenery and projected a glimpse of the happy, peaceful and harmonious life of the Malaysian people. Prior to the opening of the exhibition, members attended a summer camp in Malmo where they had painting sessions interacting with some Swedish artists. Upon their return from Sweden, the artists produced artworks of Swedish scenery which resulted in an exhibition entitled "Two Weeks in the Summer of Sweden" at Maybank Gallery, Kuala Lumpur in August. "Beautiful Malaysia" will be

held at the Petronas Gallery in November."

The National Art Gallery has also provided opportunities for artists to participate at international art exhibitions. It continues to encourage artists to take part in international art competitions and exhibitions. This year twenty-one works from the Gallery's Permanent Collection were exhibited at the Fukuoka Art Museum (May 10 - June 18, 1997) in Japan to commemorate the Asia Development Bank General Conference to be held in Fukuoka later this year. The exhibition titled "The Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia" also travelled to three other venues - Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum (June 17-July 13, 1997), Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art (July 19 - August 31, 1997) and Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum (September 6-October 12, 1997). Selected works included those by Chuah Thean Teng, Anthony Lau, Hossein Enas, Nik Zainal Abidin, O Don Peris, Georgette Chen and Syed Ahmad Jamal.

The 4th Sapporo International Print Biennale, Japan will provide Malaysian printmakers an opportunity to compete with other printmakers at international level. The prize monies are attractive with the grand prize fetching US\$20,000, first prize US\$10,000 and sponsors' prize US\$2,000 each for 35 works. This print biennale will be held from 1-6 April 1998 at the Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, Sapporo.

The ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (COCI) is another agency that provides opportunities for young artists to participate in art exhibitions and workshops. Artists below 25

years of age were selected to participate in the ASEAN Youth Sculpture Workshop and Exhibition from 18 March - 20 April in Brunei Darussalam. Two winners from the 1996 Philip Morris Malaysia Art Award have been selected to join youths below the age of thirty from the other ASEAN countries at the ASEAN Youth Cultural Exchange Programme in April in Jogjakarta, Indonesia. The Malaysian artists are Fadzil Idris and Chuah Chong Yong.

This year's painting competition sponsored by the Philip Morris Group of Companies and organised by the National Art Gallery was held in July. This two-tiered art competition (national and ASEAN levels) is an annual affair, first started in 1994. The five winners at the national level competed at the ASEAN level for the Philip Morris ASEAN Art Award held in Manila in August.

The Grand Prize of US\$10,000.00 for the Philip Morris ASEAN Art Award went to Indonesian artist, Yuswanto Adi for his oil on

canvas entitled "Masterpieces of Indonesia". Malaysian artist Ahmad Shukri Mohamad was among the four winners for the Minor Awards. The other recipients were Daniel A Coquilla of the Philippines, Tan Juat Lee of Singapore and Tran Van Thao of Vietnam. They each received cash awards of US\$5,000.00 each.

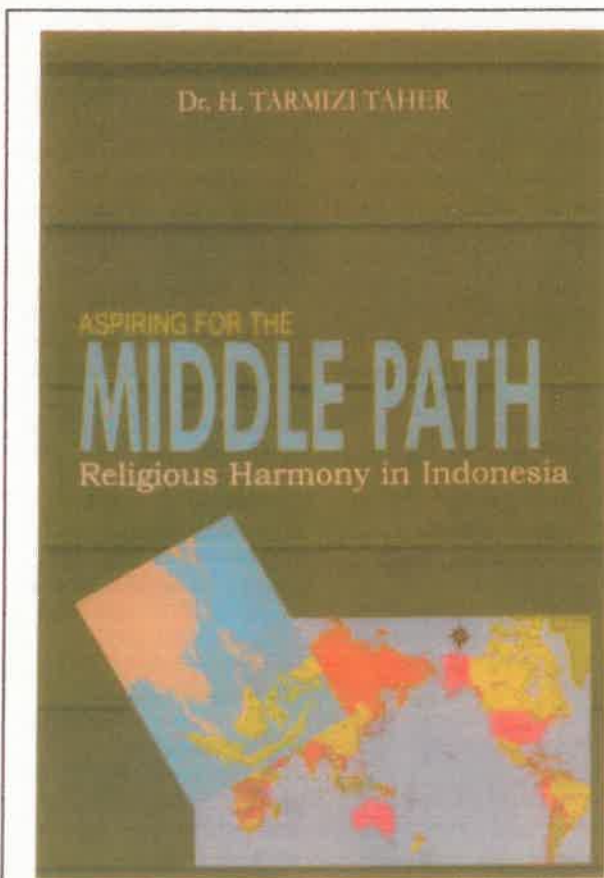
Last year the Philippines hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) Heads of Government Meeting. To commemorate this meeting, the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs and the National Commission on Culture and the Arts organised the APEC Sculpture Garden at the Philippines International Convention Centre. The theme was "Building the Spirit of Community" which captured the motion, rhyme and rhythm of APEC's continuing endeavour for enhanced growth, friendship and unity. Eighteen member countries - Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea,

Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and United States of America donated the artworks as symbols of co-operation and partnership. Malaysia's National Art Gallery selected Malaysian sculptor Ramlan Abdullah to represent Malaysia. He had won many awards including the recent 1996 Philip Morris Art Award and the prestigious 2nd Oita Asian Sculpture Competition, Japan in 1995. His sculpture entitled "V.C. - Growth" is about mass, form and structure representing the APEC community and offers a vision that reflects the highest ideals of mankind - a vision of clarity and purity which must also be the vision of APEC.

The Queensland Art Gallery Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art held in Brisbane, Australia from September 17, 1996 - January 19, 1997 was another avenue for Malaysian artists to display their artworks. The Malaysian artists selected were Eng

Hwee Chu, Fauzan Omar, Raja Shahrizan Aziddin, Hasmui Jamal Saidon and Wong Hoy Cheong. The other artists, aged between 20 and 65, were from China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Taipei, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia and Vanuatu. The works exhibited by more than 100 artists showcased the artistic diversity in the Asia-Pacific region. They included installation, painting, sculpture, prints, photographs, drawings, video, technology and performance art. The Triennial was supported by a conference "Present Encounters" which involved artists, critics, curators, writers, administrators, cultural theorists and academics from across the region in dialogue concerning contemporary visual art and cultural issues of the region.

Sharifah Zuriah Aljeffri



Just Out

Dr H Tarmizi Taher

ASPIRING FOR THE MIDDLE PATH

Religious Harmony in Indonesia

Edited by Dr Azyumardi and published by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society in Jakarta, this volume of papers and speeches by Dr H Tarmizi Taher, Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, addresses major themes and concerns including the relationship between the Indonesian national ideology of Pancasila and religion; the Muslim world today and the position of Indonesia within it; the creation and development of a moderate *ummah*; and the doctrinal aspects of Islam such as an Islamic view of science and technology, *shura* in Islam, and the Islamic concept of peace etc.



Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (CENSIS)
Jalan Kertamukti No 5, Pisangan Barat,
Ciputat 15419, Indonesia
Phone (6221) 742 3543; 749 9272

SILC – Central Asian Crafts Project

The ultimate aim of SILC is the renaissance of craft communities replicating the traditional artisans' quarters that thrived in the hearts of cities along the Silk Road. Workshops, living quarters and shops will co-exist restoring life to the cities, allowing cultural tourists to discover ancestral skills and exquisite artifacts at first hand.



The Russian conquest of Central Asia through the 19th and 20th centuries, led to the fragmentation of this region and the end of the long-range caravan trade that had characterised and enriched the Silk Road civilisations.

Under the Soviet system, there was a compulsory shift from traditional economic activities towards mechanised agriculture and industrialisation. These policies led to the disintegration of traditional craft communities which had formed the heart and soul of urban centres on the Silk Roads for centuries. Craft quarters almost disappeared, leaving empty shells of cities devoid of cultural life.

By the 1970's, when Central Asian crafts had either disappeared or been relegated to museums, a public outcry led the authorities to develop USTO's, a unionised system of crafts that was subsidised and assisted by the State. However, with the

breakdown of the Soviet Empire in the early 1990s, the remaining crafts suddenly lost support with many falling into abeyance.

Today, the majority of Central Asian craftspeople are left without raw materials, markets or a livelihood. Exorbitant tax rates and export restrictions introduced by the newly-independent republics have contributed to put an effective halt to craft production.

In the light of wholesale erosion of the Central Asian cultural heritage, several international organisations such as UNESCO and UNDP have moved to revitalise ancient cities along the Silk Road, spurring a renewed interest in the culture and traditional crafts of these areas.

At the same time, the development of cultural tourism based on the revitalisation of cities along the Silk Road is beginning to provide new outlets for indigenous crafts. The

government of Uzbekistan, for example, has realised the economic and employment potential of traditional crafts and is now contributing to their revitalisation through tax breaks and credit schemes for craftspeople. It's hoped that other Central Asian states will follow Uzbekistan's lead.

SILC - a new NGO launched to revitalise Central Asian Crafts Heritage

SILC – the Silk Road Initiative for Living Crafts – was launched on 24 March, 1997 in Geneva, to revitalise threatened living crafts by re-establishing and linking craft communities along the length and breadth of the ancient of the Silk Roads.

Michael Sinel, one of the three founding member of SILC and an expert in handicraft development, has been instrumental in rehabilitating crafts in the region by applying a concept he has successfully implemented in other parts

of the world.

Working initially under the auspices of the United Nations Volunteers in 1995, Sinel encouraged core groups of craftspeople to form local NCO's in order to set up Craft Development Centres (CDC's) as a means of attracting seed funding from international donors. Each CDC is intended to become self-financing within three years.

The first CDC's were established in Bukhara and Samarkand in 1996, with premises in former caravanserais provided by regional governments and funding from *Mercy Corps International* and *Aid to Artisans*.

The CDC's provide artisans with the opportunity to share premises, equipment and materials, train apprentices, network with outlying craftspeople and research ancient and new techniques. They also serve as a shop window for the promotion and sale of crafts. CDC's are spreading

1 WOOD CARVING, a tradition which is very strong in Khiva, is mainly used on doors for public buildings and pillars. During the Soviet period the indigent trees used for carving were felled and not replanted. Today, the wood carvers of Khiva join together once a year and invest around US\$10,000 to import a train load of inferior quality wood

and bone.

Carved wooden pillars found in mosques and chaikhana (tea houses), with their unique earthquake proof design, are still being made. The Friday mosque in Khiva has 200 carved wooden columns dating back to the 10th century.

There is still a tradition of giving a carved wooden chest

Arabs, who brought Islam to the region in the 7th century, described silk factories in the suburbs of Bukhara.

Until 1991 silk production by any individual or agency other than the state was forbidden. The Uzbekistan government still controls sericulture and nearly all the raw silk being produced in a large silk factory in

luxurious items will resume.

4 DYEING - natural dyeing was traditionally concentrated in Bukhara. It was very much a Jewish dominated craft and craftsmen could be distinguished by the colour of their hands. The craft died out during Soviet times because of lack of demand as the emirs were banished and the Jews left.

Ikat dyeing is very a complex operation. In the course of the century, traditionally used natural dyes such as indigo, pomegranate, walnut, maddar, saffron, black and green tea were replaced by Soviet chemical dyes resulting in a loss of quality. The CDC in conjunction with a botanical institute is planning to regrow specific plants used for dyeing as a cottage industry. Moreover, twelve weavers and dyers were sent to Dashkhar in India in February 1997 to relearn skills and techniques.

Ikat crafts, traditionally a male domain, are now practised by women.

5 WOOD BLOCK PRINTING is used to decorate traditional fabrics and wall hangings. There are now only two master craftsmen left in Uzbekistan and in the next months one of these will be running a training workshop at the CDC in Samarkand. Two skills are involved: making the wooden blocks - usually out of fruit wood - and designing and applying the blocks to the fabrics. Though there is large Japanese demand for wood block printed fabrics, this dying craft is in urgent need of revitalisation.

6 EMBROIDERY - Bukhara is a traditional centre of gold embroidery, but the craft is also practiced in Tashkent and Samarkand. However, gold has been replaced by metallic thread worked onto inferior quality velvet. This craft is not threatened as there is continued demand for ceremonial robes. Formerly a male dominated craft, the embroiderers are now mainly women.

7 DOLL MAKING is a new craft inspired by ancient times. A group of 4 - 5 women in Samarkand are working



from Russia for their annual requirement. A United Nations Development Programme unit is exploring the feasibility of reforestation in Khiva, Khorezm and Karalpakistan - a semi-autonomous region in Aral Sea environmental disaster area.

Door carvers receive orders from throughout Uzbekistan for hotels, government and public buildings. The craftsmen are now working in disused madrassahs and though business is healthy they lack apprentices.

Decorative wood carving has virtually stopped because of a lack of proper materials. Wooden saddle-making, once extremely popular amongst the rich, almost disappeared after the Russians expropriated the Uzbek horses in the 1930s.

Traditional wood carved stringed musical instruments are still in steady local demand and are made with fruit woods such as cherry wood. But here again there is difficulty in obtaining woods and inlays of mother of pearl

as part of the dowry, containing linen, bedspreads etc. But these are now made in inferior quality woods as local woods are no longer available.

2 GANCHE is a traditional form of plaster mouldings for interiors and related decorative painting and gilding used today in embellishing hotels and public buildings. Ganche artisans work at the Samarkand Craft Development Centre.

3 SILK - Sericulture was introduced from China and the transport of silk gave the Silk Road its name. Archaeological fragments of silk textiles have been found at a site in Central Asia dated 1500 BC. In 140 BC sericulture spread overland from China to India and by the second century India was shipping silk fabric to Persia. In Central Asia, silk was originally transhipped from China or India and later produced indigenously. Many of the earliest historical references mention silk production in the context of the silk trade. The

Samarkand, built in 1875 during the Russian era, is exported to Russia, making it difficult for artisans to obtain silk. A local carpet weaver is amongst the few to receive silk from this source.

The CDC in Bukhara has started silk production projects in the suburbs of Bukhara and in Ferghana. Artisans now make their own silk and control the production process through to the finished article. One project in Bukhara aims to reproduce the original style of 'Suzane' - decorative wall hangings or bedspreads often forming part of a dowry.

Most Suzanes have silk embroidery woven on handmade cotton. And while some ornate Suzanes had silk embroidered on silk, this practice has almost died out over the last 50 years through lack of demand, reduced income and the difficulty in obtaining raw materials. Today, inferior versions of cotton on cotton are being produced though as Uzbek wealth increases it is expected that demand for the more

together using terracotta figures to make dolls modelled from Timurid period miniatures. The dolls are 8 inches in height and pose in architectural settings, using silk for clothing with miniaturised, detailed gold embroidery.

8 CERAMICS, one of the most widely practised crafts, now suffers a lack of demand as

identify the problem. Ceramic artisans continue to make and prefer wood fired kilns although this fuel is sorely lacking. Bricks and tiles are still handmade. Clay supplies are reliable with porcelain clay from Ferghana being mixed with clay from Samarkand.

9 KNIFE MAKING is an ancient tradition. Metal is difficult to

the secret of paper manufacture. The revival of this craft is a top priority given the potential demand.

11 JEWELLERY is an ancient tradition which the Soviets curtailed through restrictions on the use of precious metals. Even today craftsmen are not allowed to use metals such as gold and silver. An alloy

obtaining brass and copper remains a problem.

13 PAPIER MACHE and miniature painting on papyrus and leather are in high demand because the quality of this work has been preserved. Painted, varnished and lacquered papier maché pen cases and boxes are being produced.



cheap plastic utility items are capturing the domestic market. Artistic ceramic production still continues with restoration work of monuments and buildings in Uzbekistan providing some work. However, the more intricate patterns and styles are difficult to achieve as skilled craftsmen die out. Many of the tiles produced now are more simplistic.

Ceramic glazing is still produced artisanally but are less long lasting than those of the Timurid period. This could be attributed to the porous quality of the bricks and studies are being carried out by institutes in Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva to

obtain and the most common source now is the drive shafts of broken vehicles which yield superb quality material and produces excellent knives. The blades are decorated but plastic is used to make the scabbards. Catering to a limited market, craftsmen charge very high prices to the scarce tourists and the expatriate community.

10 PAPER MAKING has a long history in Samarkand. Using various barks and even silk, paper has been made for centuries and was one of Samarkand's most valuable exports in the form of Korans and scrolls. Today, only one man in Tashkent still knows

Page 76: General view of Khiva, Uzbekistan. Opposite page: Detail of glazed mosaic decoration from one of the mausolea. Shah-i-Zindah in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Above, left: Detail of one of the iwan of the main courtyard, Tash Khauli Palace in Khiva. Above: Wood carver at work, Uzbekistan. Page 80: Interior, Friday Mosque in Khiva. Photographs courtesy Giovanni Boccerelli.

known as German silver is used as a substitute. Though there is a demand amongst jewellers to reintroduce the use of precious metals, specialised training would be needed.

12 METAL CHASING is used in decorating dishes, plates and trays with a variety of floral and other motifs. Though this craft is not threatened,



awareness amongst artisans of professional business practices and helping them to prospect new funding sources and markets.

SILC aims to build upon the success of the first CDC's to create similar ventures in other Central Asian states on the ancient Silk Roads, using those established in Samarkand and Bukhara as role models. SILC's emphasis is now to spur indigenous crafts production capacity and rapidly generate local income whilst enhancing quality.

At the same time, SILC will help CDC's in Samarkand and Bukhara to evolve into Craft Communities. The ultimate aim of SILC is the renaissance of Craft Communities replicating the traditional craft quarters that thrived in the hearts of ancient cities along the Silk Road. Workshops, artisans' living quarters and shops will co-exist, restoring life to these cities and allowing cultural tourists to discover ancestral skills and exquisite artifacts at first hand.

This long term strategy has already been officially endorsed by the regional governments in Bukhara and Samarkand which have pledged to provide planning permission for the re-establishment of these quarters in the heart of the cities, in close proximity to major architectural

landmarks.

These areas had been cleared by the Soviet authorities in order to provide unobstructed views of the monuments, destroying their traditional social fabric, economic and cultural vitality. Though destruction continues in certain quarters, it has fortunately slowed down with the recent awareness of the economic benefits of cultural and craft heritage, especially through growing international tourism. Over the mid term, SILC aims to extend its scope of action to encompass not only the Commonwealth of Independent States but the entire length of the Silk Road, from Turkey to China. Mr Peter Wong,

entrepreneur and Vice Chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong says "having already established three major hotels in China with direct links to the Silk Route and its culture, I fully endorse the efforts being made by SILC to link-up the Silk Route in its entirety through crafts and cultural exchange."

The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) Silk Road conference in Tehran in April 1997, adopted a resolution for the promotion of cultural tourism along the Silk Road through crafts and culture. This mirrors one of

SILC's goals and Mr Martin Brackenbury, who chaired much of the conference as President of the International Federation of Tour Operators, stated that "the thinking behind SILC will add an important and essential dimension to cultural tourism on the Silk Route." Accordingly, Michael Sinel will shortly undertake a visit to Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgistan and Kashgar in northeastern China to introduce the concept of CDC's and Craft Communities. He will call on the support of governments to provide premises, facilities, appropriate legislation and tax incentives to encourage craft development.

The next phase will be the establishment of SILC's co-ordination office in Samarkand. Premises have already been earmarked at the Institute of Central Asian studies set up by UNESCO in 1995, in an elegant turn-of-the-century Russian building located on the tree-lined University Boulevard. Endorsing the establishment of SILC, Mr Doudou Diene, Director of Intercultural Affairs of UNESCO said, "I fully support the initiative taken by SILC. Linking the Silk Route through crafts and culture plays an integral and important role in the overall future development of the region. It is a fragile and

delicate matter requiring careful handling which SILC appears capable of achieving."

SILC's co-ordination office in Samarkand will play a vital role in helping to establish a network of CDC's along the Silk Roads and forge partnerships between them. SILC's headquarters in Geneva will be responsible for international communications, promotion and fund-raising.

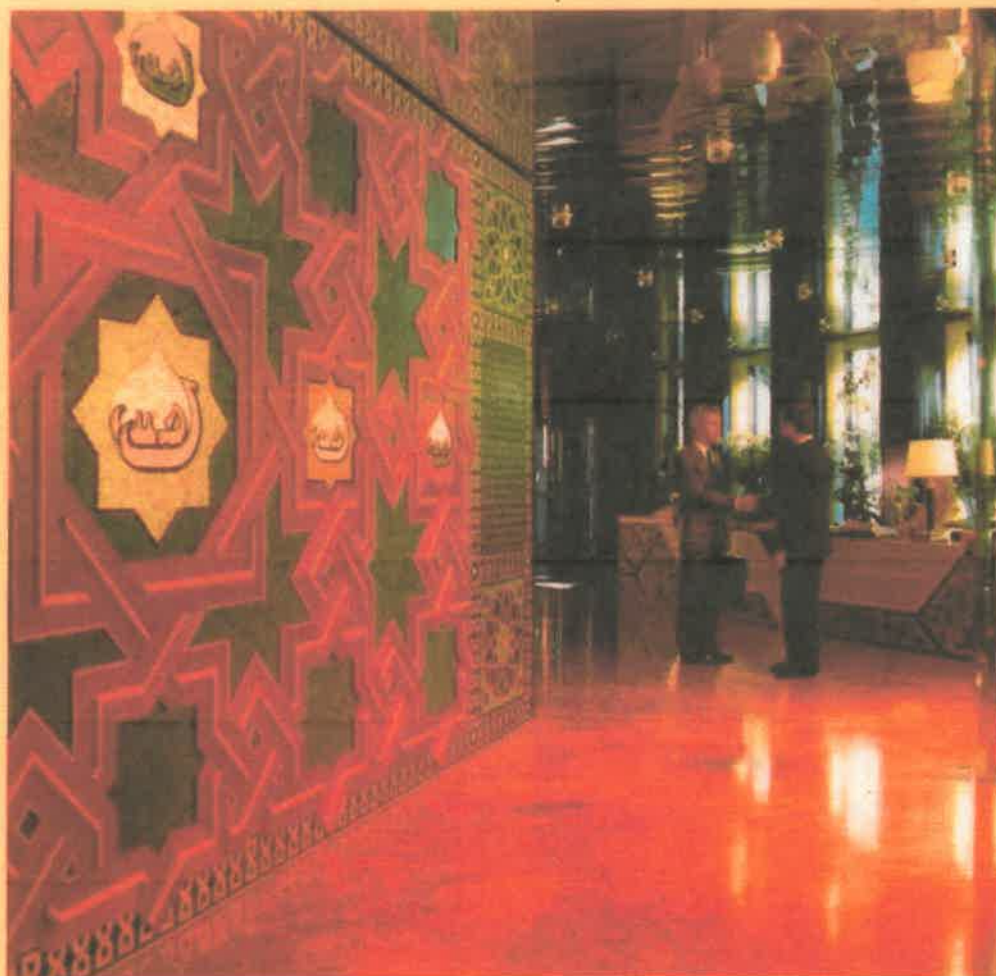
SILC founding member, Javed Ahmad, a master engraver, specialist in global media relations and corporate fund-raising, says that SILC is

poised to launch a targeted awareness campaign to promote joint business ventures, for instance between traditional silk production, natural dyeing and the fashion industry.

SILC founding member, Jennifer Pagonis, is a journalist and television director who contributes current affairs and cultural reports to some of the world's leading media. "This is a crucial time in Central Asia and it's extremely important to keep up the momentum and expand our activities throughout the Silk Route before potentially negative effects of tourism can undermine traditional crafts. SILC is designed to provide a fast response to immediate needs."

"The romantic appeal of the ancient Silk Route is incredibly powerful and it's SILC's aim to culturally revitalise the museum-like historic cities of the Route through living crafts bringing greater economic opportunity to the people of this region."

Javed Ahmad



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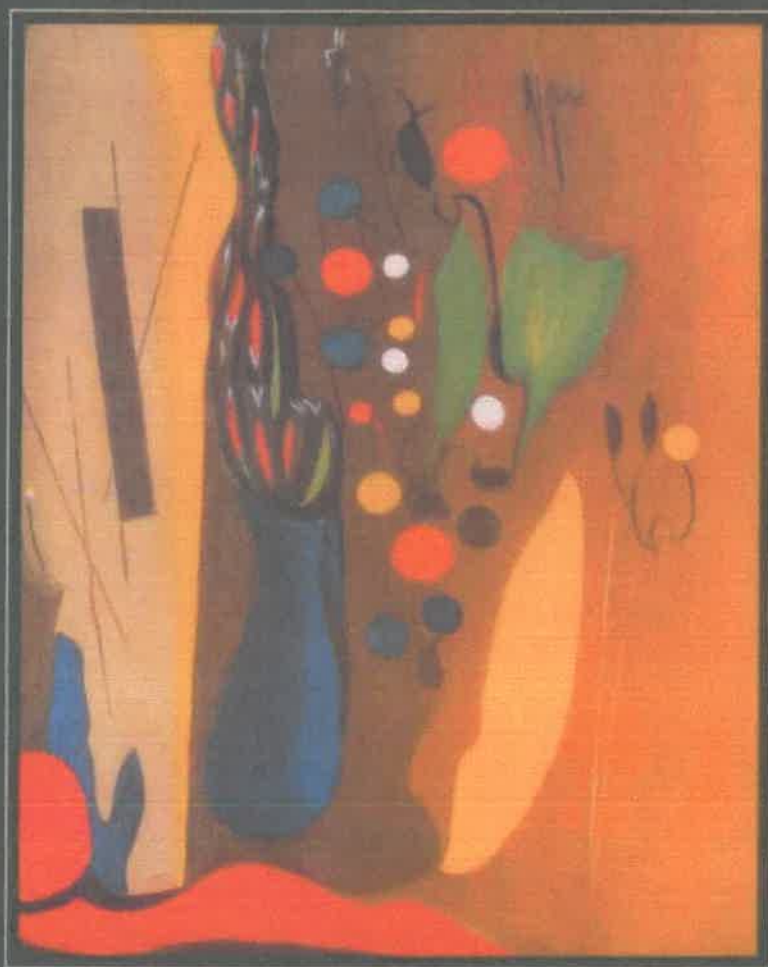
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1997 marks the 50th Independence Anniversary of Pakistan, and this special volume of *Arts & The Islamic World* looks at the contemporary art movement in the country as it has shaped over the last half century. A number of exhibitions and seminars, held in the country and abroad, served to highlight various facets of the art scene in the years since 1947. We are happy to present, with the kind permission of the respective organisations and institutions, a selection of works displayed at these exhibitions, as well as extracts from some of the papers presented at the seminars and essays appearing in recent publications: these are listed below in grateful acknowledgement.

Dr Akbar Naqvi's paper on modern Pakistani painting was presented at a seminar on South Asian art organised by the Royal Asiatic Society and the Centre of South Asian Studies, University of London. He has just completed his book *Image and Identity: 50 Years of Painting and Sculpture in Pakistan* which is being published by Oxford University Press. Dr Marcella Nesom Sirhandi presented her paper at a US symposium in North Carolina organised by the American Institute of Pakistan Studies. Her research work on *Contemporary Painting in Pakistan* was published in 1992 by Ferozsons. Prof Ijaz ul Hassan's overview of Pakistani painting and sculpture is from the commemorative volume *Pakistan*, just published by Stacey International in London. His pioneering study, *Painting in Pakistan*, was the first major work on the subject published by Ferozsons in 1991. The historical perspective on the art movement in Pakistan by Prof Salima Hashmi, Principal of the National College of Arts, Lahore, is from her elaborate *Introduction* to a retrospective publication *50 Years of Visual Arts in Pakistan*, produced by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in collaboration with a number of institutions including Sang-e-Meel Publications. The Council's permanent collection, assiduously built up over the years and presently comprising about 800 paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints etc, will soon be housed in a purpose built National Art Gallery, work on which has already started in the country's capital, Islamabad. Prof Nilofur Farrukh is on the faculty of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in Karachi. Her essay included here first appeared in the Pakistani monthly *Newsline*. Syed Amjad Ali, who chronicles major art trends and personalities, is the author of a definitive volume, *Painters of Pakistan*, published by the National Book Foundation in 1995. John Holt, British art teacher and a keen advocate of western initiatives aimed at introducing the work of non-European artists to a wider international audience, looks at an exhibition of contemporary Pakistani art held in London to mark the Anniversary; and some of the other Pakistan art events in 1997 are reviewed by art critics Marjorie Hussain, Tehnyat Majeed and Tehmina Ahmed.

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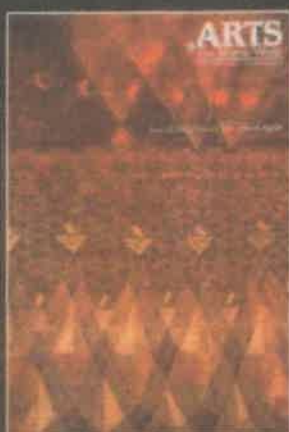
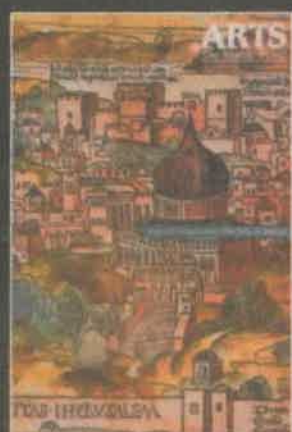
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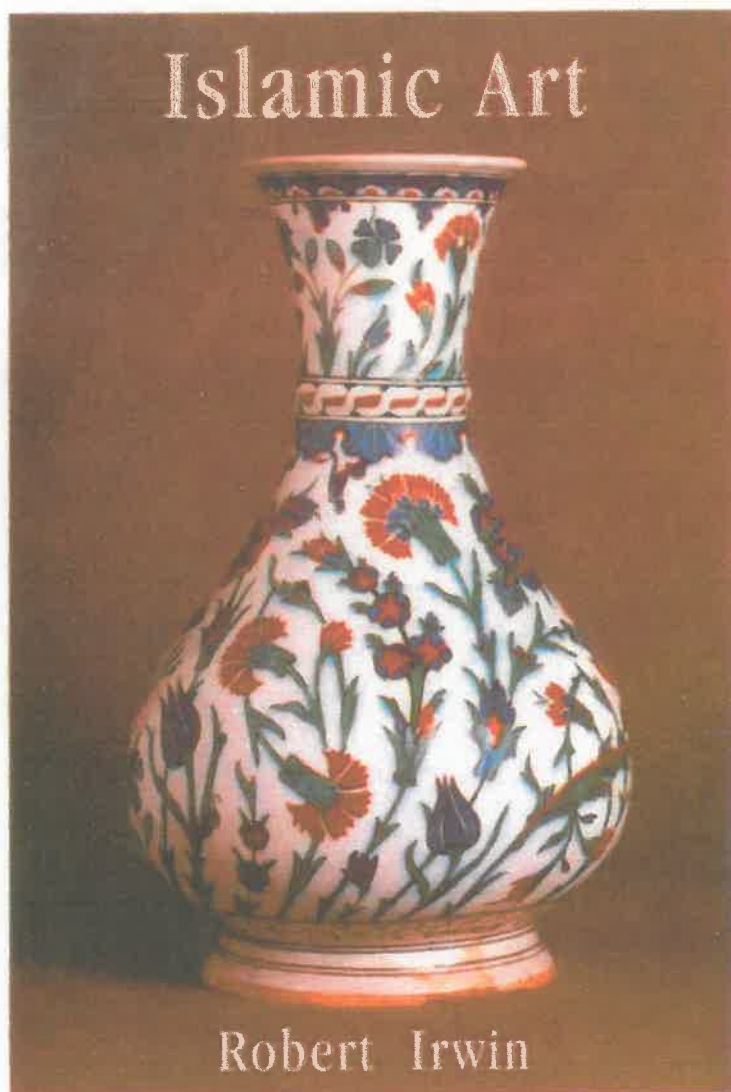
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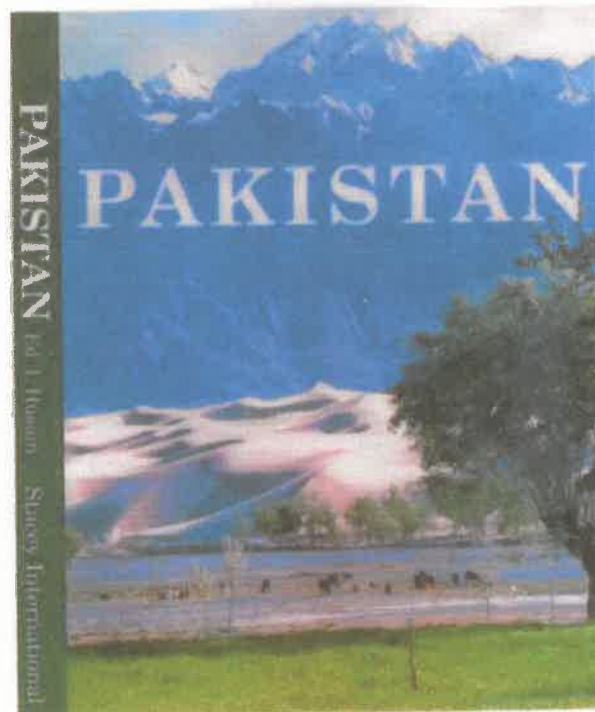
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Zubeida Agha. Self-portrait

Transfers of Power and Perception: Four Pakistani Artists

AKBAR NAQVI

It is good that the fiftieth year of independence of the Subcontinent is being recognised from one platform. The people of the Subcontinent share centuries-old, multi-cultural heritage, memories, experiences and values, which are recorded on a palimpsest, as it were.

Pakistan was born on August 14, 1947, when Abdur Rehman Chughtai was a great Indian Muslim painter, and Iqbal and Rabindranath Tagore were the greatest poets of India. In October 1996, a work of Chughtai fetched the highest bid for an Indian painting in Sotheby's auction in New York.

Allah Bukhsh was famous in Bombay and Lahore as the painter of Krishna in the Western Style of the Raj. He worked within the Urdu literary genre, called 'deomala', in which stories from Hindu mythology were narrated as strange tales of adventure. Chughtai's style did not change after Partition, but his subjects did, as was the case with Allah Bukhsh. Modern painting was a new, historically determined, manifestation of another European style in the Subcontinent, as the personal choice of our artists. I have time to speak briefly about four painters who created in Pakistan, what Harold Rosenberg called, 'the tradition of the modern'.

Modern art was seen in Pakistan as Cubist and Abstract, and it became the catalyst of freedom for painters. Zubeida Agha and Shaker Ali took the academic version of modern art forms from Paris and rejuvenated them. It was this, and the feeling that they too could rove

and ravage the West, as Picasso, Matisse and Klee had done with non-European cultures before, which made their enterprise exhilarating. The contemporary painters of Pakistan chose American art history to launch themselves into their orbits. The Western Style of Ravi Verma and Allah Bukhsh was vindicated through its mutation as modern art, but not the Indian art of Chughtai and Abanindranath

the Karachi Fine Arts Society, whose moving spirit was an Indian diplomat named N Sen Gupta. The first solo exhibition of Zubeida Agha was held by the Society in June 1949 and modern art happened. Atiya Begum Faizi, wife of artist Fyze Rahamin, called her works fit for bedlam. Zubeida Agha was defended for simplifying figures and painting ideas instead of nature. She favoured Kandinsky who had

found the rudiments of his unprecedented style from Rembrandt's handling of light and shadow.

Count Mario Perlingieri, an Italian prisoner of war in Lahore, introduced Zubeida Agha in 1946 to Italian Futurism, which 'eulogized speed' of horses and motor cars in what looked like energized Cubism. Zubeida Agha made a Futurist brass relief of a horse, an animal she loves, as 'an organization of kinetic elements', in Duchamp's words from his comment on his 'Nude Descending the Stairs'. She had the relief enlarged in cement on one of the outer walls of her house twenty years later. It is interesting that Gaganendranath's Cubist paintings were seen as Futurist in Calcutta, but he gave up his experiment. Zubeida Agha saw the works of the Fauves, Matisse, Chagall and Kandinsky in Paris and gathered her own impressions for future reference. Her art is a good example of the kind of originality that was home-made from

the resources of the international 'bazar' of modern art. But her preference for decoration, movement, space and volume came from her desire to protect herself within her self-sought inviolability as if in a veil or 'hijab'.

The Futurist lesson she remembered was that light and motion destroy the materiality of bodies, and it was reinforced by her own cultural heritage. Replace the word 'destroy' with 'hide', and you have her art.

But, she was an independent young lady in the forties when she painted a standing nude,



Shakir Ali, *Woman and Caged Bird*.

Tagore, which rose against it. It was typical that in 1948 the Bombay Progressive Group was launched, and in 1949 modern art had its debut in Karachi, but in total ignorance of each other.

The Karachi correspondent of the daily *Statesman* of Calcutta described Pakistan in 1948 as a barren field of art. He had overlooked Lahore, where Anna Molka Ahmed was painting the land and people of Punjab in the manner of Van Gogh. In 1948, diplomats and officials of the Federal government set up

and her own self-portrait. Respectable, unmarried girls of her time, and class, did not show this kind of public interest in themselves. The promiscuous Amrita Sher Gill, whom she had idolized as a painter in her school days, was a warning to girls wanting to become artists. Zubeida Agha did not mix with painters, and her work became aggressively 'virginal' in colour and form – the word is from the 1910 Futurist Manifesto. They showed that she had no intention of 'warming her hands at the fire of life', in words of Landor.

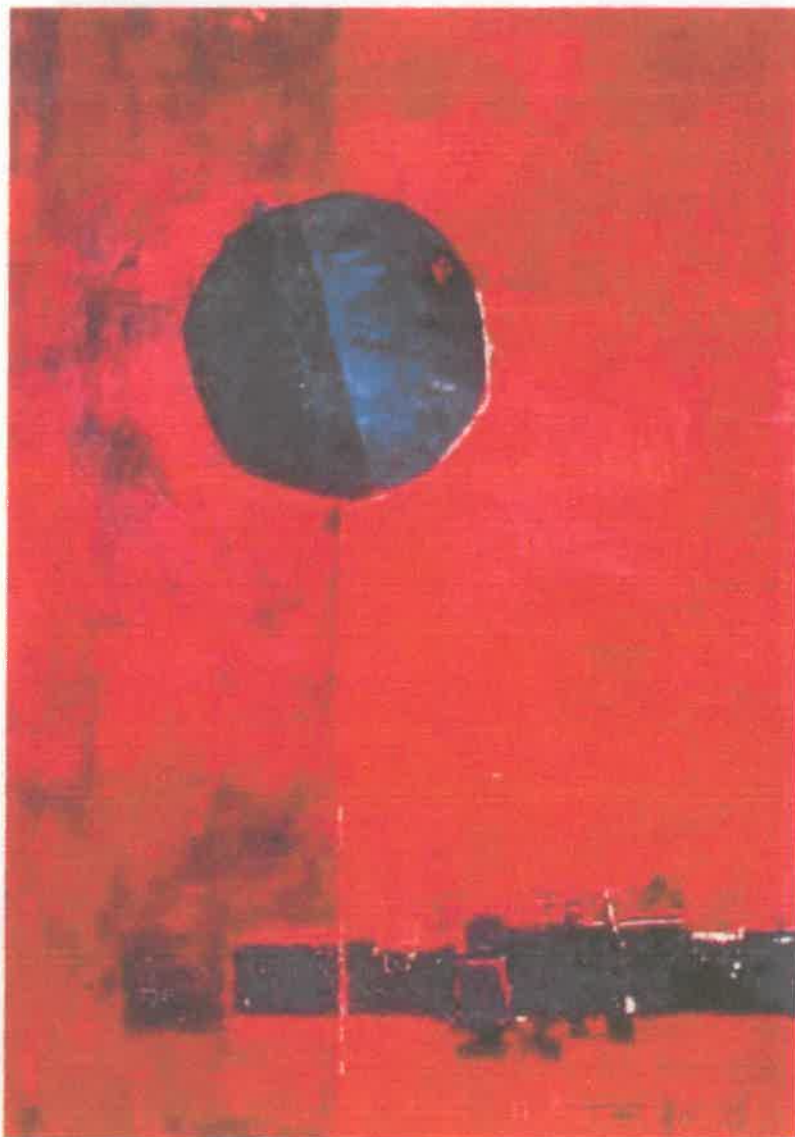
But the light, which glowed in them, came from the cool, ornamental, coloured mosque lamps of the Mamluk Syria. The light of 'Sura i Noor' is without fire: 'Light upon Light' says the Quran, shining from a 'star-like glass lamp in a niche'. Zubeida covered herself, ever inadequately, as she must according to the Sufis, with the colour and volume of this light.

Going abroad had become a voyage of self-discovery after independence, and Zubeida Agha made the round of St Martin's in London and Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris before returning to Pakistan after four years in 1953. On her return she painted the romantic story of Anarkali of Lahore as a wall, because she was bricked alive for causing Emperor Akbar's heir apparent to fall in love with her. This was a premonitional painting, because the wall became the medium, and the medium, her 'hijab' or painted veil. In paintings of empty cities as cardboard facades, and of New York, for rhythm of illumination, as well as still lifes, she tested herself in semi-abstract and purely abstract forms. One of her important works is 'Red Flower' which she painted to satisfy her love for embroidery in another medium. The painting, which subsumed her earlier self-portrait, was a frontal portrait of a feminine culture from the early decades of the century. This was the era when the first champion of Muslim woman's right, Allama Rashidul Khairi published his Urdu magazines, 'Ismat', Chastity, on current affairs and thought, and 'Jauhare Niswan', Ornament of Womanhood, a version of Women and Home in Urdu.

The magazines breached the walls of Muslim homes in India, and brought knowledge and light to young mothers and unmarried girls. Zubeida disdains to call herself a Feminist, but her art is saturated with feminine rectitude, which is aesthetic in terms of modern art and ethical in terms of her cultural proprieties.

If Zubeida Agha avoided Cubism, Shakir Ali plunged into it. His voyage to Slade, London, and six month training with the Cubist painter Andre Lohitze, was yet another diaspora. Modern art was both exile and the return of the prodigal son/daughter. That his freedom should come from Cubism, already an academic art form, was inevitable. From Lahore's National

College of Art, which he joined in 1951 when its principal Spornenberg, a sculptor who had been hired from the J J School of Art, Bombay, was preaching Bauhaus philosophy, he spread modernism in the country. Shakir's first exhibition in 1957 in Lahore failed, but another in the same year was a complete success in Karachi. Between 1952-56, Shakir Ali immersed himself in Cubism, not that of



Picasso, Juan Gris or Jean Metzinger, but of his own invention.

Shakir Ali *The Dark Moon*

A feature of Shakir's style was the use of arabesque-like line within his multifaceted design. In two still lifes from 1955-56, he broke out of Cubism into surfaces of bold, joyous colour, tending to be symbolic as in Indian miniature. Matisse may have helped him by showing that colour is sovereign and line its dithyrambic accompaniment. Shakir was also reading Rilke and Yeats at the time. He found the spiritual paradigm of his own solitude in



Above and right:
Sadequain *Untitled*.

space, which assumed greater significance than synthesis of form. For want of myths in his own culture, he adopted the Cretan and Greek mythology of the bull as the paramour of Pasiphae, and Zeus' the rapist of Leda. He was aided and abetted by Rilke's and Yeats's poems in the second painting, 'The Mother and Child' and the Bull paintings from before 1960, as well as the later 'Leda and the Swan' were executed between his two traumatic marriages. Shakir eventually evolved a spare style, his rejoinder to both the Bauhaus aesthetics and American Minimalism, in which space underwent a conversion to traditional spirituality of his Faith. Like the elephant of the Buddhist fables, he remembered the inmemoriably memorable and contemplated upon it.

Shakir Ali's best works fall outside the time frame of the seminar, but even though modern art took off in the fifties, his major works belong to the sixties. 'The Dark Moon' was painted in great sadness during a black out when Pakistan and India were at war in 1965. This tragedy was on his mind, and the 'Crucifixion' was painted on the martyrdom of the common man as Christ. He could also have been Julius Fuchick, the Czech poet, a fellow countryman of his first wife, who was killed by the Nazis during the Second World War. It was a strange, resurrectional work, with origami birds and the paper kites of Lahore's popular



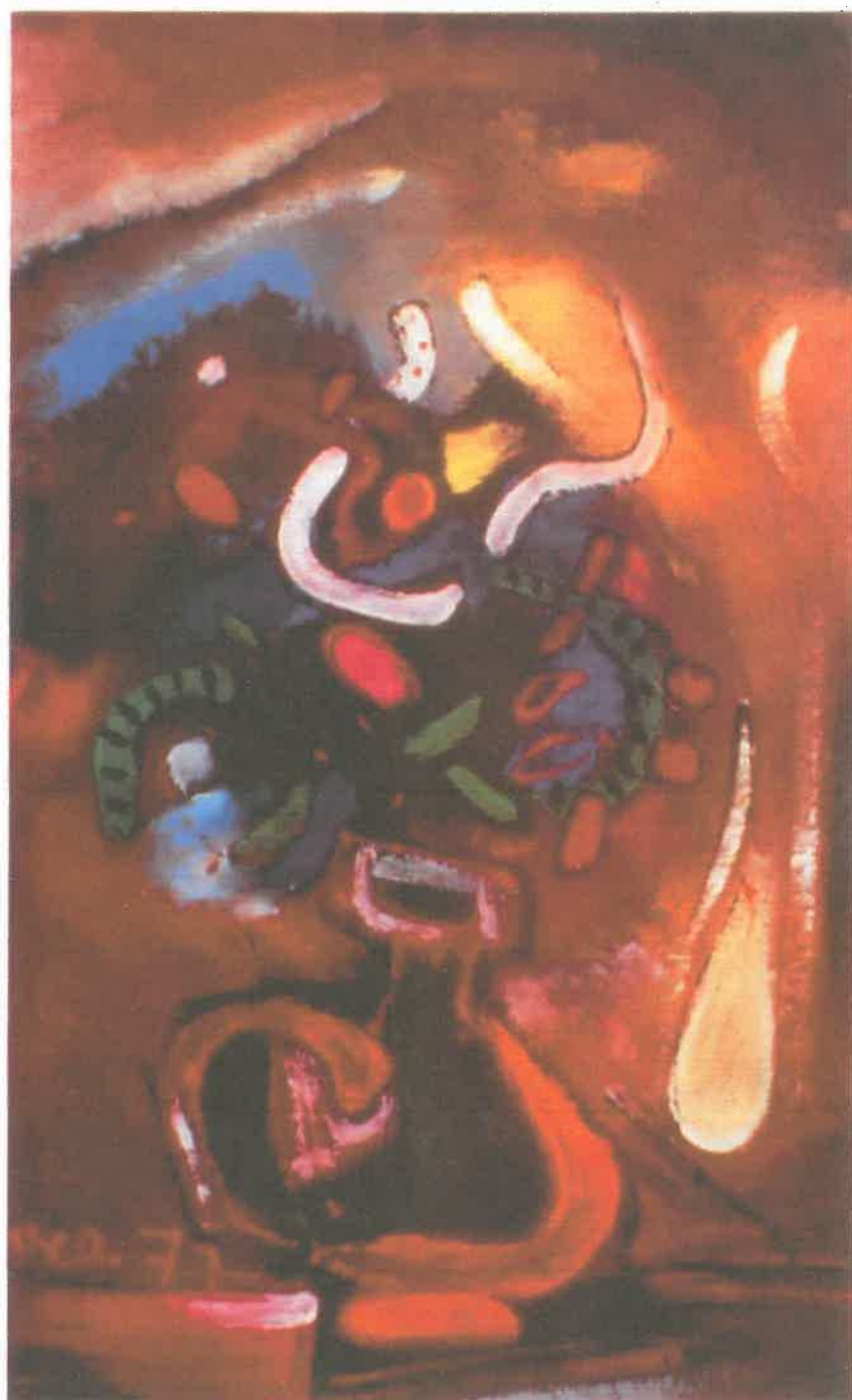
spring festival, 'basant', flying in the air while the crucified man wore a carnival mask. The surface was thickly pigmented in dark blue with red flashes. There was another work called 'Man', inspired by Rilke's dark angels, which in fact was a colour drawing. In the joyful 'Two Musicians' Shakir celebrated traditional music as the Indian colour festival, 'Holi' – It was a beautiful 'ragamala' in a modern style which can be enjoyed best with the strains of the 13th century Sufi poet-musician, Amir Khusro's songs wafting in the air. Shakir was supposed to have given his rejoinder to Amrita's painting, 'The Vina Players', in the Lahore Museum. In the simple but art historically complex 'Woman and Caged Bird', another painting in red and yellow like the 'Two Musicians', he re-invented the imagery and provenance of Indian miniature which Matisse would have applauded for its calligraphy and culture. The small parrot of the painting was Hiranman Tota, who spun tales to distract a woman from committing adultery. Chughtai also painted the subject in his Hindu paintings. Shakir painted his opulent but semi-abstract nudes as the image of 'the unique and the most seductive power in heaven and earth', in words of Kierkegaard. She was his 13th century bronze Chola Parvati rendered from memories of his days as a student of the JJ School of Art. Epitome of feminine beauty, she was the progeny of the Buddhist stone-carved tree spirits called 'Yakshis', and Shakir

restored the original Subcontinental model which Abanindranath and Chughtai had discarded. He painted space with minimal objects like two birds, a Chianti bottle, an oriental ewer and a flower, but died prematurely while in the thick of his new experiment. Maulana Rum said that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was asked how man can benefit from inscrutable truths through the mediation of form. He replied 'See yonder the form of heaven and earth'. The vision had entered Shakir's soul. In William Worringer's words 'space is always only a form of the relationship of the ego to the surrounding world', an experience the mystics knew as the journey of the Alone to the Alone.

Another pioneer, Sadequain Naqvi, no relation of mine, lived in Paris from 1960-67 and visited Pakistan regularly to exhibit his works. In the fifties he was partial to Picasso's elephantine women, but they lost weight and became his curvaceous 'houris', who also happened to be his lookalike sisters, in the drawings of the sixties. In 1955-56 Sadequain discovered the 'cactus land' and saw it as the image of his soul: the cactus became his self, as well as the first letter of Allah. To the best of my knowledge, he never read T S Eliot, and his wasteland was not that of the poet's, despite some similarities of imagery and ambience in the two. The plant's thorn and thicket became the vegetation of his psyche. He created his

Sadequain. *Untitled*



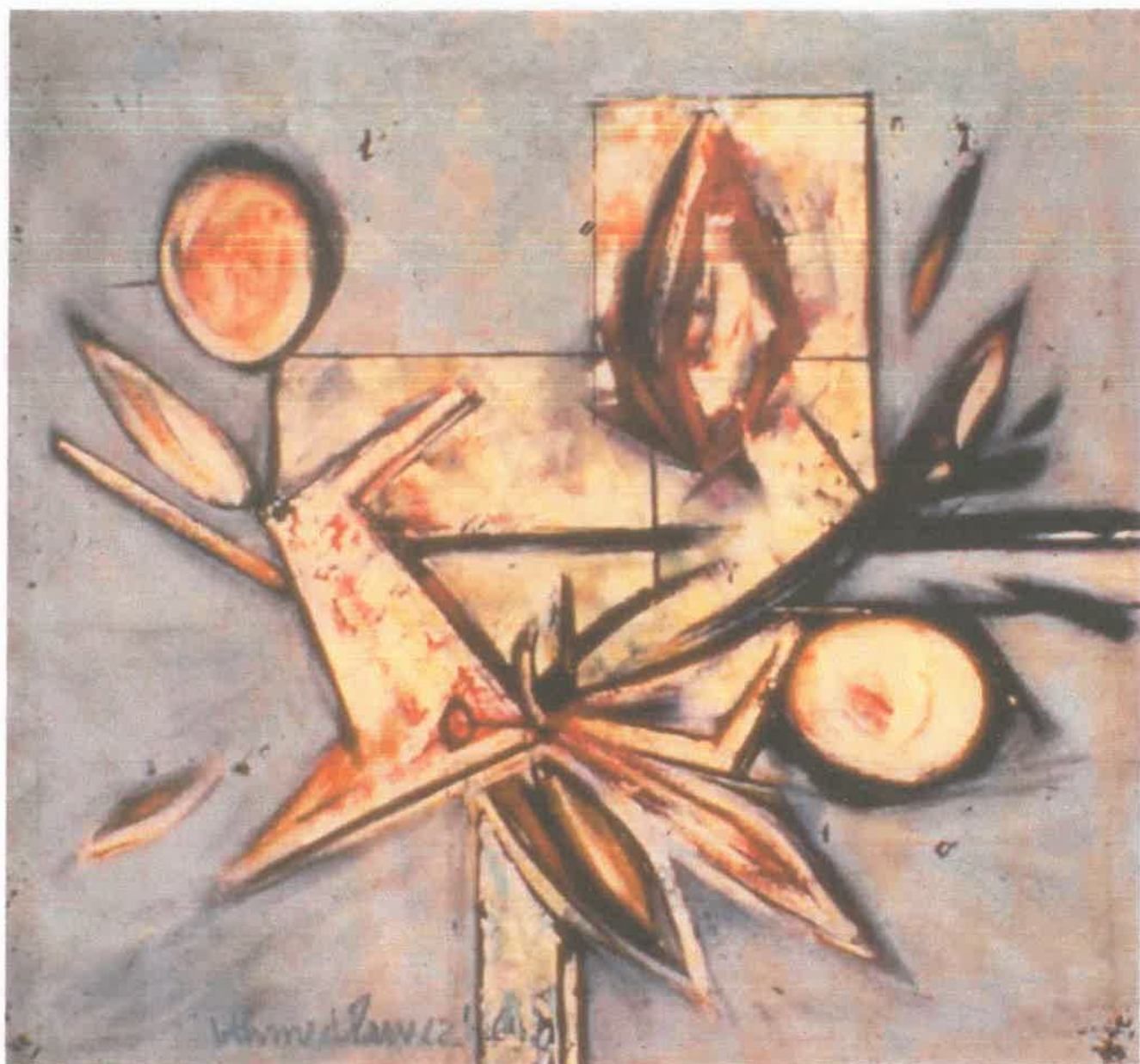


Ahmed Parvez *Untitled*

shadow man as the modern version of Muslim calligraphic 'tughra', or picture writing, from his understanding of Cubism and Constructivism. In his great drawings of the sixties, his grotesque, skeletal body grew like cacti whichever way it had to. It is important to recognise that Sadequain's line came as much from his own tradition of calligraphy as from the vitality of the plant. His art was rooted in sex, and its esoteric text will be found in a painting, which began as multiple drawings of the eternally active sexual 'mithuna' of Vatsyana's *Kama Sutra*, and their proliferation on the

facade of the Khajurao temple. The path to liberation through excess, depicted as multiplication of numbers, suited Sadequain, and he created a new genre of 'maligned monsters', to borrow the expression from Partha Mitter, from his gothic libido. Umberto Eco describes, in *The Name of the Rose*, Subcontinental monsters, among them a man who ran on a single leg and used it as shelter against the sun. They were inventions of Greek writers who came to the Subcontinent in the wake of Alexander's invasion of what is now Pakistan. Sadequain crafted far more fantastic things with the line and, pushed it in forbidden directions. There was the artist himself, undergoing strange metamorphoses. Snake-like cacti grew from the head; cobwebs ensnared him; crows nested in the head, and, 'houris' cavorted with his decapitated head like the vengeful Salome. Cobwebs entered his painting when he started lacerating the painted surface with the point of a razor blade. His art, far from decadent, reverberated, (to use Gaston Bachelard's loaded word), the sado-masochistic lores and tropes of Urdu and Persian ghazal, which through double-meaning and irony subverted the despotic authority of devotion. Ghazal often acted as King Lear's Fool. Sadequain liked to imagine himself as Shiva, the horny and fearful cosmic dancer, whose mask he wore in several quatrains, called 'rubaiyat' in Urdu. Sadequain was a 'bahrupia', the Subcontinental folk impersonator, who used to be great fun to young and old alike. His poetry and painting came from a culture in which Syed Ahmed Khan was called Raja Inder, the vanquisher of demons, by an orthodox Muslim admirer, and his friend, Raja Jai Kishan, presided over the 'bismillah', first reading from the Quran, of his only grandson. Our poets play-acted as sinful human beings, with good conscience to expose the 'ulama-ye-zahir', the externalist/literalist religious scholars, and the 'ulama-ye-su', the

hypocritical custodians of religion. The poets took heart from 'malamat', abominated, Sufis who lived unconventional lives, and some of them were looked upon as heretics. Sarmad was beheaded in Lahore in the reign of Aurangzeb. Madho Lai Hussain survived when Akbar ruled. The ghazal was an extended metaphor of man's love for the Divine, 'malamat' was its poetics, which performed as culture in Sadequain, to use an expression from Barthes. In Sadequain's case ontology was play-acting, and Heidegger's 'Dasein' a theatre. He enriched the Muslim art with the experience of his hell. Fariduddin Attar, the 12th century



Ahmed Parvez *Untitled*

Persian mystic-poet wrote: 'Grace comes to those, no matter how they're strayed/ Who know their own sin's strength, and are afraid'. Sadequain, like Kierekegaard could have said that 'I fear no one as I fear myself'. Shakir Ali influenced many young painters of Lahore, but the most distinguished was Ahmed Parvez who painted to make sense of chaos, specifically of his own life. He loved the plumage of the cock, a soul-brother, and painted the crucified fowl in a work in which colours flew like plucked feathers. The dark sun, mentioned by Attar, in 'The Conference of the Birds', shone brilliantly in his paintings. He transformed waste materials of the human body, and the dung-heap of the rooster, into random designs of colourful ejaculation. Parvez was accused of copying Alan Davie, and he retaliated with an exhibition of

his works in Davie's honour. Parvez was a Subcontinental 'malang', a derelict.

Our painters offer another kind of art against Damien Hirst's animal cadavers in formaldehyde – a message of faith on the Subcontinent's 50th anniversary of independence.

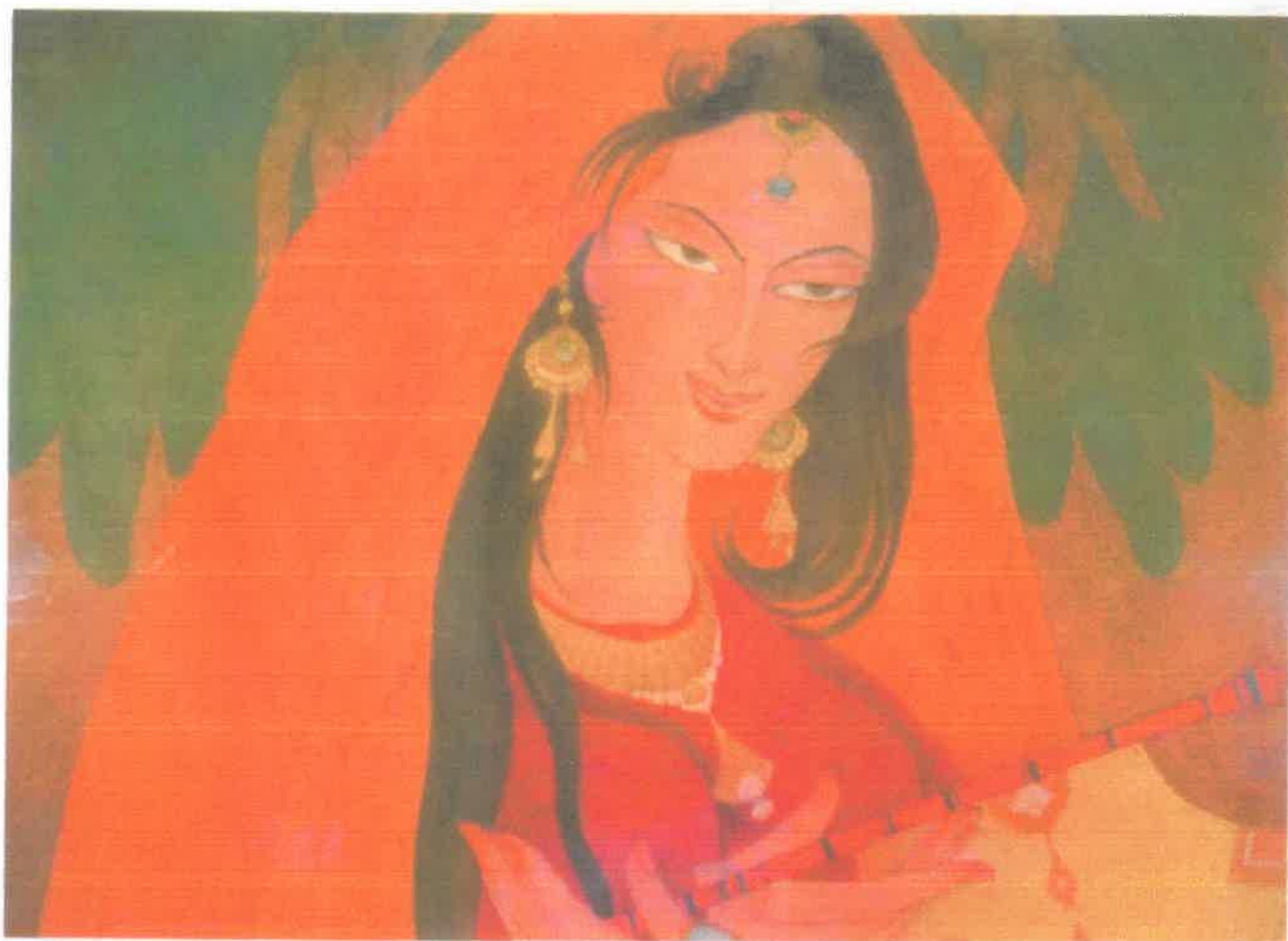
The paper was presented at a Symposium in London on the theme: *Transfers of Power and Perception: South Asian Art 1920-1960*, organised by the Royal Asiatic Society and the Centre of South Asian Studies, SOAS, University of London on 22 September 1997.

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A.R. Chughtai, *Village Girl*

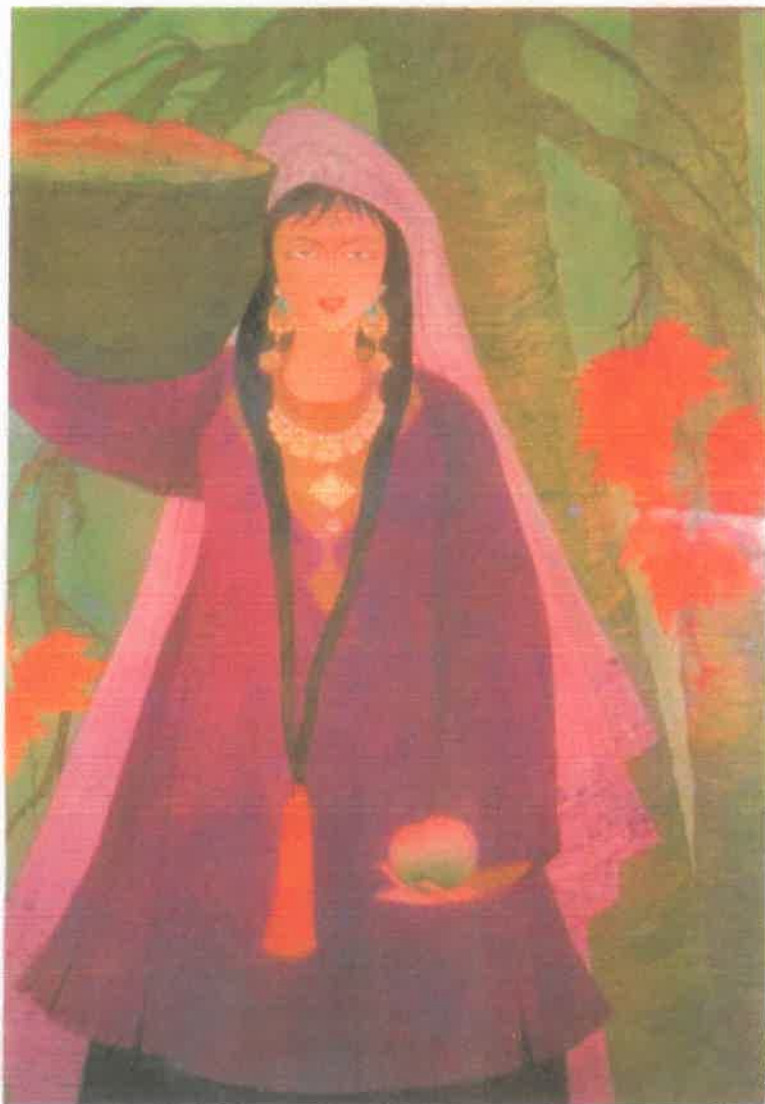
Painting in Pakistan: 1947-1997

MARCELLA C. SIRHANDI

Painting in Pakistan has taken many different paths in the fifty years since Independence and partition of the subcontinent. Cut off from India, the great diverse landscape from which aesthetic ideas and creative endeavours emerged, Pakistani artists had to reassess their artistic goals. As residents of a new country, artists asked themselves what it meant to be Pakistani and what heritage the reconfigured geography offered. Abdur Rahman Chughtai, Pakistan's leading painter at the time of independence, expressed a common feeling when he lamented that the most compelling Muslim monuments, icons of Pakistan's legacy – Sultanate and Mughal tombs (the Taj Mahal in particular) as well as mosques and palaces – were now part of *India*. Saddened but undismayed, Chughtai and fellow artists like Allah Bux responded to the richness of their immediate geography and culture. Chughtai continued painting themes from Urdu and Persian poetry and portraits of Muslim heroes and heroines, especially Jahangir and Nur Jahan whose tombs were located in Lahore. Allah Bux favoured Punjabi village life and fantastic landscapes. Younger artists, less connected with the Islamic heritage and the Muslim poetic tradition, adapted themes from the Indus Valley Civilization and from the Buddhist Gandharan Period. But these experiments were short-lived. Inevitably, artists turned to Europe for inspiration and a fresh outlook. Cubism, abstract expressionism, and other European movements permeated the art scene from the early 1950s. As order returned to the cities and life moved forward, artists were caught in a dilemma: to be modern and up-to-date or to honour tradition. This study explores the development of art in Pakistan within the context of the social and political environment and the artists' coming to terms with the national identity.

The 1950s: Conflicting Philosophies: Tradition/Heritage vs. Innovation

Abdur Rahman Chughtai was a revered Indian artist and already 50 years old by the time of Independence. He gave up Hindu themes like his painting of *Radha and Krishna playing Holi* and concentrated on cultural heritage and Islamic heroes and heroines. He depicted



Above: A R Chughtai
Apple Girl of Swat 1950s.
Above, right: A R
Chughtai, *Muharram*

village girls with hand-made fans and typical jewellery. *The apple seller from Swat* and other similar genre themes may be romanticized, but they represented the living tradition. Also real was his version of *Muharram* where Shia women place a garland on parade flags passing by. Celebrating Muslim heroes of the past, he conjured an image of Amir Khusro, a 14th century genius, playing his original musical creation on the sitar, an instrument he invented. From Persian and Urdu poetry Chughtai painted the metaphor of the rose and the cypress – the beloved is equal to the beauty

of the rose and the stately elegance of the tall cypress: she represents mankind's devotion to God, the most perfect beloved. Most of all, Chughtai loved to paint Mughal themes like *Jahanara looking at the Taj Mahal* and lamenting the death of her father, Shah Jahan, who is buried there.

Allah Bux, a contemporary of Chughtai, was another Lahore painter dedicated to South Asian heritage. Known as 'the Krishna painter' before partition, he used oil on canvas to paint large narratives in the Western style like his scene from the *Bhagavad Gita* where Krishna tells Arjun he must fight his cousins in the great



Indian war, the *Mahabharata*. After 1947, Allah Bux, like Chughtai, took themes from real life in the Punjab. His *Village Celebration* appealed to the citified gentry of Lahore who were urban to the core. For some the scene evoked nostalgia, for others it was a curiosity. Allah Bux also painted landscapes, both realistic and purely imaginary. Some were meant to convey the pastoral identity of the Punjab, while others, like his painting of a solitary tree, seem not to belong anywhere in Pakistan. A variety of abstract landscapes, including a tempera painting of giant pastel-coloured stones and the sparkling, faceted oil painting are unprecedented in Pakistan and point out the duality in Allah Bux's oeuvre. He appealed, on one hand, to nostalgia and a conservative

faction and, on the other hand, to the progressive-minded.

Though Western painting had certainly influenced the style and outlook of both Chughtai and Allah Bux, the more radical manifestations of European modernism were not realized until the arrival of Shakir Ali in Lahore. He earned a diploma from Slade School of Art, London, then moved to France

to still life motifs and ignored the local culture. By the mid-sixties, however, he altered his approach and used symbolic imagery from Urdu poetry. Women, birds, and flowers are references to the Beloved whose beauty is like the rose and birds are his personal symbol for freedom as well as the poetic metaphor for obsessive love – as that of the *bulbul* for the moon.



to study with Andre l'Hote, a protege of Pablo Picasso. Before settling permanently in Pakistan, Shakir Ali travelled in Europe and worked in Prague. In 1952 he joined the Mayo School of Art in Lahore (now the National College of Arts) and soon became its first Pakistani principal. In less than a year, nearly every painter in Lahore, including many of the older ones, were using a cubist style introduced by Shakir Ali. Preoccupied with the formal aspect of reconfiguring the object, Shakir stuck

The 1960s: New Influences: Gulgee's American Abstraction and East Pakistanis' Avant Garde

While Lahore painters were feeling very modern searching for local motifs to fit into a cubist mode, Karachi artist Ismail Gulgee was embarking on the most daring artistic experiment since partition. In 1960, after meeting American artist Elaine Hamilton whose Karachi exhibition of Abstract Expressionism

Allah Bux. *Landscape*.
Tempera. 1934.



Shakir Ali: *Still life* 1950s

overwhelmed the art community as much as her flamboyant manner. Gulgee traded his realistic portraits of foreign nobility and Pakistani aristocrats, for the freely splashed, paint-dripped canvases of his newly found mentor. Within a few years his non-figurative dabs of paint evolved into calligraphic inspired works of art – bold, colourful, and glittery like the mica in the desert sand sparkling under the glare of the relentless Sindhi sun. Some paintings, like his 1976 calligraphy for the Islamic Summit Conference, were quotations from the Qur'an: "Hold onto the rope of God and be united." Others, like the painting entitled *Memories*, use calligraphy as a decorative element with no meaning attached.

Another powerful force in the 1960s that furthered the urge to be international was the impact of East Pakistani artists working in Karachi. Zaimul Abedin was already a legend and far ahead of his time before his first visit in

the late fifties. This painting of a village maiden was considered avant garde in West Pakistan and was considered exotic as well. So, too, were the pure non-figurative paintings by Kibria and Debdas Chakraborty, most of whom worked in Karachi until 1971 when the Bangladesh war took them back home.

The 1970s: Clashing Ideologies, Calligraphy Enhances Nationalism; Sadequain Challenges Conservatism

About the time Zaimul Abedin arrived in Karachi, two Lahore painters, Hanif Ramay and Anwar Jalal Shemza, were laying the foundation for the most widespread and enduring national movement of the 20th century – calligraphy as art. Under the influence of German painter Paul Klee, who had been experimenting with numbers and words as abstractions, Shemza used calligraphy as pure design. His earliest



compositions incorporated Roman as well as Arabic alphabetic forms. Script-like markings in *Composition with the Sun* could be compared with Chinese and Egyptian writing as well as Arabic and Roman, but it makes no pretence to convey a readable message.

Contrary to Shemza's no message/pure design approach, Hanif Ramay refers to a literary tradition that formed words and phrases into artistic configurations. His painting *Kahina* functions within the realm of the sacred, but the secular intrudes because it is painted in oil on canvas, a foreign imported medium. Though coming from different directions, Shemza and Ramay spawned a national obsession for calligraphy. By the time Shemza left for England in the early 1960s, the art form had become entrenched – every artist in the country made a contribution. At a time when patronage of art was limited to a few Pakistanis and foreign diplomats, this art form made a breakthrough. Both government and big business bought and exhibited calligraphic art.

Shakir Ali and his contemporary, Sadequain, painted murals at the Punjab Public Library in Lahore. Shakir's mural, *Beit ul Qur'an*, covers an entire wall and hides a door. Subdued in colour and design, it has a gay, light-hearted ambience with patterns of leaves dispersed among the verses. It conveys a sense

of freedom and movement, yet is readable and masterfully organized. Calligraphy, even when abstracted and isolated as an independent art work, evokes an essence of Islam and a sense of patriotism. Sadequain, a peripatetic artist who came from a family of calligraphers, also painted *tughras* or word pictures like those around the ceiling wainscoting at the Lahore Museum. The rage for calligraphic art reached its zenith in the mid-seventies, highlighted by the calligraphy competition accompanying the 1974 Islamic Summit held in Lahore to which Sadequain contributed his painting entitled *All Muslims Should be United*. Rays of the light of God form the perimeter around the circle of unity which rests upon a ground line displaying flags of the Muslim world. Two years later an international calligraphy symposium and exhibition – a co-operative German/Pakistan undertaking – was held in Karachi. Renowned Islamic art historian, Annamarie Schimmel, was keynote speaker and the proceedings were published in an impressive catalogue.

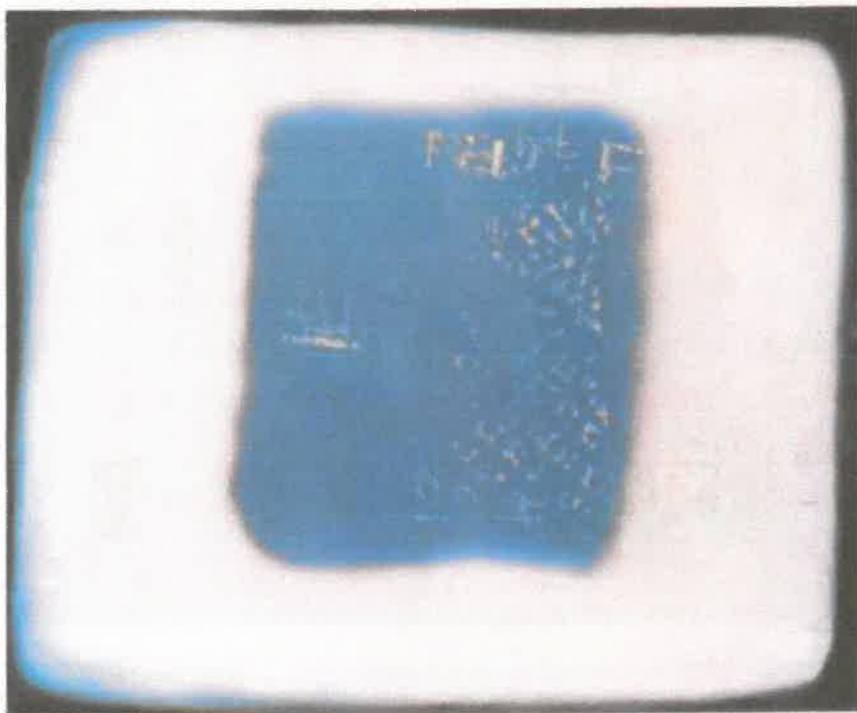
Though one of the key figures in the calligraphy movement, Sadequain was liberal-minded and deeply dismayed by sanctioned and unsanctioned forms of repression. More than any artist of his generation, Sadequain questioned social, religious, and political beliefs – he challenged the status quo. At the same time as the calligraphy symposium was

Shakir Ali *Beit ul Quran*, 1960s.

bolstering religious and patriotic sensibilities with international recognition, Sadequain was causing an uproar with controversial paintings in his 1976 Lahore exhibition. *Self-portrait of Sadequain as Faqir* – his invented persona (note the neck beads) – is a comment on repression of artistic freedom. His uplifted arms are comatose, the long artistic fingers are idle and spiders have woven webs between them. A wide-

eyed owl keeps watch for the enemy, the forces of oppression, but hope springs eternal – an assurance provided by the cactus which sprouts from his head, the source of creative ideas.

Below: Deb Das Chakraborty. Oil on canvas. 1970. Bottom: Gulgee. Nur Khan. Oil on canvas.



The Later 1970s to the Present: Blossoming Talents and Diversity

The 1970s was the most dynamic and diverse period in the young history of Pakistani painting. While riots were ensuing over Sadequain's controversial exhibition, and calligraphy had become the national art form, some Punjabi painters were taking a pastoral detour. Khalid Iqbal, one of Lahore's most dynamic artistic personalities, initiated a movement known as the Punjab landscape school. Based on careful observation, his paintings are uniquely Pakistani because they convey the changing atmosphere, intense summer heat or the suffocating humidity of an August monsoon and, of course, the peculiar flora of the Punjab, be it *likar* trees beside a mosque or prickly bushes in a barren landscape. Among his better known proteges are Zulqarnain Hyder, painting professor at Punjab University, Lahore, whose panorama depicts the endless fields of grain, rice, and corn that lend the Punjab its nickname as breadbasket of Pakistan. Shahid Jalal, another member of this group, records

picturesque scenes around Lahore like his *Lily Pond*; and Ghulam Rasool, a former student of Khalid Iqbal, now visual arts director for the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in Islamabad, paints village life as an integral element of the Punjab landscape. Now retired but still painting every day, Khalid Iqbal may have influenced nearly every painter in Pakistan.

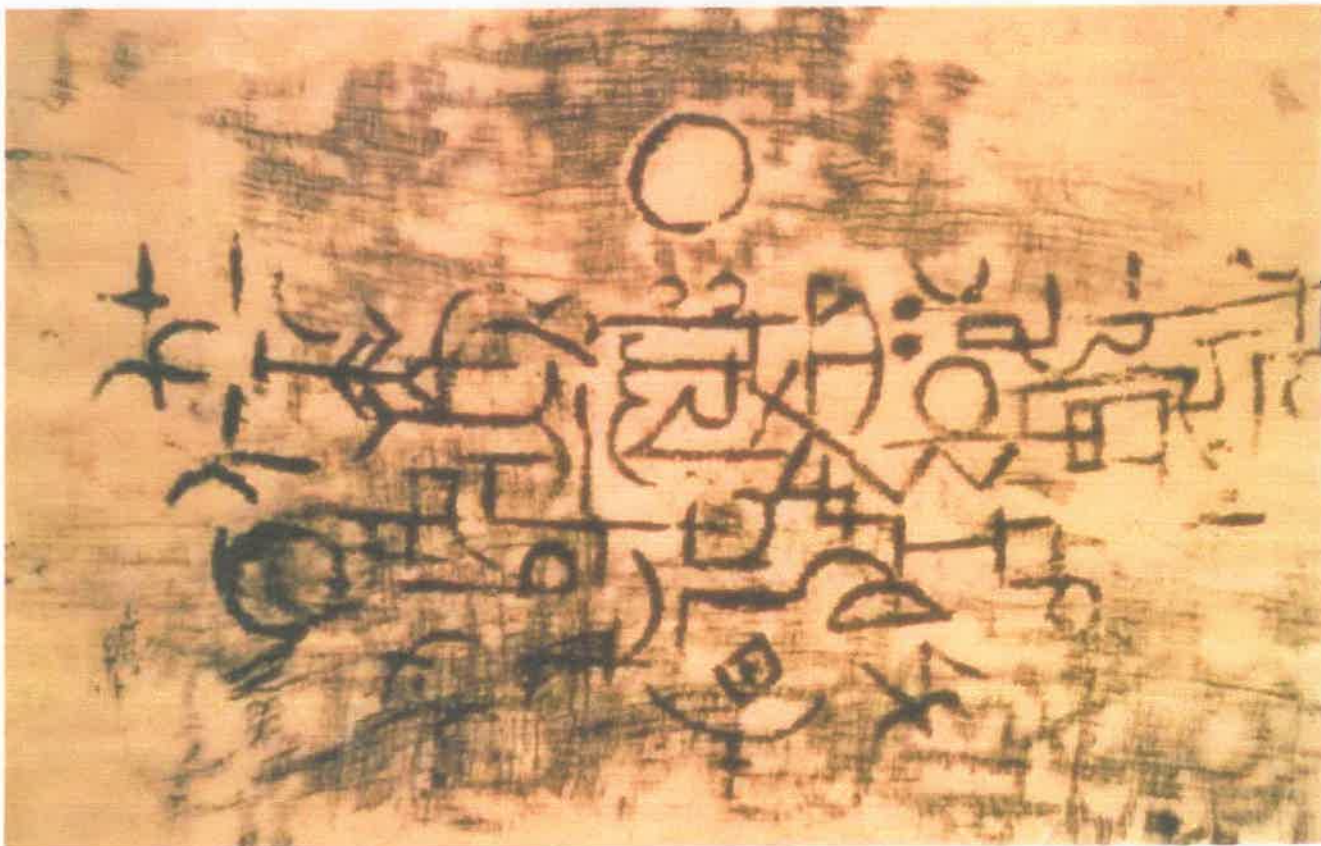
After years teaching boys classes in the art department at Punjab University in the sixties, Khalid transferred to the National College of Arts where he was teacher, head of the fine art division, and finally principal. He was a talented portrait painter and an important influence on young artists who chose to paint figures. There are, however, few serious portrait or figure painters in Pakistan, due to the difficulty of securing models and a lack of patronage. Senior most portrait painter, Lahore's Saeed Akhtar, has over the years recorded himself in a series of guises. *The Artist at his Easel* is a reverse reflection in the mirror that reveals the painter in his true life role. However, because he was raised in Quetta, Saeed also imagines himself as a Baluchi sheikh. He is best known, however, for portraits

of attractive young women such as *Faiza*.

Iqbal Husain is another first rate portrait painter, whose paintings of people and events from Heera Mandi – the less respectable district of old Lahore – are sometimes controversial. *Privacy* is a painting that communicates a common lifestyle of Heera Mandi. Two sisters are having an intimate conversation on the floor. The pillows and spreads are tossed about

early eighties. *Inside Delhi Gate* captures the charm of the inner city – women look down from ornate wooden balconies as street vendors hawk their wares, people dodge horse drawn *tongas*, and a motorcyclist pushes through the crowd.

Ghulam Mustafa is also attracted to scenes in urban Lahore. *Sheranwala Darwaza*, one of the 12 gateways into the old city, is cracking



Shemza *Composition with Sun* 1963

the room. There is no concern for matching patterns or colors or for being consistent with a style of furniture. Iqbal explained that furnishings and lifestyle in the house of a businessman would be more organized. Many women in this area stay up late since they have little to do during the day. While models are hard to come by for other painters, the people of Heera Mandi, like the two sisters, welcome Iqbal into their homes, others are happy to pose for him. His painting, *Woman on a charpoy*, records an everyday scene in his neighborhood. It won best of show in the 1987 national exhibition, an artistic masterpiece that proves art comes from the mind and hand of a master, not from the subject he paints.

Iqbal Husain sells his Heera Mandi paintings to foreign collectors. The local collectors prefer the landscapes or Lahore cityscapes, another trend that has been attracting a following since Ijaz Anwar began recording historic sites in the old city in the

and in need of repair but the artist does not glamourize his subject. Ghulam Mustafa's oil technique imparts a sense of rusticity that is missing in Ijaz Anwar's pristine watercolors. Ghulam Mustafa includes the power poles and electric line (modern technology) that Ijaz prefers to leave out. Nevertheless, both artists underscore reality – the old city is changing rapidly, wooden balconies are rotting, *jarokas* are stolen or sold to the highest bidder, and overcrowding is taking its toll. Ijaz's paintings are so popular that he cannot keep up with the demand and yet urban decay and declining living conditions in the area seem to go unnoticed.

Like Ijaz Anwar's vestiges of old Lahore, Askari Irani's scenes from the Mughal period evoke nostalgia and pride in the national heritage. Extrapolating from Mughal miniatures and Mughal architecture, Askari conjures a vision of Jahangir seen through a window from the Sheesh Mahal, Nur Jahan,



Hanif Ramay *Kalima* Oil on canvas 1950s.

Opposite page: Sadequain *Self-portrait of Sadequain as Faqir* Oil on canvas 1976.

Jahangir's queen, is framed by patterns taken from floors as well as walls at Lahore fort. His peacock, the exotic bird of South Asia, poses in front of a dovecote, the type still extant at Shalimar Gardens in Lahore where Mumtaz Mahal (Shah Jahan's queen, lady of the Taj) wandered these paths in the 17th century.

In addition to its gardens and architecture, Lahore was a centre of miniature painting and book production during the Mughal period. That legacy has been perpetuated at the National College of Arts through the teaching of miniature painting. Sheikh Shuja Ullah and Haji Sharif, hereditary miniature painters who taught at the National College of Arts in the 1960s and 70s, chose Bashir Ahmed to be their successor. Bashir heads the department of miniature painting and recently created a major in that discipline. Because of his success with students and his experiments modernizing the miniature, traditional painting has regained a lost respect and artists like Askari Irani are using it as a reference. Bashir's oeuvre includes exact copies using traditional processes like his drawing of Mumtaz Mahal or creative innovations of his own design based on antique methods like *The Bangle Seller*. *Princess with a Hawk* is a revised version of a famous Rajput miniature. In Bashir's painting, the hawk is described within a nimbus to denote the

excessive value placed on birds of prey by foreign sheikhs who come to hunt in Pakistan. To highlight the modernity of this work, Bashir has fashioned only half the border with *hashia* decoration.

Bashir is one of Pakistan's most skillful artists, but he is not too proud to acknowledge the great debt he owes to his teacher Zahoor ul Akhlaq. More than any other in Pakistan, Zahoor's art is cerebral and international. Five paintings offer a glimpse into his artistic evolution. The first is a drawing from the early seventies that reflects Zahoor's interest in Mughal manuscript pages and the royal *farman* or official orders from the King. A large circle at bottom represents the *farman* with 2 bars above it to signify calligraphic inscriptions, and a *hashia* border decorates the text body which encases a dimly rendered miniature painting. On the 30 year anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, Zahoor was awestruck by the devastation he saw illustrated in newspapers and magazines. His response was a painting of the atomic cloud contained within the manuscript format and embellished with red blood dripping from the dark cloud onto the golden border. The irregular shape of the canvas was a current fashion with American avant garde painters of New York. From European painters, Zahoor adapted another fad





Khalid Iqbal. *Mosque and Kikar*. Oil on canvas. 1985

known as optical art or op art for short. He translated his farman manuscript into op art, a process that paralleled his study of Islamic arithmetic and geometric practices. This more recent (1992) drawing was done in New York during a Fulbright study abroad program. Here, the Hiroshima cloud hovers over Mt. Fuji, and bar codes from the local supermarket – a new and novel thing for the artist – occur at top and bottom. This colored abstraction from the Fuji series was his final work before leaving New York. To the uninformed this painting would have no meaning, but you can see it's derivation from the Islamic manuscript, the royal *farman*, Mt. Fuji, and barcodes.

To paint social or political commentary is risky in any country of the world, even in the West, but A R Nagori has been censured and blacklisted due to his daring social-political narratives. *Target*, for example depicts the plight of exploited Sindhi peasants who are caught between government armed forces and criminal gangs. Over the years, fertile irrigable lands of Sindh were allotted to powerful non-Sindhies and outsiders so that Sindhis were left with barren, non-productive areas which, in *Target*, are represented by the yellow ground in the centre. Even worse, *dacoits* or criminals who terrorize the landlords take refuge in the forests where peasants live and eke out a meagre living. Landlords then pressure the army to

flush out the *dacoits* and peasants are caught in the crossfire. If not shot the peasant still loses: his home is burned as government forces burn the forest to flush out the *dacoits*. It is just a game to those in power, as Nagori suggests by inserting the chequerboard at bottom. No one gives a second thought to lives lost or property destroyed. Like Sadequain, Nagori was incensed by government censorship of the arts and having been labelled as subversive, so that his work was blacklisted from any government exhibition or facility. To express his frustration, Nagori painted *Saraswati*, Hindu goddess of the arts, with deformed black face to show that the beauty of the arts is rotting and decaying. Her arm has been chopped with an axe wielded by the wolf – Nagori's symbol for oppressive government forces. The hand that holds the pen of literature is controlled by a faceless man in a green military uniform. Nagori's paintings are often bitter statements of corruption, injustice, and social inequities directed toward the government and power elite, but in 1993 he reacted to an international incident – the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, India. Entitled *Hanuman Jai Bajrang*, the painting is divided into 3 parts. The far right is India, bright red as cities burn out of control from communal riots; the centre is green, symbolic of Islam and of Pakistan. At top right near the border two structures stand side by



Top: Zulqarnain Hyder. *River in field of grain*. Oil on canvas. 1985. Middle: Shahid Jalal. *Lily Pond*. Oil on canvas. 1980. Left: Ghulam Rasul. *Sidpur Village*. Oil on canvas. 1986.



Top: Saeed Akhtar. Detail, *Faiza*. Oil on canvas. 1985.
Above: Iqbal Hussain. *Woman on Charpoy*. 1987.
Above, right: Ghulam Mustafa Sheranwala. *Darwaza*. 1987.

side, Quaid-i-Azam's tomb is upright while the Hindu temple is pulled down in retribution. Meanwhile Hanuman, the ally of Ram, god-hero of the *Ramayana* whose temple the Hindus believe was displaced by the Babri Masjid, is reeking havoc in the aftermath. Hanuman's tail has caught fire from the riots in India and, as told in the *Ramayana*, he runs wildly around the continent burning everything in his wake. Let's hope there is redemption in the mountain of herbs he carries above his head to overpower the evil spirit on his knee that foments further destruction.

If Nagori's controversial themes and strident colours are intended to cause emotion and incite people to take action, the lyrical watercolors of Qudsia Nisar do the opposite.



These lively playful, non-objective compositions are meant to liberate the senses and release tension. Every inch of the painting is unique yet contributes to the entire composition. Qudsia spent half her lifetime preparing to be an artist. After earning an MA in fine art at Punjab University, she travelled widely in Europe and China to experience masterpieces of world art first-hand. Now she wants to overcome her training to paint intuitively, hoping to achieve a child-like innocence and freshness in her watercolors. Qudsia's paintings make no pretension to be ethnic or reveal national origin – there is nothing about her themes that is particularly Pakistani – they are simply *good art*!

Jamal Shah brings another dimension to



Pakistan painting. His dynamic, abstract canvases reflect the duality of his life. He is modern in outlook and education, yet his heart nurtures tradition. He is daring and revolutionary, yet honest and humble. Jamal's paintings reflect these contradictions. For the 1994 Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, California exhibition of selected paintings from Pakistan, Jamal painted a triptych entitled *Situation*. Measuring 14'x 9.25', the huge colourful

Above: Mian Askan Irani. *Peacock*. 1993. Left: Ijaz Anwar. *Inside Delhi Gate*. Watercolour. 1986.



Above: Bashir Ahmed
Bangle Seller. 1993. Above
right: A R Nagori. *Target*.
Oil on canvas. 1983.
Right: Zahoorel Akhlaq,
Mr Fuji 1992.



canvas appears very contemporary in execution and in its freely rendered abstract character. Indeed, Jamal earned a master's degree in fine art from London's Slade School of Art in 1988, situating him in a progressive environment at a critical moment. Nevertheless, his affinity for the rustic ambience of Quetta, his birthplace, activates his art.

Quetta is the capital of Baluchistan, a tribal territory where barren land and crusty mountains sustain little more than sheep and camel herds and feudalism is a way of life. Rather than escape the rustic ambience for the sophistication of Lahore or Karachi, Jamal chose to study at Baluchistan University and complete a master's in English before deciding to pursue his love for art in Lahore. After his 1983 graduation from the National College of Arts in Lahore, Jamal returned to Baluchistan and established the fine arts department at the university which he headed for three years before leaving for London.

His triptych, *Situation*, depicts figures moving through a tangled landscape. This, Jamal says, refers to women, particularly those from tribal areas who are constrained by the



strict traditional society. Mountains dominate this landscape as they do in Baluchistan, but metamorphose as trees to become an idealized land of dreams. Dark blue-gray clouds fill the sky and huge drops of rain fall in gushes strategically throughout the composition. Jamal confided that as a child he used to pray for so much rain that a river would form and flow by Quetta. Now relocated to Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, Jamal has his wish: trees, rain and a river, and *Hunerkada*, the thriving art academy he created.

The most talented of the younger generation is Lahore painter Quddus Mirza. A graduate of the National College of Arts where he now teaches, Quddus reveals a sense of humour in his art and confidence from his own innate talent, his training at the National College of Arts and his MA received from the Royal College of Art, London. His painting, *Let the Hundred Flowers Bloom Again*, is typical of his post-modern outlook, a cross-cultural expression and one that is conscious of breaking the rules. Splashes and smudges of paint articulate the surface with great abandon. But colours and shapes are compositionally

balanced and recognizable drawings narrate personal quips and cultural anecdotes that give his work a sense of place and time. The theme of his painting *love and death in the village*, recalls personal memories from his childhood which co-mingle with religious lore. The large central figure sipping a cup of tea exemplifies the adage of two angels that sit on one's shoulders, the angel on the right records the good deeds and the angel on the left notes the bad ones. Quddus' version of the *miraj* depicts the Prophet on Buraq ascending toward heaven, just above the right shoulder of the tea sipper. Beneath Buraq, a body has ejected from the open casket and is floating upward toward paradise, but the mourners surrounding the casket are unaware of the transformation. Above Buraq, a couple embraces because, as Quddus explains, "love and the funeral make an inseparable pair in the real, magireal and mythic-real life."

Now that Pakistan's artists have established personal and national identities as well as confidence within the international realm, they will influence society in its ideological and functional *modus operandi*. Collecting art is no

Qudsia Nisar. *Eyes and Lights*. Watercolour on paper. 1997.

longer the province of the elite, middle-class, Pakistani citizens are becoming sophisticated and discriminating collectors. With increasing aesthetic awareness and the financial means to participate, the country moves toward greater refinement, the ability to appreciate sophisticated art by the likes of Zahoor, Qudus, and Qudus, and a desire to preserve the cultural heritage as demonstrated in the paintings of Bashir Ahmed, Askari Irani and Ijaz Anwar. As galleries and art schools proliferate, art can expand its role as a humanizing mechanism; society can reflect on its aesthetic culture and take pride in its artists.

Paper presented at the Symposium on "Pakistan: 50 Years as a Nation" in North Carolina organised by the American Institute of Pakistan Studies in August 1997.



Right: Jamal Shah
Triptych, 1992 Below:
Qudus Mirza. *Let the 100
Flowers Bloom*, 1992



They wanted forward looking art. They peered beyond the horizon. They were a part of the comity of nations, the inheritors of world civilization and not the remnants and relics of Mughal civilization only.

There were no foreign patronizing rulers to please who wanted the natives to continue with their cloyingly sweet scenes of dalliance in palaces or the hackneyed scenes of the blue god Krishna's frolics with the milkmaids of Brindaban. Even Muslim painters like Ustad Allah bux exploited the latter theme to the extent that he came to be called Krishna Allah bux. Chughtai too had passed his peak in a

Art and the seven-year old Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University. The Principal of the first was G N Malik who had neither the talent nor the staff to launch a new art movement in the newly free country. The Head of the second was a dashing, talented and highly emotional British lady Anna Molka Ahmed, married to a Pakistani artist, Sheikh Ahmed. She taught her students, who were (girls only, till 1956) to paint village life around Lahore in a carefully correct realistic manner. Hundreds of girls graduated from her Department in the thirty years that she was Head.



Above: Shakir Ali.
Untitled. Above, right:
S Safdar. Red Structure.
1978.

style that he had developed as a Muslim variation of the Bengal School, pandering to nostalgia for a glorious past that was no more, and totally oblivious of the harsh present day realities. That he had attained technical perfection there is no doubt but equally doubtless is the fact that not a single artist in the country chose to follow in his steps or was inspired by him.

Adventure and Experiment

There was a new sense of freedom in the art world, a desire for adventure and experiment. Lahore was the cultural capital of Pakistan, the city of the Lahore Fort and the Badshahi Mosque, of the seventy-year old Mayo School of



The first to break the ranks and raise the flag of rebellion was Zubeida Agha. She took some lessons in art from a private studio run by B C Sanyal, who was painting common men and women in a simplified realistic manner. It was hardly avant grade and so she turned to an Italian artist who was prisoner of war in a camp near Lahore during the mid-40s. No doubt encouraged by him and eager herself to "paint ideas", she came up with paintings entitled *The Wind*, *Beethoven's Fifth Symphony* and *Wisdom*. The latter showed a woman's face in profile, with a mouse and an egg nestled on her head. All were painted in greys.

She chose to exhibit her work in Karachi, which was perhaps more exposed to modern ideas of art. The show certainly gained attention and led to quite a heated controversy in the press.

Later she went to study in London and Paris and came back a changed person, painting verdant scenes with happy people in bright colours and in a rather naive style. Her work continued to mature, with the subject reduced to the minimum and colours galore.

Forward Looking

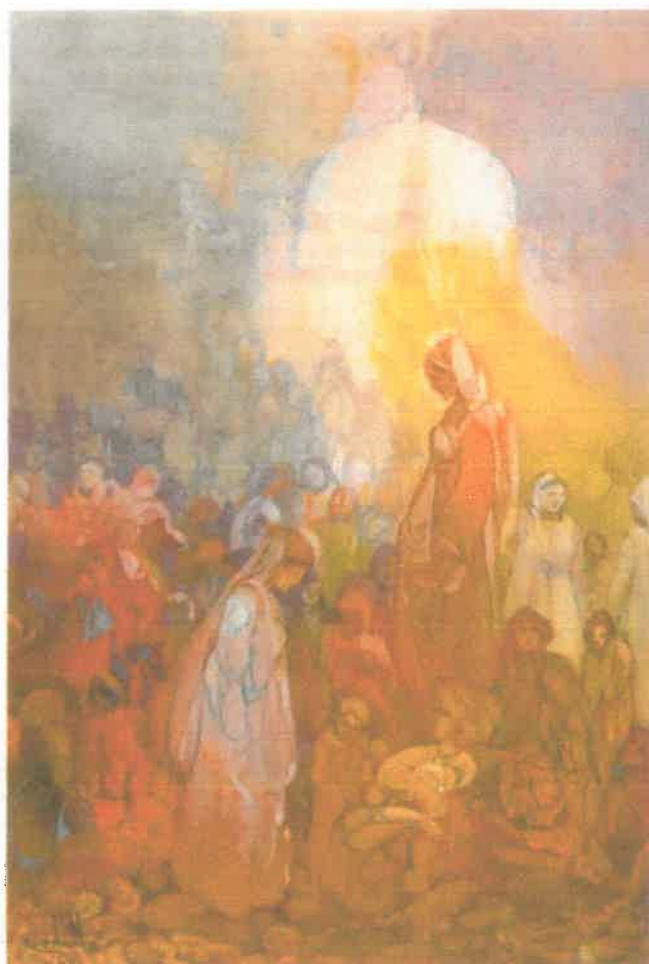
Art: Years Before

and After

Independence

S AMJAD ALI

Ustad Allah Bux, *Untitled*.



A wonderful vista of daily and cultural life as far back as eight thousand years is opening up as Pakistan archaeologists, together with teams from Italy, France and America, are digging up the past from Allah-dino near Karachi to Butkara in Swat in the north. The excavations at Mehrgarh in Baluchistan have pushed back the veil of time to 8,000 years when the Neolithic Revolution was taking place and man was mastering the art of cultivation and domestication of animals and was building his first habitation centres.

This flight of fancy into the distant past may be excused because it is meant to put in proper perspective the art of these 50 years of freedom when placed side by side with artifacts of those far off days, especially the indestructible pottery on which are found decorative designs still used by the potters of Pakistan today – such as the fish scale motif, the intersecting circles, the row of lozenges or squares, saw tooth series and so on.

It is not intended to inflict on the reader an account of the intervening millennia. The point to be stressed is only this: that evidence has been and is being brought together by painstaking research that in this land the urge for artistic expression has gone hand in hand with the desire to provide food and shelter. There are still big gaps but the caravan of

art can be seen moving through the mists of history in a long unending trail.

Freedom and Art

Having dispelled the notion that our art history begins in 1947, one must hasten to emphasize that there was no doubt a world of difference between the years before and the years after independence.

The difference was freedom. It cannot be denied that the British rulers moulded the art trends and activities of India-Pakistan, though no doubt with noble intentions. They were enamoured of the art and crafts and they set up the art schools of Lahore, Lucknow and Calcutta to promote these, not to teach painting.

Then with the benign desire to promote an indigenous school of painting, E. J. Havell, the Principal of the Calcutta School of Art, encouraged Abanindranath Tagore to develop a style by drawing, upon the example of Mughal-Rajput-Pahari miniature paintings and the great Ajanta mural paintings.

The movement swept the subcontinent from Calcutta to Lahore but with the coming of independence, it fizzled out perhaps because the people did not want backward looking art.

at the Mayo School of Arts drew more directly from the masters of Lahore of the thirties and forties, mainly Abdur Rehman Chughtai, with great similarities in the use of line and ornament. His work perpetuates the craft skills of Lahore School of the first part of this century.

Before 1970, painters from the Eastern wing of Pakistan were a formidable and meaningful presence in Pakistan. The doyen of them all, Zainul Abedin, was a frequent visitor to all parts of the country. Not only was his work exhibited and published extensively, he was instrumental in the setting up of the Department of Fine Arts at Peshawar University and was closely associated with the National College of Arts in Lahore. His friendship with intellectuals, writers and artists like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Col. Majeed Malik, A R Chughtai, Shakir Ali, Zubeida Agha and others, signified his influence and relevance to the art scene. His early work which established his international reputation, was a series of dramatic ink and brush drawings of the 1942 Bengal famine. Published all over the sub-continent and abroad, these stark images made the name of young Zainul Abedin synonymous with that of an artist with a social conscience. He went on to explore a more cubist interpretation of form, in a sensitive, personalized manner. Never very far from the visual traditions of his native Bengal, Zainul Abedin worked in several parallel ways as a water colourist and as a draughtsman of ease and skill, who manipulated reed pen and brush with echoes of Shantinketan's romance with Japanese ink drawings. Although he worked mainly in water colour on paper, many major works were executed in oil on canvas. These were often romantic interpretations of the female figure, strongly delineated, broken down into geometric components yet retaining preference for pattern and colour which brought the work into the fold of the "Bengal School" sensibility. His position as Head of the Art Institute of Dhaka was only one aspect of his crucial influence in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The breadth of his creative vision made him the guiding force in setting up innumerable institutions, as well as a gentle yet potent voice in ongoing artistic concerns. His work was seen regularly in exhibitions in Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi until the independence of Bangladesh.

The tradition of artists linking up with poets and writers as friends, illustrators, and participants in ongoing debate is an established one in the sub-continent. There is also the authentic tradition of the written word as art, with calligraphy as its manifestation. The fifties in Lahore saw the beginnings of a re-interpretation of calligraphic forms as elements of a contemporary expression in painting. Hanif Ramay, a writer and young painter, was

among the first to investigate the possibilities of constructing a fresh idiom which looked at traditional forms in an objective way, and yet respected context and meaning. Being involved in the literary scene, both as the designer of magazine covers and as a writer, he explored the more formal aspects of this traditional art, often with an eloquence and clarity. Hanif Ramay's training as a painter was not in an art school but as a young student with Ustad Allah Bux and the calligrapher Muhammad Hussain Shah.

His modernist beginnings on canvas, like many others at the time, inclined to a cubist vocabulary, but the probing into line, space, and colour became far more individual when applied to calligraphic structure. There was obviously a certain predilection for content here, which evolved into a distinct and consistent framework for visual expression. Ramay deserted his painting for the turbulence of the political world. There was an interruption of almost two decades before he returned to it with a solo exhibition in 1985, in Lahore. The new work was mellow in feeling, the calligraphic presence defined with careful control and a deft sense of line, colour and shape. This show brought him back into the discourse of contemporary painting as a mature critic and practitioner. The conscious political patronage of calligraphy as an accepted form of expression was the hallmark of the years of General Zia-ul-Haq's regime. The subsequent debasement of the form in an attempt to popularise it, did nothing to further serious development or creative maturity.

Among artists who turned to it as a major part of their life's work was Aslam Kamal and, in his twilight years, the eminent artist Sadequain. Aslam Kamal has attempted to create a fusion between several styles by subjugating them to his own geometric framework, relating them to architectural form and pattern.

Among the artists who were born in India and made Karachi their home after partition, was Sadequain. Patronised at a young age by Prime Minister Suhrawardy, who saw promise in the young painter, Sadequain was sent to work and study in Paris in 1960. Awarded the Laureate Biennial de Paris in 1961, he had already embarked on a meteoric artistic career. Until his death in 1987, Sadequain defined the role of the modern painter in Pakistan, undertaking a number of public commissions including the Karachi Airport, the State Bank of Pakistan, the Mangla Power Station, the Lahore Museum and a host of others. Sadequain was a social commentator in his painting and a poet to boot. His later years saw a certain retreat into the safety of state-sanctioned calligraphic works, but for the large part of his career, he was a prolific and tireless

define. Forms emanating from a core, seemingly embedded deep within and beyond the picture surface, they defy easy comparison.

The brilliance and effervescence of colour coincides with the agitated movement of linear and nonlinear forms. Although suggesting references from the figurative and the floral, they are sensuous and non-literal. The works on paper in his last year became more simplified, and smaller in size, reflecting perhaps his increasing ill-health and, unsustainable life style. He received the long awaited official recognition of the President's Pride of Performance before his death in 1979.

Better known as gallery owner and mentor of artists Ali Imam was also one of the founder members of the Lahore Art Circle. Like Shemza and Parvez, he too, made the journey to London in the mid-fifties.

On his return, he taught for several years at the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts in Karachi before establishing the Indus Gallery. The Gallery rapidly became the most important space for exhibiting contemporary art in Pakistan, creating a clientele and a rapport among artists. Imam's own work has remained figurative over the years, drawing its imagery from the indigenous. Deliberately textured, it is sedate and muted in colour, with a preference for tones of white peppered with darker values across the surface. Restricting himself to a few canvases a year, his time and energy has been spent on nurturing a dialogue between artist, viewer and buyer which has contributed in a significant way to the growth of an art market and the recognition of art activity as a valid career.

A steadfast main stay of the Lahore Art Circle was S Safdar. Born in the same year as Ali Imam (1924) Safdar established the first advertising agency in Lahore. Not a full time painter, he nevertheless painted with great regularity until his death in 1983. A dedicated cubist, his work was firm in structure, although romantic in content, an apparent contradiction. Strongly influenced by Shakir Ali's work of the fifties and sixties, S Safdar retained these influences for much of his artistic life. Strongly delineated, the work ranged from subtle geometric abstractions, to the genre of still lifes and well traversed figurative compositions.

Another abstractionist on the periphery of the Lahore Art Circle was Qutub Sheikh, who left Lahore early in his career to settle down in Germany. He returned now and again to exhibit and renew his personal associations. A painter of lyrical form and colour, his work has remained extraneous and not well known in Pakistan due to his absence from the gallery scene.

Raheel Akbar Javed is yet another Lahore painter who moved abroad, having been an active participant in the Lahore art scene in the

50's and 60's. Experimenting with form and medium, he moved away from an early brush with cubism to a more subtle use of paper collage on board. The layering of thin paper tissue, in Raheel Akbar Javed's painting reveals nuances of colour in carefully designed geometric compositions. Work executed after he emigrated to the US has not been exhibited in Pakistan, and Raheel is represented in his country of origin, only by his works upto the seventies.

Among artists who followed a more conventional artistic path, have been A S Nagi, Ozzir Zuby, his wife Sughra Rababi, and Sardar Muhammad. A S Nagi continues in a manner largely unchanged over six decades: working as a portraitist as well as in a variety of other genres. His rather flamboyant studies of the female nude place him firmly in the now dated academic tradition of the turn of the century. Indulging and encouraging younger artists around him, his studio was more often a centre of creative expression for others than his own works.

The applied areas of art, and the dictates of commerce have been the compulsions that have shaped the work of Ozzir Zuby, Sughra Rababi and Sardar Mohammad in Karachi. A variety of techniques and styles are reflected in their varied interests including their work in advertising agencies, interior design, garment production and commercial public commissions.

Ozzir Zuby and Sardar Mohammad have both indulged in calligraphy. Sardar Mohammad's paintings have involved well worn themes from the regional cultures of Pakistan, while Zuby has concentrated on teaching and two-dimensional and three-dimensional design. Sughra Rababi's penchant for the decorative was manifest in designs for embroidery as well as her highly coloured thematic works involving women's themes.

Traditionalists of a different kind were Ustad Aftab Ahmed Khan and Sheikh Shujaullah, both miniature painters of quality, who came to live and work in Lahore after division of the subcontinent. The better known Sheikh Shujaullah taught at the National College of Arts after Haji Mohammad Sharif retired. A subtle mix of Rajasthani and Pahari painting, Sheikh Shujaullah's own work is uncompromising in its rigour of line and pattern. Ustad Aftab Ahmed Khan's painting, on the other hand, was strongly influenced by his other career as a photographer. His father, also a photographer and miniature painter of repute in Delhi, worked extensively for nobility all over India. Ustad Aftab Ahmed Khan's own patrons in Pakistan included the Quaid-e-Azam. Apart from commissioned portraits his work dwelt on traditional darbar scenes.

Ustad Bashir Uddin who studied and taught

Shakir Ali's allusions to the past were not restricted to the sub-continent but consciously incorporated pre-history, Greece, Egypt, Crete, and many other ancient civilizations. The personal in his work was well submerged in the language of the painter. His strong and sometimes severe palette, contrasted with the delicacy of cross-hatched brush strokes. Devoid of narrative, the work employs symbolism of many kinds during the different phases of his life and work. From myth to calligraphy, Shakir Ali's work is always deliberate in design and in manipulation of space. The imagery is spare, refined and understated even when texture and colour are lyrical and joyous.

Another pioneer of the modern movement who preceded Shakir Ali's appearance on the scene was Zubeida Agha. A political science graduate, Zubeida Agha took her first lessons in the 1940's from B C Sanya in Lahore, and from Mario Perlingieri, an Italian prisoner-of-war, a student of Picasso. She went on to study in London and in Paris at Ecole des Beaux Artes. An accomplished colourist, Zubeida's career spanned more than five decades. Always very personal, with difficult to define 'phases' or preoccupations, her painting has drawn strength from her love of music and nature with both retinal and imaginative encounters. The floral, the architectural, the pastoral and the figurative, are suspended in space, often evoking a trance-like state induced by colour and tenuous mood. The images, while alluding to the real world, defy easy categorizations as symbols, taking on mysterious connotations and ambiguous meanings. Almost a recluse, Zubeida Agha, the doyen of Pakistani abstraction, lived in Islamabad and continued to paint in her inimitable, recondite style.

The decade of the 50's saw the emergence of an energetic group of artists in Lahore, with comparable but far more sedate counterparts in Karachi. Among members of the Lahore Art Circle were A J Shemza, Moyene Najmi, Ahmed Parvez, Ali Imam, and S Safdar. Early concerns were the conventional genres of landscape, both urban and rural, and portraiture; but Shakir Ali's influence transformed the group into abstractionists.

Moyene Najmi's works of the time are concerned with his immediate environment of the city of Lahore; its streets, rooftops and gardens. A painter of great sensitivity, Moyene Najmi had not been prolific. Employing a delicately lyrical range of earth colours, Najmi's works are poetic in mood and philosophical in content. A preference for texture is expressed with discrimination, ensuring its subservience to the grand design. His handling of two-dimensional space is masterly and sophisticated and his paintings of the sixties remain some of the finest examples of the visual milieu of Lahore.

The dynamic Anwar Jalal Shemza, studied at the Mayo School of Arts, before going to the Slade School in London. Coming from a family of carpet traders, his inclination for traditional pattern and design was no doubt inherited and intuitive. His early work like the others in the Lahore group was semi-cubist and vehement in its use of colour. His years in London re-introduced him to the geometry and spatial order present in his inheritance. Seizing upon Paul Klee as the window into his own exploration of Islamic calligraphy, architecture, and textile, Shemza's vision developed and matured. He returned to Pakistan briefly in the sixties with his British artist wife, Mary Katrina, before eventually settling down in England. He continued to paint, and his work toured Pakistan in a posthumous exhibition in 1986, reasserting his delight in calligraphic form and pattern juxtaposed with the flora and the organic. Always an artist of finesse, Shemza's works were small in scale and intricate in their organisation of form and space. Learning from craftsmen of old, and reinterpreting two-dimensional relationships was Shemza's forte.

Colour too, played a subtle and definitive role in these intellectual yet visually sensual works. His use of colour refers back to the miniature tradition, and yet is wholly contemporary in its simplicity and directness. Rejecting the hegemony of oils, A J Shemza worked on paper and fabrics in water-based media, as well as in printmaking. The paintings of his last years moved towards the synthesis of his ancient artistic and cultural roots and his contemporary life in the West, with poetic clarity.

Ahmed Parvez, another iconoclastic artistic presence in Lahore in the early 50's, moved to London in 1955, where like A J Shemza, his figurative cubist beginnings metamorphosed into an ebullient frenzy of exploding fragments of colour and shape.

Entirely self-taught, Parvez's temperament was inextricably intertwined with the vibrancy of his imagery. The early years in London were hard going, but in 1959, his first exhibition, at the New Vision Centre Gallery, of small water colours brought him some critical success. This first exhibition was followed by a number of shows in West End Galleries, and others in Oxford, Manchester and in Europe. This was a prolific period and his output was prodigious. He returned to Pakistan in 1964, and set up a studio in Karachi and exhibited all over the country. He continued to show abroad, and worked in New York for three years. His restless energy was reflected in the highly charged ambience in his work. His ability to articulate strongly felt emotions in visual terms was at once rapturous and combustible. Sometimes compared to the painter Alan Davies, Parvez's imagery was more wide ranging and harder to

His palette distinguished him from other painters of the time. The colour in Chughtai's work, even in the early years, was recognisable by its mature resonance and jewel-like quality. His delight in ornament and pattern was at once skilled and subtle. Himself a poet and short-story writer, his friendships with writers and intellectuals of his time ensured links with the text which developed into full fledged illustrations for the poetry of Omar Khayyam, Ghalib and Iqbal. Affinity with text continued with his prolific graphic designs for book covers, magazines, and logo designs for a host of national institutions.

Borrowing from a variety of sources in folklore literature and history, A R Chughtai was a traditionalist who nevertheless adopted, transformed and reinterpreted the grandeur of a heritage with dexterity and passion.

A respected follower of the Western academic style was Ustad Allah Bux, who painted mythological themes, rural settings, and romantic folk legends in a style popular in the beginning of the 20th century. Familiar with both the oil and water colour techniques, Ustad Allah Bux worked with skilful ease in working from observable phenomena which he later modified in the studio. Ustad Allah Bux's work was somewhat sentimental and reflected the conservative aspirations of his time. The utopian landscapes and portraits had great popular success, and nurtured many imitators. Born in 1885 and apprenticed at an early age to a master miniature painter, Allah Bux learnt his trade from a number of sources including a stint as a back drop painter for the theatre in Lahore. This experience may have contributed to the strange feeling of many of his epic works commissioned by a variety of patrons over six decades, ranging from the Maharaja of Patiala to the Government of Pakistan. His later "anthromorphic" landscapes reflect his experience in both colour and texture and are unusual in their vision.

A sophisticated and more delicate practitioner of the Indo-European tradition was Fyze Rahamin, friend of the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, at whose request he moved to Karachi from Bombay. He studied at the Royal Academy of Art in London, was a student of John Singer Sargent, and exhibited in Europe and North America well before 1947. Using oil paint in a refined austere manner, his works recall traditions of frescoes and tempera painting. His cultivated portraits are spare, quiet, painted flatly: the third dimension suggested minimally. An urbane painter of eminence, Fyze's themes ranged from interpretations of "raags" to historical and ethnic themes.

A vociferous and dynamic force in art education was Anna Molka Ahmed who trained many generations of art students and teachers

at the Fine Arts Department, Punjab University in Lahore. Working in heavy impasto oils, her work although European in its genre also reflected certain influences absorbed during the five decades of her life in the subcontinent. Passionate about her allegiance to the post-impressionists, notably Paul Gauguin, her works betray a greater kinship to Van Gogh in terms of her palette. The sharpness of light and piercing pure colour corresponds markedly with her outspoken stance on the authenticity of her own vision.

Among the artists who made their way to Lahore from the small princely states across the border was Haji Sharif, whose forebears were court painters for the Maharaja of Patiala. Owing fidelity to the Mughal miniature, Haji Sharif's work nevertheless was hybrid in its palette and in its themes. His early patrons being the Sikh Courts, some of the thematic works are to do with the Sikh gurus and their royal followers. Haji Sharif's presence in Lahore helped to renew an interest in the traditional miniature painters' skills at the Fine Arts Department under Anna Molka Ahmed, and the National College of Arts, under Professors Sponenburgh and Shakir Ali.

The Mayo School of Arts was reorganized and upgraded into the National College of Arts in 1958 with Mark Sponenburgh as its Principal and has become the major Pakistani institution for education in art, design and architecture.

Shakir Ali, its first Pakistani Principal was perhaps the most potent presence in the early modern movement in Pakistan. Artists nurtured under his unassuming yet effective influence went on to form the core of what is now the face of contemporary art in Pakistan. Shakir Ali's early training in the years 1938-1944 was at the J.J. School of Arts in Bombay, as a mural painter. The early work reflects an affinity for tradition: references to Ajanta, and folk stylization are apparent in the works that survive from those years. A dramatic change occurred when he went to the Slade School of Fine Arts in London, and at the School of Industrial Design at the Charles University in Prague. A summer with the painter Andre L'hote in France strengthened the shift towards a more contemporary cubist idiom.

Settling down in Lahore brought Shakir Ali into contact with other young painters grappling with problems of progressive change and a new vocabulary. Joining them in the struggle were writers, poets, critics and intellectuals.

Shakir Ali's painting moved from cubist still lifes and portraits to an exploration of indigenous themes, linked to his new surroundings. The archetypal village with its bulls, its potters, its farmers, carried echoes of his early Bombay themes but were now on the threshold of a transformation.

accompanied the painting folios, the margins were decorated in gold, with arabesques, flowers and animals. Jehangir was deeply interested in animal life and habitats. The works of his time combine observation with heightened lyricism.

Emperor Jehangir's interest in painting from the West was reinforced by examples that came to the Mughal Court, copies of which were undertaken in the imperial workshops. Court artists introduced one-point perspective into landscapes and stronger modelling in human figures, creating an interesting amalgamation of styles.

The informality in the painting of Jehangir's reign gave way to the stiffer pomp of Shah Jehan's rule. Exaggerated stylization and rich adornment, with a delight in rendering of textiles, carpets, jewellery and marble, characterise the painting of the Shah Jahani era.

The Mughal genre filtered into the provincial royal courts from the 6th to the 19th centuries and was modified according to local preferences and established artistic practices. Vernacular attributes and variations gave rise to a host of painting schools from the sophistication of Deccani painting to the robust 'folk' of Punjabi painting. Between the decline of one empire and establishment of the British Raj, artists looked for new forms of patronage and new mediums. In the nineteenth century artists discovered oil-painting, photography, engraving and lithography. They took up commissioned works for their new British patrons and for the fading local nobility.

Among the earliest industrial arts schools set up by the British in the subcontinent, was the Mayo School of Arts (now National College of Arts) in Lahore. Established in 1875, Lockwood Kipling was its first Principal. The school was set up like its counterparts in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, to help the local crafts and to ensure their development. As it turned out, the school imparted a mixture of local craft skills and British art education considered appropriate by the British rulers. The content of the Mayo School curriculum reflected the contradictions between the local art tradition and the dominant British aesthetic. The continuity and richness of the varied local painting tradition was taken over by the Victorian predilection for the academic and sentimental in art.

The independence movement in the late 19th and early 20th century had corresponding parallels in literature and the arts. There was a creative outburst of energy in poetry, theatre and intellectual debate among the intelligentsia everywhere in the subcontinent but especially in Bengal, which stimulated the most influential movements in art and literature. The rise of the Bengal School of painting pioneered by the

Tagores, shared the similarities with the emergent 'Lahore School' of the thirties and forties. Abanindranath Tagore chose themes which were acclaimed as expressions of nationalist sentiment. The figures were highly stylized and linear, far removed from the earthiness of the Ajanta frescoes. His special study of the "Indian wash technique" was taken up by other painters. Wash after wash of colour was laid down on paper with brushes and sponges, accented with linear brush work, somewhat reminiscent of Mughal or Pahari miniature, without recourse to burnishing or opaque colour. The rejection of oil painting on canvas became a political gesture i.e. a rejection of the Western/British influence. The movement in Lahore led by Abdur Rehman Chughtai developed its own variations, in themes and techniques.

Political events often culminate in dramatic cultural mutations or developments. The emergence of the state of Pakistan in 1947, was marked by a massive population migration, creating many socio-political problems. These problems were reflected in the cultural sphere, especially in the visual arts. Artists had to adjust themselves to changed circumstances. They had witnessed a violent political division of the subcontinent. For many, it involved a painful physical uprooting from what was India to the new State of Pakistan. The cultural landscape was truncated and had to be defined and populated anew.

The areas that comprised Pakistan had strong craft traditions, which did not play a part in art education or the 'source' stream for the Pakistani artist of the time. A Fine Arts Department had been set up in Lahore at the University of the Punjab in 1940, with Anna Molka Ahmed, a British painter married to an Indian Muslim artist, Sheikh Ahmed, as its founding Head of Department. The Department only admitted female students for the first fourteen years of its existence. Both the art establishments i.e. the Mayo School of Arts and the Fine Arts Department, were crucially depleted by the exodus of population across the border in 1947.

At the time, the figure of the painter A R Chughtai towered over all others in Pakistan. Having studied at the Mayo School of Arts, where he subsequently taught, Chughtai also studied printmaking in Europe and was the most expert of etchers in the Indian subcontinent.

Chughtai's special affinity for the wash technique, although traceable to the influence of the Bengal school, evolved in an individual manner. His thematic concerns were also indigenous and he consequently acknowledged Mughal, Persian and other sources which comprised the Muslim visual traditions in calligraphy, architecture, and the applied arts.

The probability that painting was an important activity from the most ancient of times is established from the archaeological sites of the Indus Valley and at Mehrgarh in Baluchistan dating back to 4000 BC and before, where there are signs of sophisticated animal stylizations on pottery and seals. Ancient texts from other parts of the subcontinent confirm that the painter and his craft were established features of society. From a close look at the craft traditions today, one can assume that the arts were hereditary, learnt through apprenticeship, and the artist-craftsmen must have been organized into 'beradaris' or guilds to safeguard standards, professional know-how and economic interests.

The earliest examples of rock drawings are found in the north of Pakistan along the ancient trade routes from China and Central

all directions. The undulating physical presence of the cave seems to be linked with its surface treatment.

Examples of painting, other than those on rocks, walls, and pottery are known in the subcontinent only after the 11th century. It can however be assumed that the tradition goes further back in time. Buddhist works on palm leaves from the northern part of the subcontinent are usually long and narrow and consist of images of Buddha or Bodhisattvas surrounded by worshippers or deities. The images were accompanied by text, a convention that came into its own with the flowering of the Mughal miniature tradition.

The arrival of the first Mughal Emperor, Babur, in 1524, brought about a dramatic change in indigenous painting, where a profusion of stylistic conventions and elements

Framing the Present

SALIMA HASHMI

The painting traditions of Pakistan, like its many other traditions, almost defy delineation. The absence of an hierarchical structure in the activity, its intertwining with the other arts, and the historical and regional variants, make it a complex task to arrive at simple generalisations.

Asia. These include drawings from the third and second millennium BC depicting hunting scenes, dancing figures, animals and warriors. Later drawings from the 1st century AD have Kharosthi inscriptions and Buddhist imagery with the stupa's devotees and Buddha himself as the central figure.

The frescoes in the cave temples at Ajanta in India, thirty in number, are the most impressive examples of the formal fresco tradition in the subcontinent. The early paintings date back to the 2nd century BC and the later ones are from the 7th century AD. It is apparent that even the earliest of the Ajanta paintings reflect a mature and sophisticated tradition. The links to sculpture are present, yet the frescoes respect the two-dimensionality of the surface. The figures are flatly rendered and outlined in an undulating flowing manner. The colours employed are earth reds, ochres, terreverte, lampblack and white of lime.

The later frescoes from the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries grow closer to the sculptural tradition, with a greater feeling of physicality in the figures. There are architectural motifs, foliage and flowers, scrolls and animals emanating in

came together to produce the Mughal tradition in miniature and wall painting. Early Mughal pictures were large and painted on cotton. Although much is made of the Persian Central Asian and European influences on Mughal painting, it is now felt that the synthesis which occurred in painting during the Mughal period, was unique specifically because of the historical richness of the established indigenous painting practices. The Mughal palette was warmer and deeper than the Persian. The dynamic compositions and scientific observation, coupled with a philosophic contemplation, made this an unparalleled period in the heritage of South Asia.

Each emperor set the tone for the artistic preoccupations of his era. Artists often accompanied the Emperor Akbar on his military expeditions recording his battles and victories. Court-life, hunting scenes, and epics were other favourite themes. Accompanied by texts, the paintings were bound into volumes and stored in the Imperial library. Emperor Jahangir, himself a painter, brought a greater sensitivity of mood and nuance to Mughal painting. Specimens of fine calligraphy

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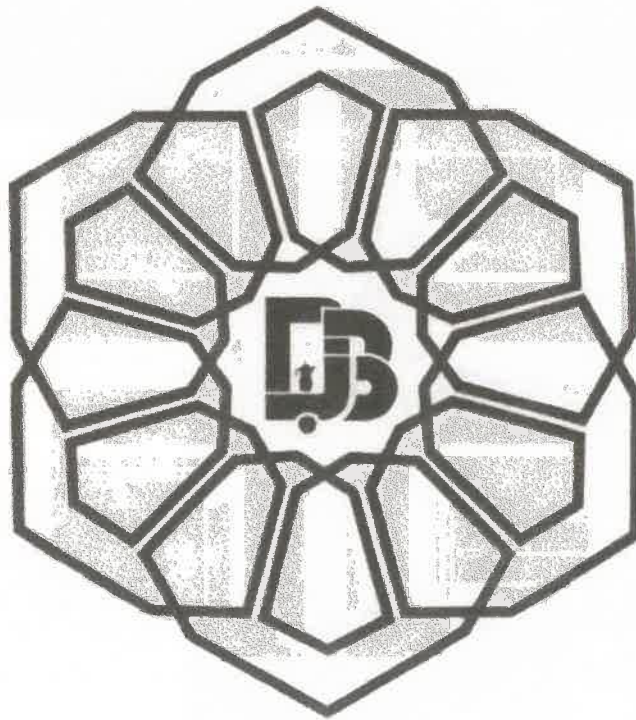
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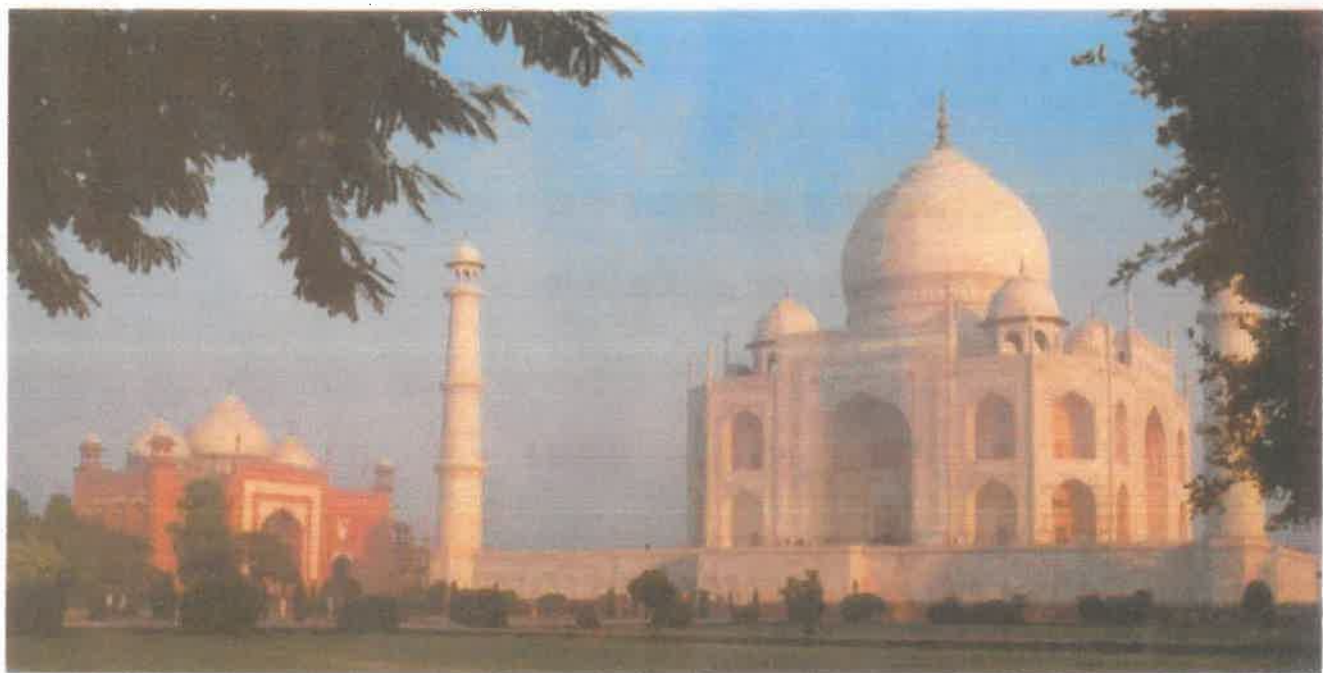
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The Taj Mahal AH 1041-1052/AD 1632-1643 from the section on 'Collections and Conservation of Islamic Art' Built by Shah Jahan for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, the peerless incomparable Taj won Curzon's heart when he first visited it in 1887. On his return to India as Viceroy (1893-1905) he supervised the restoration of the structure and the gardens. He also won his battle to return to India the pietra dura decoration from the Diwan-i-Am, Shahjahanabad, which had been looted in 1857 and lodged in the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) London Photographs by Philippa Vaughan

Photograph of Muhammad Iqbal AD 1877-1938, from the section 'Spheres of Knowledge' Iqbal trained in Islamic studies and philosophy at the University of Cambridge under the guidance of Sir Thomas Arnold, translator of the Qur'an into English. Arnold taught at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, founded by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, while the College Committee established a policy of recruiting professors only from Oxford. Iqbal is here on a picnic with fellow students near Ely in 1906, while at Cambridge. Starting with Iqbal and continuing clockwise: Sarojin Naidu, Nazimuddin Hasan, later Nazir Yar Jung, Minister of Law to the Nizam of Hyderabad; Atiya Fazi, 'Sughra' Humayun Mirza, the first leader in Hyderabad (Deccan) for Women's Emancipation; Fazle Husain, later Chief Justice, Lahore; Sheikh Raza Sir Abdugadir, founder of the literary journal in Lahore titled *Makhzan* Photograph by Zauddin Ahmed Shateb

Loves Beauty', Hadith. A number of principal practitioners of Islamic art live in Britain, working within the classic traditions of the Islamic heritage, whose work is collected by major public institutions, and they are presented through a video display. The entire exhibition has been designed by Graven Images of Glasgow, winners of major design awards, in state of the art technology, to enable the exhibition to travel during the next twelve months.

Opposite page, right: English Binding c. 1551-60 for the Qur'an, from the section 'Spheres of Knowledge' The gold tooled arabesques and black painted decoration bear the arms of Thomas Wotton (1527-87). The text is the first Latin version of the Qur'an, published in Basel in AD 1543 and based on the first Latin translation made by Robert of Chester in AD 1142. (Courtesy: Victoria and Albert Museum Picture Library, London)

Philippa Vaughan is Director of the Royal Asiatic Society in London.

Traditions of Respect: Britain and Islamic Cultures
An exhibition presented by the British Council
Curated by Philippa Vaughan
A travelling exhibition opening in Islamabad, Pakistan, 9 October 1997

Oct 9 - 13	Islamabad Convention Centre
Oct 22 - Nov 2	Peshawar Pearl Continental Hotel
Nov 8 - 17	Lahore Alhambra Arts Centre
Feb 9 - 28	Karachi Mohatta Palace

Thereafter it will travel to Bangladesh (Dhaka), Yemen (Sana'a), Turkey (Ankara and Istanbul), Brunei (Bandar Seri Bagawan)

Traditions of Respect: Britain and Islamic Cultures

PHILIPPA VAUGHAN

This travelling exhibition, which opened in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, in October 1997 presents the interface between Britain and the Islamic world, within the broadest possible geographical, cultural, and historical contexts up to and including the present day. It spans almost one thousand years, and focuses upon the enduring cultural rhythms underlying the variety of political and economic relationships.

The theme is introduced by showing the almost concurrent emergence of European Christendom and the Islamic world within the former lands of the Roman empire through which comes a shared cultural heritage. For the medieval period it focuses on the principal points of contact in Islamic Spain, Sicily and Italy, through the dynastic links of the English crown, and illustrates the appreciation of Islamic

material culture through the use of Islamic textiles for coronation robes and Church vestments, and of metalwork and carved crystals for ecclesiastical use. From this comes both the adoption of Islamic forms, such as for vessels, and of techniques, such as enamelling. Europe's debt to Islamic science, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, is highlighted along with the role of English scholars such as Adelard of Bath, tutor to King Henry II of England, in translating fundamental texts from Arabic into Latin through which this knowledge became part of the corpus of European learning.

The six sections following this introduction are presented thematically, each having its own internal chronology up to the twentieth century. 'Spheres of Knowledge' shows the study of classical Islamic languages (principally Arabic and Persian, and later Urdu and Turkish) from

the Middle Ages and the establishment of Chairs of Arabic at Cambridge and Oxford in the 1630s, the impact upon literature of the work of Sir William Jones, and particularly the Romantic poets, several of whom learnt Persian in order better to understand what they considered to be one of the greatest poetic traditions. Travellers, explorers, and administrators are mentioned as well as the Orientalists through whom knowledge of the Islamic world was made accessible in Britain.

The next section focuses on the relationship between Britain and the Courts of Ottoman Turkey, Safavid Persia and Mughal India, illustrated through dynastic portraiture, and is followed by 'Responses to Islamic Architecture' showing the influence of Islamic architecture on British style, as seen both in Britain and in British architecture in Asia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Associated with architecture is Islamic Design, and the fourth section is devoted to presenting the impact of Islamic art upon a few key figures in nineteenth century Britain such as Owen Jones,

William Morris and William de Morgan. Interest in design, greater accessibility of the Near and Middle East, and a profound interest in Islamic culture led museums such as the British Museum, and Victoria and Albert Museum, London, to build up collections of



Islamic Art, a process begun in the second half of the nineteenth century, and in which they were aided by Nasir-ud-Din Shah Qajar of Persia. Conservation of monuments, both in this country and in Asia, was also of topical concern, and Curzon, Viceroy of India 1899-1905, established the Archaeological Survey of India and personally supervised conservation of monuments throughout the sub-continent, a process in which he followed principles still accepted in the late twentieth century, advocating minimal intervention: 'Better the faded and persified originals than a series of modern restorations'.

The final section is entitled 'Towards the Future' and presents aspects of Islamic culture in Britain under several headings, illustrated with images from contemporary activities by institutions in Britain: 'Say: "O People of the Book, come to common terms as between us and you"' Sura III:64; 'Seek Knowledge from the Cradle to the Grave' Hadith; 'Humanity is God's Family' Hadith; and 'God is Beautiful and



Dish by William de Morgan Fulham, London, c. 1890 from the section 'Influences of Islamic Design'

The design is inspired by a glazed earthenware bowl, attributed to 15th century Nasrid Spain, acquired by the South Kensington Museum in 1864. De Morgan was greatly influenced by Islamic design and made over two thousand watercolour sketches, principally of Turkish and Persian motifs. William Morris, also an admirer of Islamic art, held similar views on the relationship between form and decoration. Two contemporary potters in Britain, Alan Casser-Smith CWA and Elizabeth Rousell CWA, also reflect classical Persian techniques of tin-glaze and lustre ware in their work, and Islamic decoration. Their work is shown in a video presentation with other contemporary artists. Courtesy: Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

the Rock), which was the title of one of her father's books, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who was a poet of protest, anger and righteous indignation against social injustices and iniquities. So Salima perhaps feels it obligatory to continue the crusade in her work.

Anwar Saeed, who teaches print making at the NCA, graduated from here in 1978 but his first solo exhibition was held in 1984. His also was an art of protest in the beginning until martial law was lifted on the last day of 1985. He called his first exhibition the Window Series since each painting had a window, stressing the contrast between the peace at home and the stormy, harsh and cruel world outside.

Zahoor ul Akhlaq, also of the NCA, was using the device differently: some other pock-marked blasted planet, or some strange fish-like being, issuing and sailing away out of a stone-walled house. At other times he turns objects of the work-a-day world into wondrous phenomena by which we are taken aback and forced to look again. We find it is actually not ordinary and commonplace, like a prison wall with a barred window and barbed-wire fencing, which is commonplace, but also with a triangular space of the plaster chipped off and other irregular shapes above, which make the scene unintelligible.

Abid Hussain Qureshi, who teaches in the Fine Art Department of Baluchistan University, Quetta, has studied art in Paris and embryology in Tokyo, and is another haunted artist who sees visions of the Red Sun of Kerbala which he paints again and again, sometimes with scores of hands upraised in prayer, signifying the whole humanity moved by the heart-rending tragedy. His profuse use of red underlines his horror.

Mention should also be made of Omar Farid of Karachi who expresses himself in minutely and densely wrought drawings depicting strange beings or common things in strange settings, or from unusual angles. He is another explorer of the dim and dark subconscious world but he expresses his fearful or awesome subjects with consummate artistry.

In the end, noteworthy is an artist who renders with paint and brush nightmarish scenes like a stream of blood flowing through a locality peopled by dim ghostlike figures. This is Rahat Saeed of Rawalpindi.

Conclusion

Enough has been said to show that artists in Pakistan are working at many levels. Some like Chughtai and Mansur Aye are poets of sweetness and light. Others like Rahat Saeed and Abid Qureshi explore the realms of "beauty that hath some terror in it", to use the words of Milton. Among our leading artists are super-realists of the *trompe l'oeil* type (fooling the eye) and realists (like portrait painter Eghal

Mehdi and landscape painter Khalid Iqbal), while there is realism charged with strong emotions, as in the refined figure paintings and drawings of Janul Naqsh and the rough strokes and savage figures of Bashir Mirza. In respect of abstraction, there are the semi-abstractionists who use some object or person, animal, fish or plant as a starting point and an excuse for their abstract compositions, while at the extreme end are the pure abstract rhythmic works of Gulgee and Qudsia Nisar and the pure abstract geometrical work of Imran Mir. There are those who paint the common scenes of daily life, often called genre painting, such as the work of



Qudsia Mirza, *Supping with Terror*

Athar Jamal who paints village folk of Sindh and Tharparkar, and the lithographic paintings of Mansur Aye, while there are others who delve deep into the hidden and mysterious depths of the subconscious mind and the dream world. If you consider scale, there are miniaturists like Prof Bashir Ahmed of NCA and mural painters like Sadequain who have covered acres of canvas, as on the roof of the Central Gallery of Lahore Museum and the roof of the main hall on the first floor of Frere Hall (correctly, Liaquat Hall). In respect of medium, most of our artists use oil paint but many are moving over to acrylic while water colour is practised mainly by the landscapists of Karachi and the genre painter Athar Jamal, and in Lahore by the street scene painter Ajaz Anwar and in Peshawar by the landscapists Tayyeba Ahmed and Anna Ismail.

So there is endless variety, and excellence is achieved in many directions and with different means and styles. The caravan of civilized life that began in the land that is Pakistan eight thousand years ago at Mehrgarh can be seen winding along and moving closer and closer to the ideal, but will always elude attainment, because art is an unending quest.

and also Hyderabad which is the cultural capital of Sindh.

The 80s as Decade of Landscapists

The above discussion has been brought up under the heading of the 80s because by this time the alumni or the young new teachers, as they all were, began to make their presence felt in national exhibitions. And their favourite form of artistic expression was and remains landscape. Therefore I call the 80s, the decade of landscapists. Karachi had stood apart because realistic art was in disfavour and abstract art more popular. The Catalogue of the



Rahat Saeed. *Blood Stream*

National Exhibition 1980 shows that the largest number of entries (30) were landscapes, mostly from Lahore and others from Peshawar, Quetta and Rawalpindi.

With the start of '80s a group of young artists started going out of the big metropolis of Karachi, away from its concrete jungle into the green suburbs of Malir and to the sea, and especially the fish harbour. Prominent among them was and is Abdul Hayee but the group includes Mansur Aye, Ghalib Baqar, Zahin Ahmed, M Yousuf, Manzoorul Hussain and Mukhtar Haider. They often go together on weekends to Malir and to the Fish Harbour to paint water colour landscapes.

Zahin has abandoned realism and paints the scene with such freedom that the subject, like an abandoned house in Thatta, or the fishing boats, are hardly distinguishable. But there is method in his madness and he gives you the double pleasure of glimpsing the objective reality and savouring the beauty of water colour strokes and washes.

Ghalib Baqar uses the landscape purely as a suggestion and tries to catch the awful mystery and unseen presences in glowering clouds and glistening water.

Lahore as Home of Landscapists

Two eminent teachers, Anna Molka and Khalid Iqbal, have nurtured generations of students to paint realistic landscapes. By the 80s their number was legion. Those who gained prominence in the 80s were Ghulam Mustafa, who adds bits of Lahore's many old monuments to his landscape, and Shahid Jalal who began by painting close-ups of garden scenes in great detail, then painted a dozen or more shrines that abound in the countryside of the Punjab, and now has broadened his scope to paint larger vistas.

Nazir Ahmed, who graduated from the NCA in 1978, was an adept pupil of Khalid Iqbal who taught there 1965-81. Nazir loves to paint long panels showing a river or stream with fields or village huts in the background, on the horizon. They have a uniform, even, green-grey tonality.

Zulqarnain Haider is the most distinguished among the pupils of Khalid Iqbal who taught at the Department 1955-65, while the former graduated in 1964. So he had the full benefit of guidance from Khalid Iqbal. In fact the work of the two is sometimes hard to differentiate, though generally Khalid Iqbal's work is more subdued and subtle while that of Zulqarnain is brighter and more cheerful. The latter is being mentioned with artists of the 80s because he came into prominence rather late.

Likewise Ijaz ul Hassan studied art in London in 1962 and later taught academic subjects at the NCA from 1966 to 1975 but became active and prominent as an artist in the 70s or early 80s. He loves to paint garden scenes, a single plant or tree, like his popular *Amaltas* or *Laburnum*, with a shower of golden flowers. This, he has painted four times, because it was greatly liked.

A much younger landscape artist who is the only water colour landscapist of Lahore is Pirzada Najamul Hasan. He is really a Karachiite because he graduated from the Karachi School of Art in 1978 and belongs to the group of Abdul Hayee, Ghalib Baqar and others mentioned above. He was quick in gaining the attention of art lovers by the dark rain clouds which almost became his signature. Beginning with small cameo-like pieces, he has broadened the view in his landscapes and sometimes also paints old historical monuments.

Other Lahore Artists of the 80s

Salima Hashmi, now Principal of NCA, too has to be mentioned in this decade because although she studied art in the early 60s at the NCA and at Bath (UK), she held her first solo exhibition in 1983, first at Rawalpindi and then in Karachi. Hers too is an art of protest. The title of one of her series of thirteen paintings was *Dast-e-leh-e-Sang* (The Hand Caught Under

more flourish and boldness in the strokes, as if under the influence of Gulgee's Action Painting. Then he tried his hand at ceramic sculpture and still later, large vases and platters and so forth. Now he is working on some large mural to be rendered in many ceramic tiles.

Maqsood Ali is one of the few artists whose work has developed logically from one step to the next. At first he was painting Sindhi women and Sindhi scenes. In this his greatest achievement was the creation of the 10 ft x 4 ft painting called *The Sun Rises Again on Sindh*. This was made to celebrate the restoration of Sindh as a separate province in 1970, after having remained a part of "One Unit" into which the four provinces had been integrated in 1955.

Later, gradually he began to paint the figures in Cubistic fashion, picking out the geometrical forms lurking in the human form and other objects. Still later, he abstracted or drew out only the grid pattern or the pattern made of squares which forms the two panels on the embroidered front of the Sindhi woman's long loose tunic. These squares he began to juggle in a hundred different ways and in a variety of colour schemes. The latest stage is that he is making cast brass sculptures in which these squares are used, with some live imagery around the image of a female face, or some floral motif.

Inuran Mir's work is the *ne plus ultra* of abstract art in Pakistan. His is a strictly purist art of lines and geometrical shapes to which he sometimes grudgingly adds colour. A square with chequers or squares: a circle within a square and within that a triangle, and such other devices. Sometimes he adds a Surrealist touch, as in one painting showing a carrot falling over a pyramidal shape below. His output is meagre.

Also emerging in the 70s was an artist of quite the opposite character: fully realist, richly colourful, widely popular and immensely productive. He is now the only artist wholly devoted to portraiture, since the other eminent portraitist, Saeed Akhtar of Lahore, is trying his hand at mysterious blue landscapes of some strange world, empty and forlorn, except for a horse or two. Eqbal Mehdi's portraits catch the true character of the subject with such fidelity that it seems to spring out of the canvas. His favourite subject is teenage girls and also their costumes over which he works painstakingly. He is one of the most over-worked artists because he is so much in demand.

The 80s

By 1980 the art movement in Pakistan had gained momentum and spread around the country. Fine Arts Departments had been set up in Peshawar, Hyderabad and Quetta, the three provincial capitals, in 1964, 1970 and 1984

respectively, while Lahore already had one since 1940. Art Councils too were active in all these places. Art had so far been created through the eyes of citizens of the two big cities, Karachi and Lahore. Now the provincial mind (in the geographical, not the derogatory sense) was finding expression in art.

Peshawar university had been lucky enough to secure the services of eminent artists: Zainul Abedin, Mohammed Rafiq and Mansur Rahi, though each stayed only for a few years. Still, they sowed the seeds and today one finds water colour painting, especially landscapes, popular among the young and upcoming artists.



Tayyeba Ahmed and Aman Ismail are the two leading watercolourists of Peshawar worth mentioning. Both are landscapists.

Hyderabad Art Department was headed until a few years ago by A R Nagori, who is the most vociferous anti-establishment artist. Mussarrat Mirza, who still teaches there, paints the dusty street scenes of Sukkur.

Baluchistan University Art Department produced the most powerful protest art when Jamal Shah headed the Department, but he has since left and settled in Islamabad where he is running an art school. Still, there is Akram Dost Baluch, who teaches there and voices the feelings of the oppressed. Kalem Khan is esteemed for his landscapes.

The point which is being made here is that local pride and a sense of distinct ethnical identity is found in all these provincial artists, and the natural expression of this is to paint their own land. Landscape painting is the most common form of art expression in all the four provincial capitals: Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta

Samina Mansur. *Rumours of Heaven* 1993.

mysteriousness or even eeriness to her creations.

Riffat Ali began by painting two or three areas of flat colour juxtaposed, like the American artist Rothko, she later Pakistanized it by adding here and there images and symbols drawn from the Moenjodaro seals or suggestive in some way of those pre-historic areas of Pakistan.

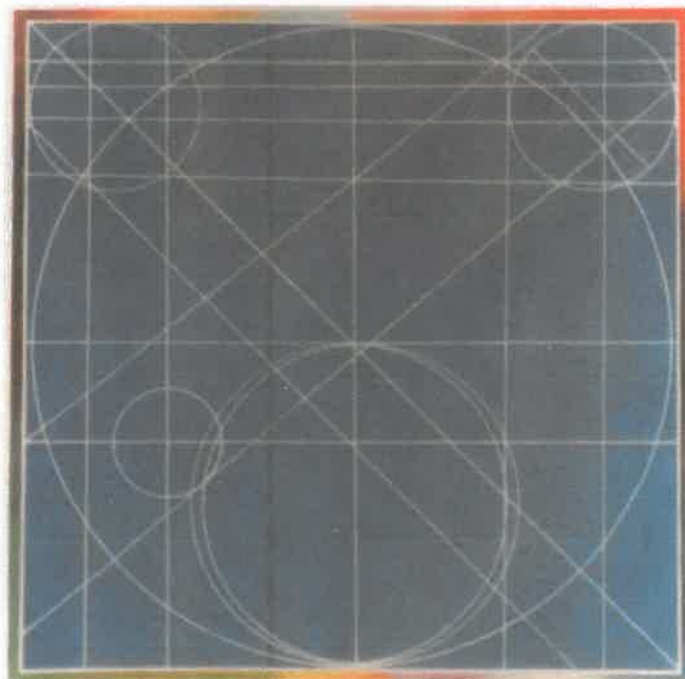
Another change came in her paintings after she visited Zimbabwe in 1991 and later Ghana. There she met an artist who was using local earth to paint by exploiting its varied colours. Riffat brought earth from there and then

espoused the cause of downtrodden women. Working on this theme, her rendering of the female figure has much improved. She also gradually used more and more of space division, dividing the picture into many rectangles, upright and horizontal, within which she placed a face or a figure, thus imposing an abstract design for focusing on her subject more powerfully.

Of the four notable men abstractionists, Mashkoor Raza, Tariq Javed, Maqsood Ali and Imran Mir, all from Karachi, the first two are pupils of Mansur Rahi. Therefore, at first their styles resembled much but as each progressed,



Above: Egbal Mahdi
Untitled. Above, right:
Imran Mir. *Composition*.



collected some more from the ancient sites of Moenjodaro. By smearing this on paper or canvas, and

adding the symbols of Moenjodaro and motifs drawn from indigenous crafts, she was able to reinforce the historicity and evocativeness of her paintings. It is yet another form taken by the desire to seek our roots in our own art.

Nahid Raza graduated in art in 1970 and had been painting aimlessly for ten years when she hit upon the idea of using the heavily and minutely carved graves of Chowkandi which are some twenty miles outside Karachi. At first she did this work rather literally but soon developed a style in which the Chowkandi tomb motifs were only suggestively used in a painting which was a medley of colour.

The technique she developed of somehow creating a thick and grainy surface of many layers of different colours, created a fascinating visual effect that had a tactical quality about it.

In the next major step she took, she

they struck out each his own path, Mashkoor painted what looked like jumble of pointed shards of ice, because one could see through one below the other. At the nexus of this tight arrangement, he indulged in some free brushwork, while the icy triangles were in blues and purples. The style clicked and he turned out dozens of such paintings for eager buyers. But after a few years he worked hard to change it. At first he introduced realistic nudes and then horses, and now he is painting horses only in an abstract style, gradually improving.

Tariq Javed's compositions did not have such clear elements for he used the brush more freely, thus creating a variety of visual images. Then he introduced a suggestion of landscape into the abstract work by indicating the horizon, and such geometrical shapes that depicted things, like the square and a kite, the circle and the moon or sun, and the triangular tops of village huts. This made his work more popular. But after a while he gave it up and started the same old compositions but with

buildings of Lahore with the new calligraphic painting of which he was the originator.

Then among the noteworthy artists of the 70s in Lahore was a Parsi Karachi lad, Jimmy Engineer, who, at the young age of twenty, made a breakthrough by painting a series of huge canvases on the subject of the migration of a million people from India to Pakistan (when a similar number of Hindus and Sikhs moved from Pakistan to India). He did this monumental work from 1974 to 1984, encouraged by Dr Javed Iqbal.

Sadequain set the ball rolling when he held the first ever solo exhibition of calligraphy in Pakistan during December 1968 at Karachi (in Ramazan or the Month of Fasting). He wrote Qur'anic verses in his individual style, treating the alphabet as just another subject for an artist like trees or clouds or rocks, which would be painted by every artist in their own way.

From modification of style, he went on to add scenic or ornamental background, and with these two freedoms, painterly calligraphy was born in Pakistan.

While Sadequain was covering the walls of the Islamic Gallery in the Lahore Museum with his innovative Qur'anic calligraphy, even the pre-eminent modern painter of Pakistan, Shakir Ali could not remain unaffected. He too painted the famous *Surat-ul-Alaq* in the Qur'an Room of the Punjab Public Library, which is just next door to the Museum. Later, this master painter, Shakir Ali, wrote or rather painted the revered *Ayat-ul-Kursi* in the form of a large triptych for the nuclear research institute PINSTECH in Islamabad. He died in 1975.

In that year two young artists of Lahore, who were to become leaders in this field, held their solo exhibitions.

Painterly calligraphy became the rage in the 70s much to the chagrin of classical calligraphists who considered it a heresy and a profanity. The most unexpected artists joined ranks, like Gulgee, Zuby and, now in 1997, the latest entrant, Jamil Naqsh.

At the end of the 70s, the movement had gained such momentum and magnitude that the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, which holds national exhibitions every two, three or four years, held an exhibition of calligraphy side by side with painting, and announced separate prizes for this work.

Painting of the 70s in Lahore

Coming back to painting, one finds that two artists made a distinctive contribution: Ajaz Anwar and Askari Mian Irani, both from the faculty of the NCA.

Niaz who had a doctorate in architectural conservation from Ankara, looked with a quizzical eye at the old houses inside the walled city of Lahore. He was struck by the bay windows and the moulded supports, tapering downwards, on which they rested. The mouldings in various parts of the facade and the wood carving, all this enamoured him. He painted street scenes in which the focus was on these features and decorations. It is a laborious and meticulous work done in watercolour. The human element gets little attention as the eye travels from the road upward to the old-fashioned balustrades on the roof.

Askari Mian Irani turned his eye to the still older Mughal monuments and their octagonal floor tiles, their arched gateways and the vertical row of recessed arches on either side of the gateway. He painted these motifs colourfully, textured and partly faded and aged, together with a figure in miniature, traditional style. With the addition of peacocks and caparisoned horses and the moonlit sky, he picturized nostalgia. It was a new way of reviving miniature painting and of using the attractive features of old architecture.

Mention may also be made of Ghulam Rasul here, though he has lived in Islamabad for long. He was also a pupil of Khalid Iqbal at the Fine Arts Department of Punjab University, but after studying art in the USA, 1969-72, he returned a very much changed artist. Instead of being overwhelmed by Western Art, he reacted by trying to discover his own art and especially the use of flat colour and indigenous hues like the earth colours, yellow and red, the vegetable colours like indigo, and the mineral colours like ground lapis lazuli.

His new work was rather rudimentary in the beginning and he was using the human element much in his scenes, but later he developed a very distinct style in which trees merge and mingle to form one sweep of deep uniform green. At other times he paints just the trunks in a grove, and altogether, uses simplification of features and intensification of colour in his landscapes.

Since Karachi is the avant-garde of Pakistan, abstract art grew and flourished there. Noteworthy entrants of the 70s were four men: Imran Mir, Mashkoor Raza, Tariq Javed and Maqsood Ali, three women, Qudsiya Nisar, Mehr Afroz and Riffat Alvi, while a fourth woman artist may be added although she paints figures but they are set in a deliberate design: Nahid.

Qudsiya Nisar is the only purely abstract water colourist. She uses her brush with freedom but not with frenzy and creates all kinds of signs and symbols combined with broad washes, all to convey some theme which cannot be put in any words other than these alphabets.

Mehr Afroz was the leading print maker when she first held a solo show in 1974. She won the first prize for Graphics in the two successive national exhibitions, 1976 and 1980. Her first solo exhibition of paintings was in 1987. It was figurative and every painting showed a face supposed to be the mask-like expressions that people wear in society. It was not a patch on her prints, which were purely abstract. Later, she introduced into her paintings more and more of the marked characteristics of her prints, like heavy texture, dark colours in layers, border within border, series of dots or dashes, the look of weathered walls or rocks or manuscripts and an engaging awkwardness in all lines and shapes drawn.

This, combined with a better ability to suggest faces or even full figures, has made her painting more meaningful and impressive. While the prints had only texture and a variety of devices to make designs, the addition of dimly and darkly glowering faces and figures has helped her to impart a certain

return from the Slade in 1962, he was fond of adding to the figure a ball or a cushion painted in the optically perplexing Op Art. In one case the whole background was painted in the Op Art style but later he gave it up.

However, he continues to show the face averted or featureless in order not to distract the attention from the female body which is his main subject. His nudes are not curvaceous but attenuated. His style too is reserved and often grey or monochrome is used. The limbs of the sitting or lying figure are arranged with deliberation and the whole figure placed just so in the picture area in relation to a few other shapes or objects.

Saeed Akhtar, a fellow teacher of Colin David at the National College of Art, Lahore, is, on the contrary almost flamboyant as a figure painter, the figures being always portraits and not faceless as in Colin David. It all depends on what he feels about the model he is painting. In some cases, the subject is painted respectfully and in others passionately, with highlights adding charm and flowing costumes adding colour. Always there is free space in the canvas "for the picture to breathe", as the Chinese say, who always leave large blank areas. At one stage, he started painting larger than life portraits, and these could be only of the face or bust. He indulged in much exaggeration and magnification when he painted the portrait of the Quaid 61 feet high (150 pieces of 4ft x 4ft) for display at an open air celebration of Pakistan Day in 1988.

For the last couple of years, Saeed Akhtar has given up portrait painting and started painting in various shades of blue, vast panoramas that have barely distinguishable hills, rivers or plains receding to the horizon, wrapped in mysterious solitude. Only one or more wild horses with arched necks and prancing postures relieve the eerie emptiness of the scene. These long panels are, at one level, a virtuoso play of blue colour, and at another, evocative of some world other than our own.

Khalid Iqbal is a retiring and reserved person who was slow in coming out into the open art world after he returned from the Slade School of Art in 1955. He began painting portraits but in a few years he has found his vocation as a landscape painter. Having taught for ten years in the Punjab Fine Arts Department and another fifteen years at the National College of Art, he has influenced numerous artists and is treated as a guru by them: especially by the many landscape painters of Lahore who work under his inspiration.

His landscapes have very few features, often only one, two or three trees that used to be placed on the horizon before but have begun to be brought forward more prominently and in greater detail and deeper colours than the former subdued greyish tonality. Whereas in his earlier work olive green was the dominant colour, in recent years he has been painting flowering trees like the kopak which has brilliant red flowers. Colour is applied in short diagonal strokes that are mingled as they vary from one tone to another, without making the strobework prominent. It

is subtle and conscientious work that tries to catch the very character of the locality and time of the day. However, play of light is never emphatic and the general effect is one of subdued light though the long summers of Lahore are known for their torrid sun, and the Lahore surroundings are what Khalid Iqbal paints. In his effort to catch the spirit of nature he avoids distraction of attention to human and animals in the picture. He has never held an exhibition of his work but every art collector who loves landscapes is bound to have one Khalid Iqbal.

Zahoor ul Akhlaq and Ahmed Khan are two other major artists to appear in the 60s. Both are graduates of the NCA, Lahore, and have taught there for long but not now. Zahoor is fond of making huge sculptures in wood and metal and painting very large canvases. His paintings are enigmatic and thought-provoking. In the last exhibition of his work in Karachi, he had put up ten small and ten large paintings that were three to six feet wide and five to eight feet high. They all had a window or two within a door, within the rectangle of the canvas. The windows had broad borders whose corners were marked diagonally in such a way that the window area seemed to sink at one moment and to rise at another. In some cases one window was shown above the other, and a mountain peak visible in one was reflected in another. The format was based on miniature paintings that had a broad border within another thin and yet another broad border. But here the optical illusion and the mysterious view of the mountain peak and its reflection are all new elements that tease the mind and fire the imagination.

He has been travelling a lot in recent years and has lived in Canada for many years. So there is not much work by him available to be seen. He is said to be working now on some huge monumental sculpture on an official commission.

Ahmed Khan was teaching Design at the NCA. His output in painting was meagre. Then suddenly he came up with strange new work creating abstract images and colour effects on metal foil with the help of acids. Graffiti was part of the composition but no living images. Then he began to use this technique for calligraphy and created wondrous effects of silver and gold in Qur'anic calligraphy. His calligraphy is not in the set classical styles but with much modification and transformation of form and colour and addition of some age-old Islamic decorative designs. Recently he has completed a large mural decoration in this metallic medium inside the President's house. The general public knows him only from a painting or so that he exhibits now and then in a group or a national show.

The 70s in Karachi

By the 70s, Karachi had caught up and overtaken Lahore as a centre of art. Not only were the art galleries proliferating and drawing Lahore artists to come and exhibit for better sales, but a Karachi artist, Sadequain, lived in Lahore from 1973 to 1984, and dominated the art scene. This he did, not with words alone, for he was a poet and an absorbing conversationalist too, but by flooding the public

Lonely Girl Series gorgeous female figures in bare outline and flat bright colours, almost nude because the tight costumes revealed rather than concealed the female anatomy. Their ample scarves trailed behind in flat colourful patterns and their hair too streamed behind them to emphasize the gustiness of the charmers. There was none of the former wildness in the technical execution; rather, it was meticulously rendered in bold designs and bright intense colour.

His art completely changed after the Indian artist F N Souza came to Karachi, stayed with Bashir Mirza and held an exhibition. Ever since, Bashir too has adopted an extra bold, almost crude rendering of faces and figures, but mostly faces or torsos. Not lines but stripes of colour are used to build up the image, with wild looks and uncouth visages, flowers stuck in ears and nose.

Mansur Aye, who is almost untrained while Bashir Mirza, has a diploma in Commercial Art from the Mayo School, is just the opposite of Bashir in temperament and work. Mansur is a calm, quiet and gentle person and his work from the beginning till now is elegant, simple and charming. He began painting round-faced teenage girls with the moon in the background. The face and figure were rendered with a few deft strokes of the brush, in thick black lines.

Today, almost 35 years since he began painting, his work has the same basic quality, though of course more sophistication, more confidence and command in the brush strokes. The naive looking teenage girls are still there with the innocent look, the twiggy figure and the pleasant colours in the background.

One piece of work that he has done not only brings out the character of his work but is also unique in Pakistan. I refer to his book *The Trip to Upper and Lower Sindh* which contains extremely rough, quick sketches of the people of Sindh and their life, done in the form of lithographs and thus directly printed, fresh as they came from the artist's brush. No one has painted the daily life of the common people and expressed himself so deftly and spontaneously.

Jamil Naqsh

From the simple unsophisticated and carefree work of Mansur Aye we turn to the conscientious, scrupulous and studied drawings and paintings of Jamil Naqsh. He became famous in the early 1960s for painting the nude and the pigeon, or only the face of a woman and a pigeon, the latter serving as a metaphor for sensuous, shapely femininity and love. He lives a cloistered and dedicated life and his output is enormous, though never publicly exhibited because of the strict social mores, but a score of his admirers to whom he "agrees" to sell, have their houses full of his and often of

his work alone.

With such laborious and delicate work comes mastery of the feminine figure, which he can draw and paint in all kinds of imaginable postures. But it has always a corporeal fullness while the cold or blank stare of the woman dispels all extraneous thoughts.

There was time when his work used to be deeply colourful but now he paints mostly in monochrome, preferably sepia. Though he has not abandoned the Nude and Pigeon theme, he has produced dozens of paintings which can be called Woman and Horse, in which the female is standing or riding. But perhaps the fullness



Anwar Saeed, *No Man's Land*.

of femininity is expressed in numerous Mother and Child paintings that he has created in recent years. Both the plump child and the curvaceous nude woman are bursting with life.

While painting "profane" nudes, he has also responded to the nationwide demand and popularity of Qur'anic calligraphy. He has painted half a dozen large panels in Maghrebi Thulth (Suls) or Naskh, and more than a hundred miniature paintings in which the Arabic script has been used more as a motif or pattern rather than as a text for reading. Most have been given the look of old manuscript pages.

It may be mentioned that a Jamil Naqsh Foundation has been set up by devoted friends; and a place has been acquired where a thousand of his paintings and drawings will be on permanent display, donated by the artist.

Lahore in the 60s

It would be appropriate to turn to the other major painter of female nudes, Colin David. Unlike Jamil Naqsh, Colin mostly paints the full figure and this is placed at a greater distance than in the case of Jamil Naqsh. The reason is that Colin makes the nude as a part of a composition in which there are other shapes and objects. In his early work, soon after his

moved him. However he has left two memorials of his art in the form of the large mural he painted in the Central Public Library of Dhaka, and the Shaheed Minar (The Tower of the Martyrs). He died in Canada in 1988.

Kibria was one of the few artists who went east (to Japan) and not west for higher education in art. He returned after having learnt to make such uncompromisingly abstract and subtle paintings in grey that the uninitiated would consider them to be zigzag rubbings of the pencil made on paper to sharpen the point. One may not jump with joy on seeing his work but the technical skill and sensitivity is well

rather three. First that he has influenced and nurtured the talents of more artists than anyone else, barring Anna Molka Ahmed in Lahore for girls only. Second, he is among the very few artists who developed steadily and logically from stage to stage on the strength of their own understanding, without copying or picking up bits and scraps from here and there. Thirdly, he is among the few, the honourable exceptions among the artists who have deigned to take notice of great national happenings and especially national tragedies. Anna Molka made one painting about the floods in the Ravi and another about the refugees. Sadequain



Above: Tanq Javed.
Untitled Above, right:
Mashkoor Raza Untitled



acknowledged. He used to exhibit regularly in Japan and was highly regarded.

The subject is long because Bengal is the land of art and artists but it is important to mention that some of these artists lived for many years in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad and enriched the art life of Pakistan: Jahangir in Islamabad; Sultan and Murtaza Bashir in Lahore, and Mubinnul Azim in Karachi. Mansur Rahi settled and married in Karachi, so he is not counted here among the Bangladesh artists.

The 1960s in Karachi

One may in fact begin an account of art in the 60s with Mansur Rahi because he came over to Karachi in 1962 soon after graduating from the Dhaka Art School. He has made a double contribution to Pakistan art: first as Principal of the Karachi School of Art from 1965 to 1985 and secondly as a prolific and technically perfect artist. Without going into much detail, only two statements will be made about him or

made paintings against tyranny and despotism, against degeneration and decadence in society but it was Mansur Rahi who was hurt to the quick by floods in Bengal, the military terrorism in East Pakistan, by famine and starvation in the Sahel region of Africa (taking a cue from his master Zainul Abedin but working so differently, half a century after the latter's work).

Mansur Aye and Bashir Mirza

Two eminent artists in the 60s in Karachi were Mansur Aye and Bashir Mirza, one suave and sweet and the other rugged and rebellious. Bashir Mirza's first exhibition in 1965 was in the form of drawings made with coloured markers, showing men yelling in anger, grimacing and gesticulating, a picture of suffering and repression. After wanderings in Germany in 1969-71, he returned to produce half a dozen paintings in a style he had not painted in before or after. These were The

Affairs, and a patron of art, sent out invitation cards for "The Exhibition of an Unknown Artist" to be held at his residence. The select crowd that came was taken aback to see the large collection of paintings by Sadequain, who was introduced to the gathering, a scraggy and shaggy figure in loose sherwani and pyjamas.

Sadequain came up to Suhrawardy's trust, and for the next 32 years a veritable Niagara of paintings came out from his brush or marker, till he was snatched away much too soon by the cold hands of death in 1987.

I can do no better than quote a fellow painter who wrote on the pages of this magazine (Autumn-Winter 1986): "Sadequain has popularized painting among the citizens of Pakistan more than any other painter after A R Chughtai and Allah Bux. He has covered more canvas with paint than all of us painters put together. His murals, some of them of gargantuan size, can be seen scattered all over the country" – and if I may add, abroad, as in Delhi, Aligarh, Hyderabad Deccan and Banaras (India) and Al Ain (UAE).

His oeuvre is too enormous to be comprehended in this article but it would be enough to mention the dozen or more huge murals that he made both figurative, calligraphic and abstract. The first noteworthy mural he made was on the dramatic subject of smuggling for the Central Excise and Land Customs Club near Karachi in 1959. But perhaps his greatest mural is the one painted on the ceiling of the Central Gallery of the Lahore Museum in 1973. It depicts the creation of the starry heaven in the form of whirling abstract designs, in the centre of which, in a circle, is composed the figure of a man and a woman while on the margin all around are hands sticking in, the hands of the Creator (?).

Another of his claims to fame is popularization of painterly calligraphy to which he devoted himself all through the 70s. Scores of young and old adventurous artists and calligraphers are leaving the seven fixed styles of classical calligraphy to create their own in a painterly manner.

East Pakistan Artists

East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, was a part of the country from 1947 to 1971. In fact, as already mentioned, the all-pervasive Bengal School of Art was born early in this century and spread as far as Lahore. Quite apart from this, they had a world-famous artist in the person of Zainul Abedin, who shot to fame with the macabre sketches he made of the 1943 Bengal Famine, with brush and ink.

After Independence in 1947, he devoted all his energies to setting up the Government Art School in Dacca (Dhaka). However, whatever few paintings he has left, like *Three Sailboats*, and *The Snake Charmer*, are most outstanding.

So he may be said to have created not so much art as artists. All the artists who became famous in the 1950s and 60s were his pupils while the younger ones (Hameedur Rahman, Bashir Mirza, Rashid Chowdhry) were students of his pupils.

The most eminent after Zainul Abedin was Safiuddin who was already famous for his charming woodcuts of rustic scenes when he went to London in 1958 for higher training in graphic arts. He was an extremely dedicated artist and a serious person, so he made the best use of his training in print making. In this technique, he created some astonishing visions



of the Bengal floods of 1958 in an abstract form, using only a few suggestive realistic features to convey the theme.

The pupils of these senior artists and teachers, like Aminul Islam and Hameedur Rahman, began with figurative painting (but Cubistic in the case of the first and Expressionistically wild in the case of the second) while, both went purely abstract with the passage of time. Aminul Islam is making huge murals in mosaic, an art that he learnt in Italy. Hameedur Rahman was a jolly and non-serious person and worked only when the spirit

Top: Saeed Akhtar.
Mysterious Landscape
Above: Safiuddin *Floods*
Etching

The Lahore Art Circle

Hers however was a lone voice, a voice in the desert, as she never influenced any other artist nor was influenced by any. On the other hand, around 1952-53, there arose in Lahore a group of gussy young men, all around thirty, filled with the love of life and of art. There were Ahmed Parvez and S Safdar, with no art education. Ali Imam had only some desultory art education, and so too Moyene Najmi. Shemza was a graduate of Mayo School. Qutub Shaikh was trained and to his credit goes the starting of evening classes in painting at the Art Council of Lahore.

The prominent women artists of Lahore, the earliest products of the Fine Art Department founded in 1940, were Zakia Malik, Anwar Afzal, N H Qazi and Tasneem Mazhar. Their work is quite plain and straightforwardly descriptive. They were mostly preoccupied with teaching, and their output was small. They held no solo-exhibitions in public places and mostly participated in the annual exhibitions of the Department.

It was with the rise of the "Lahore Art Circle" that there was seen movement and excitement in the art world. Public exhibitions were held. The people and the press responded with éclat.

The early work was quite crude but it was novel and daring. One remembers the full figure women painted by A J Shemza (*Jatti* or *Jat Woman*) and Ahmed Parvez's *Eve* with distorted visages and daring colours.

Ali Imam and Moyene Najmi were making quite amateurish street scenes in poster colour. The latter was much enamoured of architectural subjects. Safdar had picked up art the hard way in Bombay, painting sets for films and had also learnt to admire the revival of the art of Ajanta and Ellora encouraged by the JJ School of Art of Bombay. So he was adept at painting the dark beauties of Gujrat with shapely torsos and slender waists.

About Qutub Shaikh's work of those days little is known but from his later purely abstract tonal colourful work, one can guess his beginnings. He was the first to leave the country and settle in Germany, while in 1955 Ali Imam and in 1956 Ahmed Parvez and Shemza left for London, the latter permanently while Parvez returned in 1964, and Ali Imam returned in 1967.

Each of these later blossomed out into major artists. Parvez developed an intensely colourful style marked by a basic composition drawn in thick black lines. Shemza was even more unreservedly abstract, making filigree work of thin lines that repeated and juggled with the form of the letter B that was full of all kinds of suggestions.

Safdar was too far gone in his love of dainty village damsels to make any daring departures

but he did superimpose a Cubist type of space division on his subjects, thus, in his view, marrying the modern and traditional. Later, he chose subjects that were more amenable to such space divisions, like patterns of farms and fields seen from the air, or apartment blocks with lighted windows, and such.

Ali Imam returned full of admiration for the equestrian statues of Marino Marini. He painted many canvases showing a spindly figure sitting at a rakish angle on an equally bony horse, both elongated. Later he picked up a more indigenous subject, heavy village women swathed in long loose shirt and baggy trousers



Ali Imam. *Untitled*.

(shalwar-qameez). He was also very fond of introducing a sitar (stringed instrument) with a female figure playing it. He affected a rather subtle colour scheme in which light and dark greys were used with some colour barely discerned from the undercoating of many layers.

Karachi in the 50s

Karachi, the bustling port city, was made the capital of the new dominion and so was flooded by whole paraphernalia of the central government. It also drew a deluge of refugees from the regions around Bombay and Delhi, from the latter officials, craftsmen, artists, poets and from the former businessmen, bankers, film makers, commercial artists and so on.

Among the artist immigrants, the most eminent was Fyzee Rahamin (husband of the famous socialite of the 30's) who became famous for painting a thematic mural on the dome of New Delhi Secretariat North Block, in 1926-27. He built a small museum on land donated by the Karachi Corporation and filled it with all his own work that he had brought and also with invaluable art goods that he and his wife had collected. Husband and wife lived

in a small corner of the museum and a shameful part of our history records how they were peremptorily thrown out into the streets. These aristocrats and celebrities died in penury in a seedy low class hotel.

Also came S H Askari who was in great demand for making portraits of the Quaid-e-Azam and other national heroes to hang in government offices and public places.

From Amritsar came A S Nagi, mercifully still with us, now around ninety years in age. His colourful studio in the heart of Karachi attracted poets, painters, intellectuals and official pseudo-intellectuals. With him came

popularity, even though some of the others were definitely superior in many ways. These two were Sadequain and Gulgee, both totally untrained in art. Gulgee shot into fame in 1952 or '53 when a pastel portrait of the Aga Khan by him was auctioned by Begum Aga Khan for the highest price at an Artists' Ball. Gulgee used such fresh colours, and made such subtle tonal variations to depict the varying facets of the face, with a light and easy touch that he soon became the portrait painter to royalty and Presidents. The first break came when he was asked by the Pakistan Government to paint a portrait of the visiting Afghan King.



Above: Sadequain.
Calligraphy. Above, right:
Sadequain. *Untitled*.

Mubarak, perhaps the only landscape painter of Karachi in those days. He never failed to enliven the company with his jokes and amusing anecdotes.

In fairness, one cannot overlook M Turab, a photographer and artist from the Deccan, who was the only artist to paint the tragic scenes of the world's greatest blood-splattered migration of 1947, when about a million Hindus and Sikhs left Pakistan and about the same number managed somehow to take refuge in Pakistan. It was much later in 1974 and 1982 that the young Jimmy Engineer painted half a dozen mural-size paintings on this subject but Turab has an edge over him because of much longer experience and technical skill. Still, youthful enthusiasm imparts its own charm to a work of art.

Two Stars are Born

In the early 50s, there emerged like meteors two young artists, who in very different ways, were to outshine all other artists in fame and

The latter liked his portrait so much that he invited Gulgee to Kabul to paint all the royal family. This he did by combining charm with fidelity and won admiration of all when these portraits were displayed in an exhibition at Kabul.

Gulgee's is one long success story but he gave up portrait painting after doing one of President Ayub Khan in 1968 or thereabouts. Then he took to making portraits in stone mosaic, by inlay of lapis lazuli of varying blue shades on marble. From 1970 he began the abstract Action Painting, American style. Then in the mid-70s, he manipulated the Action Painting style to paint Qur'anic verses – and this is what he is doing now famously, in the form of large murals that hang in many public buildings.

Sadequain

The debut of Sadequain was even more dramatic than of Gulgee. In 1955, Shaheed Suhrawardy, the then Minister for Foreign

A R Nagori is even louder and angrier. His paintings alert us to immediate issues in stark, unambiguous terms. Nahid Ali and Qudsia Nisar have in the past enjoyed considerable success for their abstractions. However, today while Nahid's compositions articulate social issues like the trials and tribulations of Pakistani women, Qudsia's thoughtful abstractions and colour washes condemn and highlight Karachi's random violence. In the last few years Mehr Afroze, once a professed aesthete who carefully nurtured surface effects, has also been roused by harsh, everyday events.

Many younger artists pursue their destinies, guided by their instincts and circumstances. Akram Dost paints the distress and dismay of men and women. Qudus Mirza simulates the doodlings of a child to contrive a world of contrasting beauty and ugliness. Imran Mir resists extravagance for post-painterly abstractions. Wahab Jafar, deeply influenced by Ahmed Pervez, has experimented with the palette, producing a body of rich and textured abstract paintings. Tasadaq Sohail creates a world of myth and fantasy illuminated with human and animal forms scratched upon layers of textured paint. Unver Shafi conceives his abstractions in bold colours and forms with a sense of aesthetic and intellectual purpose.

Pakistani painting is unique in one sense: while many artists in the Fifties and the Sixties were trying to come to terms with abstract painting, influenced first by Paris and then later by New York, a number of artists resisted this trend and insisted on working in the figurative tradition. Anna Molka Ahmed, who had established the Department of Fine Arts of the Punjab University in the late Twenties, has proved herself a strong force in propelling painters in this direction.

The artist who has covered most ground in the pursuit of objective reality has been Khalid Iqbal. His style and work has influenced an entire generation of artists. His landscapes

embrace the rural belt on the fringe of Lahore where he observes subtleties of tone and light and textures with a clear-eyed detachment. His work is relaxed and reposeful. Zulqarnain Haider works with similar ideals focusing on the familiar and carefully chosen scenes. In Ghulam Rasul's landscapes iridescent greens are drowned in deep shadows and contours traced with lemon to establish contrasts. The territory which Shahid Jalal prefers to claim is often arid, where barren earth spews out salts, sustaining tough plants and marshes which contrast with Kaleem Khan's pale mountains and verdant valleys around Quetta. Ghulam Mustafa also paints mountains and flatlands, but finds greater relish in wandering through the dark alleys of old Lahore. Colin David who originally enjoyed painting sharp-edged reality, now includes stylised passages in canvases mostly comprising nudes. Iqbal Hussain paints the sadness and rejection of prostitutes in Lahore's red light district. In portraiture, Saeed Akhtar excels in idealising his model with the skill of his draughtsmanship, while Musarrat Hasan proceeds to interpret their personality with great sensitivity and insight.

In fifty years, painting in Pakistan has come of age. It has been investigative and experimental. It has been eclectic and plural. In Pakistani painting, everything goes. A conventional portrait can be seen next to an abstraction, a post-modernist endeavour flanking a landscape, an extravagant non-figuration rubbing shoulders with a quiet miniature. It borrows from its tradition and from near and far without prejudice. It has always spurned ethnic bias for human concerns and obscurity for truth. In painting, our half century of the territory's national existence has added a new chapter to a rich and diverse past.

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the first of his generation who enriched calligraphic forms with vivid colours and textures, transforming them from simple words to visually pleasing paintings. Later Shakir Ali produced some vibrant murals based on calligraphy which greatly extended the scope and possibilities inherent in this art form. A number of other artists have also made valuable additions. Gulgee, an artist of unusual innovative skill, demonstrates amazing dexterity in manipulating calligraphic forms to create striking abstract images adorned with glass-beads and gold-leaf.

The very first exhibition of abstract works was held by Zubeida Agha in 1949, after her return from Paris. Her early canvases were muddy in colour, eschewing sensuousness for cerebral content. Since then, she has evolved into a bold colourist who engages the viewer by her seemingly artless manner. In her paintings, natural elements coalesce with her feelings to create dream-like visions.

The impact of Western painting in the Fifties encouraged young artists to turn away from Chughtai, finding his paintings too aesthetically refined and placid. They wished to experience their own ethos rather than look back to a classical past. The influence of Impressionism and Post Impressionism was soon followed by that of Cubism and Expressionism. Moyene Najmi, A.J. Shemza, S. Safdar, Ali Imam and Ahmed Pervez were the principal abstract artists of the period. Moyene Najmi's paintings are adorned with studied textural affects and architectural details. Shemza's works are based on linear and calligraphic patterns enriched with elements from life. Ahmed Pervez follows his intuitions and instinct without pausing even to reconsider a stroke, and his canvases are a riot of colour and a maze of writhing forms. Ali Imam's textured ivory surfaces reveal human forms who are obvious and yet intriguing. Safdar's paintings follow a rather elementary Cubism to assemble and dismantle his objects.

Shakir Ali's arrival from Europe – where he had studied at the Slade School before working with Andre L'Hote in Paris – strengthened these

and other younger artists' resolve to follow the procedures of abstract art more vigorously. His influence in developing the ideals of modernism has been vital. He lent solid structure and meaning to notions of abstraction circulating in Pakistan's artistic circles, and his canvases portray man's irrepressible spirit to be fully human and free. In his works man stands alone, declaring his intentions through images and symbols. Among later artists Jamil Naqsh demonstrates inventive skill in exploring an individual subject to its endless limits. His long love affair with pigeons and with the nude female form has produced an arresting and absorbing series of paintings.

In the late Sixties and Seventies, political and social changes in Pakistan and abroad motivated many painters to veer away from the pursuit of formalism to the events and ideas of the time. For Sadequain, the *raison d'être* of painting always lay not in pursuing aesthetic niceties, but in asserting his belief in man's inherent strength to conquer evil and harness nature. He visualised all his important undertakings on an epic scale and his paintings and murals opened new avenues for painting in Pakistan. Mansoor Rahi, following in Sadequain's footsteps, tries to express his personal fears and social concerns.

During this period Zahoor-ul-Akhlaq was introducing living images into his non-figurative works. The atomic mushroom cloud, and effects of nuclear fall-out subtly entered into his work along with the traditional arabesque. The ethos of the Seventies also strengthened Bashir Mirza's determination. From his earliest days he had attempted to express his vision in bold and arresting forms. His recent works reflect his concern with contemporary issues such as the environment, nuclear proliferation and women's rights. Salima Hashmi creates muted collages in which she censures chauvinist attitudes towards women. Iqbal Jaffry who in the Sixties relied upon doodlings, scratchings and obscure symbols to create provocative aesthetic effects, has come later to lash out at individual hypocrisy and the Establishment. As a painter,

Painting and sculpture

IJAZ UL HASAN

Pakistan inherited a rich and ancient tradition of art. The human and animal figurines modelled and carved five thousand years ago reveal a lively appreciation of natural forms. Sculpture reached its zenith during the Gandhara period. Along with the idealised image of Buddha the demeanour of priests and devotees is objectively and sharply perceived. Today sculpture is largely confined to the art schools and there is little evidence of it in public life. In recent years, however, collectors have begun to show a livelier interest in the field. Small pieces of terracotta, fibreglass, bronze, ceramic reliefs, wood carvings and metallic fabrication can be seen adorning the tables and walls of many private homes. After the creation of Pakistan, sculptors focused on producing plaster busts of notables. Later some artists, influenced by abstract art, tried to form their work with cubistic simplicity. In the field of sculpture, Shahid Sajjad has laboured most consistently and prolifically. In his earlier work he was carving highly stylised but simple images in wood. He now works largely in bronze and has produced objects with delicate surface effects enveloped in a strange aura of extra-terrestrial reality. Kohari, a Pakistani artist now living in France, calls his ceramic reliefs "firepaintings". These are composite creations in melted glass, wire netting and rich glazes, throbbing with colour and texture. There are now quite a few avant-garde artists like Jamal Shah working in sculpture using all kinds of material ranging from glass to papier mache and grappling with contemporary issues. Durriya Kazi and her husband David Aylesworth have been working in abstract metal forms.

Pakistan has an uninterrupted history of painting since Vedic times. Most ancient painting has been lost but there are references in ancient texts which speak highly of the painter's skill in capturing life and nature. The school of fresco painting of the Buddhist period in subsequent centuries followed similar ideals.

The Sultanate period (13th to 15th centuries AD) prepared the ground for the great school of Mughal miniature paintings which

brought about a synthesis of Persian, Central Asian and indigenous traditions. Mughal painting is characteristically inquisitive about nature and life and depicts individuals with marvellous insight.

The disintegration of the Mughal empire which began in the 18th century forced many painters to find patrons in the Punjab Hill States. Simultaneously painting continued to be patronised by the Sikh rulers of Punjab who were particularly fond of sitting for portraits. Punjab was annexed by the British in 1857 and painters tried to introduce a new direction in the visual arts. European influences had actually been introduced as early as the 16th century through engravings presented to the Emperor. These helped to create a greater sense of depth and volume. The British introduced examples of Victorian art to local artists, and these inspired many of them to paint romantic views, portraits of beggars and picture postcards of scenes and places considered typically local. Ustad Allah Baksh was the leading figure of the period, and he tried to integrate the ideals of Victorianism with his own knowledge of common life and popular lore.

Abdur Rehman Chughtai without doubt was the most celebrated artist of the early 20th century. Rather than concerning himself with English romanticism, Chughtai aspired to revive his own country's past. He succeeded in evolving a unique style comprised of delicate flowing lines and pastel hues achieved through successive water colour washes. His paintings either illustrate couplets from classical poets or celebrate national heroes and romantic legends.

Other artists like Haji Muhammad Sharif were content to work in the traditional style without introducing any essential change. They thus became instrumental in keeping the techniques of Mughal and Pahari painting alive for later artists.

Many modern painters have discovered that traditional heritage can enrich their endeavours. Calligraphy, nuances of arabesque and images of imperial grandeur have been a ready source of inspiration. Haneef Ramay was

painter. The paintings of his early phase were strongly figurative, complex works, grand in scale and ambitious in design. The themes were social, portrayed with conviction and dynamism. His family legacy of calligraphy came through a few years later, as the work became more abstract and linear. The socio-political realities in Pakistan were reflected in his 'cactus' series, where he reduced human form to its skeletal structure and related it to similar configurations in nature. Close contact and friendships with poets, writers and intellectuals influenced and informed Sadequain's paintings of the late sixties and seventies. Works of this period range from the celebration of human labour and endeavour at Mangla, to the sophisticated and more formal abstractions of the seventies. His extensive ceiling in Lahore Museum was a feat of creative endurance. He worked on an ambitious theme, employing vivid figurative imagery. Sadequain's flamboyant temperament was reflected in strong contrasts of colour and shape, with little patience for subtle nuances of either. His affinity for both the literary and literal was confirmed by his paintings inspired from the works of Ghalib, Iqbal and Faiz, often competent but not exalted. The slide into calligraphy in the eighties was no doubt comfortable, but added little to his aesthetic evolution. His valuable contribution to the modern movement in Pakistan had already been achieved in the work of sixties and seventies.

A star of another kind in the firmament of Pakistani painting, is Gulgee. Trained as a design engineer in the US, Ismail Gulgee's natural talent as an artist transformed his career on his return to Pakistan, in 1952. He was working as an engineer at Warsak Dam, near his birth place Peshawar, where he first exhibited his paintings in the fifties. Originally a brilliant portraitist, Gulgee's successful career has encompassed abstract expressionist works, calligraphy, sculpture and architectural design. His meeting with the American artist, Elaine Hamilton, in 1960 in Karachi, introduced him to the New York school. Brilliantly coloured, Gulgee's abstract canvases have been unabashed in their use of the decorative. His irrepressible preference for the luster of gold, juxtaposed with the richness of lapis lazuli, have made his works recognisable for their heightened contrasts of hue and texture, and reliable use of materials and skill. Lauded by a number of public personalities, Gulgee has had the opportunity to demonstrate his skills as a portrait painter for most of his career. Among his early sitters was King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan; his mosaic lapis portrait of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was among his best known and most reproduced works. Apart from kings and presidents, Gulgee's recurring themes have

been horses and calligraphic forms, treated with energetic if predictable results.

A painter of quiet, almost silent determination was the shy Laila Shahzada. Working at A S Nagi studio in Karachi, she had her first solo exhibition in 1959. Her 'Driftwood' series, and works inspired from Moenjodaro and Gandhara, became well known in the sixties and seventies. Moving north into the mountains in her later years brought about a significant change in her imagery and palette. The landscapes of the mountains gave her work a simplicity of form and a lightening of palette which echo with memories of Georgia O'Keeffe's landscapes of New Mexico. Laila Shahzada was coming into her own as a poetic, essential painter when her life was cut short in a tragic accident in 1995.

Acknowledged as the foremost landscape painter in Pakistan is Khalid Iqbal, Professor Emeritus of the National College of Arts, having taught there for several decades. Trained at the Slade School of Art under Sir William Coldstream, Khalid Iqbal's early works were in the usual academic genre. His concentration on the landscape in and around his native Lahore consumed his interest in the sixties and continues to do so.

A poetic observer of the changing seasons, terra firma, and light, Khalid Iqbal's paintings are gentle in their visual understatements. Paint is sparsely laid, and the brush's existence is delicately unobtrusive. The palette is discreet, carefully nuanced and orchestrated. Landscape in Khalid Iqbal's work becomes a metaphor for the undertones in nature. He has many imitators but no real equals.

The contemporary art movement in Pakistan today owes a great deal to the complex socio-political and artistic milieu out of which it grows. The many influences, compulsions, and realities which have shaped the work of schools and individuals, have established a framework from which young contemporaries are emerging with a profusion of artistic voices and concerns.

Reproduced from *50 Years of Visual Arts in Pakistan* published by Pakistan National Council of the Arts / Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1997.

Art in Pakistan, like its sister disciplines music and literature, echoes the socio-political history of the nation and projects the process of assimilation and conflict faced by groups of different ethnic loyalties. It is also about continuity of traditions and a break from precedent.

The complexity of the process through which an identity evolves cannot be underestimated and it would be premature to say that a distinct identity has emerged in such a short period. The time frame of this organic process is determined by circumstances rather than man-made milestones, and history is littered with the failure of attempts to incubate an identity in an atmosphere controlled by political directives or social engineering.

In 1947, when the Muslims of the majority areas joined the displaced Muslim minority areas of the subcontinent, they had only one thing in common – the ideology of a Muslim homeland. In the next five decades, the greatest challenge faced by this heterogeneous group of people was to become a nation in the truest sense.

Fifty years of shared historical experiences as a nation have helped the Pakistani artist to lay the foundation of such an identity. Initiatives based on dynamic connections with our collective heritage and intellectual space for each other can also serve as a catalyst in future.

Pakistan has an ancient multi-faceted creative heritage that can be traced to the Mehrgarh of 3600 BC in Baluchistan. Sindh is home to Moenjodaro and Mansura, which became the first meeting point of the cultures of Arab Muslims, Indian Hindus and Buddhists. In the valleys of the North West Frontier Province lie the treasures of Gandhara art. Lahore, once a Mughal capital, is a repository of indigenous Muslim arts. Pakistanis who came from the Muslim minority areas of the subcontinent brought with them the heritage of a sophisticated imperial court culture, and the East Pakistanis were heirs to the rich folk art of *madhubani* and *kalighat* paintings. Before we could take full advantage of the legacy of our traditional cultures, the dominant western social theories of the early 20th century and belief in the western model of economic development became the most influential factors shaping art in the post-independence era.

The political and social leadership of Pakistan that belonged to the Muslim elite of undivided India, with their western education had begun to seriously question the relevance of tradition in a progressive modern future. Art was the tool of the dreams of a post-war independent nation. Contemporary philosophies of the industrialised nations based on reason and science were looked upon as a vehicle of progress, and the primary concern of

these landowners-turned-professionals became a robust intellectual, economic and social participation in the modern age.

Iqbal, the mentor of this generation with his message of *khudi* (self), reinforced the awakening of individuality and personal ambition. Iqbal's verse sends a message diametrically opposite to the fatalistic beliefs of the majority of the tradition-bound and community oriented orthodox Muslims.

Painting, too, was influenced by these changing mores. In search of "a vital new expression", the Progressive Artists Group – India's first organised Modernists – rejected the effete art of their time in favour of the school of Paris, in their manifesto. In the words of Raza, one of its founders, "the revivalist movement of the Bengal school, despite the laudable effort it made to instill an awareness of our cultural heritage, seemed to produce literary works, sentimental, delicate, unresponsive to the pace and anguish of our time."

It was the same philosophy that became the guiding spirit of the Lahore Art Circle in Pakistan, founded in the early 50's by Ahmed Parvez, Sheikh Safdar, Shemza, Qutub Sheikh, Moyene Najmi and Ali Imam. However, this group was not the first to introduce modern art in Pakistan: that honour goes to Zubeida Agha, who exhibited her work in Karachi in 1949.

The socialist idealism that existed in the 50's made the painters more receptive to the new idiom. As artists and visionaries, they found it appropriate to announce the entry of their nation into the era of social equality, where dignity of labour and mass production was expected to improve quality of life for all.

Artists of the nascent Pakistan were also assisted by the secular spirit of modernism during their transition from the strong influence of an art dominated by Hindu mythology to a stage when a new vocabulary of visual expression, in keeping with the new ideals, could be evolved. A negative outcome of this was the outright rejection of the shared

Echoes of Socio-Political History

NILOFUR FARRUKH

As Pakistan celebrates half a century of its birth, two questions about art in the country urgently need to be addressed: does Pakistani art have an identity? And does it in some way reflect the aspirations of the Pakistani people?

cultural heritage of this region due to its non-Muslim character. These taboos not only limited the creative vision of the artist but sowed the seeds of self-censorship that further narrowed the canvas.

Overzealous enforcers of the national ideology cobbled selected facts into a history that led to the study of a truncated account of artistic achievements in recent Indian history.

The urban painter of the 1940's was a product of western style art academies set up by the British to perpetuate their cultural superiority. With considerable exposure to western aesthetics, the painter was indoctrinated in Eurocentric dogma, encouraging him to look to the west for cultural solutions. To such an artist, modern art must have appeared to be the logical choice in his search for avant garde visual expression. Thus modernism, despite its radical opposition to traditional modes, entered the Pakistani mainstream.

As a result of this, art in the urban centres of Pakistan developed a dual personality which was divided along economic and linguistic barriers. Social polarisation was exacerbated by the system of education that was divided between the Urdu and English mediums of instruction. Those who received their education in Urdu, the rural population and the urban masses, continued to be influenced by folk art, classical realism, Islamic design elements and calligraphy, unlike their more westernised elite counterparts.

Abdul Rahman Chughtai, master of the Bengal school of painting, may not have received early recognition by the state or patronage of the Anglophile elite but had a large following among the traditionalists and illustrators of Urdu and vernacular publications.

Miniaturists like Haji Sharif and Sheikh Shujauallah continued in the purist tradition and contributed to the iconography and palette of the popular painting style of the masses. Tall stately cyprus, the arabesque and Mughal court figures are examples of the integral design vocabulary of theatre backdrops, greeting and invitation cards, and were eventually adopted for the decoration of public service vehicles.

Modernism, in contrast, could not achieve widespread recognition, because it was not only esoteric but also negated the age-old aesthetic values of this region that were a part of the *jamaliati zauq* (aesthetic taste) that linked literature, music and painting. Poets and writers rejected and ridiculed abstract art. Syed Mohammed Jafri voiced the opinion of his peers when he wrote: *Jis ko mein nay samjha anannas woh aurat niklee* (What I thought was a pineapple turned out to be a woman).

The 60's saw an art divorced from the larger segments of society adopt the philosophy of 'art

for art's sake'. It did not encourage the development of a collective cultural identity. Content followed form, using European points of reference, and Shakir Ali chose to paint Lida and the Swan, while Beethoven's Fifth Symphony became the theme of Zubeida Agha's canvas.

Sadequain was perhaps the only painter of that time who was comfortable with both his inherited tradition and modernity. After a brief flirtation with cubism, Sadequain evolved a figurative visual expression that was more suited to his message of social comment. He took art out of the homes of the affluent into public spaces. He was sensitive to his relationship to the common man and paid tribute to the toiling masses in his murals. Following in the steps of his forefathers who were master calligraphers, Sadequain integrated contemporary forms in *tughras* and calligrams. His link with tradition was too strong to use calligraphy as a mere form. Sadequain has yet to be fully appreciated as a bridge between modernism and traditional art forms. Social concerns dominated his contents and he employed symbolism extensively to promote a possible reconciliation between polarised sections of the society of his time.

At this time, another development occurred as the landscape painting of Punjab that had developed under the shadow of the English landscape tradition came into its own. It became a vital link with the rural sensibility of the people of the land of five rivers, who related strongly with their ancestral lands. East Pakistani painters also successfully translated the ethos of their culture in their expression of modern art and faced little or no social conflict.

Political change and its repressive role in the freedom of expression raised its ugly head early in Pakistan's history and directly or covertly tried to influence the creative endeavours of poets, writers and artists. The witchhunt of creative people with socialist and communist leanings began as early as the 50's and disbanded a committed band of individuals who had the intellectual acumen to give the arts direction and much needed national expression.

With each subsequent martial law and civil government, certain mechanisms were put into place – in the form of censorship or official apathy – to curb creative freedom. Often work was forcibly moulded into a mood of timidity and compromise, for survival's sake. Art and art institutions were deprived of consistent and widespread state support and it was left to individual and private initiative to rectify the vacuum. Political correctness prevented a full-blooded reaction to the tragedy of East Pakistan when painters failed to chronicle the horrors and shame of this historical debacle. No public debate on its causes has been held and

Pakistan's Art World Celebrates a Golden Jubilee

MARJORIE HUSSAIN

In Pakistan, the people of every region were united in a national Golden Jubilee celebratory year. Schools were decked with flags and bunting as children participated in programmes of songs, debates and dramas. Shops hung flags and photographs of the Quaid-i-Azam in their windows and regional costume displays, exhibitions of photographs and food festivals attracted large crowds. The rural areas celebrated in their own traditional ways with cattle shows, melas and bazaars. Artists and cultural circles throughout the country made a unique and significant contribution of their own.

From Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, elaborate art events were arranged to gladden the hearts of art enthusiasts. The historic city of Lahore, once a capital city of Mughal rulers and seedbed of artists and teachers, is famed for its distinguished art institutes. There is the National College of Arts, restructured in '59 from the Mayo School of Arts and Crafts built by the British Raj in 1875, and the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University, initiated by Anna Molka Ahmed in 1946. From these two institutions art has spread by way of teachers all over Pakistan.

Lahore also boasts the finest venues for exhibitions in the country. There is the Alhambra art complex of the Arts Council and a new, impressive, two-storeyed gallery close to the sports stadium, site of the Annual Horse and Cattle Show. Here was fashioned a sculpture of five arches commemorating five decades of independence.

Organizing exhibitions of four hundred paintings from every province, Lahore Arts Council joined forces with the Karachi Fine Arts Association to curate a series of outstanding displays. There were four exhibitions running concurrently. The Masters Exhibition of Pakistan's early pioneers of art, a National exhibition of stunning variety, a younger artists and talented students display and Lahore Colours, the inspiration for a book of the same name.

Many of the Masters' paintings were borrowed from private collections and never

before seen on display. Early Ustad Allah Bukhsh's, superlative watercolours by A R Chughtai and, seen for the first time, exquisite works by Miran Bux who immortalised historic architectural features of Lahore. Colourful impasto paintings by Professor Anna Molka were vibrant with feeling for the beauty of nature, and her seldom seen portraits in sculpture recreated a bygone era.

The Bengali artists who before 1970, had a unique place in Pakistan's art events, were represented: Zainul Abedin who established the Dhaka School of Art in 1961, and Murtaza Bashir, to name but two. Several artists, almost forgotten with time, were remembered with nostalgia. Since there is no Art Gallery to house a permanent collection of art treasures, art students and others rarely have occasion to see the works of the senior artists. Inaugurated by the Prime Minister who arrived on the dot of 10.00 a.m. for the occasion, for a brief while, the old artists who paved the way, came into their own.

At the Arts Council, the National Exhibition was a feast for the eyes and the senses. Myriad points of view, united in the common cause of a proud, celebratory occasion, vied for attention. There were the landscapes of the Punjab School initiated by Khalid Iqbal; watercolour landscapes from renowned Karachi watercolourists; abstract, semi figurative, magic realism and traditional paintings in a classic style. All hung together, resembling a Hall of the Summer exhibition show of the Royal Academy of London.

The Commissioner of Lahore, who is also the Chairman of the Arts Council, wrote an informative text for the book *Lahore Colours*, and hosted a large dinner for artists, visitors and friends. In a spacious garden were laid out numerous small canvases, paints and brushes, irresistible to the artists who proceeded to make a mural of tiny paintings carrying their signatures.

Located in Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan, the PNCA - Pakistan National Council of the Arts - arranged a lively Art Fest. Surrounded by the Margala Hills, Islamabad is

accountability is nowhere in sight as the nation and its artists continue to remain oblivious of the realities of this dark period. In contrast, Bangladeshi painters in a surge of creativity following their freedom struggle, have managed to put this dreadful event behind them.

Ironically it was a similar period of repressive and inhuman conditions that united artists and poets through statements of outrage. Feminist painter Nahid Reza joined Kishwar Naheed and Fehmida Riaz to attack General Zia-ul-Haq's discriminatory Hudood Ordinances. The army action in rural Sindh became the theme of Nagori's hard-hitting paintings which were banned from viewing in the state capital. Zahoor ul Akhlaq painted the brutalisation of Pakistani society through images of the Nawabpur incident.

Jamal Shah's intense and disturbing paintings and prints brought home the fact that the neglect of Baluchistan was every Pakistani's problem. A conspiracy of silence and apathy between citizens and political leaders had robbed the Baluch people of their share in the Quaid's dream of prosperity. The bond born out of shared experiences between the disenfranchised citizen and painter bestowed a new status on art during General Zia-ul-Haq's regime. As the keeper of a nation's conscience, the artist in Pakistan found a new connection with the common man.

A new crisis entered the artist's life in the post-martial law era with its successive 'democratic' governments. This period has been one of disillusionment: to quote a senior painter who pioneered protest art, "I am in my passive period, still reeling from the knowledge that this is the democracy that we fought for."

Today, the artist's role in an increasingly consumer society is being defined as the nation faces a media offensive by satellite channels. In a world where a position in the corporate jungle has become the ambition of every youth, and educational priorities have shifted from humanities to exclusively career-oriented courses, the danger is that fewer and fewer individuals will look at art outside of the context of an investment index.

The idealism of the artist in such a world seems increasingly irrelevant. Nurtured in an environment of materialism, the painter feels he has no popular commodity to trade unless he compromises himself and caters to the marketplace. Such feelings of conflict and alienation among the creative have made a number of them search for indigenous solutions to indigenous problems. They seek a better understanding of their heritage in literature, tradition, art, making connections with a time when art was a metaphysical experience and epitomised a quest for the pinnacle of the intellect. Others are drawn to the dominant

discourse of the West, succumbing to an art which is no longer used as a tool to project universal truths but has become subservient to vacillating standards and fickle canons.

While the artists of Pakistan may have come a long way, a lack of dialogue within the art community has prevented any consistent art movement from emerging in the last five decades. Another reason may be the perceptual and physical distances between the major art centres of Pakistan. Lack of significant collections of national art at our museums prevent young painters from using the work of seniors as a point of reference, and this has led to the problems of continuity in the field.

Critical discourse on art is still at its formative stage and has not been able to help locate the artist in contemporary art history. Commentary on art in the print media often makes Pakistani Modernism seem like an extension of Western art, thus denying it of any identity outside the constructs of Western discourse. Without an indigenous tradition of art critics, it is easy to fall into this trap. In the last decade or so, as more and more senior artists have begun a deeper and more serious dialogue with their own culture, writing on art has also felt the need to express this new ethos by drawing parallels between indigenous poetry, music and art. Dr Naqvi very successfully conveyed the mystical content in Shahid Sajjad's sculpture and Mehr Afroz's paintings with the help of Urdu verse. This was perhaps more expressive than any number of descriptive words. Recently, I compared Jamil Naqsh's study of pigeons in which the subject remains constant while the composition varies within a given space, to the demands of *bundish* in classical Indian music.

This new orientation in art commentary will further help the painter to recognise connections with different aspects of the arts and develop an identity as a contemporary Pakistani artist rooted in his or her tradition.

Perhaps the most significant initiative that can be taken to create conditions conducive to the evolution of a cultural identity is to inculcate a sense of belonging in every Pakistani. This will come from an understanding of our collective history with connections developed between the diverse cultures of Pakistan. The study and search of all ethnic cultures should be given equal importance to develop mutual respect. With similarities emphasised and diversity celebrated, such an honest cultural and political history of Pakistan could be a first step towards a coherent identity reflective of our sensibilities and relevant to our social and moral priorities.

Reproduced from *Neusline*, Karachi.

Tributes to Zubeida Agha

This volume was in its final production stages when news came of the passing away of the distinguished artist who pioneered the modern art movement in Pakistan, Zubeida Agha. She was 75. Three of her artist colleagues talked to *The News on Sunday* about Zubeida Agha's career and contribution. Extracts from these interviews are reproduced here by courtesy of the above journal:

A mystic approach

Zubeida Agha was one of the most modern painters of Pakistan. She had studied under Professor Sanyal, and later on took lessons from Mario Perlingieri, an Italian prisoner of war at Walton Camp, Lahore. Mario had himself been a student of the great European artist, Picasso. She got her Bachelor's degree in philosophy and political science from Kinnaird College, Lahore.

Her first art exhibition was held in 1949 at YWA, Karachi. I clearly remember that her work had created a month-long controversy in the Press and attracted much criticism from her admirers as well as detractors. Among her critics was Atiya Fyze Rahamin, who wrote openly against Zubeida's work.

Zubeida Agha attended some of the best European art schools. In 1950, she joined St. Martin's school of Art in England for six months. Later, she went on to attend Ecole des Beaux Arts, France's prestigious art institution for two years. Zubeida returned to Pakistan in 1958.

As an artist, she preferred to concentrate more on ideas, rather than subjects. Some of her best works included: *Bethoven's Fifth Symphony*, *In The Jungle*, *Black Vase*, *Cotton Pickers*, *Tea Pickers*, *Harmony* and *Landscape with Horse*.

Her ideas were mostly intellectual or emotional in nature, depicted in semi-figurative form. She painted very few abstract paintings. She had a mystic approach towards her work. She sought to paint the essence of things around her, not just the things themselves. The colours she used were dark, and not very bright, in her earlier work. However, as her work progressed, she became a very colourful painter and could be called a good colourist. She held a number of art exhibitions around the world including London, Paris and Rome.

As a person, Zubeida Agha was a very private individual who remained lost in herself. Although she was averse to meeting many people, she ran a contemporary art gallery in Rawalpindi till 1979. Throughout her life, she painted consistently.

My last meeting with her took place in March this year. Accompanied by a number of renowned artists and art critics in her studio, we found about 50 paintings

in her house, which appeared more like a gallery.

She received a number of awards during her illustrious career. Besides a Pride of Performance, in 1982, she was also given Shakir Ali Award which she reluctantly accepted out of grace as she considered Shakir Ali junior to her in modern painting. Earlier this year Zubeida was given the Quaid-e-Azam Award for her meritorious work as a painter.

Ali Imam

Unflinching devotion to her own vision

She had a personality which was retiring but incisive, quiet but assertive. She stood apart from the academics of art and yet she was the pioneer of modernism in Pakistan.

When she first exhibited her work in 1946 at the All India Exhibition in Lahore Museum, she was charged four annas to gain entry because she was not formally educated, while the professional artists had to pay one rupee. Dr Charles Fabri, the Curator of the Museum, commented on one of her paintings as brilliant and profound. She was self-taught at that point of time.

If today one looks at 51 years of her work, what one credits her with is an absolutely unflinching devotion to her own vision. This vision owed a lot to her affinity for music and her love of philosophy.

She was a major colourist and her work was occasionally playful and always extremely thoughtful.

She was always careful to talk about the fact that she survived in a man's world and fought her way. She knew that if she called herself a woman artist, she would be marginalised and labelled as a woman artist. In that sense, she preceded the women's movement in art.

Salima Hashmi

An individual way of looking at things

For the younger generation of artists like us, generally being known as a pioneer of modern art as Zubeida Agha was, does not

mean much. We tend to look at the whole body of creative work that an artist has produced, and of what quality. In that background Zubeida Agha had an individual way of looking at things and describing them. She was not influenced by anyone nor did she influence anyone.

Her work was sometimes close to the surrealist or the cubist idiom but it was individualistic. There was a poetic approach in her work, a dream-like quality and it was very, very personal. Artists here are under great pressure to do political work, serve the society, or take the tradition of history and culture further. But Zubeida's paintings reflected how an individual artist works; it was consistent and extremely mature. The best thing is that you can't phrase it or contain it within a term.

I had a chance to meet her once before I got admission in National College of Arts. She said one thing which has stayed in my mind all along: "If you want to be an artist, then become a professional artist and not a Sunday artist."

Zubeida Agha herself worked throughout her career although we have very few full-time artists here. We can't say she was a loner because she used to run an art gallery in Rawalpindi and was also involved in the movement of modern art.

Trying to place her in the category of women artists would be wrong because in my view it is not proper to compartmentalise art. She did start her work amid male dominance but in our context there have always been women who have been on the top like Anna Molka and Zubeida herself. The fact that she was a woman did affect her work which has a poetic and lyrical quality. She did choose women as her subject in some paintings like the *Cotton Pickers*, but so do men. We can only describe her as a major artist of Pakistan.

It goes to her credit that she held the first exhibition of modern art. I would say that her house in Islamabad should be turned into a museum because this is how we can educate the young generation.

Her ideas were mostly intellectual or emotional in nature, depicted in semi-figurative form. She painted very few abstract paintings. She sought to paint the essence of things around her, not just the things themselves.

Quddus Mirza

a magic city combining elements of town and country, where traditional aspects and contemporary life exist side by side. The festivities began with a Kathak recital performed by internationally acclaimed Nahid Siddiqui, Pakistan's premier dance artiste. An exhibition of paintings collected by the PNCA over a period of 20 years followed in which examples of the finest paintings in the country were included.

A one day Seminar gathered together artists and art celebrities from every region, to discuss the development of art in the country over the last fifty years and vigorously arguing the pros and cons. PNCA had also published a book of art which contained a selection of reproductions of works by Pakistan's best known and revered painters.

Karachi, art market of Pakistan and always individual in approach, started celebrations early with activities such as plays, group art shows and book launches held at various cultural centres.

Artists Wahab Jaffer, Samina Mansuri, Riffat Ali, Nahid Raza and Mehr Afroz participated in the celebrations by mounting solo displays of their signature styles at various galleries in town. Veteran artist Hanif Ramay, a retired politician and long-time painter, showed a collection of calligraphic works in Karachi for the first time. Belonging to an era of the earliest art activities in the country, Mr Ramay has remained true to his classic method of expression, sometimes transforming linear strokes into form. At a seminar on art, the artist talked of the early days of art and his compatriots, now established as leading artists in their disciplines.

Souza once said of Wahab Jaffer's paintings, "It is always Christmas...." The outpouring of jubilant colour was no exception as abstract and semi-figurative works lit the walls of the Clifton Art Gallery.

Samina Mansuri showed her work after a gap of four years, fittingly optimistic as heavy foliage revealed glimpses of scarlet tipped bird creatures. Riffat Ali, due to show her earth pigment artworks at the Blackfriars Gallery in '98, found it appropriate to pay homage to the soil of Pakistan in its Golden Jubilee year. Nahid Raza, with her proud declaration of women's place in an Islamic society, Mehr Afroz with her esoteric references to past present and future and Chitra Pritim with his

exuberant revelations of rustic life, all expressed deep feelings with diverse viewpoints.

The active Karachi Fine Arts Association under the Chairmanship of Aftab Zafar arranged a series of art events. At the Sadequain Gallery a group show was arranged in which senior and unknown artists alike displayed their work for the public.

Aftab Zafar who is the country's leading illustrative artist, donated several series of prints to the Karachi Museum where they will hang on permanent display. Heroes of Islam, the Pakistan Movement and its history, regional festivals and celebrations combined to narrate the essence of the country and its colourful people. The Governor of Sindh, as Chief Guest on the opening of the exhibition, set an example of punctuality by arriving on time and giving every appearance of enjoying the brightly coloured print display.

The climax of Karachi's celebrations will be the inauguration of Museum of Art dedicated to the paintings of Jamil Naqsh. Initiated by a group of art collectors known as 'The Friends of Jamil Naqsh', it is the first such gesture from the private sector and one that may lead to others of its kind. Jamil Naqsh has donated one thousand paintings for permanent display. An extraordinarily generous gesture from the artist on a very special occasion.



Ahmed Fawer '76

NATIONAL ART COLLECTION AND EXHIBITION

TO MARK the Golden Jubilee celebrations, the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) – mounted an impressive display of selected works in various media at the National Art Gallery in the Federal Capital, Islamabad, from 19 August – 11 September 1997.

The PNCA also brought out a de luxe publication *Fifty Years of Visual Arts in Pakistan*. As its Director General, and herself a well-known poet, Kishwar Naheed, highlighted in her Foreword, it was based on interviews with a number of artists, conducted all over Pakistan by a team of researchers which included art critic Quddus Mirza and artist Durriya Kazi. The publication also carried a scholarly Introduction by Prof Salima Hashmi.

The exhibition itself offered a panoramic view of 50 years of Pakistani painting, sculpture and graphics, now part of the National Art Collection which comprises about 800 works. The existing premises of the National Art Gallery being rather modest, only about 450 works could be displayed, emphasising the need for expediting work on the permanent Gallery, presently under construction. Some of the works in the National Collection pre-date the emergence of Pakistan in 1947, such as a 1924 painting by Ustad Allah Bux. There are also a number of paintings by artists from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

A selection of works included in the exhibition are being reproduced in the pages that follow, with the kind permission of the PNCA.



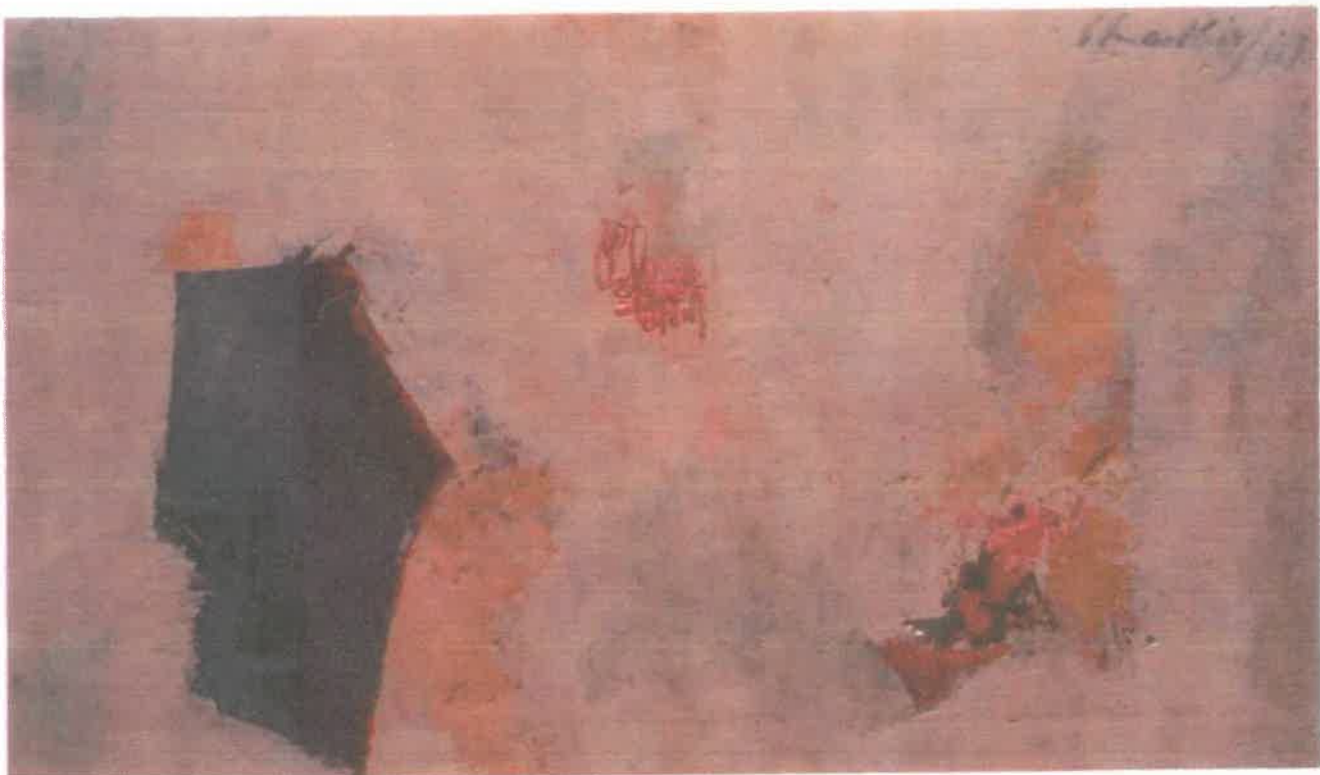
Ustad Allah Bux. *Intizar*. Oil on canvas. 1924



Abdul Rehman Chughtai. *Potter's Daughter*, Fixed wash.



Haji Mohammad Sharif. *Akbar in Procession*



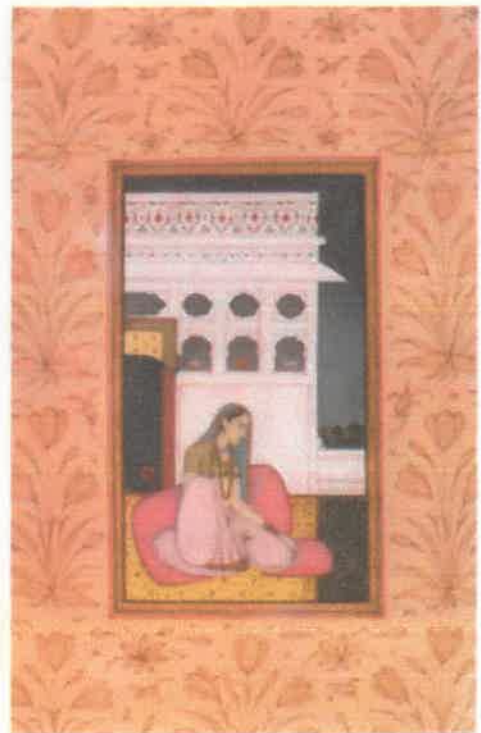
Shakir Ali. *Composition* Oil on canvas 1967



Anna Molka Ahmed. *Chhota Derga village, near Lahore* Oil on canvas 1957-8



Khalid Iqbal. *Village Landscape*. Oil on board



Sheikh Shujaullah. *Lady sitting on a terrace*



Zubeida Agha. *Reclining Figure*. Oil on canvas. 1987



Hanif Ramay. *Al Wahab*. Oil on canvas



Haji Mohammad Sharif, *Rukhsati* (Sassi Punnu)



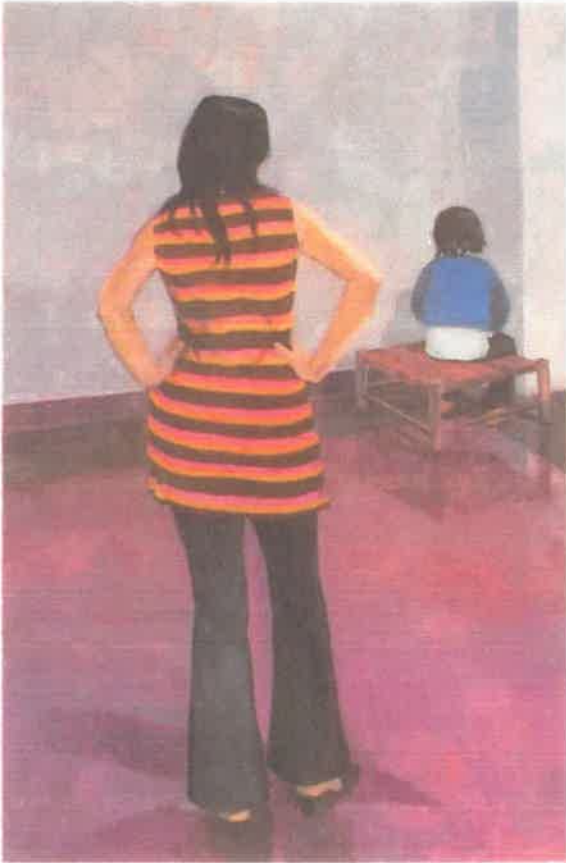
Anna Molka Ahmed, *Untitled*. Oil on canvas



Ali Imam, *Figures*. Oil on canvas 1974



Moyene Najmi, *Moon & Masque*. Oil on canvas



Ahmed Khan. *Untitled*. Mixed media

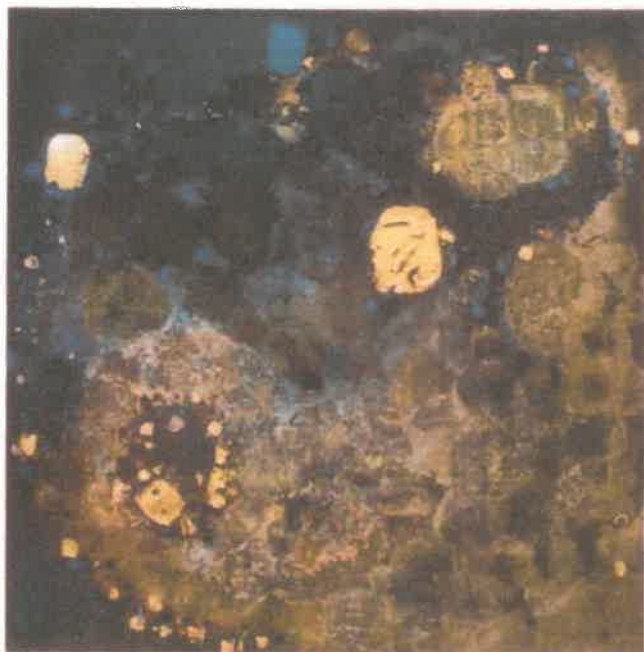
Left: Colin David. *Punishment*. Oil on board



Mussarat Mirza. *Untitled*. Oil on canvas



Askari Mian Irani. *Naqsh-e-Darwaza*. Oil on canvas



Gulgee. *Composition*. Oil on canvas



Ghulam Rasul. *Fall, Saidpur*. Oil on canvas. 1989



Iqbal Hussain. *Untitled*. Oil on canvas



Masood Kohari. *Untitled*



Ahmed Pervez. *Composition*, Oil on canvas. 1974

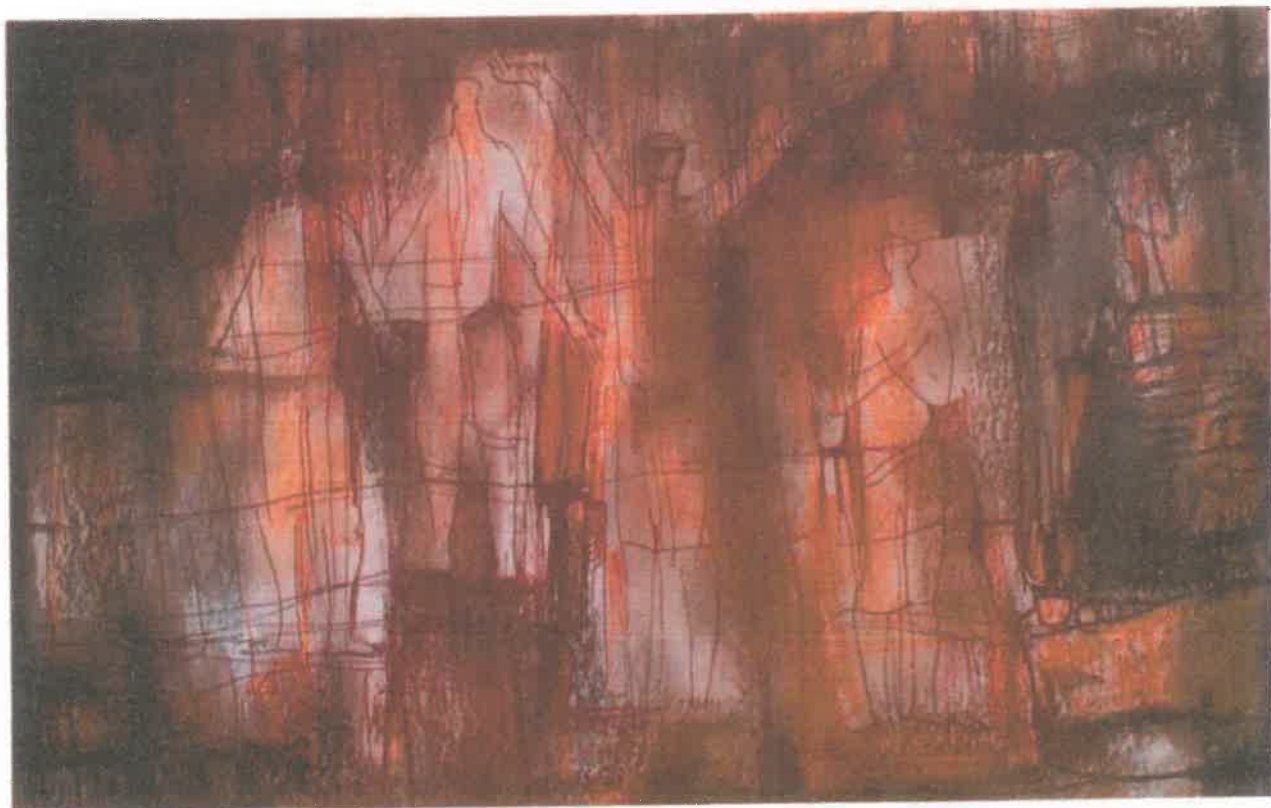


Jamil Naqsh. *Woman & Pigeon*, Oil on canvas



Mansur Rahi. *Wild Horses*, Oil on canvas

Left: Anwer Maqsood. *Birds have cages*, Oil on canvas

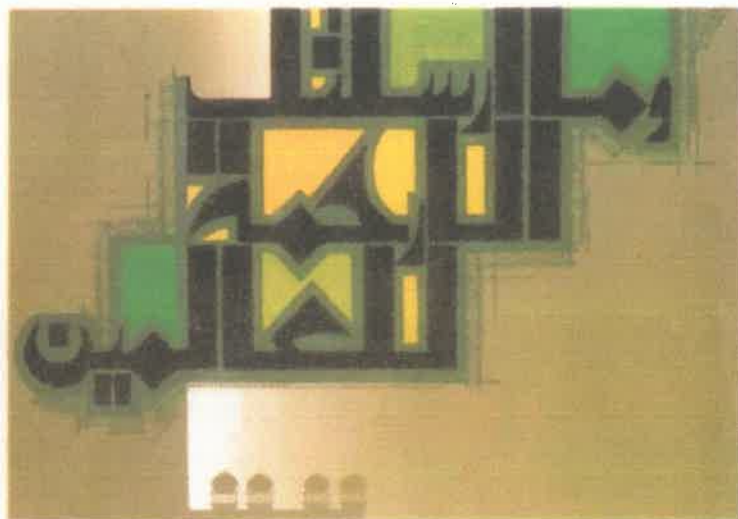


Rabia Zuberi *Labour Series* Mixed media

Below: **Salima Hashmi**, *Untitled* Mixed media

Below, right: **Zahoor ul Akhlaq**, *Radio photo of an object unidentified* Oil on canvas





Aslam Kamal. *Calligraphy*. Oil on canvas

Left: Nahid Raza. *Code of Silence*. Acrylic on canvas

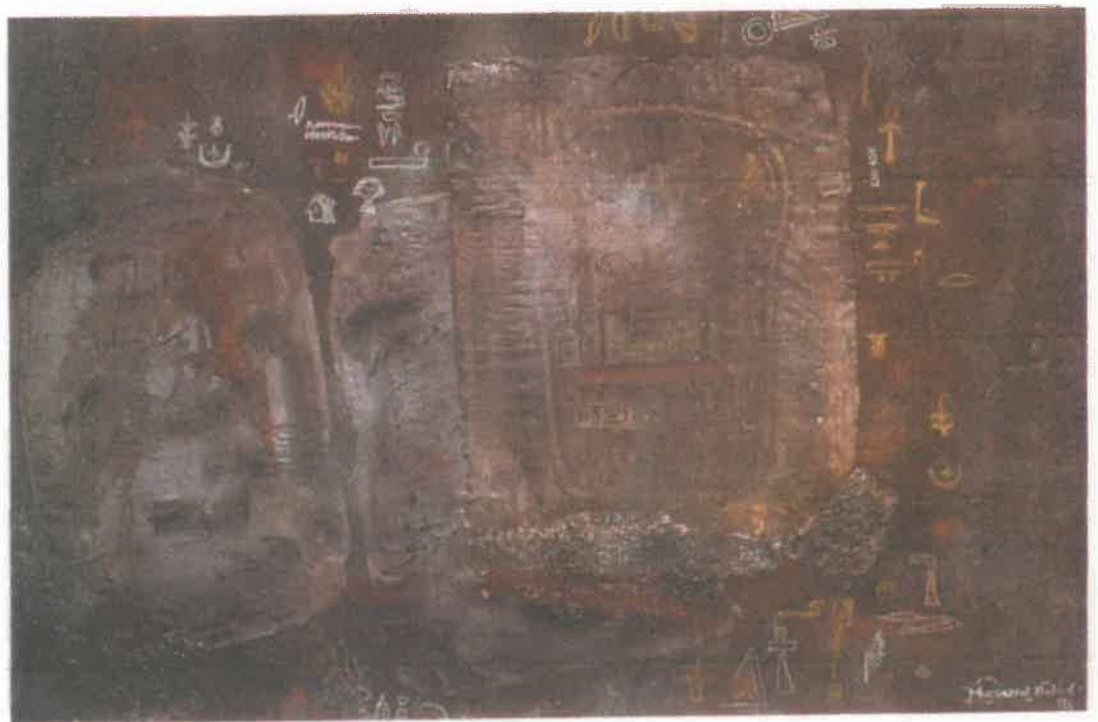
Below: Mansoor Hasan. *Untitled*. Mixed media





Elahi Bux Mattee. *Calligraphy*

Below: Mussarat Nahid Imam. *Naqoosh*. Mixed media





Anwer Saeed. *Untitled*. Oil on board
Below: Maqsood Ali. *Untitled*



Mehr Afroze. *Untitled*





Akram Dost Baluch, *Untitled*
 Right: Sumayya Durrani, *Untitled*

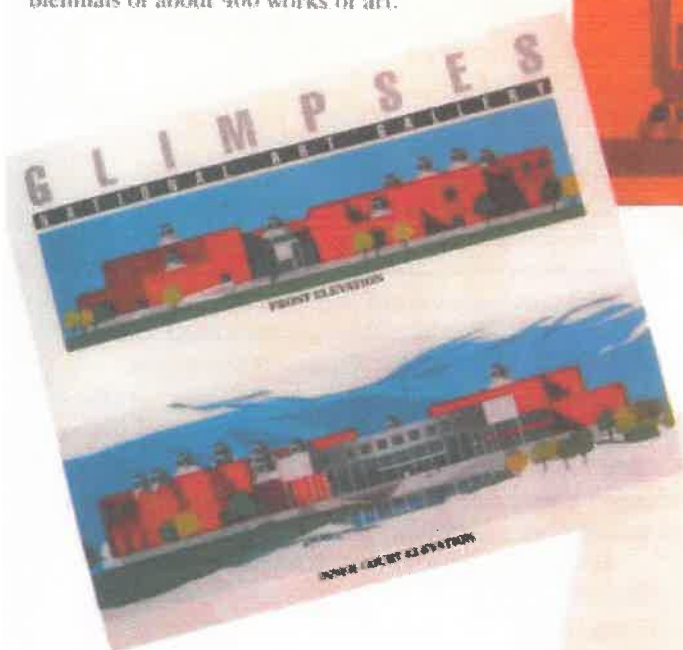
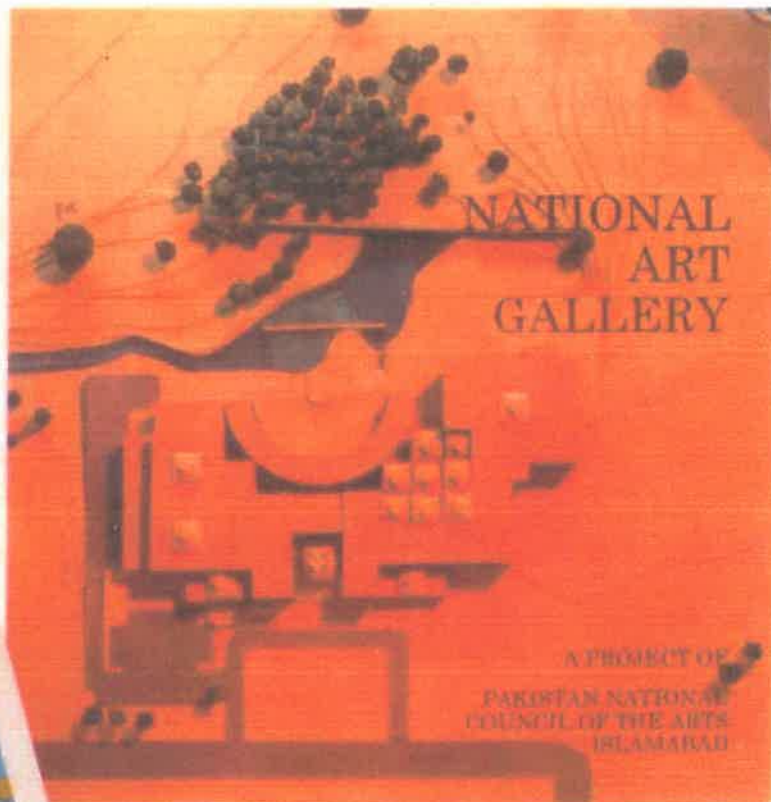


Zubeida Javed, *Untitled*

National Art Gallery

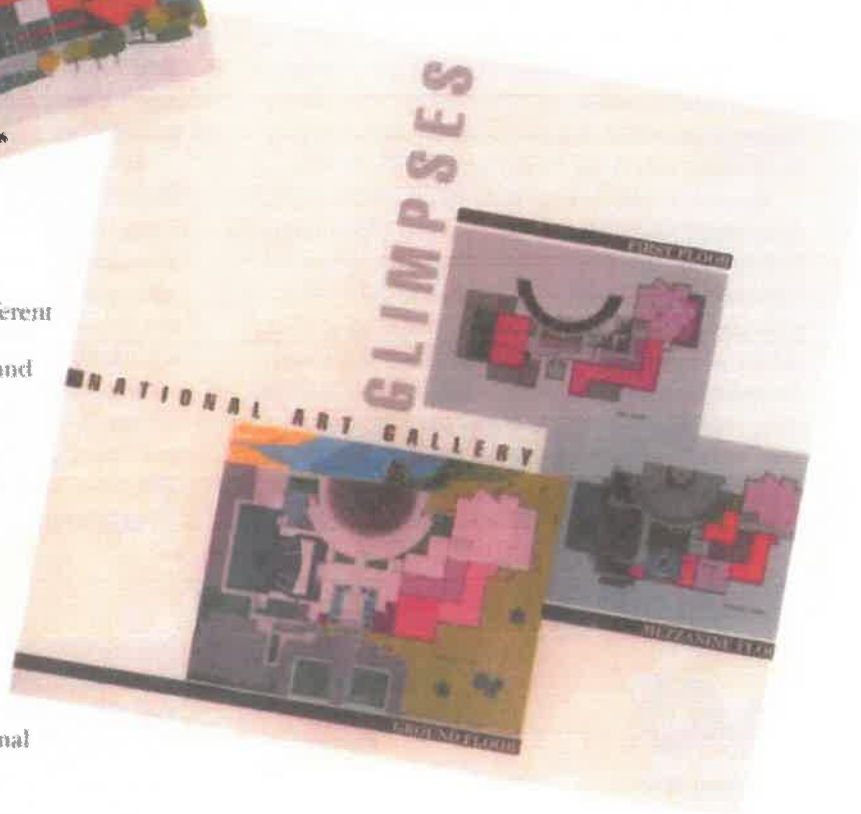
The National Art Gallery (plans reproduced here) is part of the National Cultural Complex in the country's capital, Islamabad. The Complex site is roughly 12 acres, of which the Gallery site is 3.5 acres, located to the north of Jinnah Avenue and across from the Presidency and Parliament Building, above the parade ground.

Planned for completion around the year 2000, the Gallery will be able to hold three periodical exhibitions concurrently, and will also have space for National and Reserve Collections. The periodical exhibition space will be able to hold National Exhibitions and International Biennials of about 400 works of art.



The main gallery space is divided into different mediums, large and small format, with exclusive sections for miniature paintings and children's exhibition areas. The space and volume will be defined to cater to special needs of different works, whether it be for intense viewing of miniature or interaction with the spatial presence of wall hangings, installations, mobile sculptures etc.

An auditorium of 450 seats can also function as a theatre. Other facilities include spaces for a research and reference library, a children's section for art education, and a restaurant/coffee house, designed to provide areas for informal get-together of artists.



India and Pakistan fiftieth anniversary:

Review of UK events and directory

Visiting Arts will publish the **Review of UK events and directory** in January 1998. This brochure is the culmination of the Visiting Arts India and Pakistan anniversary project, which aims to show how the cultures of India and Pakistan are enriching all aspects of British life. The aim of the project was to promote South Asian arts in the UK by publishing information about relevant events taking place in the UK during 1997, the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence and Pakistan's statehood. The majority of the events featured are arts or cultural activities, and all have a connection with India, Pakistan or British Asians.

Event information was published on the internet throughout 1997 (<http://www.britcoun.org/visitingarts/indpak1997>) and through a brochure, *India and Pakistan fiftieth anniversary: Guide to UK events*, published in July 1997. The *Guide to UK events* was widely distributed in Britain as well as in India and Pakistan, through government bodies, arts organizations, libraries, galleries and city councils, and at relevant events and exhibitions.

The **Review of UK events and directory** is a more comprehensive, retrospective version of the *Guide*,

and is designed to show who did what during 1997 and where. The purpose of this is twofold: to provide a contemporary snapshot of the rich variety of South Asia-related activities in the UK, and to assist those planning similar events in the future by providing contact details of the people involved. The **Review of UK events and directory** includes a listing of some 1,000 events related to India, Pakistan and British Asians, including almost forty publications. It also contains an index of approximately 800 of the organizations involved, including artists, promoters, and venues.

The sheer volume of events is an expression of the variety and vitality of South Asia-related involvement in the UK arts and cultural scene, and the widespread interest in it. This is not a phenomenon that will disappear after the golden anniversary year, but something that has developed over many years and whose influence will continue to be an important part of contemporary creative Britain.

The **Review of UK events and directory** is available from Visiting Arts, 11 Portland Place, London W1N 4EJ, telephone 0171-389 3019, fax 0171-389 3016, e-mail office@visitingarts.demon.co.uk.



Visiting Arts is a joint venture of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, The British Council, the Arts Councils and the Craft Council. It promotes and facilitates the inward flow of foreign arts into Britain. Visiting Arts' activities include consultancy, advisory services, training, grant-giving and publications.

A Quest that Continues

MARJORIE HUSSAIN



"Celebrating the 50 Years of Pakistan's Independence, the Lahore Arts Council, in a tremendous initiative, brings together works by 320 artists from the four provinces of the country. Representing the work of pioneering Masters and the established, the aspiring and the upcoming, the exhibition unfolds, for the first time, the great creative continuum of Pakistani painters, artists, sculptors and ceramists over five decades. The exhibition is the largest organized in the Punjab till date."

Mohammad Athar Tahir, Chairman, Lahore Arts Council.

Top, left: Mian Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, at the Masters Retrospective & National Exhibition being received by Mr M Athar Tahir, Chairman Lahore Arts Council. Top, right: The Prime Minister (l), Mr Shahid Hamid, Governor of the Punjab (c), and Mr M Athar Tahir (r) before a painting by Ustad Allah Bux. Above, middle: Gulgee (l), the Prime Minister and Mr M Athar Tahir. Above: The Prime Minister at the Gallery. Above, left: Group Photo: Seated (l-r) Aftab Zafar, Ahmed Khan, Dr Samia Malik, Gulgee, M Athar Tahir, Zubeida Javed, Colin David and Saeed Akhtar. Standing (l-r) Zulfi, Fatah Hale Pota, Shakil Ahmed, R M Naeem, Sajid Qureshi, Waqar Ali, Rumi and Zulqarnain Haider.



By the nineteenth century, the rich, centuries-old art traditions of the South Asia had almost come to a standstill. The arts and crafts that flourished during the great Mughal dynasty declined with their passing. Changes wrought by the advent of a foreign rule heralded a lack of patronage. Princes turned to western artists to decorate their galleries, imported furniture from Europe and discovered the convenience of the camera. Painting miniature works became a craft as artists painted imaginary portraits of kings on ivory pieces. Around the towns, a hybrid art was formed combining eastern subjects painted to accommodate western tastes.

The discovery of erstwhile forgotten chapters of history gave art a new direction. The chance discovery of the Ajanta caves in 1817, and the seals of the Indus Valley Civilization in 1921 caused artists to reassess their roots. A new art form emerged from the Calcutta School of Art inspired by traditions of album and fresco paintings, assimilating a Japanese wash technique.

Small in scale, hazily coloured by successive colour washes, the subjects of the New Bengal School of art were romantic in mood. A R Chughtai met the leading exponents of the Bengal School when studying photo techniques in Calcutta in 1916, but he was always extremely individual in approach, choosing to go his own way and earning enmity in the process. In fact, it was Chughtai's ambition to form a Punjab Group of Artists. The period preceding partition found artists in a turmoil. As the awareness of modern art developments grew, a synthesis of eastern and western art methods emerged.

Abdul Rahman Chughtai, respected in art circles throughout the subcontinent had by 1947, already accomplished an important body of work. Ustad Allah Bukhsh and the miniaturists Sheikh Shujaullah and Haji Sharif were also notable artists of the period who made their home in Lahore. Chughtai abandoned subjects which delighted the princes and worked alone in his studio, drawing inspiration from his own rich imagination. Allah Bukhsh turned his mystic brush to the Punjab rural areas, recording the robust sons of the soil, the festivals and fetes of the region. The miniaturists reproduced the work of long ago in an effort to keep their art alive.

With the advent of Pakistan, an art infrastructure had to be built up from the grass roots in every major city of the country except Lahore. In the historic city of the Mughal rulers, was sited the Mayo School of Arts and Crafts, built in 1875, and a Fine Arts Department at the Punjab University.

At the Punjab University, Anna Molka Ahmed worked hard to establish art



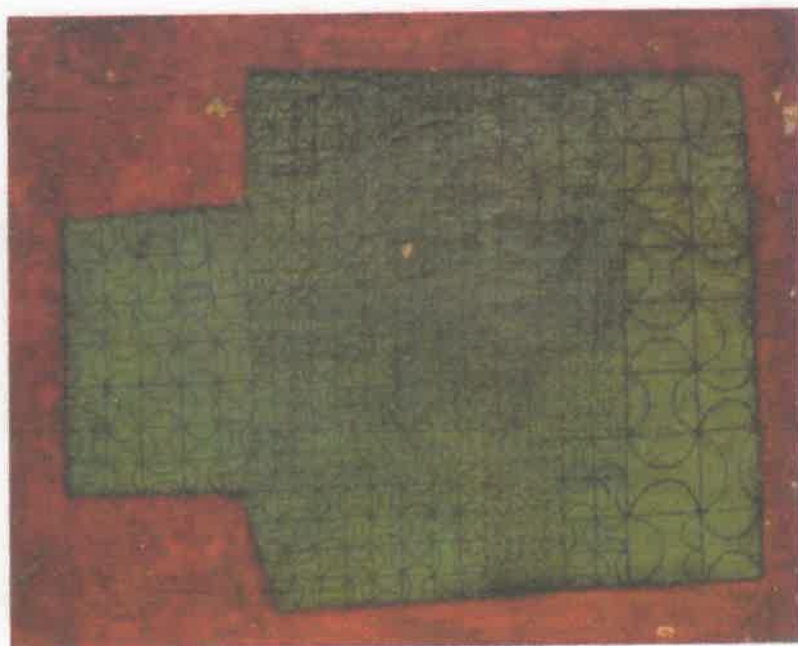


Page 82: A R Chughtai.
Slave Girl with Shoes
Watercolour. 56 x 44 cms.
Page 83: Zainul Abedin.
Two Figures. Oil on canvas.
157 x 70 cms. This page,
top: Zainul Abedin. *Tree*.
Watercolour. 38 x 27 cms.
1945. Top, right: Murtaza
Bashir. *Mother & Child*. Oil
on canvas. 92 x 64 cms.
1957. Above: Shakir Ali.
Kitchen Table. Oil on
canvas. 75 x 75 cms.
Above, right: S Salfar.
Figures. Oil on board.
80 x 38 cms.

curriculum. She enlisted the assistance of Khalid Iqbal, the distinguished teacher and artist who trained with Sir William Coldstream at the Slade School of Art, London. In 1955, when male students were admitted to the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University for the first time, Khalid Iqbal was their instructor.

A Lahore Group was formed which included Moyene Najmi, Anwar Jalal Shemza, Miriam Habib, Ali Iman, Ahmed Parvez, Shaikh Salfar and Qunub Sheikh. They met, explored the writings of modern critics, talked art and showed their work together in group exhibitions. All aspired to continuing their art studies abroad which most of them did.

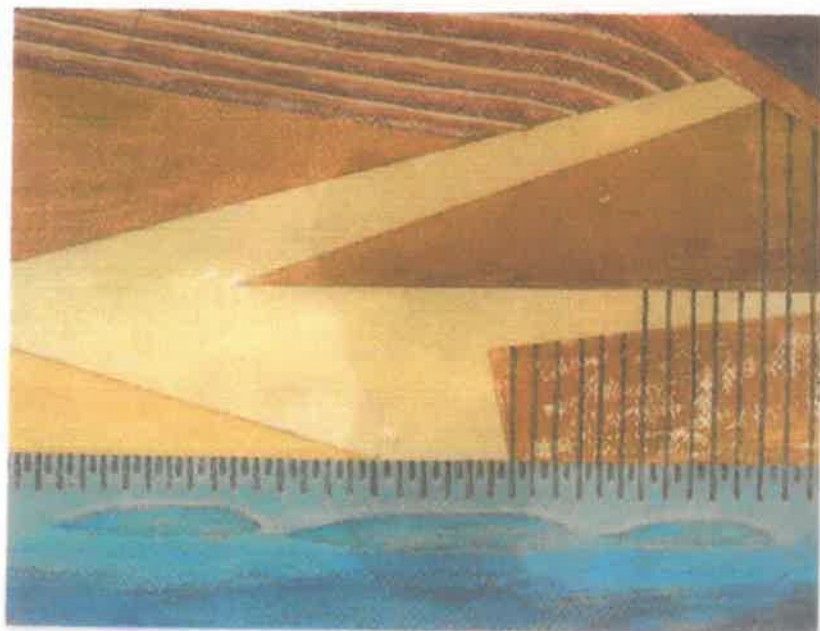
Committed to the analytical intent of Cubism and its geometric connections when Shakir Ali joined the faculty of the Mayo School of Art in 1952, he opened up new vistas for younger artists, and an exciting art era began. Well schooled in Eastern and in Western art philosophies, he attracted a lively group of aspiring artists around him. In Lahore Shakir Ali, Zainul Abedin and Zubeida Agha pioneered a modern art movement in the 50s, while in Karachi artists gathered from all parts of the subcontinent. A Fine Arts Society was formed and without an art institute, or cultural centre to speak of, arranged exhibitions in the YWCA or in private houses. Fyzee Rahamin, the



Top, left: Ali Imam. *Mother & Child*. Oil on canvas. 120 x 90 cms. Top, right: Shemza. *The Fort*. Oil on canvas. 100 x 75 cms. 1959. Above, left: Gulgee. *Composition*. Oil on canvas. 42 x 42 cms. 1988. Above: Jamil Naqsh. *Nude Figure with Pigeons*. Oil on canvas. 94 x 63 cms. 1987.



Awarded a prize for his work in this series at the Paris Biennial in 1960, he was regarded as something of a folk hero, demanding acceptance on his own terms. Later he turned to Calligraphy and helped to change the direction of art for a decade. Thus, through the efforts of individuals and the talent of the creative cadre, art was firmly established in Pakistan. Extreme individualism and diverse influences generated a plethora of styles from abstraction to visual metaphor. During the last five decades, the number of artists has multiplied. Art institutions have been established and art galleries have proliferated in major towns. The Government has set up organizations to encourage the arts though not always achieving their declared intention. Artists in Pakistan are aware of international art developments, many are widely



Top: Khalid Iqbal. *Landscape*. Oil on board. 60 x 60 cms. Above: Hanif Ramay. *Landscape*. Watercolour. 48 x 36 cms. Above, right: N H Qazi. *Still life*. Oil on board. 88 x 59 cms. Opposite page: Ahmed Parvez. *Eve after the fall*. Oil on canvas. 90 x 72 cms. 1961

distinguished portraitist, set up his own gallery of artworks and artifacts in his residence on Burns Road, the Aiwan-i-Raffia and held tea parties on Friday afternoons when cultural programmes were arranged in the garden. Younger artists eager to explore modern methods met nightly at Nagi's studio in Saddar to exchange views.

The greatest influence on artists by a single individual was that of Sadequain whose Cacti period in the 1950s broke new ground in art.



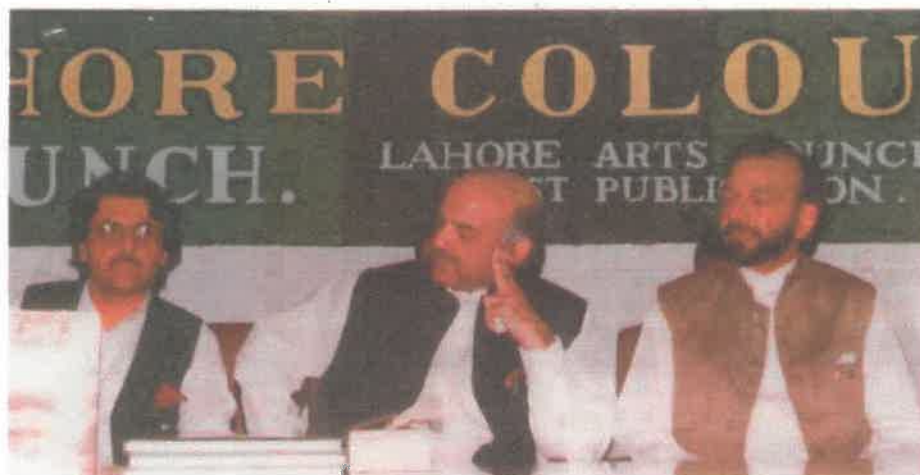
travelled. Significant exhibitions by Pakistani painters have been shown abroad. Even though the exposure may be regarded as slight, yet it has influenced a revaluation of the definition of art and aesthetics. A seemingly global inclination to shape art into a commodity vulnerable to changing trends, led local artists to examine their own traditions, aspiring to acknowledge the past while keeping abreast of the present. It is a quest that continues to the present time, moulded by the vitality and variety of the artists.

A list of the artists whose work was on display at the exhibition appears on page 88.



Participants of the Masters Retrospective & National Exhibition 1947-1997 Pakistan Golden Jubilee Celebrations, Lahore Arts Council, Lahore

A R Nagori	Azra Minhas	Liagat Ali	Najam-ul-Hassan	Sardar Muhammad
Aamir Malik	Babar Amin Chughtai	Lovisa Majeed Tariq	Nargis Ishaq	Sarmad Raza
Abbas Ali	Bashir Mirza	Luba Jabeen	Naseer-ul-din Sheikh	Sayyam
Abdul Hameed	Bilal Bela	M A Bukhari	Naseem Hafiz Qazi	Seemi Piracha
Abdul Hayee	Bilal Javed	M Aadil	Nasreen	Shabana Kausar
Abdul Malik	Bushra Hamwad	M Ajaz	Naseer Haider	Shafiq Ahmad Rana
Abdul Rahim Abbasi	Colin David	M Amjad Butt	Naseer-ul-din Muhammad	Shahza Zaidi
Abdul Rasheed Butt	Dabir Ahmad	M Asif Sharif	Nasrat Asmatullah	Shahbaz Malik
Abdullah	Dania Ali Khan	M Atiq Khan	Nasreen Aurangzeb	Shahid Furqan
Abid Hussain Qureshi	Dur-e-Yaqda	M D Ali	Noureen Nattvi	Shahid Iqbal
Abid Khan	Durre Wasim	M K Saig	Nausheen Hukhar	Sandhe
Abida Ehsan	Ehsan Ullah Khan	M Tasneem Shahzad	Nayyar Iqbal	Shahid Jalal
Abgeen Farooq	Faiqa Qayyum	M Nasim Shahzad	Nayyar Nigar	Shahid Manzoor
Abrar Iqbal Malik	Faiqa Saeedi	Mediha	Nazir Ahmad	Shahida Manzoor
Adela Razvi	Faisal Asghar	Mahmood Hassan Rumi	Naila Salman	Shahnawaz Zaidi
Afshan Muzaffar	Faizan Peerzada	Mahnaz Shah	Nomana Masood	Shahida Shafat
Afshar Malik	Farida Fatima	Mamoonah Khanum	Nasheen Ahmed	Shauza Akram
Aftab Ahmed	Farhat Khurshid	Mansoor Saleem	Nusra Latif Qureshi	Shazia Haque
Aftab Zafar	Farhat Nawaz	Mansoor Zuberi	Nuzhat Amir	Shazia Nizami
Agha Rafiqat	Farooq Mustafa	Mansoor Hassan	O V Joona	Shazia Anjum Zaidi
Ahmed Parvez	Farruk Kader	Mansoor Aye	Pervez Khan	Shakeel Ahmad
Ahmed Reza	Fasiullah Ashraf	Maqdas Rafiq	Perzada Najmul Hassan	Shamim Khan
Ahmad Khan	Fauzia Ayaz	Maqsood Ali	Quddisa	Shamim Shaukat
Ahmad Saeed Nagi	Fayyaz Ahmad	Maqsood Nazir	Qudus Mirza	Shehla Farooq
Ahmed Anwer	G A Kamangar	Maria Fareed	Qudsia Nisar	Shemza
Ahmed Bilal	Ghazanfar Abbasi Syed	Maria Iqbal	R M Naeem	Sheraz Shaukat
Ahsan Ullah Khan	Ghazala Sarfaraz	Maria Fazal Iqbal	Rasfia Zia	Shumaila Nooreen
Aisha Khalid	Ghulam Murtaza	Maryam Rasul	Rasna Zaidi	Sobia Ijaz
Aisha Siddiqui	Ghulam Mustafa	Mariam	Reba Kanwal	Sobia Riaz
Ajib Khan	Ghulam Rasool	Mashoor Raza	Raheel Akbar Javed	Sohaila Bokhari
Anjum Ayub Khan	Gulgee	Masood Hameed	Rana Muhammad Afzal	Sornia Nawab
Anjum Zaidi	Gulzar Hussain Naqvi	Mazhar Hamid	Rashida Farooq Syed	Sohaila Pervez
Akbar Ali Jabbar	H U Khan	Mehboob Ali	Rashid Khan	Sumaira Nozar
Akram Dost	Hajra Mansoor	Mehreen Aman	Rehan Khan	Sumaira Latif
Ali Shah	Hamida Sajjad	Mian Ijaz-ul-Hassan	Behava Anjad	Sumaira Jawad
Aliya Abidi	Hammad Farooq Chaudhry	Mian Naeem	Riaz Ahmad	Syed Farida Batool
Aliya Aziz	Hassan Rumi	Mirza Tahir Saraj	Riaz Rafi	Syed Masood Khalid
Aliya Najam	Hanif Rainay	Misbahuddin Qazi	Riffat Shahid	Syed Munawar Ali
Aliya Riaz	Hanif Ullah Khan	Modabbi Sattar	Rizwan Syed	Taleat Khalid
Aliah Bux	Hassain Malik	Mohammad Gulzar	Rizwan Ali	Talha Rathore
Amjad Ali	Hina Zia Dar	Mohammad Ashraf Gill	Rizwana	Tanveer E-Rehman
Amjad Samdani	Humaira	Mrs Munir Saeed	Rizwana Ghori	Tariq Javed
Amana Riaz	Humaira Malik	Mubashara Toor	Rizwana Muqeen	Tariq Gill
Ambar Azfar	Humaira Mohsin	Mughnas Riaz	Rizwana Shahid	Tahir Saraj
Amreen Safdar Bokhar	Humira Malik	Muhammad Aadil	Rubina Hukhar	Tasadduq Amin
Amir Jamil Butt	Hurda Siddiq	Muhammad Ali Talpur	Rukh-e-Noor Zaidi	Tauqeer Iqbal
Amin Guljee	Hassan Shahnawaz Zaidi	Muhammad Amin	S Manzoor Hussain	Tayyaba Aziz
Amina Arif	Irfan Ahmad	Muhammad Amjad Rafiq	S Safdar	Uneeza Zulfiqar
Amin-ur-Rehman	Imrana Afshen	Muhammad Atwar Khan	S Liagat Ali Shah	Ustad Saleem Sharif
Andleeb Rana	Imran Riaz	Muhammad Arif	S M Masood	Uzma
Anila Ghulam Hussain	Imtiaz Husain	Muhammad Asif	Sabahat Fareed	Uzma Rabbani
Anwar Ali	Iqbal Ahmad	M Nadeem Qureshi	Sadia Awan	Uzma Usmani
Aqib Sherif	Iqbal Ahmad Khokhar	Muhammad Riaz	Sadequain	Wahab Jaffer
A R Chughtai	Iqbal Hussain	Muhammad Rafique Ahmad	Sadie Qutub Hashmi	Wahid Ahmad
Asghar Ali	Jahanzeb Malik	Muhammad Yousef	Saddagat Hussain Saddique	Wahid Nasir
Asif Mehmood	Jakes Nagee	Mukhtar Hyder	Saeed Akhtar	Waqar A Sheikh
Asim Amjad	Jamal-e-Mustafa	Munazza Rashid	Saeed Ahmad	Zafar Mehmood
Asma Chaudhry	Jamil Ahmad	Munazza Yousofi	Salma Butt	Zahir-ud-Din Babar
Asma Kamal	Jamil Baloch	Mussarat Hassan	Salma Khan	Zarina Khurshid
Atif Ameer	Jamshaid Hassan	N Wamiq	Salma Reuf	Zartash Anjad
Attiya Jawad	Javed Qumer	Nadia Shaukat	Saira Dar	Zaibonnisa Zubair
Ayesha Abid	Kaleem Khan	Naem Khan	Sajima Hashmi	Zulfiqar Ali Zulfi
Ayesha Rehman	Kamal Hayat	Naghat Parveen	Salwat Ali	Zulqarnain Haider
Aziz Jan	Khalida Ali Khan	Nahed Saleem	Saleem Durani	
Aziz Mirza	Khalid Iqbal	Nahid Raza	Sajmar Mehmood	
Azmat Ali	Khalid Mehmood	Naila Aamer	Samina Afzal	
Azra Chaudhry	Khalid Saeed Butt	Najma Waqar Ahmed	Samina Nasim	



Lahore Colours

M ATHAR TAHIR

'Lahore is a city without comparison', proclaims a Punjabi saying. And through the ages this timeless place has continued to enchant residents and foreigners alike. Whether it was the English poet John Milton who sang of the "Lahor of great Mogul" in his magnum opus, *Paradise Lost* or his itinerant countrymen who spoke of it with unconcealed admiration, whether they were Europeans or Asian explorers or adventurers, merchants or missionaries, pilgrims or plunderers, all found this heart of the Punjab a magic place. Gateway to the subcontinent, the city suffered countless invasions but eventually invaders succumbed to its charm. From Greeks to Afghans, from traders to Central Asian Turks, from Arabs to the original local population, all mixed and merged, giving the place a colour and diversity unmatched by any other city of South Asia. To crown it all, it remained for decades the jewel of Ghaznavid and Mughal empires, rivaling such great cities of the Muslim world as Granada, Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad.

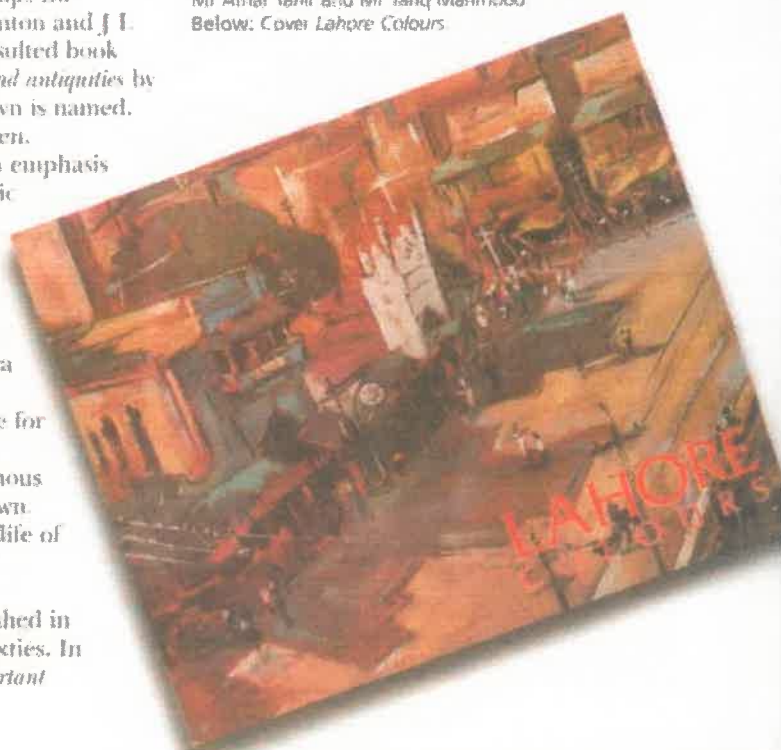
Much has been written on and about Lahore. From poetic panegyrics in Persian, Punjabi and Urdu to books in English. Despite centuries of scholarly attention, it still remains full of new discoveries and dimensions unexplored. Perhaps the earliest book devoted to Lahore was by T H Thornton and J I. Kipling, *Lahore*, published in 1870. The most consulted book however, is *Lahore: its history, architectural remains and antiquities* by Justice M A Latif, after whom a lane in the old town is named. Published in 1892, it is a work of detailed, if uneven, scholarship listing buildings and inscriptions, with emphasis on historical aspects. It fails to capture the dynamic impulse of Lahore life. Kanhiya Lal's Persian book is basically about the architectural additions with which he was involved by the British. While he mentions some of the chief families and the rituals of the three religious groups, he too is unable to capture the special aura of Lahore. A short but delightful book by H R Goulding *Old Lahore*, 1924, emanates genuine love for the city.

Rudyard Kipling's several short stories and famous novel *Kim*, pay the finest creative tribute to this town. This most evocative body of work brings alive the life of those who inhabited, and continue to inhabit, the labyrinthine lanes.

Dr M Baqir's *Lahore past and present*, first published in 1952 and later updated, brings the city into the sixties. In 1961 Waliullah Khan published *Lahore and its important*



Top: At the launch ceremony for *Lahore Colours*, Mr Tariq Mahmood, Secretary Information, Mr Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, Chief Minister Punjab, Mr Muhammad Athar Tahir, Chairman Lahore Arts Council. Above: Mr Shahbaz Sharif viewing the exhibition with Mr Athar Tahir and Mr Tariq Mahmood. Below: Cover *Lahore Colours*.



monuments. As the name suggests, it is an archaeologist's examination of the city. *Lahore: the city within* by Samina Quraeshi appeared in 1988, followed by F S Aijazuddin's *Lahore: illustrated views of the 19th century* in 1991. Other books on Lahore, and there are several now, are photographic essays on the city.

Lahore Colours, in contrast and complement to all the above, captures the creative continuum of five decades. The city has always

afforded artists a continuing stimulus. This volume brings together many a rich response. Lahore colours spill out once the gates of the walled city on the end



Artists were invited to paint small canvases to form part of the Golden Jubilee Mural. Top, left: (l-r) Zulfi, Saeed Akhtar, Athar Tahir, Marjorie Hussain and Ahmad Khan. Above: Mehboob Ali and Mrs Anver Afzal painting their canvases. Top, right: Khalid Saeed Butt. Chou Burp. 1991. Middle: Moyene Najmi. *Nila Gumbad*. Oil on canvas. Right: Iqbal Hussain. *Labourers*, Bhattri Chowk. Oil on board. 1996.

and rajas enacted the drama of kingly power: war and peace, the grand havelis of the nobility where splendour and intrigue wove intricate patterns, the lanes frequented by poets and artists, walked by sufis, scholars and commoners, and the narrow streets that follow not like a tedious argument, but have the vivacity of the colourful language Lahoris are known for.

Then there are words that ferry one across the Ravi river on to Sher Shah Suri's Grand Trunk Road to witness the stones of the empire.

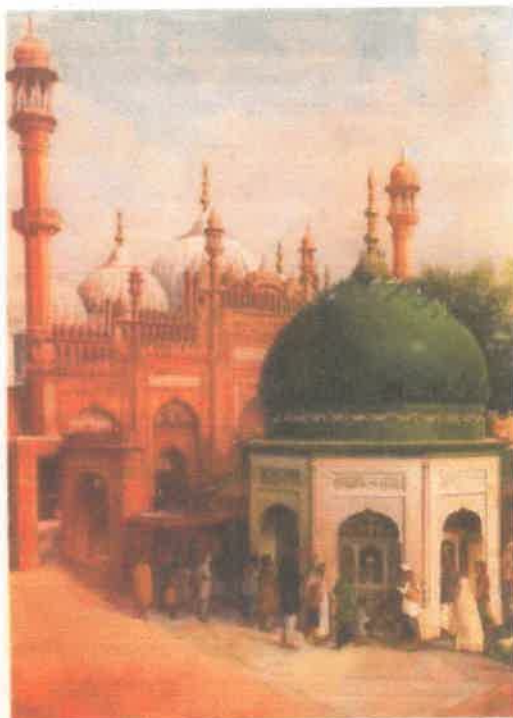
And of a different aesthetic, outside walls, the colonial structures of yet another imperial import. Along the splendid Mall, the British stood one glorious hybrid after another. Each is a testament to their expansionist vision and amalgam of South Asia's multifarious cultural strands. All tampered with the Western biiding, transmuting, transforming initiative.

With the sole exception of Miran Bakhsh's



paintings all the works date from after Independence, whether they were executed by foreigners who made Pakistan their home like Petman and Anna Molka Ahmad, or by visitors

Below: Hal Bevan Petman. *Gateway to Badshahi Mosque*. Oil on canvas. 1950. Right: Ustad Miran Bukhsh. *Data Darbar*. Watercolour



from abroad, like Sir Hugh Casson or by Pakistanis.

Miran Bukhsh has been included for several reasons. His work, so rare to find, suddenly appeared before the public in some quantity very recently. It had neither been seen by the post-Independence generations till that date, nor reproduced before. An important painter, he was active during the British Raj. He did not look to romantic mythology or legend or Mughal twilight for inspiration, like his more famous contemporaries, Allah Bux and A R Chughtai. Instead his was a more realistic approach. He saw Lahore, unencumbered by historical preconception, with refreshing clarity. And he painted what he saw.

Page after page stands the young next masters and the established, verve and enthusiasm next experience and expertise. In each work a skill and distinct sense, sensitivity and sensibility is visible. Here, surely, is God's plenty. This book, like the proverbial richness in a little room, is a small but feeling



compliment to the city, the people of Lahore and their *jote de vivre*.

Lahore Colours is a critique, a commemoration, a celebration.

Anna Molka Ahmad
Museum. Oil on board
1985

Artists whose works have been included in *Lahore Colours*

Aftab Azeem
Asha Khalid
Aminur Rehman
Anir Malik
Anna Molka Ahmad
Askari Mian Irani
Babar Amin Chughtai
Bushra Hameed
Colin David
Durre Waseem
Fasiullah Ahsan

Ghazanfar Ali
Ghulam Mustafa
Habib Burkie
Hal Bevan Petman
Hasan Shahnavaz Zaidi
Haseeb Ullah Waqar
Hugh Casson, Sir
Iqbal Ahmad
Iqbal Hussain
Khalid Saeed Butt
M Saleem Ansari

M Tariq Mehmood
Mahmood Hasan Rumi
Mehboob Ali
Mirza Tahir Siraj
Moyene Najmi
Mubushra Sami
Muhammad Asif
Muhammad Aslam Minhas
Naela Amir
Naseem Hafeez Qazi
Naseer ud Din Sheikh

Nazir Ahmad
Nusra Latif Qureshi
Nusrat Ali
Pirzada Najam ul Hasan
R M Naeem
Rahat Naveed Masud
Raheel Akbar Javed
Sabina Gillani
Sadaqat Hussain Siddiqui
Sajid Qureshi
Samina Nasim

Shakil Ahmad
Sufi Waqar
Ustad Bashir ud Din
Ustad Miran Bukhsh
Moortarwaley
Uzma Rabbani
Zakir Meer
Zubeda Javed
Zulfikar Ali Zulfikar
Zulqarnain Haider

*May it be colour, or brick and stone,
May it be a lyre or words and sound,
The miracle of art draws lustre from
The life-giving blood of heart".*

Iqbal

On my way to meet Soni Zuberi Shah who had brought a series of paintings, calligraphic texts, jewellery, prints and ceramic works from Pakistan to show in London as a celebration of 50 years of Pakistani sovereignty, I bought a copy of the *Guardian* newspaper and noticed an article headed, 'Demons return to haunt Karachi'. In this article, (in itself a rarity for the British Press to cover Pakistani affairs), it reported the shooting of Naveed Hussein, an architect who had challenged "Karachi's powerful mafias that profit from the Karachi administration's failure to provide basic services, housing, transport, employment, even water".

This seemed somewhat ironic to me as I went to consider a collection of contemporary

to the visual language of the West to facilitate the growth of its own contemporary visual vocabulary. This for many people in the west is a problem:

"Art, like language, lives by appropriation and assimilation, and interactions take place in all directions. The problem is that when "Others" appropriate from the "West" they are often labelled as imitators and their work is deemed derivative, contaminated and impure. This attitude stems from the West's desire to contain and control the Other in terms of fixed identity. Fluidity rather than fixity provides an alternative framework, and artists from all cultures may be seen as working within and through 'the contingencies of ambivalent identities, discontinuous but intertwined histories and the diasporan experience.'"

Tawadros G. "The Case of the missing Body" *Global Visions*, p 109.

From the Heart: A Celebration of Art

JOHN HOLT

Works by 30 Pakistani painters, sculptors and graphic artists were brought to London by a young British Pakistani art consultant and galleryist, Soni Zuberi-Shah for a two-week display in August 1997 at the Art Connoisseur Gallery.

Talha Rathore, *Basari* (Kite Festival). Miniature. 15 x 20 cms.

Opposite page, Left: Tariq Javed, *Sindhi Woman*. Oil on paper. 68 x 53 cms

Right, top: Nahid Raza *Thinking of You*. Oil on canvas. 35.5 x 35.5 cms

Middle: Askar, *Mian Iran Mughal Princess*. Oil on canvas. 75.5 x 75.5 cms

Bottom: A R Nagon, *Sindh Card*. Oil on canvas. 96.5 x 88 cms

Pakistani art in this 50th year of the existence of Pakistan that the terrible chaos within Karachi, though in itself not indicative of the whole of Pakistan, witnessed the enormous complexities of the situation within the country, encumbered by the legacies of colonialism, the consequences of wars with India, the residue of the Afghan war and the pernicious and implicit corruption of this fledgling country.

Pakistan should not, however, be defined by its problems, but more by the potential of its people who are its greatest resource. Its contemporary voice is in as formative status as its short history as a nation state would indicate. The discourse that is within modern Pakistan is subject to the repressions and systemic failures of its institutions, yet, despite the evident elitist nature of the arts, due to the enormous inequalities of education and social provision, it is nevertheless a voice of the Zeitgeist, of the spirit of the time within modern Pakistan.

It is clear that the artists of Pakistan looked



The short history of Pakistani art is marked by its western influence, prompted by the need to facilitate an opening of conceptual and formal possibilities.

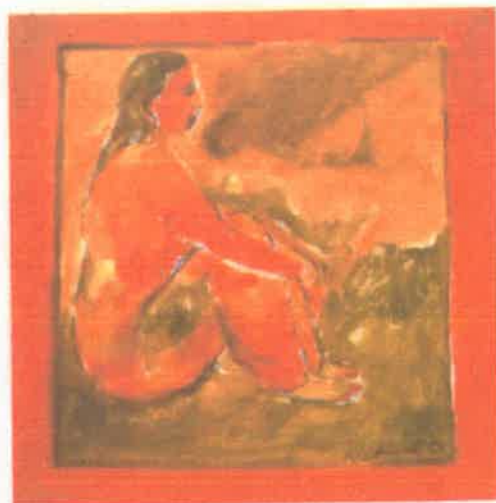
"The first Post-Partition generation experimented with Western "isms" - abstract expressionism, pop, op and more. Some artists have integrated these "isms" into a personal signature... Since the 1960s, most of the nationally recognised Pakistani painters have graduated from college and gone abroad, to England, America, France and Italy. Certainly the art and philosophy of most have been influenced by their experiences abroad. All have brought back the styles of foreign artists who impressed them, though the impact of those artists has tended to be superficial for the most part and assimilated or rejected according to each artist's personal preferences and requirements. The graduates from the 1960's are today teachers at the National

College of the Arts, Punjab University in Lahore, the Karachi School of Art and the Central Institute of Arts in Karachi."

Marjorie Hussain, 'Contemporary Paintings from Pakistan', Pacific Asia Museum 1994.

I know of one Pakistani woman artist (not in this show) who, after a period of indulgence in the stylistic forms of American Abstract Expressionist Mark Rothko began to find her own voice in the spiritual presence of Pakistan itself. Her acknowledgement of a connectedness with the earth of her country transformed her work into something alive with the spirit of place, and of the people. Her language became Pakistani not a mere western derivative. She had taken a journey home

of refugees that flooded in from India, brought with them vestiges of a very liberal Muslim tradition. Remnants of the legacy of the great Mughal Empire in the arts and crafts were still part of the daily lives of the Muslim families that moved to Pakistan. It was not unusual for middle class women to be poets, painters and musicians as long as it was within the confines of the home".



having been opened up by a dialogue with improvisational abstraction.

The roots of Pakistani art go much deeper than an engagement with Western art. It is located in Islamic history, a history which is not passive but ever transforming, and, as all histories it is a fluid and transfiguring phenomenon. The "mind set" of the movement is one of modern Pakistan being challenged to move towards a more compassionate and tolerant ethos through the manifestation of contemporary art by artists, men and women of courage and integrity, many of whom have faced severe political opposition to their work. "Although in 1947, the new state of Pakistan did not immediately move to proclaim any cultural policies, the large number

Salima Hashmi - Introduction to the exhibition "An Intelligent Rebellion. Women Artists of Pakistan" - Cartwright Hall, Bradford. 1995.

In 1996, in response to an exhibition of six artists from Pakistan called "Tampered Surface", curated by Alnoor Mitha and Richard Hylton which toured the North of England, I wrote: "The apparent problem of western encounters with



'Islamic Art' is heightened by the lack of western understanding of contemporary Islamic history and thought. The absence of a clear context within which to place the work of both "traditional" and modern" 'Islamic artists' leads, inevitably, to a stereotype, or more, an indifference to the arts of the Asian subcontinent. If this is true of India, it is even more so for Pakistan where it is assumed there is little or no contemporary art work, and what there is, is perceived as being subject to imposed limitations of formal figurative content. In my experience, this assumption is not only true of western attitudes to Pakistani art, but also of Indian perceptions."

"Tampered Surface" Review in *Third Text*, Autumn 1996.

The exhibition of 30 Pakistani artists seen in London's Art Connoisseur Gallery, curated by Soni Zuberi-Shah, is in some ways a problematic venture in relation to the perceptions of Pakistani art by a British public and art establishment. It is true to say that the British engagement with Pakistani art is, in some ways an engagement with the "other". Pakistan is an unknown culture, despite the presence of so many British people whose histories are located in Asia, and as I stated in the quote above there seems to be an absence of a clear context into which to place contemporary Islamic work, and in the vacuum caused by a lack of understanding of the environment in which the work was made there manifests the dangers of misrepresentation.

It is evident that art institutions are guilty of a form of aesthetic exclusion to cultural paradigms that do not conform to the established view. That the arts of South Asia are so often seen as the preserve of the ethnographic museum and not contemporary galleries of art is symptomatic of a Eurocentric attitude to the arts of Asia which prevails today at a time when acknowledgement of cultural diversity is one to which only lip service is paid.

Up to now there have been only two major exhibitions of contemporary Pakistani art in Britain, both in the North of England. This, I believe, is due to the proactive work done in the North in relation to cultural identities in a transcultural sense by individuals like Alnoor Mitha, now working at



Top: Ismail Gulgee, *Calligraphic composition*. Oil on canvas. 122 x 91.5 cms. Middle: Fatima Zahra Hassan, *A Wise Man*. Miniature. 23 x 18.5 cms. Above: Marsoot Rahi, *Violin Player*. Oil on paper. 37 x 30.5 cms.

Oldham, and Nima Poovaya-Smith at Cartwright Hall in Bradford, where, with the full support of Bradford City Council, she has established a Transcultural Gallery which houses a collection of contemporary Indian and Pakistani art. Cartwright Hall will continue to platform art from the Asian sub-continent and Alnoor Mitha continues to curate exhibitions from developing/emerging countries. But this remains a minority activity and the capital seems to have had no significant exhibition of Pakistani art until now!

The exhibition at the Connoisseur Gallery in London is the consequence of the stoic determination of a young environmentalist and film-maker, Soni Zuberi Shah. It is indicative of the dearth of interest in the UK to the contemporary arts of Pakistan that she received no funding and little support for her venture. She felt that Pakistani art was under represented and decided to put a show together to celebrate the 50th centenary. The references to the Golden Jubilee of the Asian sub-continent all seemed to presume that it is only India that is celebrating. Soni had conducted a major environmental project in Pakistan and was familiar with the art and artists of that country. She was supported by Rabia Zuberi, an acknowledged artist and teacher who lives in Karachi. Soni went to Pakistan earlier this year and collected over 140 works, all chosen by herself. She travelled throughout the country and chose works more on a subjective basis than from the intention to construct a paradigmatic exhibition of Pakistani art.

As I have already stated, there are dangers of this show being seen as representative: as *the* survey of Pakistani art. It is *not*. The political struggle evident through the work of many artists, is not fully represented and mixed media and time based work is absent. This is not to deny the value of this exhibition which should be seen as a personal choice from the arts of Pakistan. The work in this exhibition is diverse in its quality and the range of issues informing it. But in such an emerging art scene one can look at the show in the context of the emergence of cultural voices, a

phenomenon which has its parallels in contemporary Pakistani writing which is flourishing at this time. The exhibition "50 years of Pakistan. A Celebration of Art", as Salima Hashmi states "does not set out to be a definitive view of the contemporary art scene in Pakistan today. It attempts to open a window into the diversity of idiom, vocabulary, concepts and directions, reflecting the commitment of the Pakistani artist to a vibrant and confident future."

Many of the artists showing in the exhibition have never shown in the West before. Soni has swept up a range of work, some of which is clearly Islamic in nature, though expectations that all Pakistani work should be evidently Islamic is to reduce the possibilities of its formal outcomes.

I am reminded of an exhibition of Native American Art at the Philbrook Art Centre in America in which Oscar Howe, a Sioux painter, submitted an abstract painting. Oscar had his painting rejected because it was said to be not "a traditional Indian painting". Oscar Howe responded with a moving letter which addressed, probably for the first time, the strictures placed upon artists to conform to a stereotype:

"Dear Mrs Snodgrass, Whoever has said that my paintings are not in the traditional Indian style has poor knowledge of Indian art indeed. There is much more to Indian art than pretty stylised pictures. There was power and strength and individualism (emotional and intellectual insight) in the old Indian paintings. Are we to be held back forever with one phase of Indian painting, with no right for individualism, dictated to as the Indian has always been, put on reservations and treated like a child, and only the White Man knows what is best for him? Now, even in Art. "You little child, do what we think is best for you, nothing different". Well I am not going to stand for it. Indian Art can compete with any art in the world, but not as a suppressed art..."



Top: Rasheed Butt. 99 Names of Allah. Mixed media. 49.5 x 33 cms. Middle: Sarwat Hayat Maharana Swaroop Singh. Miniature. 38 x 28.5 cms. Above: Hajra Mansoor. Pathan maiden. Mixed media. 48.5 x 32.5 cms.

Western art practice is devoid, it seems, of a numinous reference in any pronounced way. The search for a metaphysical experience through art has not survived the modernist petition. In the work evident in this exhibition there is clearly manifest in some of the artists a profound engagement with the deeper aspects of identity as though the artist was penetrating a surface, undertaking an inner journey through the strata of political and social illusion, a journey contracted until a compassionate reality is realised and formally expressed. The principle of defiance through personal challenge and articulation of insight has always been a major aspect of Islamic thought and practice. As with the Sufic propensity to puncture the illusory, the contemporary artists of Pakistan are facilitators for change and transformation of their own land and culture.

This exhibition paves the way for far more exposure to the contemporary art of Pakistan in Britain. The process has begun, and now with this large scale show in London I suspect many will follow. From the fiercely challenging paintings of A R Nagori in which his narratives of passionate defence of the oppressed and the marginalised are carried in a mythic and symbolic language, to the sacred iconography of the ethnocentric paintings of Askari Mian Irani whose numerologically ordered works allude to the notion of *tawiz*, sacred and esoteric numbers and words in a hybrid of traditional and contemporary imagery.

Women artists who have had a significant influence on the genesis of Pakistani art are well represented in the show. In her preface to the "Intelligent Rebellion. Women Artists of Pakistan", Nina Boovaya Smith writes: "Yet one of the achievements of these artists is the manner in which they have managed to become central to the cultural life of Pakistan. They have successfully resisted any attempt to isolate or marginalise them. This is remarkable in the light of the frequently fearless critical stance they have adopted. Perhaps they have earned respect because their rebellion, whether articulated against political or social injustices or even against an aesthetic tradition, has never been merely an affectation but solidly underpinned by a deadly seriousness coupled with shrewd commonsense: in short, an intelligent rebellion."

Right: Qudsia Nisar. Detail. Abstract Series 1. Watercolour. 47.5 x 39 cms. Middle, extreme right: Ather Jamal. *Rural Sindhi Woman*. Watercolour. 36.5 x 53.5 cms. Middle, right: Rabia Zuberi. Detail. *Labour Series 2*. Mixed media 53 x 37 cms. Bottom, extreme right: Mashkoor Raza. *Abstract Composition 3*. Oil on paper. 73 x 53 cms. Bottom, right: Ambar Aslam. *Piscine series 1, blue/orange*. Oil on paper 35.5 x 35.5 cms



From the miniature paintings of Fatima Zahra Hassan to the large abstract canvases of Ismail Gulgee this exhibition conveys the vision of modern Pakistan to the people of Britain. It seeks to celebrate the spirit of an unacknowledged vision, a vision informed by a history which, in its hybrid manifestation, touches upon both west and east, upon the inner and outer, upon the expansion of a history wrought by both pain and beauty.

*"Deep in the recesses of my heart hangs
a picture of myself
God knows who painted it and when
There it remains hidden from me and my friends
but if ever I glimpse it, even by accident,
My heart shudders at the comparison with myself"*

Image by Fahmida Riaz. *We Sufid Women*. Contemporary Urdu Poetry. The Women's Press, 1980.

John Holt is an artist and writer. He lectures at Bepton Hall College of University of Leeds.

Artists whose works were exhibited at the Connoisseur Gallery

Ismail Gulgee
Alican Murtazin
A.R. Naqvi
Bashir Mirza
Salma Hashmi
Mohammad Kurr
Hajra Mansoor
Mansoor Rabi
Sabah Husan
Mashkoor Raza
Ather Jamal
Ambar Aslam
Iqbal Qasbi
Amar
Rabia Zuberi
Rashid Razi
Tariq Javed
Meerzaali
Fatima Zahra Hassan
Saniat Hayer
Amar Malik
Rabia Kamwar
Tahira Rathore
Faridul Ahsan
Masood Ali
Qudsia Nisar
Zahra
Nasir Raza
Ghaffar Bagai
Tahir Ahmed
Gulzar Ahmed
Amin Gulgee



Since the exhibition, Soni Zuberi-Shah has set up a Gallery at:
Soni Gallery
25 Connaught Street, Marble Arch, London W2
Tel 0171 262 9101



1997 at the NCA

TEHNYAT MAJEED

Every year, a large number of fine artists, designers and architects dedicated to playing an integral role in the improvement and promotion of art and architecture in Pakistan, graduate from the National College of Arts (NCA). It is evident that this institution is shaping artistic trends by its prolific output of innovative and creative work achieved through extensive experimentation in both traditional and modern techniques and skills. For NCA, 1997 celebrated the Jubilee year marking the culmination of fifty years of consistent effort and development of arts in the local, national and global context.

With the progressive success of its learning environment under the principalship of Professor Salima Hashmi, the National College of Arts plans in the near future, to expand into a postgraduate programme offering M Phil degrees in Communication and Cultural

Top: NCA Gallery September 1997, Group show *Patterning*. Middle: The Queen visited the National College of Arts on 10th October 1997, seen here accompanied by Salima Hashmi, Principal NCA and Governor Punjab seeing a puppet performance by students and above, chatting to Students and Faculty. Photographs of the visit, Courtesy Dawn

Studies, and in Fine Arts. It is due to its unique character that this prestigious institution was singled out during Queen Elizabeth's brief visit to Pakistan. In preparation for the Queen's visit on 10 October 1997, the students under the supervision of their teachers embarked on various projects which included two large murals: one depicting historical figures associated with the National College of Arts, formerly known as the Mayo School of Art, and the other a colourful collage of self portraits. The brick installations project "Mashrabia", assigned to second year architecture students, featured interesting additions in front of the

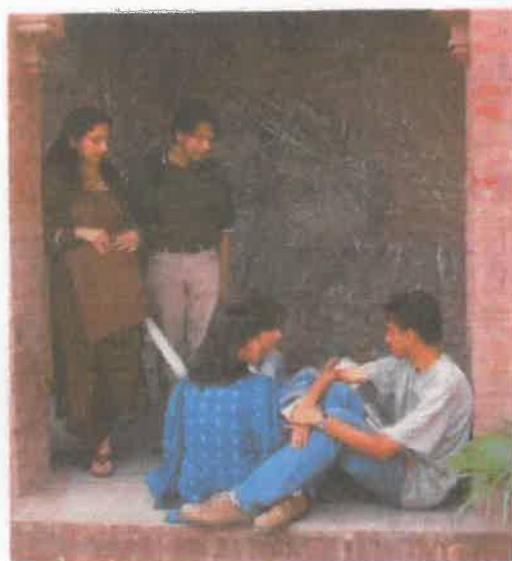


Above: Mural based on group photos of the 1880s, with Lockwood Kipling as Principal at Mayo School. Above, right: Students in verandah. Right: Shazia Sikander, *Cycles and Transitions*, 1995. Vegetable colour, dry pigment watercolour, tea on wasli - handmade paper.

otherwise unassuming exterior of the college building.

During her tour of the college, the Queen showed great interest in the Department of Miniature Painting and was presented a scroll painting. NCA is the only institution in South Asia which offers formal training in the traditional art of miniature painting. A few years ago, the faculty realising the importance of traditional arts, revised the course to assimilate new contemporary themes with traditional elements in order to revive the interest of students and the public at large, in miniature painting.

The scope of contemporary Pakistani miniature painting has progressed well beyond national boundaries onto the international level as evidenced by Bashir Ahmad's solo exhibition held at the Asia Pacific Museum at Pasadena, California where it was well received by art lovers. Another miniaturist, Imran Qureshi's work too has gained international fame as he was commissioned to paint some twelve miniatures illustrating costumes of the subcontinent from the 16th-20th century. This repertoire also included four specimens of calligraphy, displayed in the "Draped and Shaped" exhibition in November 1997, at the Cartwright Hall in Bradford. Affiliated with this department are other such accomplished artists like Talha Rathore and Fasihullah Ahsan.



The former has been awarded a UNESCO Bursary to work at the Sanskriti Kendra Institute at Delhi for three months. This bursary was awarded on the basis of her work entered in the exhibition of Contemporary Asian Art featuring seven artists, held in Hong Kong in February 1997. The above mentioned trio currently teach in the department of miniature painting and have been given several awards for their works which have been exhibited nationally as well as at international centres such as London, Hong Kong and Colombo.

Works by NCA artists have made their way

into major international exhibitions held during 1997. Zahoor ul Akhlaq, former Head of the Fine Arts department was amongst the thirteen artists selected from all over the Muslim world for the show entitled "Modernities and Memories: Contemporary Art from the Islamic World", which opened as one of the shows at the Venice Biennale. Sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, the exhibition appointed six curators from Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan, Tunisia, Jordan and Sudan. Salima Hashmi was nominated the curator from Pakistan.

Amongst younger artists, the work of Shazia

predominating theme of the mural was the fifty years of freedom of arts in Pakistan.

In addition to the regular courses, the Department of Architecture, Design and Fine Arts have taken the initiative to start evening courses catering to professionals as well as mature students. The diploma offered in interior design is a twelve month course and is structured to provide teaching in construction technology, drafting, sculpture, furniture design and history of art. The workshop in drawing and painting was conducted for five weeks.

NCA is also committed to encouraging cultural and artistic exchange through a close



Left: Students in a studio.
Below: Main courtyard with sculpture by NCA graduate Jamil Baloch.

Sikander was chosen for the Whitney Biennale held in New York, in the spring of 1997. Her solo exhibition opened in November at the Dietch Project Gallery in SoHo, New York. In connection with the Jubilee celebrations, Risham Sved was invited to participate in the exhibition "Mappings and Shared Histories" based on the partition of India and Pakistan. The show consisted of works by three Pakistani and three Indian artists. It began in September 1997 at the Eicher Gallery in Delhi followed by a tour to Bombay from where it was brought to Lahore.

The NCA experience has been to reach out to the public by continuous dissemination of not only plastic and fine arts but also through integrated performing arts. The Mime Club, Notanki Drama Society and the Puppet Society are actively involved in putting up productions providing quality entertainment with occasional social and political undertones revealing an awareness of such issues amongst the student body. Numerous performances have been staged in large cities and everywhere the public's enthusiastic response has been very encouraging. One of the student-teacher collaborative projects was the designing of the Jubilee Train which would carry works of art to various parts of Pakistan. Students also worked on a 6ft x 750ft mural for the International Drama Festival held in November 1997. The



interaction of artists from various countries. A workshop was conducted by an Austrian artist, Hermann Krensmayer whose works were also on display in November 1997, at the NCA Gallery. An artist from Peru will be working as an artist in residence sponsored by a UNESCO Fellowship in the field of printmaking and painting. Some projects in the offing include a two week workshop on vegetable textile dyes, in February 1998, which is being sponsored by UNESCO. Various experts from Turkey, India, Bangladesh and Iran have been invited to NCA to demonstrate the use of vegetable dyes. The

workshop's objective is to explore these techniques to determine the feasibility of vegetable dyeing in order to revive the tradition in Pakistan as it is considered to be environmentally friendlier than synthetic dyes.

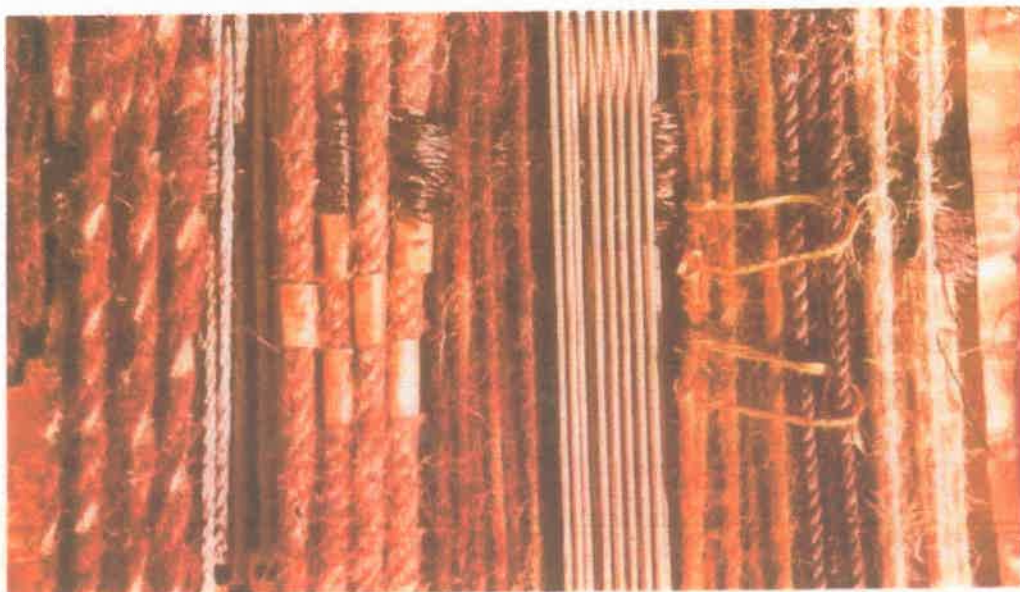
It was an honour for NCA to receive Ahmad Moustafa, the renowned calligraphist for the second time. On this occasion, he had been accompanying the royal entourage. He extended his stay in Lahore to give a brilliant slide show of his works and a lecture about his previous work and his latest painting "A Mingling of the Oceans" which was presented by the Queen to the people of Pakistan.



The NCA Gallery is a non commercial art gallery which does not aim at sales but rather focuses on exhibiting works of an experimental nature by unknown or less established artists. It provides artists from places other than the cultural centres of Pakistan, with a platform to display their works. This year it patronised the

works of Rizwan Ali Inrani, a self taught artist from Kana in interior Sindh, and Mohammad Afzal who is based in Bahawalpur. It is also a convenient outlet for the works of many talented NCA alumni and faculty. The year 1997 has witnessed a spate of fine exhibitions with works of Sheherzade Alam, Zahoor ul Akhlaq,

Above: Faziullah Ahsan
Detail, *Lahore of Today*
1993 Above, right:
Shazia Sikander *Knock,
knock, Who's There?*
Mithila, Mithila, Who?
1996 Installation view
Project *Row Houses*. Right:
Sania Samad *Off Loom*
Panel Copper sheet,
copper wire, silk threads
and cotton fibres



Nafeesa Shah, Ustad Bashir ud Din and his son Amin ur Rehman.

A number of artists from NCA joined in the show known as "Patterning" put up by Australian artists in September 1997. The show generated an on-going cultural dialogue translated through an exploration of traditional designs and patterns. Other international shows held at the NCA Gallery during 1997 included works from Britain and an exhibition on Moorish architecture from Spain. There are plans contingent on the availability of resources, to build a permanent collection of the finest Pakistani art for which some artists

the younger faculty members are making meaningful contributions by their input of fresh ideas for the upgrading of the curriculum according to current needs and requirements. One of the main highlights of 1997 was the government allocation to the National College of Arts, of the Wazir Khan Baradari, the land adjacent to the college which will in future house the Department of Miniature Painting.



have donated their works. An interesting fund raising venture, soon to take place, for the Printmaking studio, is the auctioning of the "Boxprint"; a portfolio of prints donated by both students and teachers.

In short, there has been much activity taking place within the precincts of the college where



Above, left: Mohammad Imran Qureshi: *Truth Foretold* 1996. Above, right: Quddus Mirza: *Homage to a Book Which is Burning Still* 1996. Oil on board. Left: Risham Syed: *Untitled*, mixed media on paper. Right: Nausheen Saeed: *Familiar Labyrinth* 1997. Dyed Muslin. Site: Nelson Hospital, London.



Seminar and Exhibition at IVSAA

TEHMINA AHMED

The Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture (IVSAA) in Karachi rounded off 1997 as a year of innovative activities and projects, with a Seminar on traditional textiles accompanied by an exhibition at the school premises. A collaborative effort with the Goethe Institute, the seminar was titled "Traditional Textiles: Inspirations for the Global Market" and was attended by textile experts and academics from different parts of Pakistan as well as delegates from Bangladesh, India and Germany. India's Jasleen Dhamija was a lively presence at the seminar, and a valuable contribution was made by

modes to those more suited to the demands of the buyer. She said that standardisation of the product and low costs were among the foremost concerns of European buyers, and as a result, the region which was known for the production of very fine qualities of textiles, began to replace some of these with cloth of middling quality, made with cotton of a lower quality and a lower count yarn.

The organisation of production also changed drastically in order to meet European needs for standardisation and strict delivery schedules. While trade needs had already created specialised centres for weaving, embroidery and dyeing, the European companies eventually began to set up factories near the centres of production and procurement of raw materials, and just the East India Company had set up 19 such factories by



Above: Seminar participants included (l-r) Fakir Syed Aijazuddin, Irfan Hussain, Ghazi Salahuddin, Dr Hameeda Hossain and Salima Hashmi. Above, right: Craft Bazaar at the IVSAA Campus



Aditi Ranjan who has taught for fifteen years at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad. NID was also represented by the Finnish textile expert Helena Perheentupa who now lives in Finland but was associated with the institution for eighteen years, during which time she played an important role in the development of its textile design curriculum.

The seminar was convened by Shehnaz Ismail, head of the textile design department at IVSAA and coordinated by Nilufer Farrukh of the communication design department. The convener defined the objective of the gathering as an attempt to "rethink the much ignored status, role and use of Pakistan's traditional textiles". She said that "the craftsman in the village" was "the lost bastion of our culture" and that it would be worthwhile to invest in "the bonding between the urban and rural sector through craft."

Dr Hameeda Hossain's paper was a scholarly exposition of the effects of the intervention of the colonialists in South Asia on the textile trade. Focussing on the role of the East India Company in the subah of Bengal in the 18th century, she aptly illustrated how market forces could shape methods of production in textiles, changing traditional

the mid 18th century. A class of middlemen also evolved to supplement the large traders in the procurement of goods as the market grew.

Later, the company began direct procurement under the "agency" system, a system that was highly oppressive for the weavers. With increasing political clout, the Company Bahadur began to legislate its monopoly over certain sectors of the trade to draw an even more rigid ring around the craftsman and weaver who dealt in textiles. At the same time, village women who had spun yarn suffered as the company began to resort to imports from England. Dr Hossain's paper was a salutary account of what some forms of "globalisation" could mean to the traditional craftsman.

A case for the revival of traditional crafts with reference to hand block printing of textiles was presented by Noorjehan Bilgrami who has painstakingly documented the *aparak*, a traditional textile of Sindh. She traced her own journey, from stumbling across the few surviving printers in old Karachi to learning to print herself from setting up a makeshift shop in a friend's garage to a time when a number of other designers have taken up the hand block process to produce a variety of fabrics based on

traditional motifs.

Jasleen Dhamija dealt with the exploitation of the craftsmen, both in the rural context and in the context of the "so called globalisation of trade" where their condition does not improve while the quality of goods deteriorates. She also traced the deep connections between the crafts and the spiritual practices of the people, saying that the craftspeople of South Asia were the "custodians of its psyche". As examples of the significance of textiles in this tradition she cited the *Parola*, a ritual cloth in India believed to have magical powers, and to be effective in healing. Then there was the concept of the *chowk* in the south eastern coast of India, where the grid or checkered pattern defines a sacred space.

She touched upon the separation of art and craft in India, tracing the change in the attitude



towards crafts to the effects of a colonial education, a change survived by only a few, such as the Madhubani painters and the Kalamkari artists whose work continues to be given the recognition it so richly deserves.

Angelika Haberbosch of Germany traced the change from traditional technique to modern technology with reference to the example of textile dyeing. From the Middle Ages when it was thought of indigo that "the wind would bring the blue colour into the cloth by magic means" to the art of red dyeing with madder, to a time when dyes began to be synthesised from tar components, she traced a process leading eventually to the complete replacement of natural dyes with chemical dyes.

Professor Hans Herpich took up the theme of globalisation and the radical changes in the field of creativity and culture it had brought about. In the textile field in Germany, for instance, it had meant a decline in production as manufacturers shifted their base to third world countries due to their lower labour cost. He also commented on the way that mechanisation and automation of the working environment had affected the value placed on skilled manual work.

The exhibition that coincided with the

seminar displayed a representative collection of textiles from Sindh as well as some examples of the traditional textiles found in other parts of Pakistan including the Punjab, the province of Balochistan and the North West Frontier Province.

Sindh, the southernmost province of Pakistan is known for the rich variety of its textiles, its vibrant embroidery and the *ajrak*, a meticulously crafted handblocked fabric. Among the pieces on display were the *ajrak* and the elaborately embroidered *maleer* which is presented to a bridegroom by the bride and her family. This is a cloth woven on narrow looms and desert flowers adorn it along with mirrors and small medallions. Then there was the *abochini* or bride's shawl, found in the desert region of Tharparkar, bordering Rajasthan in India, and the *bokhani*, an embroidered sash

with motifs marking the union of bride and groom. The *ralli* is another traditional textile of Sindh, and it ingeniously combines pieces of leftover cloth to make colourful coverlets, dowry bags and saddle cloths. Also on display were fine examples of the *gaj*, a wedding blouse of the merchant caste in certain areas of Sindh.

From the Punjab there were *phulkaris*, shawls with embroidery in floss silk on a thick, hand woven fabric. These shawls are precious family heirlooms, passed

on from one generation to the other.

Swat in the north of Pakistan is home to a distinct style of embroidery, on black hand-woven cloth, employing a combination of vibrant colours and geometrical motifs. From Balochistan came a collection of dresses or *pushks* with fine embroidery on the front bodice.

The objects on display were put together from a number of private collections and in their diversity and colourful splendour made the best case possible for the preservation and promotion of traditional textiles in Pakistan. The fact that the exhibition drew crowds for the course of its 10-day duration spoke of the interest that could be stimulated by a closer acquaintance with these creations of the craftsman.

The seminar ended on an upbeat note with a number of resolutions from working groups covering different sectors including craft revival, the industrial sector and documentation and exhibition of traditional textiles. There are now plans afoot to take further action to work for the preservation of traditional textiles and the revival of the rich crafts of the region, among which are the formation of a trust to channelise efforts in this direction.



Above, left: Lungi (Gulbadani) from Thatta, Tilla work Kurtas and Tilla work Gaj from Sindh. Above: Abochinai (women's head covering shawl) and Gaj from Thana Bhala Khan, Sindh.

1997 Award for Faiza Butt

Cupola, the Dubai-based Development Capital and Operating Group, has announced a further development in its extensive arts sponsorship and environmental activities in South Asia, through The Cupola Foundation, a body created as an umbrella for the community projects of the Group.

As part of its programme of activities with the National College of Arts in Lahore, it has announced the creation of the landmark Cupola Scholarship. This Scholarship is to be awarded each year to a leading student at the NCA, to allow them the necessary funding to study at a leading post-graduate art school internationally.

This year it has been awarded to the artist, Faiza Butt, who has won places to study both at the Slade School of Art and at the Chelsea School of Art, in London.

This Lahore-based artist graduated from the NCA in 1993, majoring in painting, and is a Berger Gold Medal-winning student from the College. She has also studied in South Africa, gaining a UNESCO Bursary to do so and has

exhibited domestically and internationally. She has held a teaching post at the NCA. Her work was recently on exhibition at the Chawkandi art gallery in Karachi. She took up her place in London in September.

"This represents a landmark for the NCA in developing corporate relationships for the benefit of the college and its student body and is a further commitment from Cupola", commented Professor Salima Hashmi,

the NCA principal. "We're keen to enhance further our commitment to the arts in Pakistan and South Asia, but to do so in a unique way: that is, by investing in the future as opposed to the past. This Scholarship provides us with the perfect

way of doing this", commented Arif Naqvi, the Chief Executive Officer of the Cupola Group.

This is part of a series of further activities by Cupola and is a follow up to its sponsorship of the highly successful Lahore Arts Workshop project at the NCA in December 1996.



Top: Faiza Butt. *Alas! Nothing is forever*. Egg tempera on board. South Africa 1995
Above: *An Awkward Silence*. Egg tempera on board. 1994.



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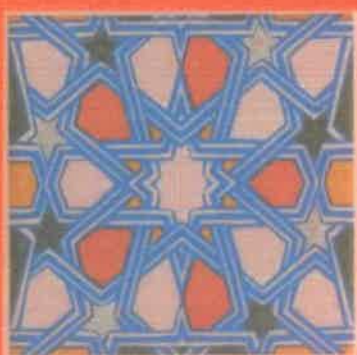
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SPECIAL REPORT

Glasgow's Salaam Festival 1997-98



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SPECIAL VOLUME

Treasures from Central Asia

ISLAMIC ART OBJECTS
IN THE STATE MUSEUM
OF ORIENTAL ART, MOSCOW

GUEST EDITOR IN MOSCOW
Natalia Nekrasova

COORDINATING EDITORS IN LONDON
Penny Clark & Azra J. Ahmed

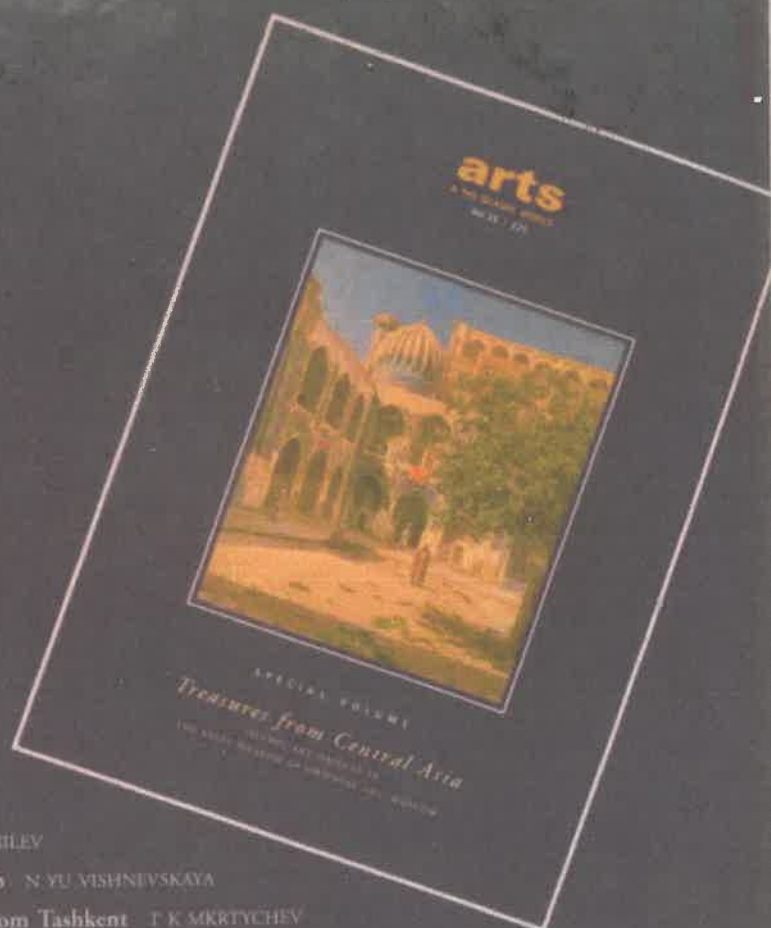
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SPECIAL REPORT

Glasgow's Salaam Festival 1997-98

GUEST EDITOR IN GLASGOW | Peter McCann

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Better Understanding of Different Cultures

MESSAGE FROM THE LORD PROVOST OF GLASGOW

GLASGOW IS A TRULY MULTI-CULTURAL AND COSMOPOLITAN CITY, AND AS THE LORD PROVOST, I am fully aware and appreciative of the valuable role played by the Muslim communities in all aspects of the lives of our citizens. I am also proud of the way that the people of Glasgow build bridges and promote equality between different cultures, and of the many different ways in which Glasgow City Council has helped to create a better understanding of such cultures.

The city's celebration of Art & Culture in the Muslim World entitled SALAAM explored many facets of the Islamic way of life, and was designed to appeal to all ages, with the events including special exhibitions, talks and lectures, radio broadcasts and a film festival.

Glasgow has many Muslim artefacts within an extensive municipal collection, and the city has a proud history of exhibiting and promoting Islamic Art, including a special exhibition during our year as European City of Culture in 1990, while some of our treasures form part of the permanent displays on show at our award-winning St Mungo Museum of Religious Life & Art.

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Your august publication can have made no better choice as its Guest Editor on this special occasion than Peter McCann who was one of my most distinguished predecessors in the office of Lord Provost, who has long held a great interest in Islamic Culture and was dedicated to the cause of Glasgow/Arab Trade expansion.

My best wishes to all your readers. I hope that this special supplement gives you a flavour of Glasgow and its collection of Islamic Art, and should you choose to visit us in person to view our collections first-hand, I can guarantee that you will receive a warm and friendly welcome from all our people.



Pat Lally

Salaam – A Year-Long Festival

In May 1997 Glasgow saw the launch of the first ever large-scale festival of Muslim art and culture in Scotland - SALAAM. This city-wide festival was the brain child of Glasgow Museums and their first ever curator of Islamic Art and Culture, Dr Ulrike Al-Khamis. Following Dr Al-Khamis's appointment in 1994, the promotion of Muslim

art and culture, previously confined to small individual projects, has been increasingly driven forward within the city. Within the Museums themselves

the Islamic Art Gallery housed in the world-famous Burrell Collection in Glasgow's Pollok Country Park was improved and extended. It now contains a rich array of precious carpets and rugs from Persia, India, Central Asia and Turkey as well as early Islamic pottery vessels, tiles and metal items. The Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum boasts a new display case within the Ethnography Gallery with costume items from Palestine and Jordan brought back by Dr Al-Khamis from a trip to the Middle East in 1995. The collecting of contemporary art from the Muslim world,

initiated by Glasgow Museums in 1993 with the purchase of Ahmad Mustafa's *"The Attributes of Divine Perfection"*, received renewed impetus with the acquisition in 1996 of two oil paintings by the well-known Palestinian artist Laila Shawa: *"Aliens"* and *"The Blind leading the Blind"*.

In addition to the ongoing efforts within Glasgow Museums to highlight Muslim Art and Culture among the permanent displays, Dr Al-Khamis's main commitment went towards the establishment of close ties with the local Muslim community. Her increasing involvement with local Muslim groups led to a successful collaboration on the 1995 and 1996 Islam Awareness Weeks in Glasgow. On both occasions Glasgow Museums provided a mini-exhibition in

which Islamic artefacts from the collections were utilized to highlight an aspect of Muslim culture. The greatest achievement to date, however, has no doubt been the successful launch of the year-long 1997-98 SALAAM festival. The idea for it was born nearly four years ago, when the management of Glasgow Museums decided to take five individual exhibition proposals with an Islamic theme devised by Dr Al-Khamis as the basis of a large-scale celebration of the arts and culture of the Muslim world, involving also the City Council's Department of Performing Arts and Venues and local Muslim groups. There was a strong commitment from the beginning that SALAAM, as it was named after the friendly informal greeting and wish for peace between Muslims worldwide, should be devised with the



STUCCO WINDOW WITH COLOURED GLASS INLAY, from Egypt, 19th century CE. The inscription reads *al-hamdu lillah* – Praise be to God

PICTURE, from Iran, 19th century CE. One of the famous love stories from the Muslim world is called *"Khusrow and Shirin"*, eternalised by the poetry of the Persian Nizami in the 12th century CE. The scene shows Khusrow gazing upon Shirin bathing in a pool

MILITARY BANNER (detail), from Iran, 19th century CE. The lion with the sun rising behind its back is a well-known symbol of Iran

close involvement, the advice and expertise of local Muslims. Consequently, the SALAAM Steering Committee was established. This consisted of local Muslim councillors and other community representatives as well as members of Museum staff and representatives from the Performing Arts and Race Equality Departments. Together, every step in the preparation of the festival was discussed and great care was extended to the fact that religious sensibilities should be respected at all times. With time the initial project grew beyond all recognition and when SALAAM was launched in May 1997, the five exhibitions organised by Glasgow Museums themselves had been joined by a stunning array of events, workshops, lectures and film

Broadening the Experience of the Individual

MESSAGE FROM THE GLASGOW JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

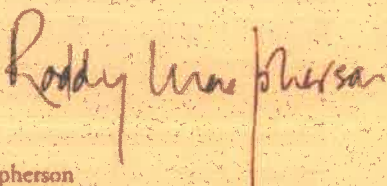
I am delighted, and honoured, to be able to join the Lord Provost in sending good wishes from Glasgow to your readers. It is also a particular pleasure to wish all success to this special supplement; since the invitation to do so comes from Peter McCann, who was our Lord Provost some twenty years ago. His efforts to encourage trade between Arab countries and Glasgow are still remembered by many members in the Junior Chamber – even though it is a condition for membership of the Junior Chamber that we are all under 40 years of age!

Glasgow Junior Chamber of Commerce is the local branch of one of the world's largest self-development organisations for young people in business. Junior Chamber International has some four hundred thousand members who are to be found throughout the world. It is indeed an organisation which exists to develop understanding and goodwill between people of different nations and different cultures; and, through its emphasis upon broadening the experience of the individual, plays a useful part in encouraging the development of commerce between cities and states.

Being a part of an international organisation, so founded upon principles which develop the potential of the individual, respect the diversity of cultures, and aim at the furthering of trade between nations, all of the Lord Provost's comments are ones that we would thoroughly endorse. But it is especially in his message of welcome to our city of Glasgow that the Junior Chamber would like to join.

It was in Glasgow, in 1937, that the Junior Chamber movement was founded in Scotland. 1997 was therefore our Diamond Jubilee. For sixty years, our self-development programmes have allowed our members to acquire knowledge of the problems arising from the working of trade and industry; to help improve the amenities of the city; and to better the condition of its people. In a mood of some celebration in our Jubilee year, we can reflect on numerous projects that we have carried out. But we are particularly happy to remember that Glasgow recently hosted the congress of Junior Chamber International, when thousands of our colleagues from around the world were able to visit our homes, and enjoy our city.

To the many friends we made at the congress from the "Islamic World," we say 'haste ye back'; and to those who have not yet had a chance to experience the hospitality of Glasgow, we hope that the invitation from the Lord Provost, our First Citizen, is one that you may one day accept.



Roddy Macpherson

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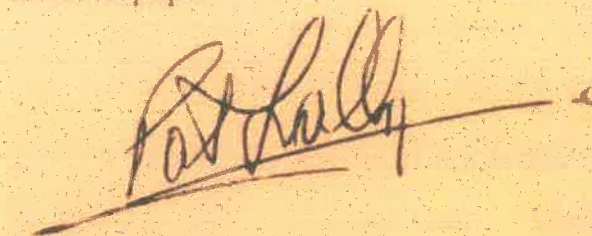
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Pat Lally

performances throughout the city. The Muslim community made a major contribution, too – among other things with the launch, in June, of 'Radio Salaam'. Manned entirely by enthusiastic volunteers and broadcasting programs in English, Urdu, Arabic, Malay and Punjabi, Radio Salaam played a vital role in raising awareness of the SALAAM festival among the local Muslim communities.

The flagship exhibition of the SALAAM festival was held in Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. It was entitled 'Open Sesame'. The idea for 'Open Sesame' was born nearly

through the various stores ensued and every new vault, every new box revealed exciting surprises and often unexpected treasures. The buzz of excitement was never-ending: this is how Ali Baba must have felt after the magic formula of 'Open Sesame' had opened up the treasure-filled caves of the 40 thieves in front of his eyes! The title for the present exhibition was born.

But how to select, how to eliminate? Over a thousand art objects and ethnographic items were recorded and assessed over a three-year period.

Eventually, considerations of thematic



four years ago, when Dr Al-Khamis first began to explore and access the considerable Islamic collections housed mainly in the Burrell Collection and at the Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, with the aim to exploit their potential for the benefit of the public. Together with Glasgow Museums' ethnographer, Antonia Lovelace, she started to assess all relevant objects. Extensive rummaging

and spatial requirements all helped to determine the final choice for the exhibition.

The next challenge was to find the story behind the objects, the picture to emerge from the many jigsaw pieces. Of course, each artefact had its own story to tell, but all of them were united by one common denominator: Islam. The question then arose: how to present this subject to the public and with what objective?

Despite the fact that Islam is today the

BRASS CASSET WITH SILVER INLAY from South Iran, 14th century CE. This casket was probably used for storing precious objects or money in an upper class household. It shows musicians set against a background of interlaced and pseudo-inscriptions

second largest religion in the world with about one billion adherents all over the globe, and despite the fact that Islam as an entire philosophy of life lies at the heart of a civilization of global proportions, knowledge of it in the West remains scant and inaccurate. Too many centuries of religiously and politically motivated propaganda by Church and State have preconditioned the West to regard Islam and all that comes with it as backward and inherently dangerous. The most recent and increasingly common images of fierce Islamic fundamentalists sadly have only helped to reinforce the prejudices. Among the profusion of myths, distortions and generalisations that have

shaped our attitudes to Islam, it is difficult to gain a more objective insight.

Never has a more objective understanding of Islam been more necessary than now. Nor only have the political events of recent years

brought the two worlds of Islam and the West into ever closer contact, but 10 million Muslims have made their homes in the West today. They have become neighbours, colleagues and increasingly, friends. Understanding, respect and tolerance of their right to be different are essential in a world where Muslims, together with other minorities, are increasingly the target of racism, abuse and denunciation for global political events that they themselves often have nothing to do with or condone as little as we would do ourselves.

Coming from such considerations the declared objective of 'Open Sesame' was to contribute to a better understanding of Islam and the Muslim world. At the same time,

however, it very much intended to provide an

attraction for Muslim visitors, too, and it was hoped that the exhibition will help to make Muslims ever more aware and proud of their fascinating and wide-ranging heritage.

The exhibition welcomed the visitor to a journey of discovery through various aspects of



traditional life in the Muslim world. All of these were displayed within the context of an imaginary and idealised Muslim city.

Such a city of course always has the mosque at the centre, and here visitors encountered Islam as a religion and got an insight into the duties of a pious Muslim. Around the mosque, the typical labyrinth of a Muslim city invited them to explore at leisure. They could encounter expressions of popular belief, unorthodox and yet vibrant and alive, rest in the story-telling corner of the marketplace or explore the Art of the Written Word, as practised for example by the professional scribe who traditionally offers his services outside the mosque. They could also catch a glimpse of the splendour that characterized many urban mansions and palaces in the old days or join the traders from all over the Muslim world who would meet in the market to sell their textiles, ceramics and other wares.

A visit to the citadel revealed splendid armour and an array of beautifully crafted weapons. A special section on Jihad or Holy War dealt with an issue very much in peoples minds today.

On the fringes of a typical Muslim city lie the villages and the encampments of the nomads so many of whom still populate the extensive deserts and steppes of the Muslim world and so, in 'Open Sesame', too, aspects of 'Nomad and Village Life' could be explored.

The exhibition culminated in 'Paradise', the ultimate aim of every pious Muslim's earthly



RELIGIOUS PRINT, from India, 19th century CE. An idealised bird's eye view of the holy mosque at Makkah with the Kaaba at its centre. This cubic building marks the heart of the Muslim world

BOOK WITH MINIATURE PAINTINGS, from Iran, 19th century. The only Muslim manuscript in the collection of Glasgow Museum is this small book of poems telling the tragic love story of Leila and Majnun. In Iran this famous tale had strong mystic overtones and symbolised the intense longing of the Sufi to be united with Allah

THE WAGNER GARDEN CARPET, from Iran, late 17th century CE



journey. The splendid Wagner Garden Carpet formed the centrepiece here, with its complex garden design reflecting the beauties and refreshing fountains that the Muslim paradise promises to all true believers.

In addition to 'Open Sesame' Dr Al-Khamis project-led a second, very different exhibition which ran at St Mungo's Museum of Religious Life. 'The Veil in Islam - Myth and Reality' dealt with an issue that has been fervently discussed in recent years by Muslims and Non-Muslims alike. In recent years 'the veil' or more correctly the *hijab* has become the most potent negative symbol in Western eyes of Islamic 'fundamentalism'. This perception goes hand in hand with older popular images of veiled Muslim women as symbols of mystic eroticism and female oppression. At the same time true knowledge and understanding with regard to 'the veil' remains scant. This exhibition highlighted that the wide-spread ideas about veiled Muslim women are often based on mis-construed generalizations or outright myths. The visitor first entered 'The Myth' section of the exhibition. Here images and statements were highlighted that have helped to form western misconceptions about veiled Muslim women. Beyond a partition symbolizing the concrete *hijab* referred to in the Qur'an (and indicative of physical separation within a domestic setting to separate the private and the public sphere) accessed the reality of the Muslim world. Here photographs of veiled Muslim women in all walks of life and from all over the Muslim world conveyed the stylistic diversity with which the concept of *hijab* could be interpreted and more importantly the diverse life styles of Muslim women. The photographs were accompanied by statements from Muslims of all walks of life and reflecting all kind of opinions. This emphasis on Muslim self-perception and self-expression was intended to transcend the

general tendency in the West to apply occidental values and notions of civilizational superiority when discussing issues of another culture.

At the heart of the 'Reality' section of the exhibition, an integral yet independent mini-display could be found. This was concerned with 'The Veil in Glasgow'. Alex Robertson from the Open Museum Department of Glasgow Museums, who curated this section, went out into the local Muslim community and invited Muslim women from various walks of life to talk openly about their attitudes towards *hijab* and record their statements on video. The result was a very sympathetic film which formed the centre



piece of the 'Veil in Glasgow' display. Acting on suggestions from Muslim women themselves, a handling kit with various *hijab* covers and two glass cases with head-scarfs and one complete *hijab* outfit were also provided to enhance this display.

MAN'S ROBE, from sekundi, Ghana, c.1900 CE. The embroidered designs are typical of those worn by Muslim Hausa traders in West Africa. The Hausa were gradually Islamized between the 15th and 19th centuries CE.

Planning the Performing Arts Events

CHARLES BELL

The original idea for a festival to celebrate the arts and culture of the Muslim world came from Glasgow City Council's Museums and Galleries Department. The invitation to the Performing Arts and Venues Department to become involved by programming a complementary series of performance events was immediately accepted. It



was only when we began to look in detail at the exhibition's programme and to consider the ambitious aims of the project that we realised the enormity of the challenge that we had taken on. There



is no such entity as the 'Islamic World' and the breathtaking diversity of cultural practices and traditions in the countries linked by the Islamic faith makes redundant the concept of a neat, all-encompassing festival. We also found that there are few 'rules' - as in most cultural endeavours 'interpretation' is the important factor and the effect that the activity has on the viewer or the participant is the only true gauge of success. We were fortunate in that one member of our arts team was born in Pakistan and she was able to provide

contacts and useful advice on cultural etiquette. For the rest of us there was much reading to be done and a heavy reliance on members of the SALAAM steering group and contacts within Glasgow's Muslim community who were generous with advice and support. Our relative ignorance of Islamic art and culture at the start of the process did have some benefits - we had to discover the impulses and traditions behind certain cultural activities and then seek to interpret what we found to a non-Muslim

audience. Building cultural bridges between communities has to be an important element of a celebration such as SALAAM.

The event's programme grew until we had film, folklore and visual arts events weaving in and out of the exhibitions programme. The most visible symbol of connection was the SALAAM bus painted in the style of the decorated transport of Pakistan. Glasgow artist Nicola Atkinson-Griffith and Afshan Abid from Karachi combined their skills on this project and the bus happily transported numerous schools and community groups to exhibitions and performances during the year. Nicola was subsequently involved in a project to place artworks created by professional artists, school groups and individuals in buses throughout the city - a fascinating development of the SALAAM bus project and one which brightens up a means of transport which in the greyness of a Glasgow winter can be rather



depressing.

The Folklore project comprised storytelling, music and dance from Algeria, Indonesia, Morocco and Pakistan. Many of the events took place in the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) and the art works provided a vivid backdrop to the performances. There were several memorable evenings but I recall with particular pleasure Chloe Goodchild's songs, chants and improvisations based on Sufi mystical poetry and performed in the Air Gallery which is a room lit from above by large skylight windows. As darkness fell, ethereal and magical sounds transported us far beyond our own city. Another

A WORKSHOP at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum

SCHOOL PUPILS about to join the decorated bus

THE BUS decorated by Nicola Atkinson-Griffith and Afshan Abid

NUAY KANGUKTAR performs at the Gallery of Modern Art



remarkable performance was presented by the dancer Amel Tafsout who seemed to become an integral part of the Fire Gallery - her costume and movement blending perfectly with the atmospherically lit space. Other performers who contributed to this unique season included Inno Sorsy, Nita Basu Chaudhuri, and Hassan Erraji.

'Speaking in Tongues' explored how poetry and verse grew within an ancient Asian culture. The award-winning Glasgow writer Janet Paisley led the project and a group of young people were invited to create, write and perform their own poetry. Close links were established with the first Youth Asia Festival which took place in Glasgow's

of fascinating films to our attention at the Glasgow Film Theatre. The focus was 'Gender and Islam' and the season looked at the representation of Muslim women from both within and outside the culture, and in front of and behind the camera. This theme was of course reflected in different ways across the entire SALAAM programme. Glasgow Film and Video Workshop was commissioned to make a film which looked at SALAAM through the eyes of women from one of the city's housing schemes. Cultural exchange came to life as the women from Red Road flats made their own silk prints with Islamic designs, visited the exhibitions in the company of some of the artists... and learned to belly dance!

Some ideas unfortunately did not get beyond the planning stage - the 'Feis/Bhangra' for example. This was intended to be a fusion of the growing traditional music movement in Scotland and the Bhangra movement. Tutors from both backgrounds were to work with young musicians to create an event which would comment on attitudes to traditional and contemporary musical styles within both cultures. 'Feis/Bhangra' remains an active idea for implementation at some future date.

The contribution of the spirit of SALAAM was very important. If SALAAM is seen as an explosion of activity which left no legacy then it will have failed. There are signs however that some strong bridges have been built and that they will continue to carry two-way traffic in future years.



AFSHAN ABID, Nigel Serafini of Strathclyde Buses, and Nicola Atkinson-Griffith.

THE GALLERY of Modern Art

Tramway in November 1997. The Youth Asia Festival was a logical development from SALAAM - an event organised by and for young people. SALAAM has in many respects been about uncovering a hidden past within the city and bringing to light half-forgotten or misunderstood artefacts, traditions and practices. Youth Asia and 'Speaking in Tongues' aimed to make a statement about life as it is in Glasgow today for young Asian people and to set the agenda for future cultural development in this area.

The 'Film in Focus' season brought a number



Charles Bell is Principal Arts Development Officer, Cultural and Leisure Services, Glasgow City Council.

A Voyage of Discovery

MARY BRENNAN

Gradually, across a period of many, many years, Glasgow's art galleries and museums have acquired a veritable trove of fine Islamic art and artefacts. It is, however, only in recent years that the true value of these collections has been recognised, behind the closed doors of curators' meetings at least. For most of these objects have lain in storage, tucked away from public view - out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. You could, I suppose, take this as a metaphor for the Muslim communities within the city. For gradually, across many, many years, Glasgow has acquired a Muslim population that is part of the city's fabric - a vital strand in its commercial profile, an element of its workforce, an influence on its culinary tastes - and yet there was no real awareness of what Muslim culture embraced. No greater familiarity with its poetry, its music, its folk-lore than with those unseen works of art.

Time, certainly, to take a closer look at what had been gained and to accord it a proper appreciation. Time to make SALAAM, a celebration of Muslim arts and culture that ran for a whole year. The most obvious starting point lay, of course, in the basements and repositories of the various galleries and museums. In 1994, Glasgow Museums appointed - for the first time ever - a curator of Islamic Art and Design: Ulrike Al-Khamis. She took charge of a thrilling array of objects - carpets, ceramics, textiles, even armour. The range, both geographically and historically, was impressive in scale and in quality.

But as ideas for displaying the artefacts were being mulled over, the curators began to feel that here was a marvellous opportunity to establish real, living links with Muslim culture at other levels. To create a widespread sense of the traditions that had shaped the artworks, and to show how those traditions had translated into other art forms. It wasn't something they could tackle themselves, so they asked colleagues in Glasgow's Department of Performing Arts and Venues if they would be interested in expanding SALAAM into other realms of activity. The DPAV, more than keen to build on existing creative

contacts with local Muslim communities, agreed. It's fair to say that when they responded so enthusiastically, no-one had a clear idea of what the performing arts contribution to SALAAM might be.

Suddenly the whole process of programming took on the promise of a voyage of discovery.

Here was an opportunity to surprise everyone - the Glasgow Muslim communities included, whose roots mostly connect back to Pakistan with performances of live music, poetry, film, puppetry and other art forms, from Islamic sources all across the world. Here was a huge tapestry, rich with different textures of the same essential culture. The possibility of bringing some of these textures into the city, having cross-over contact and maybe new strands evolve. The prospect was both exhilarating and yet daunting.

Daunting because it is all too easy to blunder into someone else's culture and, unwittingly, cause offence. For instance - quite by chance - the SALAAM season stretched across the actual 50th Anniversary of the Independence of India and Pakistan. There was no way that the DPAV wanted Glasgow's Muslims to feel that the city was muscling in on the marking of this significant event, setting an agenda for the anniversary or - worse still - instigating a rival event. Whatever SALAAM became, it had to begin with respect.

Now of course - as arts programmers everywhere soon learn - you can rarely please all



HAND OF FATIMA PAPER CHARM, found inside a copy of the Qur'an picked up on a battlefield outside Kabul in 1879. The fingers and palm of the hand are filled with religious names and formulae

tastes, or meet all expectations. But the Muslims and non-Muslim who came together on the performing arts steering committee hoped that their good intentions will at least be recognised for what they are by the city as a whole: a sincere attempt to focus attention on a culture that lives within a culture - the culture of the Muslims, who are now part of Glasgow's artistic culture, just as they are part of its business culture and its political culture. The programme did look out

and beyond, to Indonesia, Tunisia, the Mediterranean but this was also an inward-looking journey, an invitation to see what is already in our midst and take pleasure in it, get involved in it even. Which was where, perhaps, we could take to the roads! Mind you, traffic could well come to a sudden standstill when 'truck art' rounded the corner. Decorating everyday vehicles in vibrant colours and eye-catching designs is one of the most popular forms of folk art in Pakistan, nowadays claiming the kind of critical appraisal enjoyed by, for instance, the graffiti artists in New York's subway system.

It seemed an ideal way of advertising the accessibility, the brilliance, the relevance of SALAAM and so, as part of the celebration, Glasgow had its own specially-painted bus. When the single-decker coach took to the road, its glorious artwork was the end product of a far-reaching collaborative process, one that stretched back and forth between Karachi and Glasgow, bringing together professional artists, students and local schoolchildren. It proved a true welding of traditions and new inspirations, a crossover between Muslims in Pakistan, Muslims - and non-Muslims - in Glasgow. And when that bus travelled

through the proud, dark Victorian architecture of the city, or pulled up outside one of the more recent rises of glass and concrete, it was a tangible statement of what lay at the heart of SALAAM. Throughout the duration of SALAAM the bus shuttled between the exhibition sites, enabling members of the public - and especially school parties - to visit the entire spectrum of gallery displays. At the same time, however, a

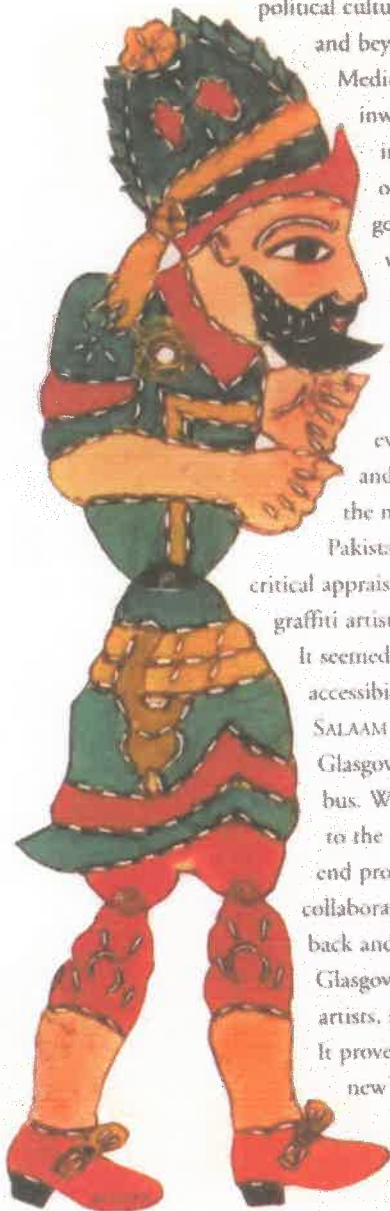
sister vehicle was decorated by the Glasgow group: a small commercial van, that when the celebration ended - became a permanent exhibit for Glasgow Museums, when it's not required to shift other exhibits, that is! And who knows what other spin-offs there might be? A bright rash of technicolour taxis? Or a rainbow scatter of illuminated minis?

And who knows what legacy will emerge from another skein of the celebration, the Folklore Project entitled 'Speaking In Tongues'. Here again there were two elements to the concept: a programme of professional performances running in tandem with specific opportunities for creative participation. Major artists from Indonesia, Senegal, Morocco, Pakistan and elsewhere were invited to give poetry readings, music recitals, dance performances and evenings of story-telling so as Glasgow audiences could witness something of the heritage and traditions that course through Muslim culture - and appreciate, too, how each geographic region, each community shades in its own individuality.

At the same time, the DPAV drew on one of the most popular traditions - the 'mushaira' or poetry event - as a springboard for a new writing initiative. Every community deserves to have its own stories. Not just the legends of yesteryear, or the 'learning tales' that are passed on, from old to young, as a means of securing tradition and preparing children for the ways of adulthood. But also new stories of itself in its own immediate time. Not the stuff of tabloid news, but the anecdote and the personal reflection that express the contemporary character of an individual, a community, a generation, a culture.

It was this character that Speaking In Tongues wanted to hear, and to hear coming from the mouths of new young writers whatever their background. This was a forum for Muslims and non-Muslims to say - through their poetry, their performances - what it is they think and feel about their relationship with the city, with each other, with their own communities and with themselves. And yes, it could as well be and was a time when prejudices were aired, and personal dilemmas were brought out into the open.

In a rapidly-changing, cosmopolitan city like Glasgow it can be hard for any young person - regardless of colour, creed or class - to know where they stand, or where their future direction truly lies. For many young Muslims, brought up



SHADOW PUPPET, from Turkey, 20th century CE. This is Hacivat, one of the two main characters of the traditional Turkish shadow theatre. He is always represented with a neat painted beard and a tall hat.

in this city - far from the homeland remembered by their parents - there can be an added conflict of loyalties: how do you keep faith with your roots, yet put down new ones? Non-Muslims, meanwhile, can frankly be baffled by these new Glaswegians - and in the wake of ignorance, can often come racism and bigotry. These are dark feelings, but they will stay dark and unresolved if they are not voiced.

At the same time - as other cross-cultural ventures in the city have happily proved - joys do abound whether it is in the discovery of new friendships, new skills, new attitudes or new tastes. Speaking in Tongues celebrated the positive strengths of living in a culturally-diverse society. The young writers created an informal 'mushaira' that acted as a commentary on the present and future situation of Muslims and their place within the Glasgow community.

Not every instance of creative participation necessarily reached the public eye. The women who were working under the 'Film in Focus' banner on a kind of 'Clothes Show' project were allowed to decide whether the finished product was to be screened privately, publicly - or not at all. It was crucial that they should have had that choice since, for many of the Muslim women involved, being on show is not in their nature or their culture. In any case, the real legacy of bringing together these Muslim and non-Muslim women lay in the meeting, in the exchange of skills and the sharing of experiences. The Muslim women - under the observing lens of a women-only film team - devised costumes for a music and dance production that was, itself, performed and filmed. At every level - from the creative use of fabric to the creative use of film - this project celebrated both the visionary and practical sides to the women's collaboration.

Meanwhile the work of Muslim film-makers from across the globe was showcased at the Glasgow Film Theatre, offering audiences access to material that has probably never been screened outside its country of origin. And here too, the

work proved inspirational - possibly fostering new understanding between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, and encouraging would-be Muslim film-makers to realise the bigger picture of their ambitions.

The focus of SALAAM was Islamic art and culture - but that art and culture is already in our midst, in every area of Glasgow. This celebration



was to remind us of that, and to bring all the communities of this city together in a shared appreciation of our increasingly rich and diverse culture.

Mary Brennan is a Freelance arts journalist and Dance critic of *The Herald* newspaper.

DECORATED TRUCK, from a research trip to Karachi undertaken by Nicola Atkinson-Griffith.

Women in Focus

MARY BRENNAN

Layers of assumptions: some thick with prejudice, others shaded with simple ignorance. Whether or not women in Muslim communities actually wear the veil, Western attitudes tend to shroud them in mysteries and miseries that often say more about their own societies than the Islamic ones.

Women in Focus: a series of events tied into Glasgow's recent SALAAM season,

celebrating arts and culture in the Islamic world – sought to explore some of the accumulated myths while demonstrating, through film, talks and exhibitions, some of the realities that affect the lives and choices of Muslim women. Essentially it's an attempt to challenge unthinking preconceptions. To say, if you like – 'take time to look at what we're showing you. You say well recognise your own hopes, fears and aspirations even if the customs and clothing are different.'

Indeed, this bid to realise shared humanity has been a hallmark of the entire SALAAM! initiative. What began as an imaginative exhibition of previously unseen Islamic art treasures – sadly Glasgow has never had quite enough space to do its collections visible justice – has grown into a purposeful

statement of the city's multi-cultural identity. While personnel from the Museums and Art Galleries division created a thoughtful series of exhibitions – acknowledging modern as well as ancient Islamic arts and artefacts – the Department of Performing Arts and Venues, with the assistance of other organisations like the Glasgow Film Theatre, tried to foster contact with, and understanding of the Muslim culture worldwide but most particularly within Glasgow itself. This was a call across all communities – of age, gender, class as well as religion – to look, with fresh and open eyes, at one's neighbours.

Which brings us, I suppose, face to face with The Veil. Frankly it's doubtful if there is a more emotive, controversial or misunderstood symbol

of Muslim culture. It was, therefore, a commendably brave move to have, as central to the whole 'Women in Focus' project, an exhibition about The Veil in Islam. Curated by Ulrike Al-Khamis – who was also responsible for bringing Glasgow's long stowed-away Islamic works to light – this two-part display was a powerful, and impressively unhistorionic, collection of images that spanned continents and concepts in a way that was both immediate and accessible to a general public.

Walk into the upstairs space at St Mungo's Museum of Religious Art and Life and the first thing that hit you was the 'myth' – the familiar commercial images of mysterious veiled temptresses used, by Western agencies, to sell confectionery, films, books.... anything, in fact, that might be enhanced by a veiled reference to something exotic yet forbidden, inviting – hence the gauzy, scanty costumes – but secretive – hence the covering of the face.

It's an image of Muslim women that is as representative of the culture as the straw donkeys and bull-fight posters that so many tourists bring home from Spain. And indeed that is, in part, the truth of it. Cast an eye over the extracts wittily reproduced on the pages of a 'mock-terror' novella and you would see how easy it has been for Western travellers to interpret what they saw in terms of their own context and not that of the country, or the people, they were visiting.

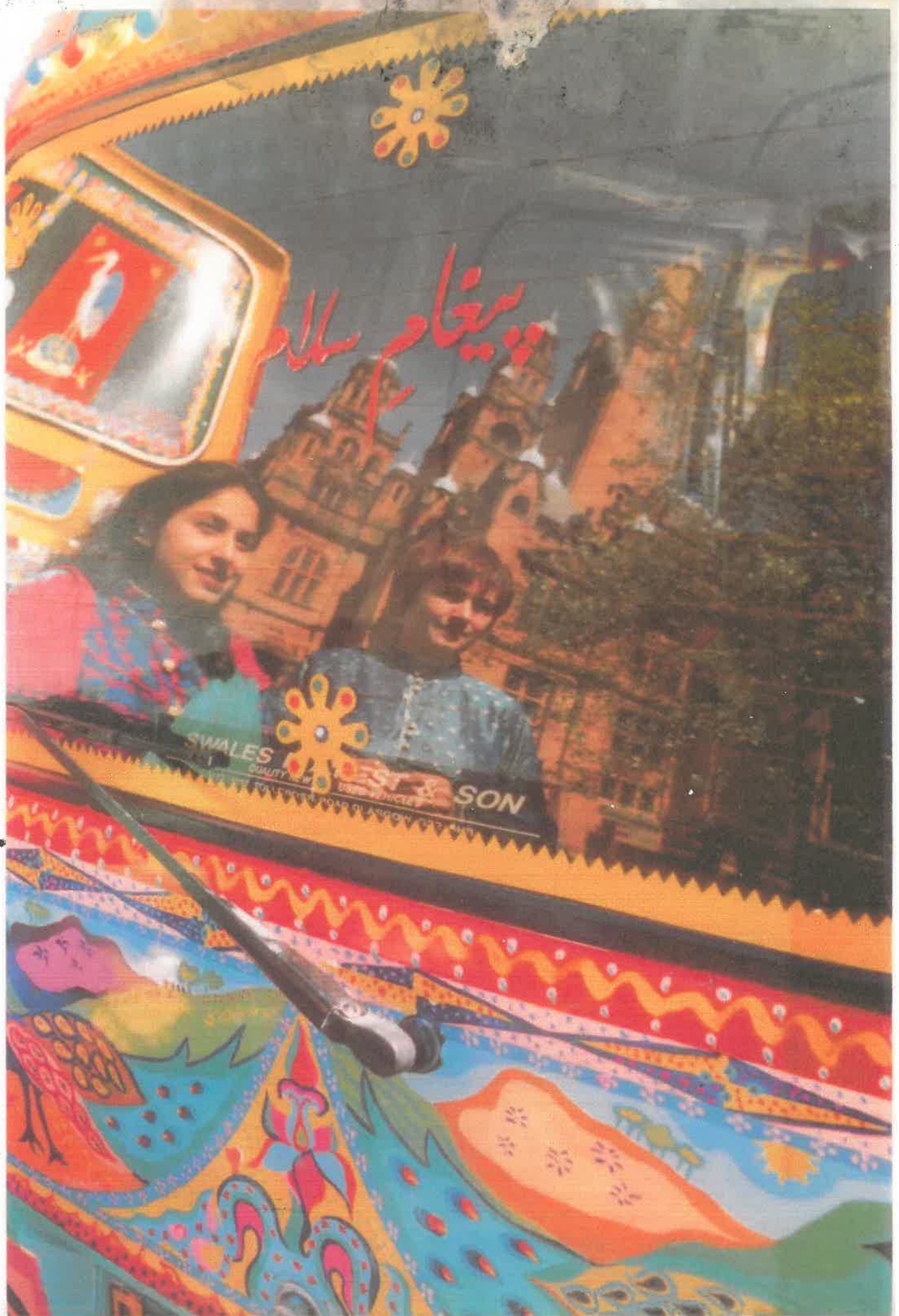
A symbolic passing through a draped archway – which also carried apposite quotations from the Qur'an, in translation – took you into an area of reality. Here was the chance to witness actuality: to see and hear statements from women who know, from first-hand experience, what wearing the hijab (as the veil is properly called) entails. And no, it is not simply a litany of pro-hijab propaganda that screens out opposite viewpoints.

In among the positive images – the photographs and text showed veiled women, worldwide, actively employed in all walks of life – there were dissenting, questioning, voices. Voices that protest, though maybe not so much against



'OPEN SESAME' at
Kelvingrove

DETAIL, DECORATED BUS and
reflection of Nicola
Atkinson-Griffith and
Afshan Abid



the hijab per se, but at its possible hijacking by extremists as a tool of political power, and its enforced, unhappy shift into a symbol of suppression and oppression.

But if this exhibition was an invitation to non-Muslims to open their minds, to look, learn and possibly re-adjust their thinking. It was also – and this, I think, is of immense value – a point of affirmation for Muslim women living in Glasgow. Especially if they have chosen to wear the *hijab*. Indeed, within the surrounding context of photographs from places like Somalia, Malaysia and the Middle East, there was video footage of Glasgow women talking about why they choose to wear the veil.

These women may share the wearing of the hijab but really, they could hardly be more different in terms of background, attitudes – even their taste in veiling material! Listening to a young Scottish woman – a convert to Islam – talking of her decision to wear the veil or hearing how a very modern, outgoing Muslim woman had found herself choosing – after years of wearing Western clothing – to take on the mantle of her faith, is both moving and enlightening.

Some of the women who spoke on camera – there were some five or six of them – in any way downtrodden, or locked in inarticulate submission to some unseen male agenda. They were, self-evidently, able to speak for themselves. And they did, with humour and warmth and great dignity. They also demonstrated that – for those – there is veiled sense of privateness contained within the public wearing of the veil. A sense of overt identity, as a Muslim woman, yes – but also a sense of one's inner, personal identity being safeguarded...

At a time when the British Government and the media are pre-occupied with issues of privacy – even to the point of legislation – these testimonies from Glasgow women take on an unforeseen poignancy.

What emerged – from this video, and from the exhibition as a whole – was a quiet request for respect. For non-Muslims to temper any knee-jerk assumptions, even if they do not intrinsically change their opinions. And for Muslims, too, to keep an open awareness of how different Islamic communities worldwide interpret the tenets of faith: one woman's veil may be another's headscarf... it's the belief woven into the wearing of such cloths that matters most.



Still further glimpses, and insights, into the lives of Muslim women were offered through the medium of cinema: in Film in Focus, the GFT – Glasgow Film Theatre – put together a season of films and illustrated talks that considered the roles allocated to women both on and off the screen. Discussion sessions led by guest panellists explored the images – perhaps one should say clichés – given credence by Western cinema and by Arab cinema as well, channelling exchanges in ways that usefully enhance issues of gender as well as of culture and identity. Again, the artform was being used as a bridging medium within the city. Vanessa Paynton, who put the programme together, points out that a film like *Life... My Passion* (1995; Egypt) is likely to strike a chord with non-Muslim women, dealing as it does with the prospect of unmarried old age and the way in which three impoverished thirtysomething women still manage to face the future with resilience and even humour.



The discussions, too, threw up further points of shared experience. For in truth it is just as possible to draw up catalogues of perceived gender discrimination against women in the West – despite decades of Equal Opportunities legislation and the forceful spread of feminist doctrines – as it is to construct a weight of evidence suggesting that under Islam, women are corralled within specific, predominantly domestic, realms.

And I daresay there are many women artists – in Glasgow and beyond – who could see something of their own creative quest and search for expression in Zineb Sedira's installation at



But not everything attached to this Women in Focus season had thrown down a gauntlet, centre-stage. Take, for instance, the workshops held behind closed doors – most usually in the north of the city – where women old and young, Muslim and non-Muslim, resident and transitory, came together because of cloth. Yet again textiles proved massively significant. Through the medium of embroidery and needlework, connections of trust and friendship were forged between costume-makers, musicians, dancers and – ultimately – film-makers, who recorded the process leading up to a community dance display.

JIBBAH ROBE OF PATCHED COTTON, from Sudan, 19th century CE. Many of the Mahdi's early followers were so poor that they only wore white cotton smocks repaired with brightly coloured patches. Later this type of dress was worn as a uniform throughout his army and symbolised virtuous poverty.

Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art. For in *Quatre generations de femmes* – shown in *Out of the Blue*, another aspect of *Women in Focus* – Sedira took on a traditional male preserve: tiles-work. Moreover, by using figurative images – of herself, her mother, grandmother and her own daughter – within the geometry of the computer-generated designs, she had forcefully disrupted a whole swathe of conventions and cultural perceptions.

Here was a provocative, upfront statement that challenged both Muslim and non-Muslim expectation of tilework and Islamic art.

The resulting film was, in fact, screened as part of the GFT Film in Focus programme.

Indeed, as *SALAAM!* unfolded, Glasgow found itself looking at its multi-cultural communities through a new veil of understanding, its sense of forward identity brought into clearer focus by looking – with respect – beyond the hijab and towards the cultural heart of the women who wear it.

The Veil in Glasgow

ALEXANDRA ROBERTSON



BUSHRA IQBAL, a member of the SALAAM Steering group with some visitors at St Mungo's Museum

In May 1996 I was asked to curate a project called *The Veil in Glasgow* as part of the *Veil in Islam*, which was to be an exhibition for St. Mungo's Museum of Religious Life and Art and an important contribution to Glasgow's SALAAM Festival in 1997. This Festival was a City Council initiative to promote greater tolerance and understanding of Islam in our multi-cultural City.

As a curator of the Open Museum, I work with community groups from varied backgrounds and with very different interests but always with the same objective, to help them towards an understanding that Glasgow Museums collections are a resource which they can use as a means of empowerment.

After discussions with Dr Ulrike al-Khamis, curator of *The Veil in Islam*, it was clear to me that the best way to proceed was to talk with local Muslim women about their faith and their feelings about the veil. As a believer in the power of the moving image, I wanted to create a film

which would be the centrepiece for the exhibition instead of relying on written text which we, as museologists know, many people do not read.

Consequently, I needed to speak with women who would be willing to be filmed. This, I felt, was a great deal to ask but the finished product would be so worthwhile that

I was determined to pursue this aim.

With this in mind, I contacted the Central Mosque to discuss the project and ask advice on how best to approach local women. Much to my delight they agreed to help and asked some Muslim women to come into the Mosque to meet with me. It was also agreed that I might bring our video camera to record the initial meetings.

From the moment I met with these women I knew that we could create a great exhibition. They spoke to me with such sincerity, conviction and humour that I knew that I had to employ a film company to provide the technical excellence, which I lacked, in order to do them justice.

I was fortunate enough to be given the same offer by the Ethnic Minorities Youth Counselling Service which is based in Pollakshields in the south of the city and was once more welcomed by open, friendly women who were happy to talk to me.

Speaking in Tongues

JANET PAISLEY

Words are building bricks with which we structure communication. They are instruments of power with which we influence, and often manipulate, other people. They are sounds with which we make music that evokes mood and affects emotion. They are paint with which we colour our view of the world. They are clay, by



FROM THE 'Gender and Islam' film season at the Glasgow Film Theatre

TRUCK PAINTER, from a research trip to Karachi undertaken by Nicola Atkinson-Griffith

which we shape our own thoughts. The highest art of words, poetry, deservedly merits its age-old description as the mother of all arts. As such it has long been the preserve of the few, rightly revered, but exclusive. Now, in Glasgow, as part of the SALAAM celebration of the Arts and Culture of the Muslim World, a group of young people had the opportunity, encouragement and platform to create, write and perform their own poetry.

When I was asked to lead the project, it was the excitement of bringing out new ideas, thoughts, voices, that led me to say yes. But on reflection it is the continuity through time and across cultures which was the most rewarding. From the Urdu *mushaira* to the Gaelic bard, there is a world-wide historical tradition of oral poetry. In Scotland today, there has been a resounding recent revival. Termed performance poetry, it is the poet writing, the poet reciting.

Across the country, groups of poets come together regularly to hear others speak their poems, to speak their own. At festivals and special events, poets speaking their work are now the norm. And many single events are spontaneously created for that purpose alone.

All of this is new, a recent flowering of the older tradition of poetry round the fireside, at family gatherings, in village and town squares. The poets are not, as might be expected when the old becomes new again, predominantly young, though there are many young people among them. Equally, they are male and female. The influence of American rap has brought out many black poets - a long overdue development in Scotland where our multi-cultural modern society has yet to be reflected in mainstream publication. But what hadn't, so far, happened spontaneously is any discernible input, or outpouring, from the Scots Asian community.

Two years ago I worked for a short time with a group of creche workers. None of the women had any particular desire to write poems. None had written before. Mainly, they wanted to make more use of English so that their grasp of the language would improve. There was Parveen, always convinced she had too few words to succeed but succeeding in *accidentally* letting the language give her an end rhyme, writing to express her love of Pakistan.

*Morning, I like
to see my family.
In the morning;
sound of prayer,
smell of rose,
bright weather
and open air.*

Shenaz constantly apologised for her lack of command and was barely reassured by my insistence that simplicity of language often created the most rewarding poems. Here, in *After His Death*, form she was unaware of using is created by the stepped repetitions.

My next task was to employ a film company and one with whom other curators had worked and highly recommended was called Life's Rich Tapestry. I met with Tony Grace, one of the partners, to discuss the project and to show him my initial interviews. He explained that there were various ways to create such a film and it was decided that we would accept his quote for two days filming and associated editing which allowed us to use both outside and inside locations which reflected the women's interests. The alternative was one day of filming in one location to which we would then add computer graphics to simulate different backgrounds. I felt that this could create a sense of unreality which I did not feel was appropriate to our subject matter. We were, after all, aiming to expose the myth of the veil as an exotic, sensual item of clothing for what it is, a myth.

My next task was to select from our interviewees which women we would use in the film. This was not easy but I did have certain parameters. To present a cross section which was truly representative of the Muslim women living in the city it was necessary to have one woman born in Glasgow, one from Pakistan, one Arab, one Malaysian, one who had converted or reverted to Islam and one who had not veiled from puberty but had chosen to adopt the veil later in life.

We filmed each woman in an appropriate place. Noor in the University Library where she studies, Farkhanda at her place of work, Rifat choosing fabric for hijabs and so on.

This necessitated co-operation from a great many people but I found that assistance was always freely given when the project was explained and interest and enthusiasm swiftly followed. The project was given a boost when the Equalities Committee of the City Council awarded me an extra sum of money. This I chose to use to provide extra copies of the film which I am able to lend with a pack of accompanying notes.

All of the women chosen live in and around the City; some have prominent careers, some are just beginning their careers, others are very busy mothers. They are all modern women living or working in our busy city, sharing the same concerns and tackling the same problems as the average Glaswegian. They all choose to wear the hijab and all of them reject the idea that anyone

has pressured them into wearing it. They talk in terms of identity, equality, protection, confidence and freedom, thereby exploding the myth of the veiled woman leading a secluded life which offers no choices and which is dictated by the whims of a husband, father or brother. Nobody seeing the finished film can be in any doubt as to the determination of these women to choose how they lead their lives.

To present the film, my designer, John Macinnes, built a special case into which he incorporated a drawer which we filled with hijabs for people to try on. Two more cases were designed to display hijabs which have been lent to us by women who do not appear in the film. It was important to me that we included as wide a group as possible in this project, so many other women helped to deliver a series of workshops for Secondary School pupils entitled *Veiled Encounters*, across the Autumn.

When the *Veil in Islam* closed at the end of December, the *Veil in Glasgow* was still available for loan as an exhibition in its own right. Any local community group can borrow it and our own staff will deliver and install. In this way people who could not come to the museum can have an opportunity to see the exhibition in their own communities. For those who do not have sufficient space for an exhibition, we can offer a copy of the film and, indeed, we already have requests for this service from many different organisations and are happy to hear from anyone who is interested. In this way the subject of the hijab will be kept in the forefront of debate for as long as people have an interest. I hope people will be helped towards a clearer understanding of the reasons for Muslim women wearing the hijab through this project. I certainly have and my thanks go to everyone involved.

Alexandra Robertson is a graduate of Glasgow University and the Open University and, as an Open Museum Curator, is able to pursue her commitment to lifelong learning. Anyone wanting more information about the *Veil in Glasgow* or to borrow either the exhibition or the film should contact her on 0141 429 1202.

*It was the photo on the wall.
It was a photo of my uncle.
In the photo my uncle spoke to me.
He said remember me,
try to remember me.*

It must surely be time for that communication process to begin. Speaking in Tongues was a small step in the right direction, a small step that just might initiate a large leap. The title is apt. Most Scots are naturally bilingual, able to speak and understand English and Scots though, after two centuries of linguistic repression, they may well have difficulty reading and writing their own tongue. Glaswegian Scots have a particular 'patter' readily in their mouths with which to enliven spoken poetry. The young poets taking part in the project also had Punjabi and Urdu available to them. And, given their age range, and current educational dictates, were even able to make use of a smattering of European languages. The end performance which took place in Tramway Theatre as part of the Asian Youth Festival was coloured by many 'tongues' as well as influenced by the variety of voices.

The decisions was not mine. My rôle was to guide and assist and advise. The performance presented the spoken work actively translated into other tongues as it was performed. Or, what might have appeared to be active translation might instead be corresponding or contrasting poems. A marriage of words in this way did, from one performance, produce as many different shows for the audience as there were languages within that audience. The effect for a listener was of things being screened by language they did not comprehend counterpointed by revelations of startling clarity in the pieces they did fully understand - a shifting veil that allows seeing and not seeing, created by words.

Whatever the full content of the final performance, I already knew we will be creating art in action. Live art forms cannot be predetermined: even though learned and rehearsed, each re-telling is subtly different in tone, energy, emphasis. Just as we can find new marvels each time we read again a favourite poem, so does the performance create new thoughts and emotions in the coming together. A new poem, the performance itself, grew from the coming together of all it's individual poem parts.

My group of women creche workers were,

very naturally, nervous of speaking out, with their pens, alone in a language they felt unsure of. As a native Scots speaker, it was a feeling I well remembered when crashing into the language barrier of English on starting school. So we stood together for a first poem. I asked, each told then wrote only a phrase, collectively choosing to write about the subject by which they were all most deeply affected. Once we had all the phrases, we put them together as:

Pakistan

*Feeling and thinking about my country,
it's the weather that comes first -
the air, the people, specially the
family.*

*Birds are flying, the sun is rising -
it is a very beautiful view.*

*I cannot sit in the sunshine.
The shadow of the trees is nice -
a lot of light and the smell of sand.
All around there are gardens,
many flowers in different colours.
I bring a melon inside -
the smell fills the whole room.*

by Parveen, Razia, Shenaz,
Saeeda, Nasreen, Neelofar.

Poetry is necessary. Ninety percent of all people write poetry at some point in their lives. Poetry is important. Through thought and emotion it transfers experience directly from head and mind to heart and mind. When we experience as another person does then we understand, then we become human. Speaking in Tongues did leap across linguistic barriers to use language as it was designed, to communicate, to confirm humanity.

Janet Paisley is an award winning poet, writer and playwright in great demand as a performer of her own poetry.

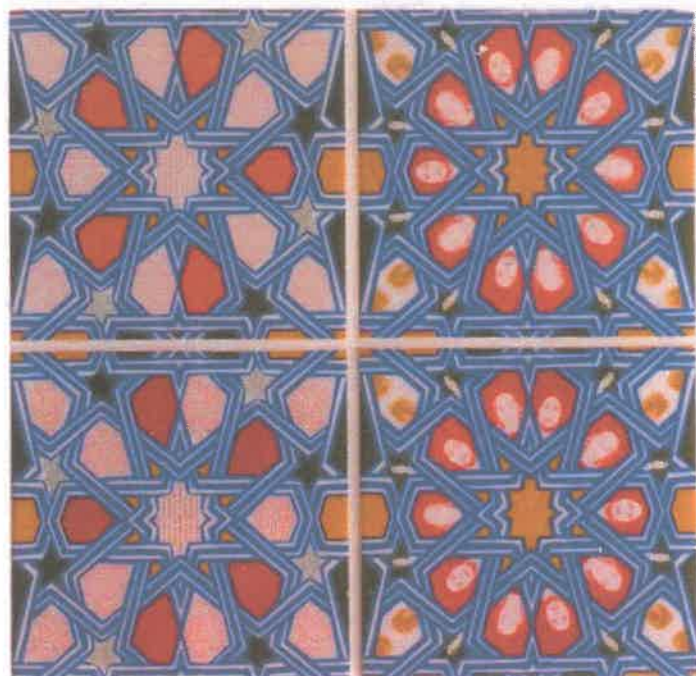
Speaking in Tongues began on National Poetry Day, October 9, 1997 in the Gallery for Modern Art with readings in English, Gaelic and Urdu. Four Sunday workshops for the young poets followed with a concluding performance at Tramway 16 November.



Museums, Islam and Muslim Culture

MARK O'NEILL

What can be learned from the SALAAM Festival about how museums in Britain can relate to Islam and to Muslim culture? The ideal would be that Islam, Muslim art and culture and issues of interest to Muslim communities would be represented in displays in a straightforward way, just like the art and culture of other communities. However, this ideal is difficult for a



BRASS WINDOW GRILL, from India, 19th century CE. Its arched frame and intricate arabesque designs are typical of traditional Islamic art.

number of reasons. As a faith which does not distinguish between the secular and the sacred, Islam is uncomfortable with their separation in Western society. Media portrayals of orthodox Islam, especially as it has evolved in the past 30 years in the politics of the Middle East, contribute nothing to understanding. Further, on the central issues of our time – the relations between men and women, the relation of the individual and the community, finding ways to 'preserve traditional identities in a world marked by difference,' Islam has a distinctive view. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say 'views', as the ummah is a diverse community, despite its shared core beliefs.

There are corresponding difficulties within museums themselves. The traditional museum is a western European invention, reflecting the values that have evolved over the past 2,500 years. Many of the objects on show are 'pagan' and contain representations of the human figure, often unclothed. Many of the greatest museums, like the British Museum, are built in the style of Greek temples, and are secular versions of or even substitutes for religious buildings. It is significant that much of the greatest art which expresses Christian beliefs is no longer in churches where people worship, but in museums, where its sacred meaning is treated as if it were just another myth. Portraying Islamic art drained of its spiritual meaning would not be acceptable to most Muslims, who do not separate the aesthetic and the religious. However, museums are very important places in British society, providing unique opportunities for communities to celebrate the achievements of their culture, to assert their status as full members of society, and to combat misunderstandings promoted by news media.

The challenge facing museum staff and Muslims is to find ways in which these tensions and contradictions can be resolved creatively for the benefit of society as a whole.

Glasgow Museums staff and members of the local Muslim community have been working on these issues for some years. Our first significant attempt to represent Islam began with work on the St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art in 1990. Our overall aim was to promote mutual understanding among people of different faiths and none. For specific religions, such as Islam, our aim was twofold. First, we wished to provide opportunities for the community at large to understand something of Islam and Muslim culture. Our second aim was to represent the beliefs of an important local community in a museum run by their city, and to which their taxes contributed. It was very important to us





COURT ROBE, from Kashmir, mid 19th century CE. This man's robe is made of the finest wool, delicately embroidered and lined with silk. It was worn over trousers, at court functions.

that this representation included present as well as past culture. It is relatively easy to generate admiration for the great achievements of Muslim culture of times that are safely in the past; promoting understanding of the present is far more difficult. The task of the museum is to make these connections.

The Committee of Glasgow Central Mosque appointed the Imam, Dr Sahibzada, as our

advisor on Islamic matters in the creation of the museum. We showed him slides of the objects we hoped to include in the displays, many of them representational, and all emphasising what religions had in common, seen from a secular perspective. He felt that this would be interesting and acceptable, but only if there was also a separate section on each faith, to show it as seen from within, by believers. We took his advice,

and changed a section on Deities to six separate sections on the main world faiths. Buddhism,

Christianity,

Hinduism, Islam,

Judaism and Sikhism.

This was a crucial step in making the whole museum work. We had realised that it would be

impossible to achieve a literal balance between different faiths, given the very different kinds of objects produced by different traditions. Our aim was to treat every object with equal respect. (Despite large differences in the size and number of objects from different religions, 85% of believers who visited the museum felt that their religion was treated fairly). Dr Sahibzada's advice however made it clear that an even more important balance is that between the perspectives of the insider and the outsider. Combining an analytical and an empathic understanding of a faith, the close-up perspective of the believer and the detached view of the historian, is the most effective way of creating a communication which works for the general public. This is at least as challenging, and beneficial for museum staff as for community representatives, as they traditionally look at cultures from afar, from a very safe distance in fact!

When it came to the SALAAM Festival, our aims were built on this understanding. We wanted to do more than remind non-Muslims that Islam has inspired great art, or even that showing local Muslims cultural treasures they could be proud of. We wanted to bring the Muslim community with all its variety and complexity within the society represented as a matter of course by the museum. This meant not just looking at high art and popular crafts but trying to address issues of life within the Muslim community. The collaboration of believer and historian, insider and outsider is the only way this can be done.

Every community wants to be seen at its best, especially in a high status place like a

museum. The aim of museum exhibitions is not to make propaganda on behalf of different groups, but to increase understanding of them. If an exhibition feels to visitors that it is not addressing issues honestly, it will put them off, not draw them in to thinking more deeply about the subject. This puts museum workers in a delicate position - wishing to represent specific communities fairly, but also representing the community at large and putting the sometimes challenging questions they would wish to ask. Staff have to resist their instinct to take refuge in the less contentious past.

It can also put community representatives in



a difficult position. Representing modern themes - such as The Veil - may involve looking at difficult issues, facing up to disagreements within communities, not just giving the "official" point of view. While they may agree that honest presentation is more important than a bland promotion, they may have to justify to their communities something which may be seen as "letting the side down". The range of points of view in the exhibitions and events in SALAAM showed what can be achieved when these issues are tackled.

The learning process for the museum and the SALAAM Committee was a fascinating one. Among the issues which arose were, what kind of mannequins should one use to show Muslim costume? How could one show some of our

FROM THE "Open Sesame" exhibition



LACQUERED PAPIER MACHE MIRROR WITH EUROPEANISED COURT SCENES, from Iran, 19th century CE. It has been suggested that mirrors such as this had lids to discourage vanity

wonderful Muslim Arms and Armour collection and discuss Jihad, without reinforcing stereotypes? How could you show contemporary Muslim art, which would be no less 'difficult' for most Muslims as for anyone else? What did we need to do to make Muslim visitors feel at home in the often strange environment of the museum? What events could we mount which would attract both Muslims and non-Muslims? Would

Muslim businessmen help fund a project run by an institution which they have felt to be outside their community? How should one respond to individual comments on aspects of the displays, which represented a compromise of many constraints. For example one visitor – and only one – commented that he felt that the Qur'an on display was too low to show respect. However placing it any higher would have made it

inaccessible to children and wheelchair users. The answers to these questions are not important individually, and may be different the next time: the important thing was to have a forum in which to discuss them until a workable resolution could be found.

In our current financial and political climate, everything, no matter how idealistic, has to be measured. How can one measure the effectiveness of a festival like SALAAM? We do know that many more Muslims visited our museums. But were attitudes to Islam changed among non-Muslims? It is impossible to say, though according to our surveys, a little over 50% of visitors think that

The local community aims to continue to maintain a *Centraal* for Islamic and Muslim Art. The museums have agreed to consult on what follow-up projects would be most interesting to them. The costs of not understanding are so great, and the opportunities for mutual enrichment so wonderful, that we are determined to go on finding ways of working together.

Mark O'Neill is Head of Curatorial Services, Cultural and Leisure Services, Glasgow City Council.



exhibitions can make a difference. But the elusiveness of a firm measure cannot be an excuse for doing nothing – even if we did not convert a single person to a less prejudiced point of view, the effort is worthwhile if only to encourage those already committed to mutual understanding.

Museums used to be lofty institutions, 'temples' in which experts spoke to the public as if from a great height. While museums still have to be scholarly, they can no longer present this impression that there is only one authoritative view, which they hold. Under the influence of projects like SALAAM, they are changing, to use another Greek word, into forums, where experts and public engage in debate and where citizens of differing backgrounds can meet and learn about each other. Museums are among the safest public spaces in our society, where young and old, individuals, families and groups can go and explore the world's heritage in peace. The essential conclusion of our 'measurement' of the value of SALAAM is that we must do more, soon.



DETAIL: BUS DECORATION

DAMASCENED STEEL HELMET, from Iran, 19th century CE. Richly decorated helmets like this one probably formed part of a soldier's parade armour and may never have been worn in a battle.

FROM THE 'Open Sesame' exhibition



An Exciting Experience

BISHRA IQBAL

In my position as community relations officer with the West of Scotland Community Relations Council I had always been acutely aware of the general lack of interest in issues of Islamic culture in Scotland as well as Britain as a whole. In early 1994 the first ever survey was conducted into the lack of ethnic minority visitors to the museums

of artistic diversity through time and space, the freedom of the individual artist, cultural discrepancies between the various countries of the Muslim world, all these had to be discussed within the parameters of religious propriety in order to ensure that the end product - the SALAAM festival of Muslim Art and Culture -



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE, from a research trip to Karachi undertaken by Nicola Atkinson-Griffith

DECORATED MINI-BUS, now in the permanent collection of the Museum of Transport

and galleries of Glasgow as the city's largest ethnic minority had virtually no access to Islamic art and culture and this problem needed to be addressed. In late summer of 1994 Glasgow Museums appointed their first ever curator of Muslim Art and Culture, Dr Ulrike Al-Khamis. Following her initiative, plans were soon underway for a major festival devoted to Muslim Art and Culture and I, among other local Muslims, was approached to sit on an Advisory Committee to oversee the preparations and advise on religious sensitivities which of course in the field of art can be many. Indeed, it soon emerged that this first co-operation between the council, its museums and the Muslim community would prove exciting, challenging and a long-overdue learning process for all sides. At every step issues

would reflect a Muslim approach to their art and culture rather than the traditional, Eurocentric presentation, where an 'exotic' non-European culture is presented through Western eyes. Work on the festival led to extensive dialogue between all parties involved and a good basis was created for future co-operation. This is no mean feat given the fact that after half a century in the West of Scotland the Muslim community here is still struggling for survival. SALAAM was the first opportunity for them to appreciate their heritage in a local museum, and even more importantly, see it appreciated by others. The festival has given both Muslims and non-Muslims the opportunity to celebrate the richness of the Muslim past. Thousands of people visited the various exhibitions and participated in workshops and

other activities. It is my expressed hope that Glasgow's Cultural Departments will continue to work with and for Muslims so that we can create greater understanding and growing friendship with our non-Muslim fellow citizens. In this ever-changing world it is only through respect and understanding for all cultures and religions that

we can have peace and harmony. SALAAM. Peace be with you all.

Bushra Iqbal is Community Relations Officer with the West of Scotland Community Relations Council, was a member of the SALAAM Advisory Committee



Glasgow's Muslim Cultural and Welfare Centre

AALYA MAAN

With the city of Glasgow heading towards an increasingly more cosmopolitan and culturally diverse future, it comes as no surprise to any Glaswegian that around 20,000 Muslims from all over the world have chosen to make Greater Glasgow their home. The Muslim population have access to 13 mosques, two of them purpose-built, the rest converted buildings. With Muslim adults so well catered for spiritually it is not surprising that for years there have been calls for an Islamic community and welfare centre, somewhere specifically for children and young people to go to socialise, study or just 'hang around' in an Islamic atmosphere.

The need for such a centre is undebatable, particularly in the Muslim community as parents' greatest fear is often that their children, growing up in a Western country will lose touch with or lose interest in their religion when what they see every day in Glasgow so strongly contradicts the beliefs and traditions of Islam. It is this fear that makes many parents over-cautious with their children and reluctant to let them out on their own or with other Scottish kids. This impossible situation can be extremely damaging to the young people involved and results in a feeling of cultural alienation. It is not surprising, therefore, that depression and mental illness are more common in Muslim teenagers than in other social groups.

The new Muslim Cultural and Welfare Centre (MCWC) in the city could be the answer to many Muslim parents' prayers. Situated in two acres of ground beside the Glasgow Central Mosque the Centre has been in the pipeline since 1984 when the Trustees of the Mosque acquired the land specifically with a view to building such a community centre. The reasons why work was not started until recently are mainly financial. The Trustees were earlier offered half a million pounds funding by the Scottish Office. But in order to ensure that their vision of the MCWC was not compromised, the Trustees and elders set about raising the money themselves. Thus half of the £1.3 million needed to complete the first phase has been donated by the Muslim

community itself with significant donations coming from prominent Muslim businessmen. Despite the fact that half the money is still to be raised, it seems that Scotland's first Muslim Cultural and Welfare Centre is well on its way to becoming a reality.

If the Centre is to be successful in this respect providing a haven for young Muslims to escape the pressures of home and a preferable and safer alternative to the streets, it will have to make itself attractive to the young. It seems obvious that the best way to do this is to let a representative committee of young Muslims play a major role in determining the direction of the centre and in organising events.

The 18.5 thousand square feet covered area on two floors of the new building will incorporate offices, a kitchen and cafeteria and an 120 x 80 feet hall to be used for sports, meetings, festivities, etc. Another smaller hall (50 by 32 feet) can be used for lesser celebrations, dinners and other recreational gatherings. The first floor of the centre will house an extensive Islamic library, conference room and specific needs unit. There will be 115 parking spaces for cars in the compound of the Centre. As well as catering for the young with educational and recreational facilities there will also be a Muslim elderly day care centre that will aim to provide care and companionship for male and female senior citizens. The completion of the Centre has been set for October '98.

Aalya Maan is studying Film and Media Studies at Sterling University

Epilogue

PETER T McCANN

IN SUMMING UP MY IMPRESSIONS OF THIS GREAT FESTIVAL OF ART AND CULTURE IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD, it is difficult to do adequate justice to an event so much directed to the common good of humanity. It is, too, almost impossible to find enough words of praise, satisfaction and appreciation for the compilation of these articles and pictures devoted to a religious faith and culture which has made such an overwhelming contribution to the progress of mankind in this world and which has proved such a great asset to those of us of different faiths and cultures who now live together.

We must each of us acknowledge our responsibilities to all the rest of humanity, because in each of us there exists this strange gift of an awareness of something within us which compels us to recognise the existence in mankind of a Divine Power.

The contributions in this Supplement arose out of an examination and respectful study of the Islamic world, its gifts and the heritage it has left to all of us. For myself, a mere traveller and observer, to have been invited to be the Guest Editor of this publication was a great delight, not merely in itself but also because this great event has arisen in my own city, a city which had already started developing trade links with the Muslim world some years ago.

The City of Glasgow is renowned for its great historic contribution to our nation. It is by reputation a place of friendship and extraordinary frankness. Glaswegians have no wish to act artificially towards anyone, for that, in truth, demeans whomever one seeks to delude and shames those who would delude. Therefore, in accordance with our tradition, as a true friend of humanity, the City of Glasgow sincerely appreciates the peoples of the various cultures from so many places who have come here and who enhance our City by their presence.

This great festival in Glasgow welcomed the World of Islam. It is, therefore, our hopeful expectation that those who read the foregoing pages will appreciate, and be thankful for, this opportunity to know, and benefit from, the study of Islam and will stand in wonder and admiration before its contribution to world civilisation.

As a stranger who has been involved in this most laudable task, a simple chronicler and a mere presenter, I beg to express a personal word of gratitude for the honour of having been given the privilege and the opportunity to recall memories of the singular honours and friendships bestowed on me in that land where Islam first proclaimed its message.

In closing, I wish to record my grateful thanks to all who have been engaged in presenting these exhibitions, talks and lectures, broadcasts and films, and those who have had the task of collecting and arranging all the items, for the dedication of their time and skills. It is an honour to have had the patronage of the Lord Provost of the Glasgow City, together with the cooperation of the Members of the Glasgow City Council and its officials. We are mindful also of the encouragement given by the Junior Chamber whose members are involved in so many aspects of the commerce and industry of Glasgow.

My parting words of farewell to our readers is the hope that they will be kindly disposed towards our efforts. We have but sought to make strong the cause of peace and friendship between our very different cultures. It has been an opportunity to know, appreciate and learn that we all live in the same world and to remind ourselves that as the twenty first century approaches, no man can be an island or ignore a helpful hand from other cultures.

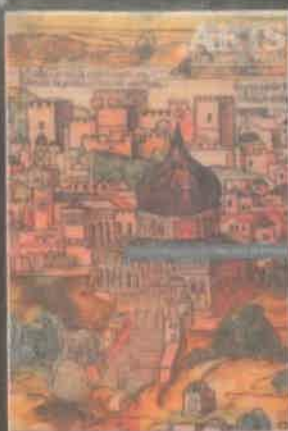


Peter T McCann is former Lord Provost of Glasgow, and Guest Editor of the Glasgow Special Report

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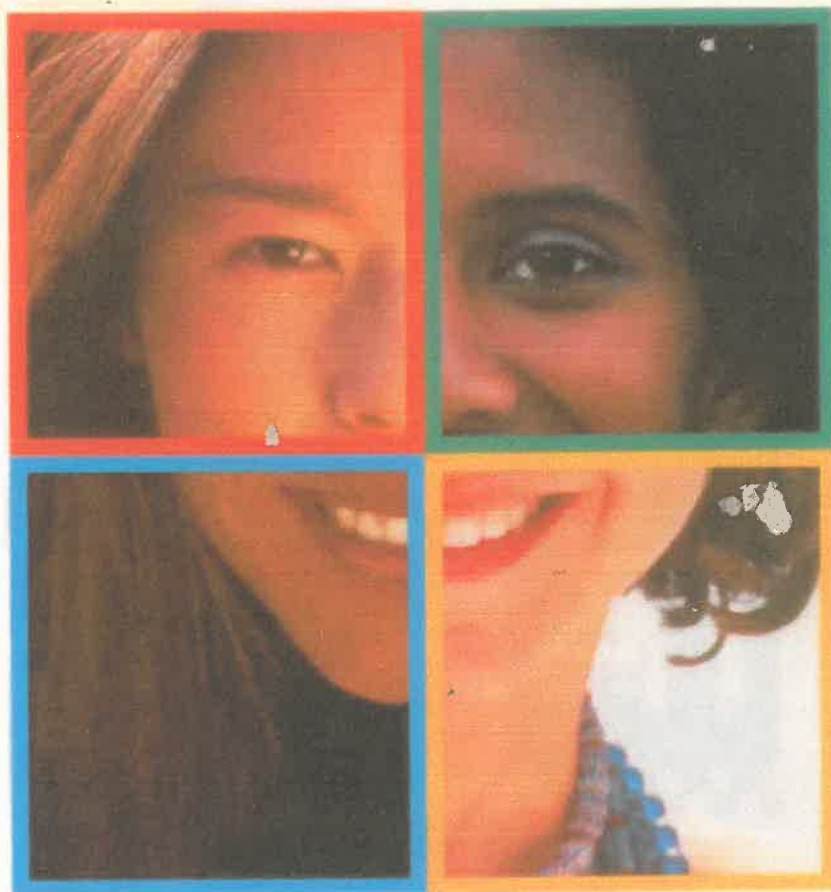


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