

An Artist and a Gentleman

Moyene Najmi
1928 - 1997



Attiya Moyene Najmi



MOYENE NAJMI

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Dedicated to my Children

Najeeba, Tayyaba, Zahid and Mujtaba

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Pen and Ink

Preface

It has for many years been my dearest wish that a book should be written on Moyene Najmi.

I had started the process by approaching his friends and asking them if they would be willing to write their recollections of him. Most of them agreed. The artists Murtaza Bashir and Sayyed Jahangir from Bangladesh were, unfortunately, in poor health and could not contribute. At the same time, I discussed the project with Mehmood Rumi. He endorsed the idea of a book on the life and works of Moyene, but actively encouraged me to take on the task of putting it together myself. This was a daunting prospect as I had no

experience as a writer. And so the project stalled.

One day, I contacted the artist Khalid Iqbal to enquire about his health, and the subject of publishing a book on Moyene cropped up again. I told him I did not have any ability as a writer. In his typically simple manner, he replied that when you write something, you become a writer. This gave me confidence and I also thought that if I did not do it, it might never happen.

I began to collect Moyene's work and approached other people who had known him. I soon became immersed in the project and this book is the result of my efforts.

I am grateful to my granddaughter, Alizeh Yahya, for her initial input, and to my daughter-in-law, Asma Zahid, for her support and for helping me to cope with technology when it got the better of me.

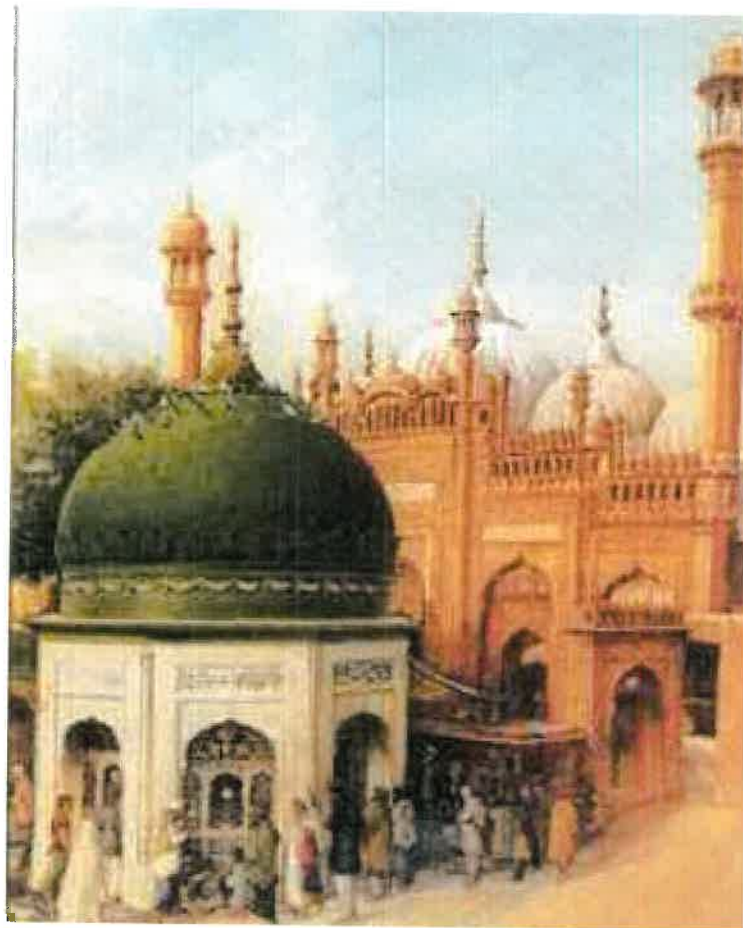
My thanks to my publisher for painstakingly collecting the images, and to Salima Hashmi for suggesting Maryam Hasan who helped in editing the text. My special thanks to Tayyaba Ahmad (My daughter) for doing the final proof reading.

I would also like to thank Mr. Athar Tahir for his helpful suggestions throughout the compilation of this book.

Attiya



Chaudhry Ghulam Rasool



The Data Darbar mosque

Family History

Moyene Najmi was born in Lahore on 6 July 1928 in his family's palatial villa at 5 Montgomery Road. The property is much changed now, although the main house stands to this day, now housing the Public Health Nursing

School.

Moyene's paternal grandfather, Chaudhry Ghulam Rasool, hailed originally from Hafizabad. He moved to Lahore and made his fortune selling

the medicinal kuth herb from the Kashmir mountains. He became very wealthy and owned huge tracts of land in and around Lahore. Chaudhry Sahib was commonly known as the Raees-e-Azam (the richest man) of Lahore.



The grave of Chaudhry Ghulam Rasool, inside Data Darbar

A philanthropist, he gave generous donations to many religious causes, as well as large sums of money to various shrines. He had the singular honour of constructing the original five-dome Data Darbar mosque in Lahore in 1878 which existed until 1984, before the

shrine came under Pakistani government control as part of the Auzaf Ordinance of 1960, and the mosque was rebuilt. He is also buried there, near the hujra (small room) of Khwaja Moin-ud-Din Chishti, where he used to sit for Itikaaf in Ramazan. Chaudhry

Ghulam Rasool also built two mosques in Amritsar, now in India, and constructed many properties in Lahore, Pakistan, including two residences at Golf Road and the palatial property at Montgomery Road where Moyene was born.

Chaudhry Ghulam Rasool also built one of the most impressive examples of colonial architecture on the Mall, popularly known as the Ghulam Rasool Building. It was built in 1916 and covered 5,000 square yards, featuring a striking central dome and a

grand staircase in the central section.

At the time, there were no other such buildings, and the structure was an imposing landmark.

So great was the impact of the

buildings associated with Moyene's family, it is unsurprising that architectural elements appear in almost all of his paintings, combined with natural features such as the moon and trees.



The Ghulam Rasool building on the Mall

Moyene's maternal grandfather was a doctor who served in the army and took part in the Second World War. He settled in Amritsar and was a supporter of the Muslim League.

Chaudhry Ghulam Rasool had two sons, Chaudhry Din Muhammad and Chaudhry Ghulam Mustafa. Moyene's father, Chaudhry Din Muhammad, was an easygoing, sociable person who loved to entertain his friends, of whom there were many. He enjoyed his father's wealth and, later, his inheritance, which was more than substantial. He was extremely fond of classical music and ghazals and listened to the most acclaimed singers of his time in the company of his friends.

Din Muhammad married his first cousin, Nawab Begum, the daughter of Khan Bahadur Chaudhry Saif ud Din. She was a gracious and dignified lady who competently managed Din Muhammad's household. She bore several children, but only four sons and a daughter survived.

Moyene's eldest brother, Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal, was married

to the daughter of Chaudhry Eid Muhammad, from another well-known family of Lahore.

Moyene's other brother, Chaudhry Muhammad Aslam, popularly known as Aslam Pervaiz, entered the film world and made a name for himself as an actor in Pakistani cinema. He was always extremely well-dressed on the screen. Sadly, he died in 1984 in a car accident at the age of 52.

Yet another brother, Chaudhry Muhammad Akram, worked for the Rustam and Sohrab Company for several years. Their only sister died at the early age of fifteen.

Prior to Moyene's birth, his grandfather suffered the loss of two grandsons in premature birth. Chaudhry Ghulam Rasool vowed to himself that if his next grandchild survived, he would give the child to the shrine of Hazrat Moin ud din Chishti at Ajmer.

Moyene was born severely underweight so, when he turned five, the family decided to fulfil the promise of his grandfather. When Moyene was left at the shrine, he

created such a commotion that the ulema advised the family to take him back. He told them they would be absolved of their vow if they donated gold and silver to the poor, equal to the weight of the child. This was willingly done.

Moyene was named after this great saint.

Early Life

Moyene's early schooling was at Sacred Heart Convent in Lahore which he attended along with his brother and two female cousins. Later, he was sent to the Bishop Cotton School in Shimla, where he did his Junior Cambridge.

The hill station of Shimla attracted droves of the elite and art aficionados and the events organised by the Shimla Fine Art Society were a prominent feature of their social life.

This was a time when artists such as Jamini Roy and Amrita Sher-Gil were gaining credit for laying the foundations of modern Indian art and their experimentation was the early inspiration for Moyene's growing interest in art.

Amrita Sher-Gil's family had originally settled in Shimla in 1921, and she returned there from Europe

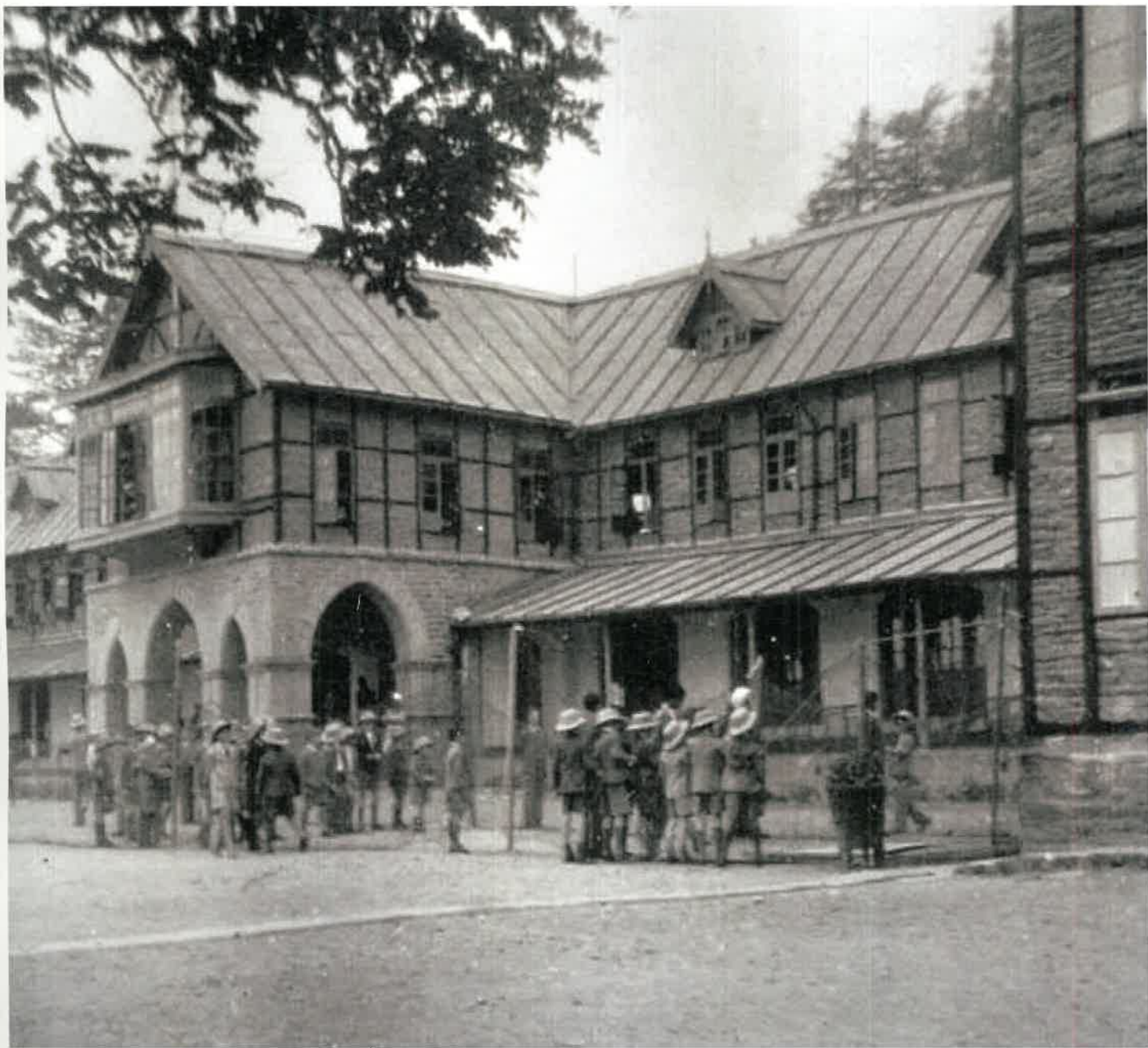
in 1935. Her bold blend of Western techniques and Eastern aesthetics made her a pioneer of the modern movement.

At a very young age, Moyene participated in a group exhibition in Shimla, along with Amrita Sher-Gil, Jamini Roy and Svetoslav Roerich, a Russian artist whose family had settled in the Kullu Valley in the western Himalayas, near Shimla.

Moyene first came into contact with Roerich in Shimla and studied under his guidance. The intensity of Roerich's landscapes and his symbolic paintings left a lasting impression on the young student.

Moyene's artistic talent was recognised at both his schools and, if the decision had been his to make, he would have enrolled at the Mayo School of Art. He was sent instead

to Islamia College in Lahore. After he graduated, however, he was free to follow his true inclination – art – having been left an ample bequest to live on.



Bishop Cotton School in Shimla, 1944

Professional Life

In 1948, Moyene set up his own studio on The Mall in Lahore, at one of the properties owned by his grandfather. This small, independent studio, called Skyline, became a place for young artists and intellectuals to gather and exchange ideas. Moyene worked as a freelance commercial artist, creating press layouts, cinema slides and advertisements which kept him occupied and supplemented his income while he pursued his passion for painting and studied art on his own. His style at the time was realistic and conventional.

When Anwar Jalal Shemza came over from Shimla, he went into partnership with Moyene. Skyline was renamed Shemza Studio but remained a gathering place for artists and men of letters, generating a constant flow of ideas and animated discussions. Moyene also participated in the 1949 and 1950 Punjab Art Exhibitions.

In the 1950s, a number of young artists emerged all over Pakistan, and particularly in Lahore. The expression of their modified or new ideas gradually became visible in their paintings, and the influence of post-

war Europe was also very evident. As Moyene's studio was the hub of all art-related activities, his own style began to display the signs of this *mélange* of concepts and ideas.

He was also influenced by the fresh and attractive style of Ali Imam's watercolours of buildings and landscapes. Never one to be complacent, however, Moyene also began experimenting with a third dimension in his paintings, introducing overlapping elements and forms.

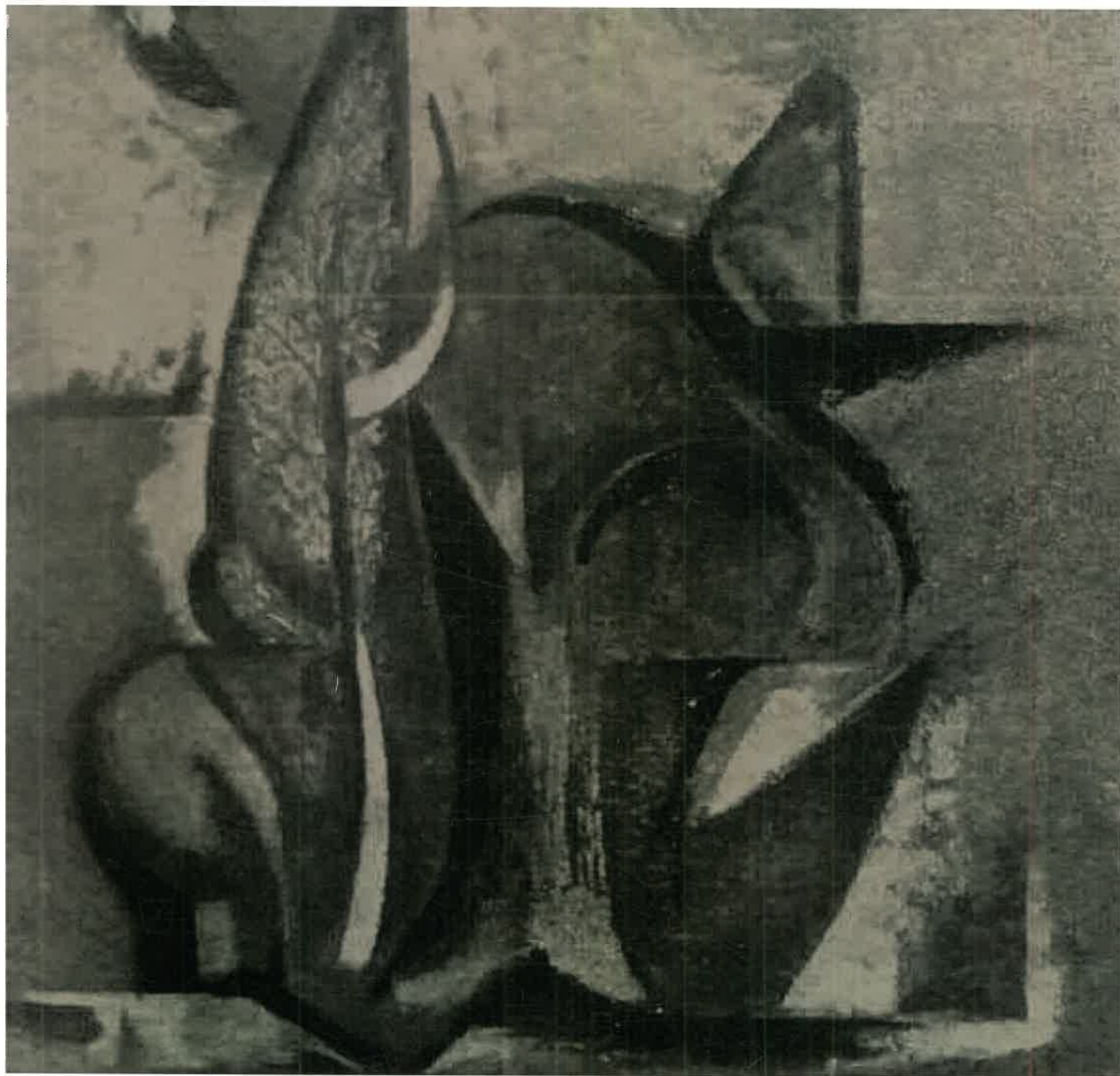
In 1952, a group of these close associates formed the Lahore Art Circle. Moyene, Sheikh Safdar Ali, Ali Imam, Ahmed Parvez and Anwar Jalal Shemza felt the need to acknowledge and give voice to the new influences that were gradually pervading their practice. They were later joined by Mariam Shah and Razia Feroze, then Qutub Sheikh also became part of the group. In an interview in 1986, Moyene explained, "We were experimenting, looking for new forms of expression, but none of us had gone abroad at that time."

In 1953 he painted in poster colours in a decorative rhythmic style, with curved lines and a certain flatness of colour. Two Figures, showing a group of women round a well, is one painting where the influence of Amrita Sher-Gil is apparent.

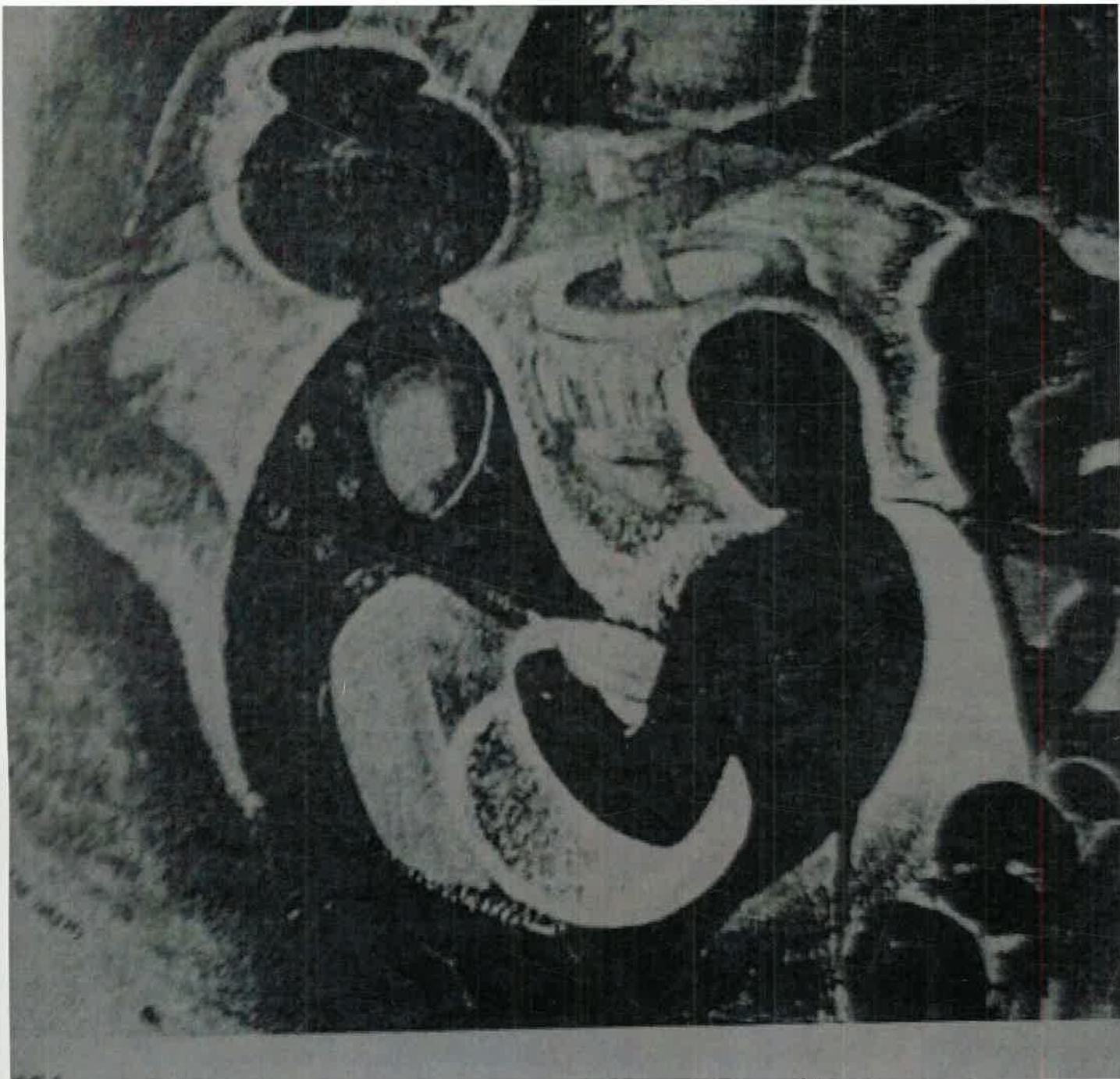
The arrival of Shakir Ali from London prompted the drift towards abstract. Moyene was in continual contact with Shakir Ali who later became the Principal of the National College of Arts.



AJ Shemza (extreme right), seated next to Moyene Najmi, with the Lahore Art Circle planning committee members. Seated, wearing dark glasses, is Safdar Meer. He was a well-known journalist and art critic. Many of Moyene's paintings are missing but there are a fair amount of descriptions of his work by Meer in an art magazine. These were Moon and Trees and Rain, Ahmedi Girls, Zuljanah etc



In 1953 he painted in poster colours in a decorative rhythmic style, with curved lines and a certain flatness of colour.



Two Figures, showing a group of women around a well, is one painting where the influence of Amrita Sher-Gil is apparent.

They all painted and experimented together, so similarities were inevitable in this free borrowing from one another's style. It is most evident in Moyene's work in the 1951-52 period where the influence from Ali Imam's work is obvious. Both painters changed from watercolour to gouache around the same time and their style manifested a shift from representation to absorption with pattern and texture.

Moyene attempted human figures as

well, especially female ones. In his famous paintings, *Anarkali* (1955) and *Ahmedi Girls* (1958), figures have been used but only as symbols. In *Anarkali*, he is not concerned with posture or proportions. The main stress is on design and texture. The foot is twisted back simply for design and the balance of colour. Background textures, shapes and colour are also repeated. On the whole, the picture is pleasing, harmonious and well-balanced. The figure is placed right in the centre but

the colour is repeated in such a way that the viewer's eye is drawn to the whole canvas.

Sometimes, the subjects of paintings were also borrowed from each other.



Shemza's Anarkali

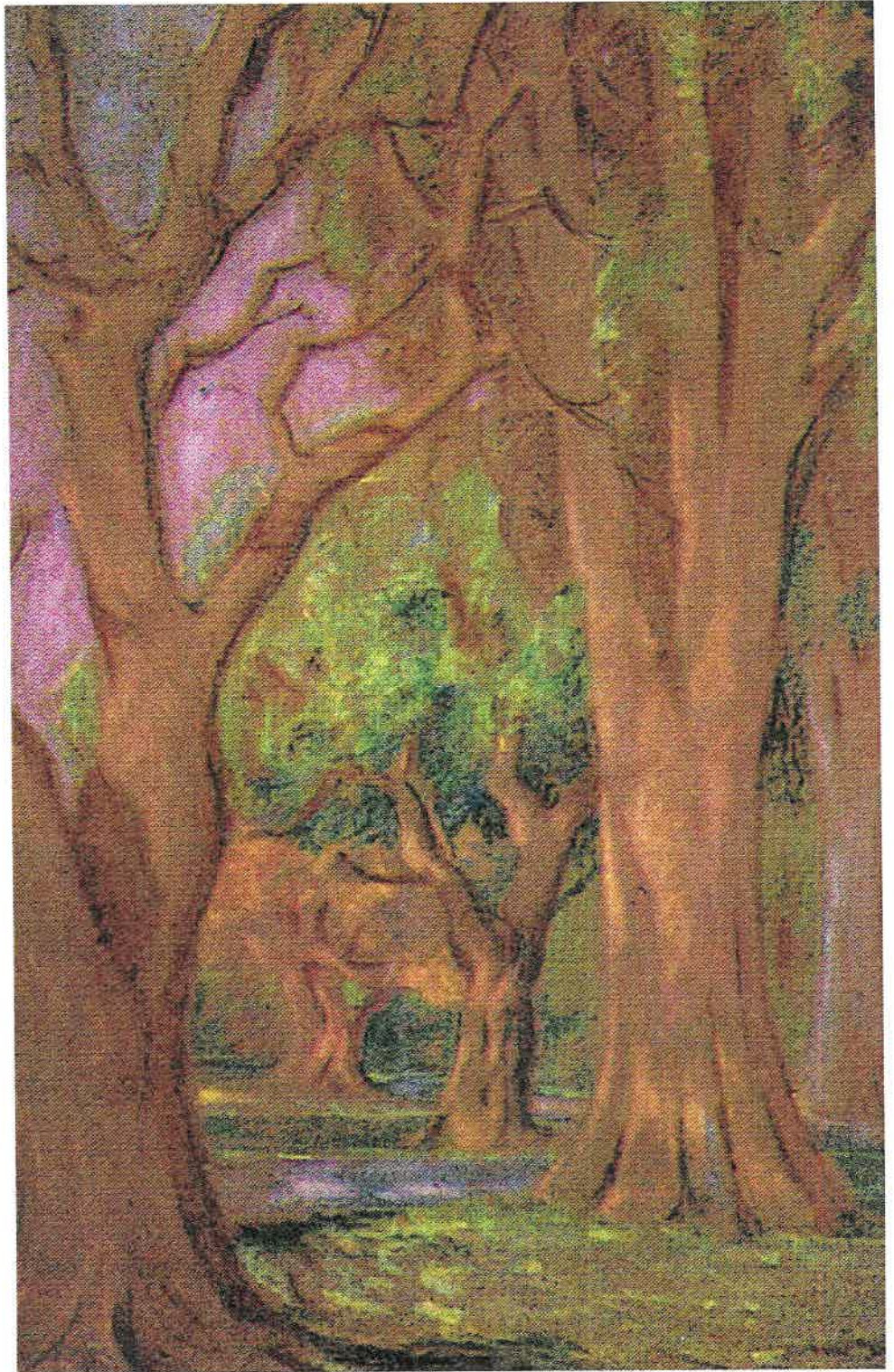


Moyene's Anarkali

Shemza and Moyene both abstracted their depiction of Anarkali to a symbolic female figure.



Quick sketch by Moyene Najmi



Landscape in Pastel by Moyene



Ali Imam, Murree Hills • 1953-55 • Water Colour • 13 × 13

Collection: Shahid Jalal



Realistic Conventional Painting by Moyene Najmi

Their preferred subjects, however, were still buildings and street scenes. The artwork displayed a fascination for houses, with their balconies, windows, arches and tiny surface decorations. The main difference in their images was that Ali Imam looked for an overall unity of texture resulting in a flat effect, whereas Moyene suggested depth with his

device of overlapping and the placement of forms on different planes.

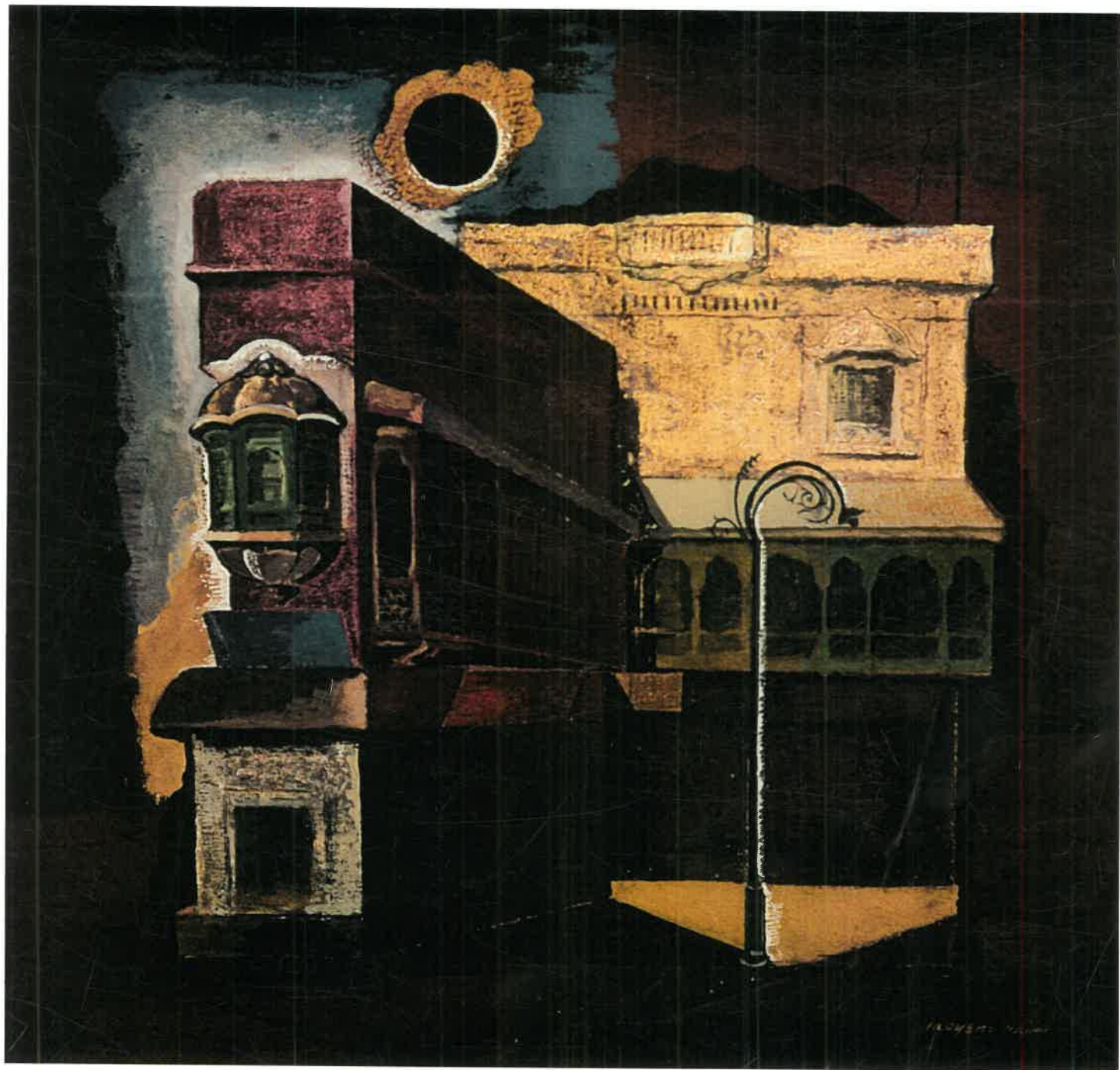
Although Moyene acquired a great deal of knowledge from his association with other artists, he was mostly self-taught. He speaks of one of his works – *Moon and Trees* – as his only truly intuitive painting in which

the forms and colours came of themselves and not from a previously thought-out intention. Both in concept and execution, it is a very successful artwork. The distorted forms of the trees, the contrast in line and tone, and the restrained use of colour come together in a well-harmonised image.



Nila Gumbad/Blue dome, early fifties • Oil on canvas • 58cm × 58cm

Collection: Syed Zulfiqar Ali Bokhari



Old Lahore-1, early fifties • Oil on canvas • 88cm × 88cm

Collection: Begum and Malik Anwar Noon



Moyene's work in one of Punjab University's brochure

An energetic and progressive artist, Moyene was always one of the more active organisers of the Lahore Art Circle. It was also around that time that he took charge of art classes at the United States Information Service Centre in Murree.

Along with all his other commitments, Moyene exhibited regularly every year from 1952 onwards in the Punjab University Fine Arts Exhibition,

winning the University shield for men in 1954 for a set of four paintings in poster colours. The subjects again were architectural and the colours rather sombre, evoking the earthy browns and ochres of the region. Once more, he tackled the problem of depth and contrast in these carefully drawn studies.

It is worth mentioning that Anna Molka Ahmad had set up the

Department of Fine Arts at the University of the Punjab, which she headed until 1978, and she contributed a great deal to the promotion of art in Pakistan. She provided opportunities for young artists to exhibit their work every year and she also wrote about the artists and their work. Her writings are valuable documentation of the history of painting in Pakistan.



L to R: Moyene, Aitzaz Ahsan, Anna Molka and Sajjad Haider

The Lahore Art Circle members were very active between 1955 and 1956. In 1955 six artists, including Moyene, exhibited in a group exhibition in Lahore. Later, the same year, Moyene, A J Shemza and Ali Imam exhibited at the United States Information Service Centre in Murree. The then Governor of West Pakistan, Mushtaq Ahmed Gurmani, purchased Moyene's paintings for display in the Government House in Murree. This group of artists put up many three-man shows.

There was a brief lull when a number of members of the Lahore Art Circle left for further training abroad. But once again in 1957 the three remaining members, Moyene, Mariam Shah and S Safdar arranged a successful exhibition in Lahore at the Pakistan Art Council. Moyene exhibited six new paintings in poster colours, along with two of his earlier ones. The new paintings revealed a greater imagination than his previous work – there was the same leaning towards decoration, but he had been bolder in the use of symbols.

In some cases, he had drawn on the decoration from historical buildings

and woven them into the pattern of his picture, as in the mosaic horse in White Mosque, and the green tile pattern in Zuljanah. The still life, Tibetan Teapot and Moghul Miniature, was a refreshing departure from his usual style, as until then he had not displayed any particular interest in still life.

In Mountain, Moon and Trees, colour and form were subordinate to pattern. The distortion of tree forms and simplification of the mountains serves this end. Mountain, Moon and Rain had a different effect. Here, colour was so blended that tonal transitions were barely distinguishable. The horizontal lines gave a feeling of a window in space through which the elements of nature are observed.

The feeling and imagination in this picture were noticeable and the viewer sensed that Moyene did not analyse and deliberate so much but imparted some of his sensations in a freer way.

During 1956-57, his competence and the respect he commanded led to him being invited to become a member of the Syllabus Committee of Art in Secondary Schools.

Moyene was known for his good nature and depth of knowledge. He was honest and fair in judging the work of others, and he was asked to join a judging committee along with Abdur Rahman Chughtai and Anna Molka Ahmed. His name appeared in many brochures of that time.

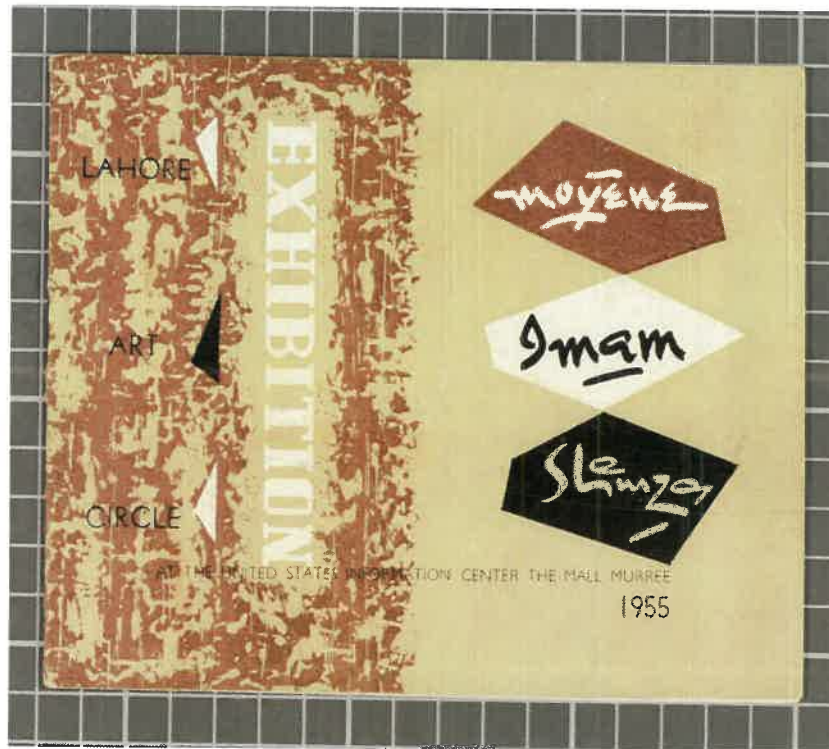


LAHORE
ART
CIRCLE



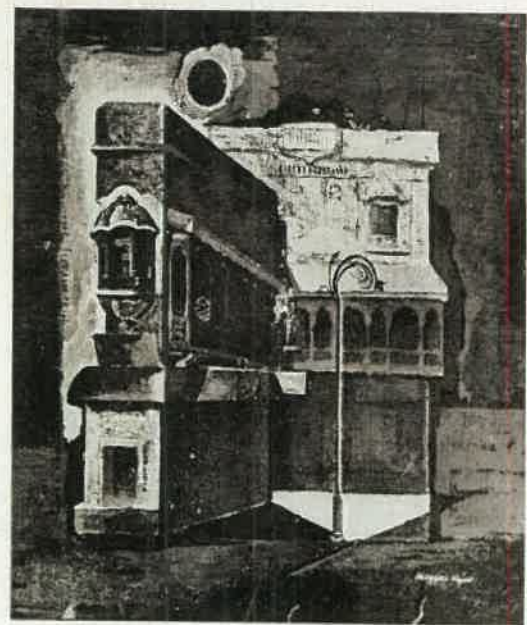
EXHIBITION





Moyene Najmi was born in 1926 at Lahore. Not being able to submit to the hidebound discipline of an art school, he taught himself to wield the brush for the complete expression of an independent personality. He has applied himself exclusively to painting for the last many years and has developed a technique which is bearing fruit now. He has exhibited his work in many art displays over the last decade and created a name for himself among the abstract painters of Pakistan. He was awarded the Punjab University Shield for the best set of paintings among the male artists in 1954.

He was the first among the working artists to join a public school in Pakistan as Head of the Art Faculty in Aitchison College, where since 1952, he is organising Art Education on modern lines. And with the help of a few other art teachers has considerably raised the prestige of art education at Public Schools in this country. At present he is busy completing the plans for the first All Pakistan Child Art Exhibition which is due to be held in winter at the Aitchison College, Lahore.



BALCONY

MOYENE NAJMI

Group exhibition by Moyene, Imam and Shemza



پاکستان

Exhibition of Paintings

Miriam Shah
Moyene Najmi
S. Safdar



Lahore Art Circle

Pakistan Art Council

Miriam Shah

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Landscape | Rs. 300/- |
| 2. Canal Bank | Rs. 250/- |
| 3. Old Pathan | (courtesy of Mr. E. O. Anderson) |
| 4. Landscape | Rs. 200/- |
| 5. Mother and Child | Rs. 350/- |
| 6. The Wind | Rs. 300/- |
| 7. Portrait | Rs. 250/- |
| 8. Old Man | Rs. 400/- |

Moyene Najmi

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 9. Mountain Moon and Rain | 300/- |
| 10. White Mosque | Rs. 250/- |
| 11. Zuljanah | Rs. 350/- |
| 12. Ahmadi-Girl | Rs. 300/- |
| 13. Tibetan Teapot and Mogal Miniature | Rs. 250/- |
| 14. Mountain Moon and Trees | Rs. 300/- |
| 15. Landscape | Rs. 250/- |
| 16. Chowk Nila Gumbad (courtesy Zulfiqar Bokhari) | |

S. Safdar Ali

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 17. Still life with cactus | Rs. 400/- |
| 18. Two Sisters (courtesy Javid Saigol Esq.) | |
| 19. Seated Woman | Rs. 400/- |
| 20. Fish and Figure | Rs. 400/- |
| 21. Still life with jug and mangoes | Rs. 400/- |
| 22. Four faces | Rs. 300/- |
| 23. City | Rs. 500/- |
| 24. Jatri | Rs. 300/- |

Group exhibition of paintings by Mariam Shah, Moyene Najmi and S Safdar



Moyene with the Governor General of Pakistan Malik Ghulam Muhammad



Moyene with President Ayub Khan

First Tenure at Aitchison College

In 1952, Moyene joined Aitchison College Lahore as the High School art teacher and Kelly assistant housemaster. Khalid Iqbal was the art teacher at Aitchison College and a close friend of Moyene. He asked Moyene to apply for his place at Aitchison so that he himself could go

abroad for higher studies at the Slade School of Art. Moyene recommended a few artists for the post but they needed a teacher who spoke good English. So Moyene took Khalid Iqbal's place.

During this first tenure, he organised several art exhibitions and arranged

for them to be inaugurated by high ranking officials.

In 1956 he undertook the organisation of the first All Pakistan Child Art Exhibition on the occasion of Aitchison's Diamond Jubilee. Many local schools participated, and the best works were judged and awarded



President Ayub Khan at a prize distribution ceremony with Moyene announcing the recipients' names

prizes. A colour catalogue was printed with the students' original work.

Moyene's introduction in the catalogue, reproduced on page 33, is remarkably relevant even today. It displays a unique understanding of the importance of art in child

education and the need to allow children the freedom to express themselves creatively. It is easy to understand why Moyene again and again returned to art instruction, and so often arranged exhibitions to promote the art of others, perhaps to

the detriment of his own artistic output.

In 1957 he left Aitchison College after completing a five-year contract, having decided to go on a painting tour of Ceylon and East Pakistan (now Sri Lanka and Bangladesh).



President Ayub Khan opening an exhibition

CHILDART

EXHIBITION-1956



on the occasion of
THE DIAMOND CUM PLATINUM
JUBILEE

of

Aitchison College Lahore



The first All Pakistan Child Art Exhibition was held on the occasion of Aitchison's Diamond Jubilee.



● HUTS
Kamil Khan
16 Years
Aitchison College Lahore



● MOTHER & CHILD
Hamid Nasir
12 years
Aitchison College Lahore

Some of the students' submissions for the art exhibition

Introduction for the Child Art Exhibition at Aitchison by Moyene Najmi

The dreamland of children, untainted by the complexities of the realistic world, is a domain which charms us as much with its fantasy and colour as it does with its complete innocence and unblemished expression. A painting by a child is not charming because of its symmetry and artistic completeness but for its integrity, frankness and unsophisticated approach to the world as it is seen by them.

It is in the boundless imagination, the innocent representation and the personal method of expression that we must seek to find the child's real personality and innate potentialities which are such a significant feature in the education of a child. Educationists have sought in the past, and are still endeavouring to formulate, a method of discovering individual talent and inclinations in order to set every child on the path God meant him or her to tread. Child art is perhaps serving its purpose towards this end in a larger measure than is commonly realised by us. It is a complete and well-balanced method for exhibiting child inclinations because it enables the children to

express themselves in the way they like best and in the sequence they prefer.

Even child psychology has now admitted that the use of colours and paint brushes play an important part in the mental satisfaction and happiness of the child. He or she must be free and must have an opening to express in their own way their natural inhibitions and desires. The experience of handling the medium of painting unconsciously supplies the child with an outlet which consequently makes their mental growth healthy and prepares them to adjust to the problems of life. Thus a child's mental process of growth is assisted as much by art as it is by their environments. This, of course, is all subject to the child having complete freedom when he or she is painting. The child who is allowed and encouraged to function freely as an artist is merely learning to be a whole person. This technique is not followed by the old school of thought which insists on the child being constantly guided and influenced by the teacher in their method of expression. Happily that old conception of child art education is now considered as

obsolete as the use of a flickering candle in this age of electricity.

It is indeed gratifying to note the great interest taken by the children of our country in this first display of child art. I had never expected such a large number or variety of pictures to be entered for this exhibition. This has made me optimistic and I feel that this exhibition will help a great deal in the recognition, by educationists and teachers, of the importance of child art in this country. Now that the seed has been sown, let us hope and expect that it will be fully watered and cared for by the

JUDGING COMMITTEE

•
MR ABDUR RAHMAN CHUGHTAI
MISS ZUBAIDA AGHA
MR SHAKIR ALI
MR MAHMOOD NIZAMI
MRS SATNAM MAHMOOD
MRS FAIZ AHMAD FAIZ
MR MOYENE NAJMI

educational authorities in order that it may grow and bloom and occupy the position it deserves in the domain of child education as it does in all other advanced countries.

Our endeavour has been to select and present from this collection the paintings, drawings and sketches of children that are being produced in this country. This does not necessarily mean that the exhibition is in concurrence with the modern conception of freedom in child art. It is only a representation of what is being painted by the children under the present circumstances. Some of the work may have been suggested by teachers, some influenced even by the direct result of the teacher's desire to have his or her pupil's work exhibited. However, this should not be the pattern for future exhibitions and I would sincerely suggest to all the teachers to let the children paint as they wish.

Certain pictures have also been contributed and exhibited by the children who have produced them at home without any assistance or guidance. These may be copies from other pictures, but they have been included to give enough encouragement to these children so

that they continue to delve into the aesthetic world and derive benefit from their paintings and drawings. Their spontaneous creations will liberate their creative faculties and develop their powers of observation. The result of this encouragement will in itself give it full justification. It will stimulate in them the formation of taste, the awakening of an aesthetic need and their desire for contact with art and life. It will leave a deep impression on the child from both human and artistic points of view.

The underlying idea of this whole exhibition is not only to form a basis for future child art representations but also to encourage the children to paint and gain confidence in their work. This incidentally is sometimes unduly tampered with by parents and teachers who insist on ridiculing the work of these young artists. No teacher or parent should ever underestimate the value of even a very simple creation of his or her pupil or child. It should be regarded as something which is worthy of praise and, what is more important, something which is the outspoken result of the child's desire for expression which is an extremely

important element in his or her growth.

This exhibition is also a pointer to the authorities concerned to take steps to improve the standard of child art education where it is required and encourage those institutions with better facilities where it has found its real importance.

Aitchison College is trying to take a keen interest in raising the standard of art education and to afford an opportunity to all the children of Pakistan to exhibit their works by sponsoring this venture and providing the means to make it a nationwide success. My thanks are due to the Lahore Art Circle, Mr. A.J. Shemza, and all those friends and friendly institutions which have provided valuable assistance in the preparation of this exhibition. Of course, we must not forget that the exhibition would not have been possible without the cooperation of various schools, colleges, and the children themselves. I am grateful to them all.

Lahore
March 1956
MOYENE NAJMI



Faiz Ahmed Faiz at the Punjab Art Council

The Arts Council and UNESCO Scholarship

When Faiz Ahmed Faiz became Secretary of the Arts Council, Lahore in 1959, one of his first initiatives was to set up daily classes in art and music. Moyene was among the regular daily visitors to Alhamra until Faiz left Lahore in 1962, and Faiz asked Moyene to organise the art classes. He prevailed upon Moyene to create a space for the art classes and exhibitions within an amount of Rs.

5,000 and so the 'The Hut' was built of mud and thatch on the side lawns of Alhamra. The garden outside The Hut was used as a cafeteria and an additional arena for the animated discussions and conversations of the artists, writers and intellectuals of Lahore.

Moyene joined the Lahore Arts Council, and worked as Programme Director and instructor of the art

classes until 1963.

The Minister of Education nominated Moyene for the UNESCO Fellowship for Art and Museography and he was selected in 1962. He embarked upon this fellowship in 1963, touring and visiting art galleries, museums, art institutions, and cultural organisations in the UK, Germany, Italy, and the United States.



Moyene in Rome, elegant as ever, with the Colosseum in the background

Second Tenure at Aitchison College

On his return from the UNESCO tour, one of his friends offered him a shareholding membership of the first commercial cooperative gallery in Rawalpindi, but this Moyene declined. He preferred to once again join

Aitchison College in 1963 as the head of the art faculty. Here, he taught Senior Cambridge and Higher Senior Cambridge classes until 1975.

His teaching techniques were inspiring, moving his students to use

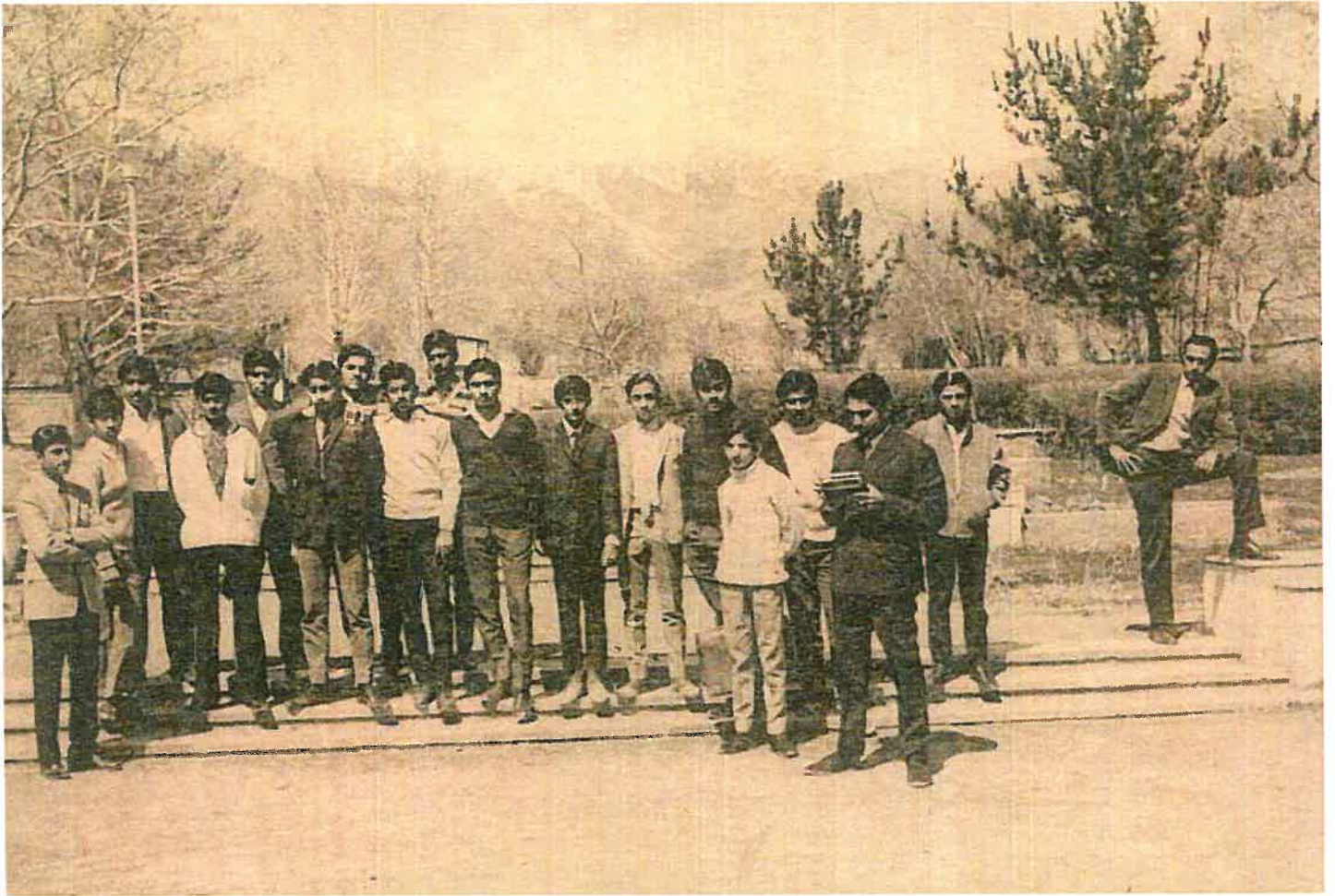
their senses to think and imagine while producing their artwork. During this period, he organised students' art exhibitions on Founder's Day. He also lent a hand to the students in devising the swimming gala skits.



Staff photograph at Aitchison College - Moyene standing 6th from left, 1963.



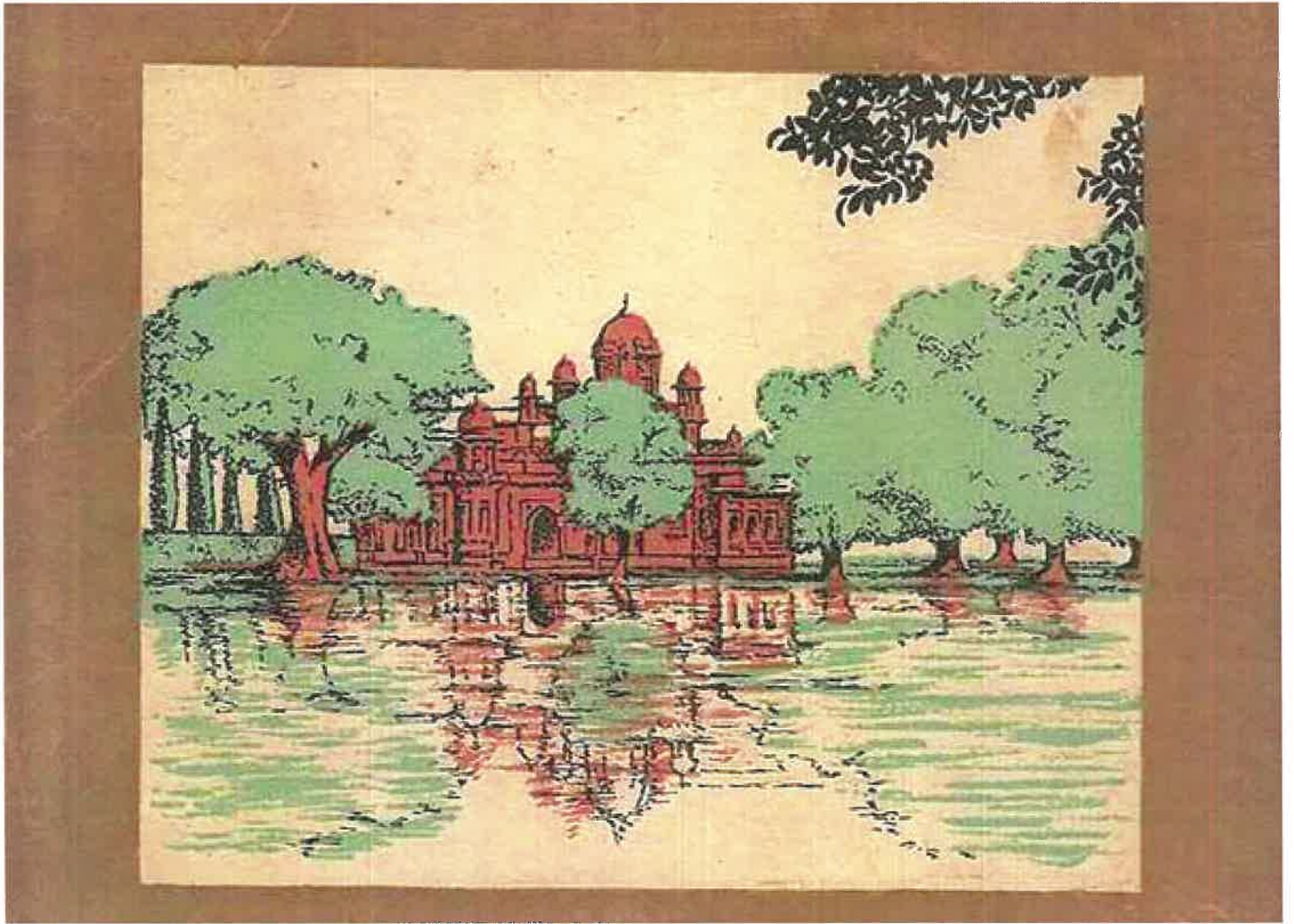
After the 1965 war, a delegation of young artists visiting the front lines: Khalid Iqbal, Taufiq Rafat, Shakir Ali, Ijaz ul Hassan, Musarrat Ijaz and Najmi.



On a field trip to Swat, Moyene on the right striking a pose. 1968



Aitchison College Prize Distribution, 1964-65



Invitation for an event at Aitchison College, designed by Moyene Najmi

Punjab Council of Arts and Art Galleries

Hanif Ramay was appointed Chief Minister of the Punjab in 1974.

During his brief tenure he formed another organisation in 1975, the Punjab Council of the Arts, for the patronage, promotion and development of the arts and culture.

Moyene was put in charge of the painting section of the Council. With his customary zest, he set about establishing a new gallery in the basement of the premises known at the time as the Masonic Hall, now 90 Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam, a landmark property in Lahore. Several

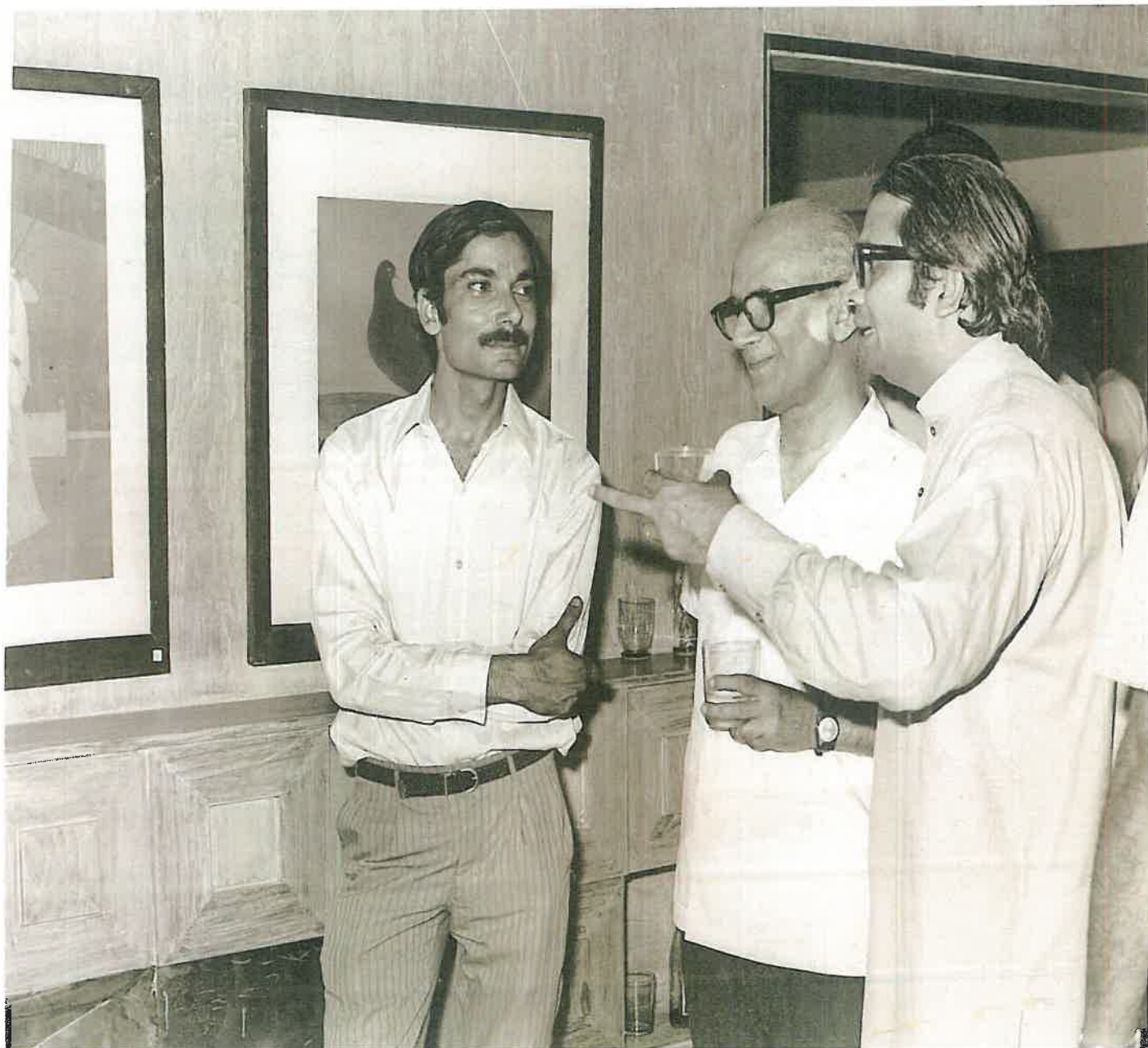
exhibitions were organised under his stewardship.

When the shroud of politics descended on the Punjab Arts Council at Alhamra, it was closed down for an indefinite period. All cultural activities ground to a halt and Lahore became, for all intents and purposes, culturally starved.

To fill the void, Moyene took it upon himself to open the first commercial gallery in Lahore – The Art Galleries – in 1975, at his own residence at 6 Golf Road, GOR-1. Every year, at least 13 art exhibitions were

organised, including children's art competitions, calligraphy shows, group shows, and solo art exhibitions. Different embassies sponsored exhibitions from their respective countries.

Moyene appreciated the works of other painters. When someone once commiserated with Abdul Rahim Nagori, a Pakistani painter known for his socio-political themes, about the lack of sales in one of his own early exhibitions, he responded, "It was extremely successful. Moyene Najmi bought a painting."



Shakir Ali and Hanif Ramay at the Art Galleries, Golf Road, G.O.R 1



L to R: Artist Mahmoud Farshchian, Sadiq Hussain Qureshi (Governor) and Dr Anwar Sajjad at Art Gallery, 6 Golf Road.

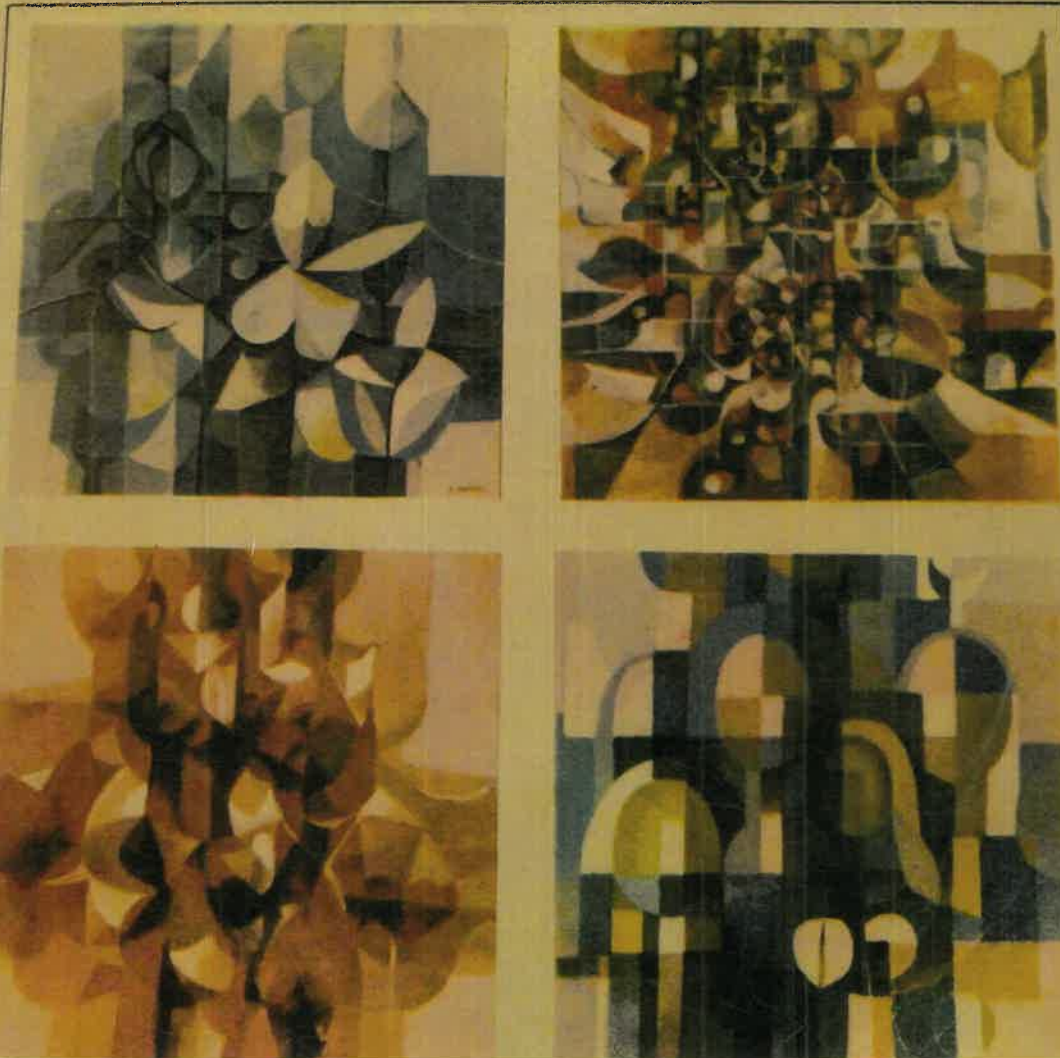


Moyene at prize distribution for child art 1973 at the Art Galleries

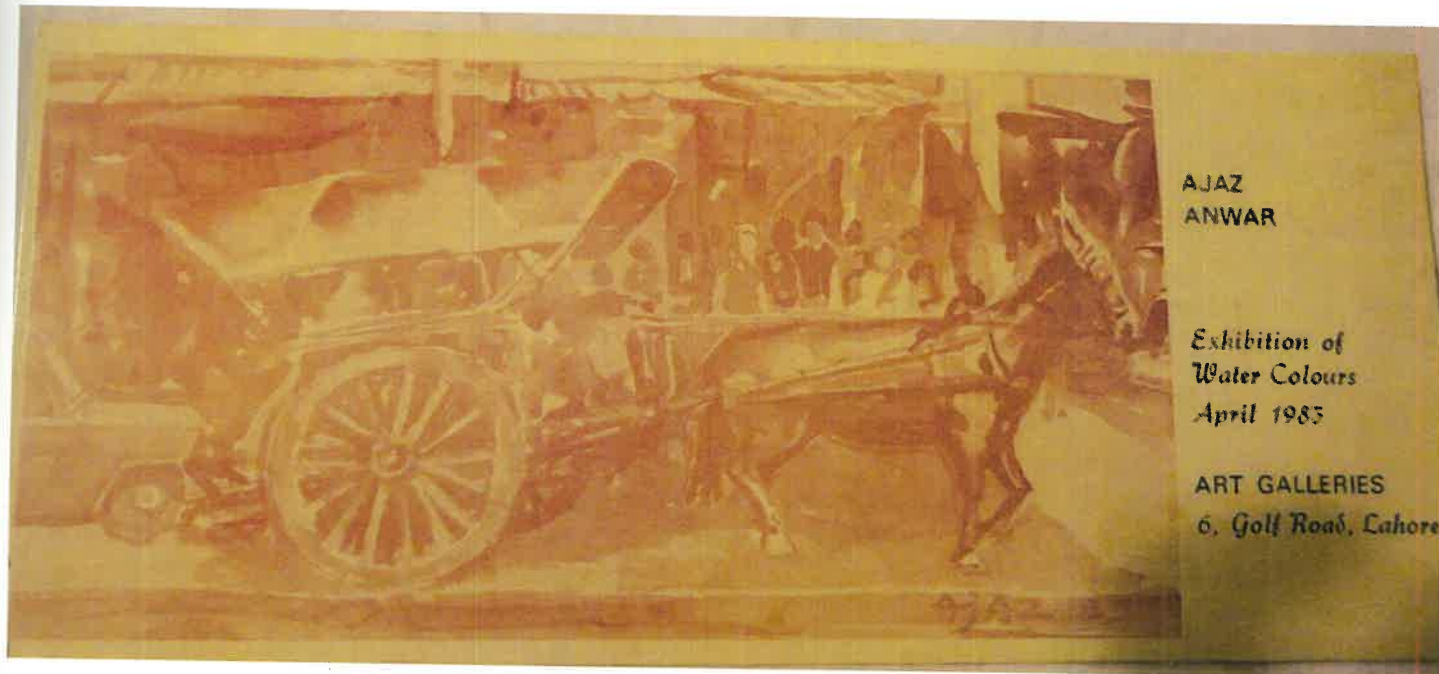
S. SAFDAR

exhibition of paintings, '83

THE ART GALLERIES
6 GOLF ROAD LAHORE



Invitation for different exhibitions at Art Gallery, 6 Golf Road



**AJAZ
ANWAR**

*Exhibition of
Water Colours
April 1985*

**ART GALLERIES
6, Golf Road, Lahore**

in which, there is a worthwhile glimpse into the activities for the yet unexplored and unexplored ways of looking at things. Asif is a keen observer of details. His style of work has been influenced by the Indian miniature world of his own while his latest observations on still objects into something to the spectator.

Asif is a versatile yet serious fine artist with a prolific career in portrait painting from where he seems to have acquired an attitude to depict the personality, ordinary, everyday aspects in a realistic, without resorting to super-natural detail. He intuitively employs his characteristic dark to create the outlines of the main subject which, with the more monochromatic touches adds to the textured feature and tone and a dry brush accentuates a glowing, they brighten to be followed by the signature - Asif.

He owes all this to his teachers Prof. Khaliq Iqbal and late Prof. Shahn Aiz, and to his typical background, hobbies and interests. Inspite of being an avid reader of classics, he manages to find time every evening to practice classical music on his lapso in an equally relevant company of animated profiles where the verse and aria's vibrate to keep pace with the quartet-like beat of the drum while his own composition ponders over the various possible solutions to the series of thematic paintings. He started long ago but while returning from the National College as he crosses the Lake road and passes in the front of Chaburji, the declaration re-schedule his train of thoughts and he enters his home thus with a callflower in his hand. But his wife is no longer interested for she knows that it is not to be consumed in a dish but consumed as a canvas in form of a yet another still life.

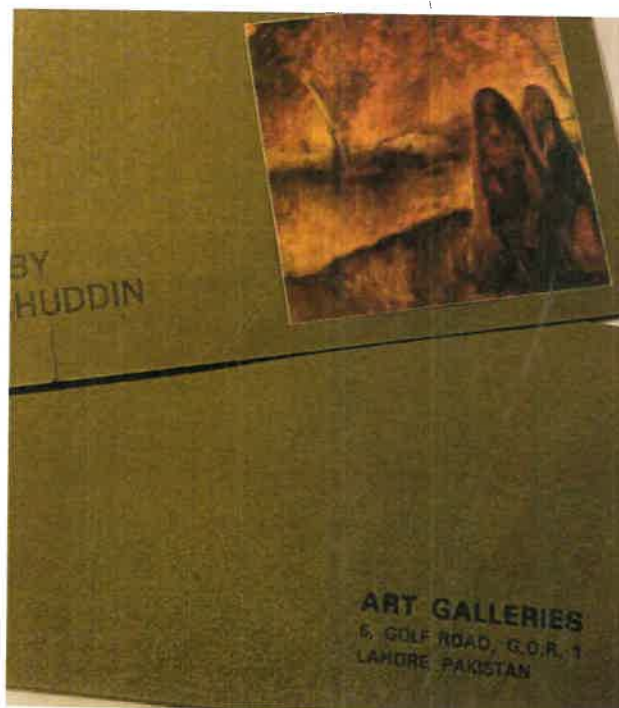
DR. AJAZ ANWAR



**EXHIBITION OF
PAINTINGS
STILL LIFE
IN OILS
83**

**MOHAMMAD
ASIF**

**ART GALLERIES
6-GOLF ROAD,
LAHORE**



**BY
HUDDIN**

**ART GALLERIES
6, GOLF ROAD, G.O.R., 1
LAHORE, PAKISTAN**

His style and technique

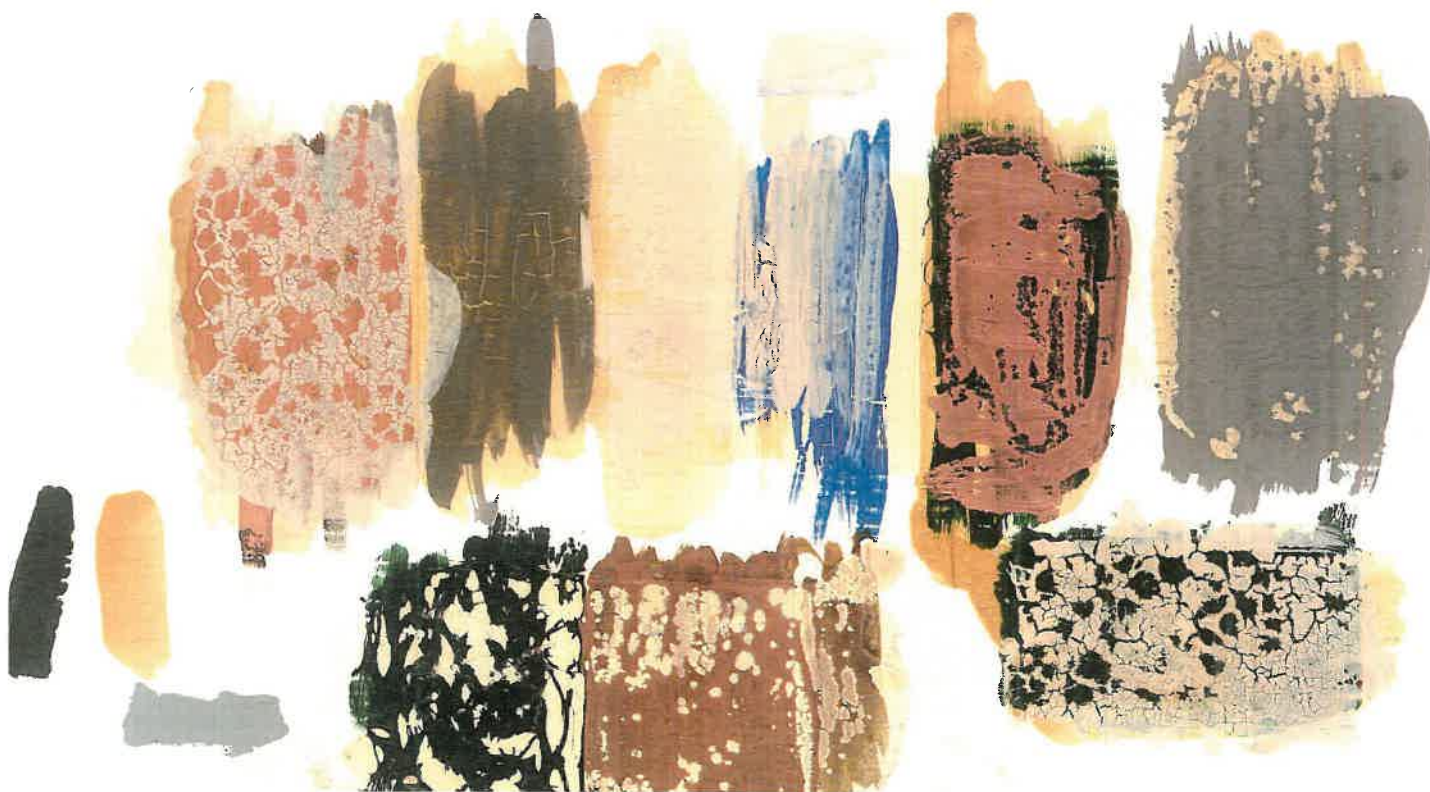
More than anything else, Moyene enjoyed painting architectural elements combined with texture and lines. His own particular absorption with the architectural elements of buildings stemmed from his earlier experiences in the properties owned by his grandfather. He took photographs of old buildings of Lahore and then used them in his paintings wherever appropriate. He painted a series of 25 paintings with the title 'Lahore-I', 'Lahore-2' and so on.

Moyene's generally planned his pictures. He applied the darkest tones with a palette knife using thick oil paint on canvas or hardboard. As the paint dried, he applied middle tones on top of the thick first layer. He later used highlights after the middle tones had dried.

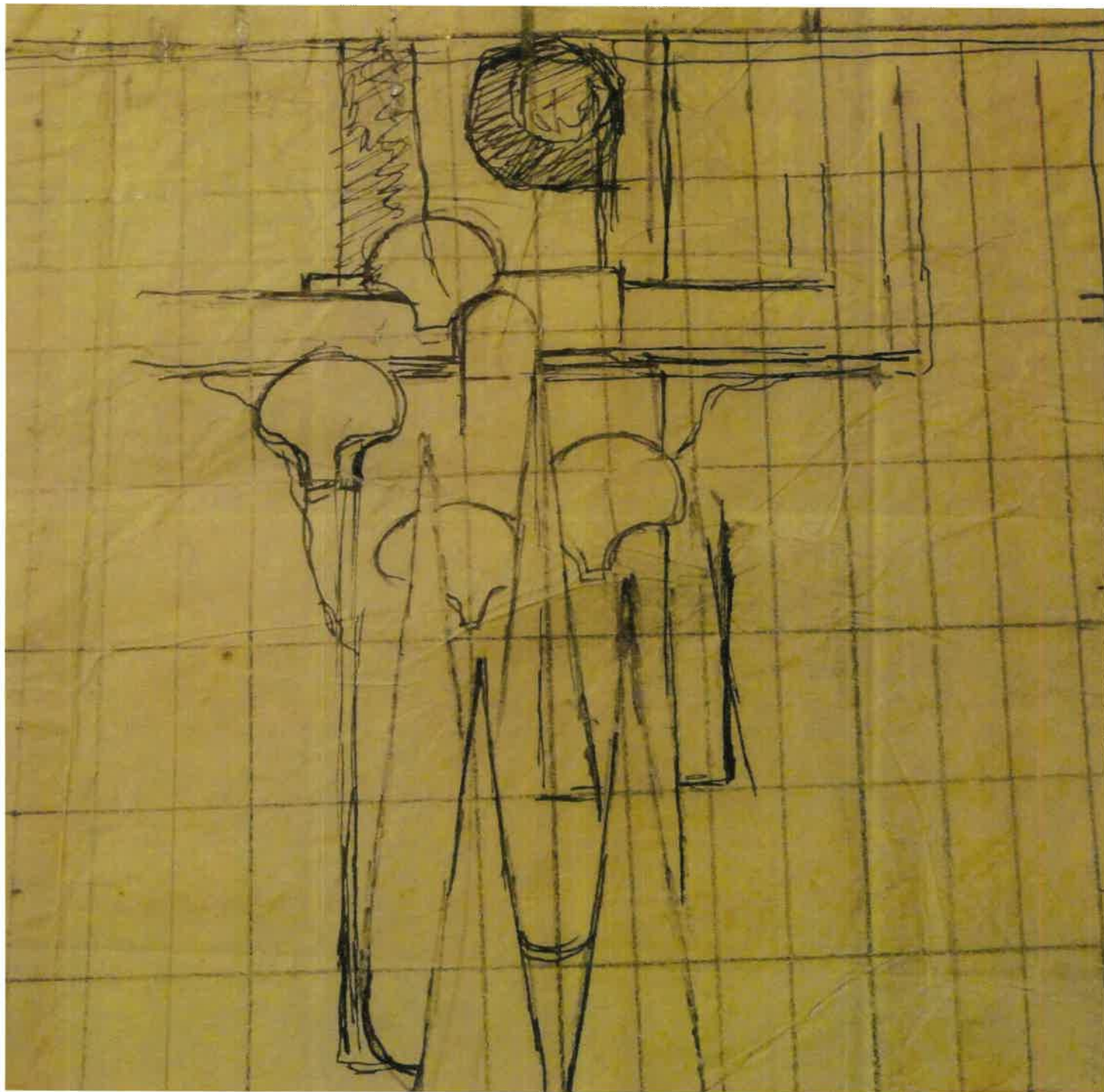
His contemporaries would say that he painted very slowly and was a perfectionist, sometimes taking many months to complete one work. He would discard anything that he considered unworthy. Dozens of unfinished sketches and outlines were scattered around but, despite his painstaking style, his work never appears forced or contrived. It retains a lightness of touch and a deftness that immediately catches the eye.

Moyene's paintings imply an observant and analytical mind at work, rather than a feeling of externalised emotions – a well-considered deliberate interest in pattern, a studied use of texture and tone for a decorative result. They convey a certain coldness and detachment, but nevertheless arouse interest and draw the viewer in.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, he usually painted in his customary attire of a three-piece suit. However, his meticulous approach apparently did not extend to his tools – once he had finished painting, he would invariably wander off without remembering to clean his brushes.



Some samples of the textures applied by Moyene

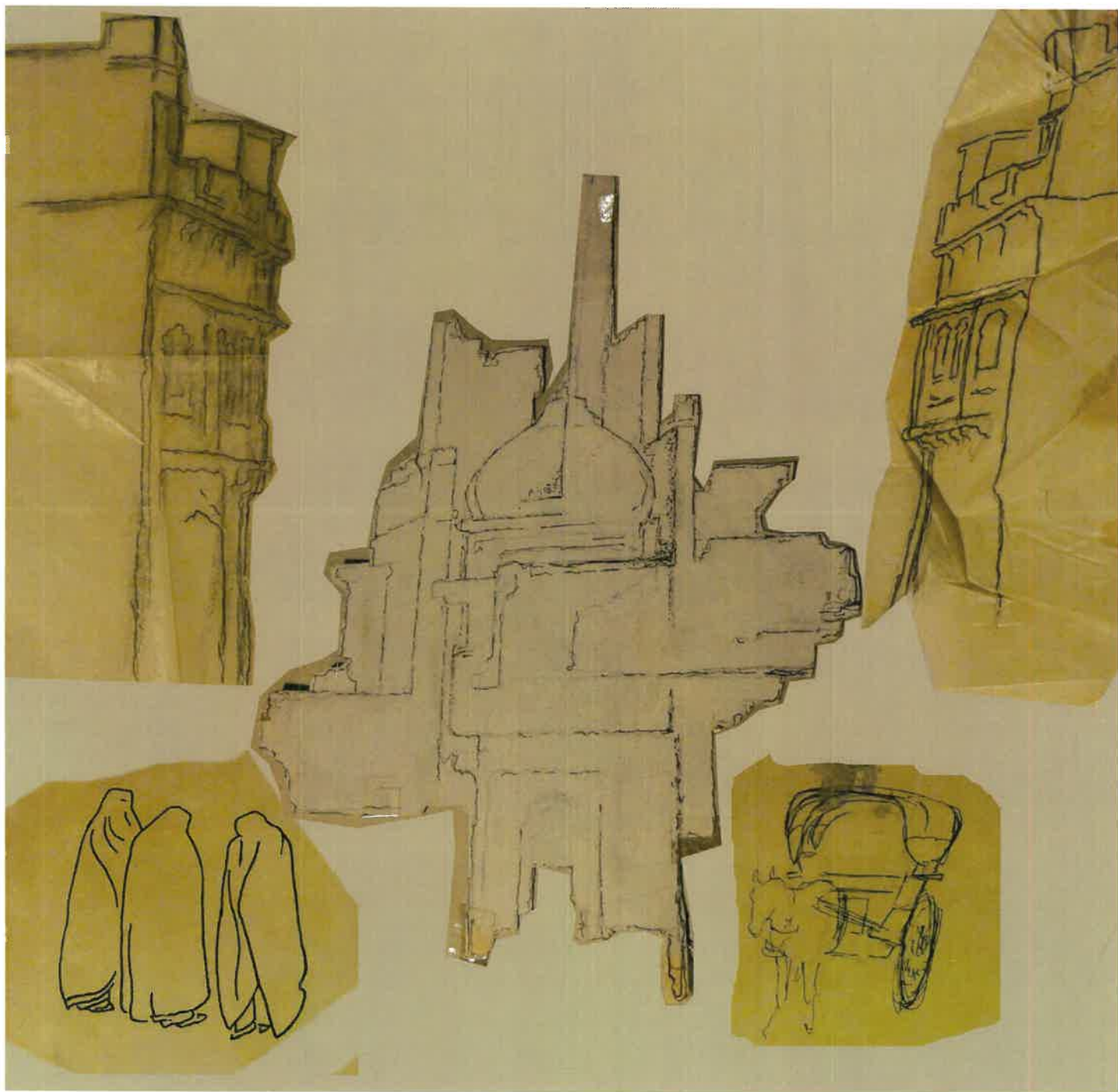


A tracing of Shalimar Gardens • painting on the right

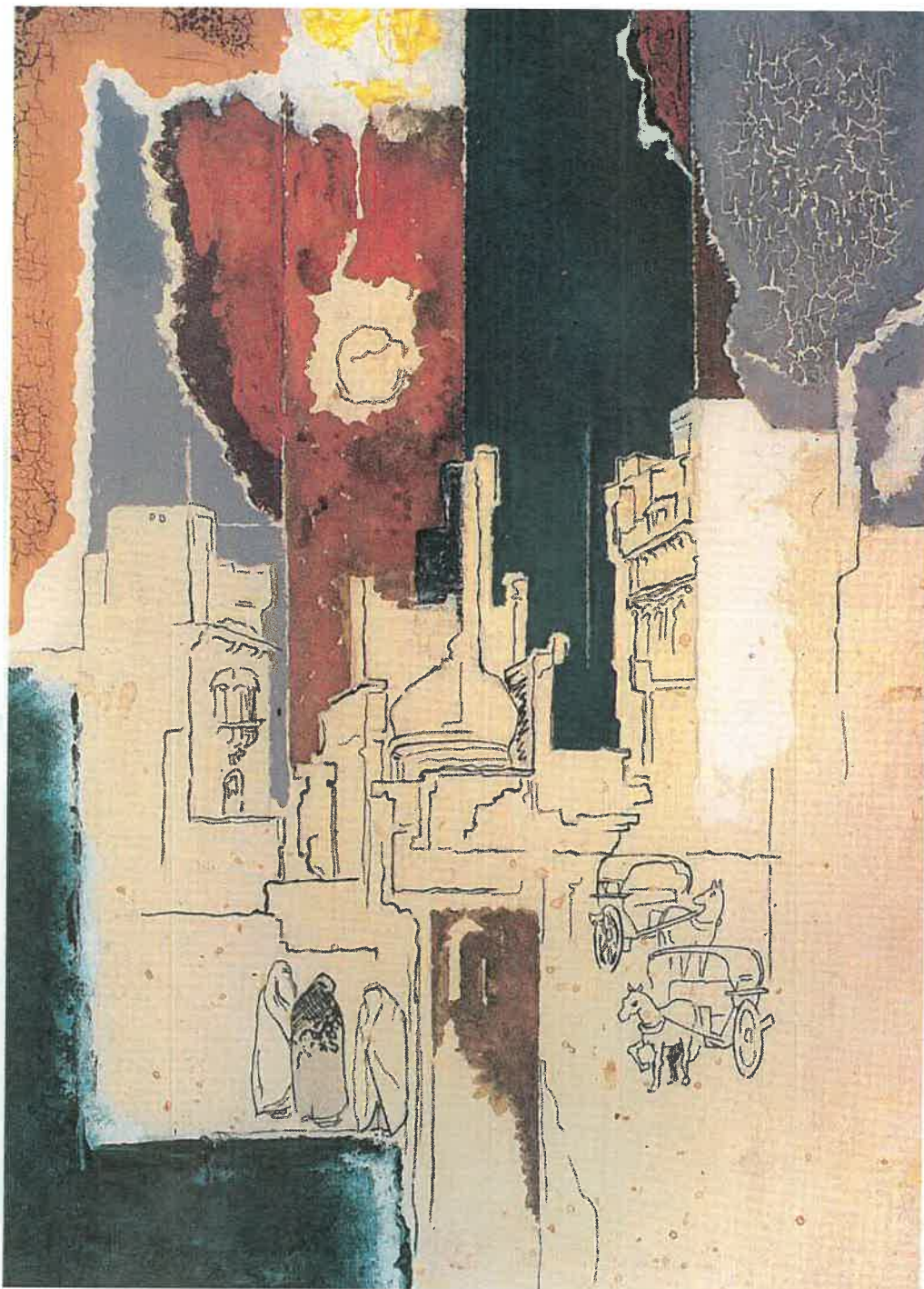


Shalimar Gardens

Collection: Lahore Musium

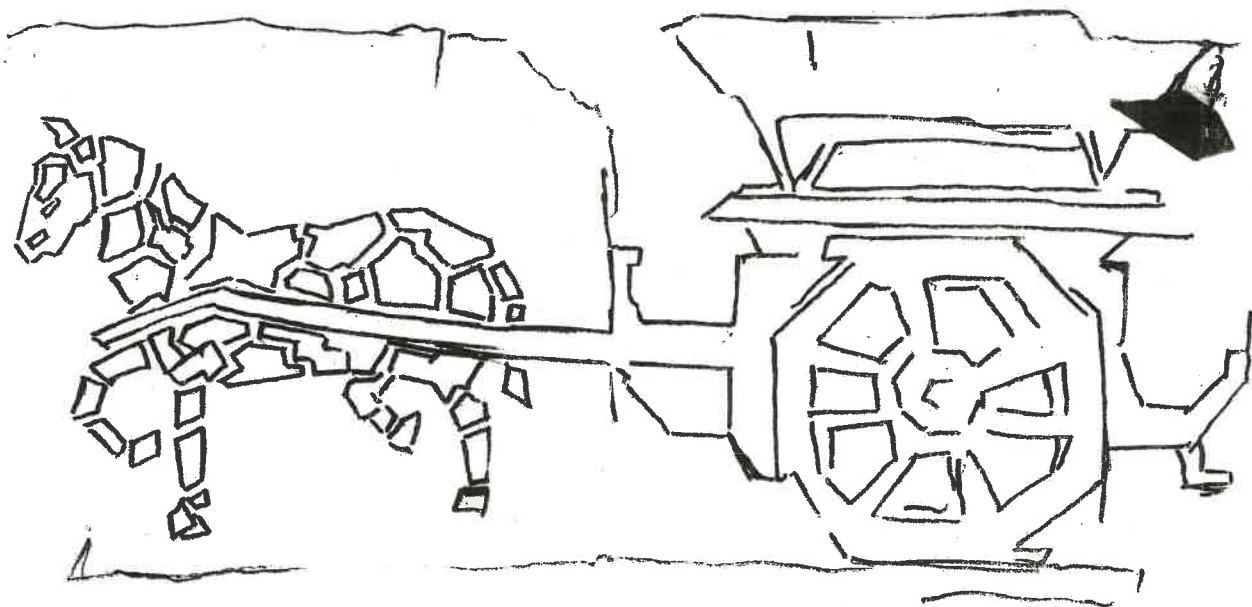


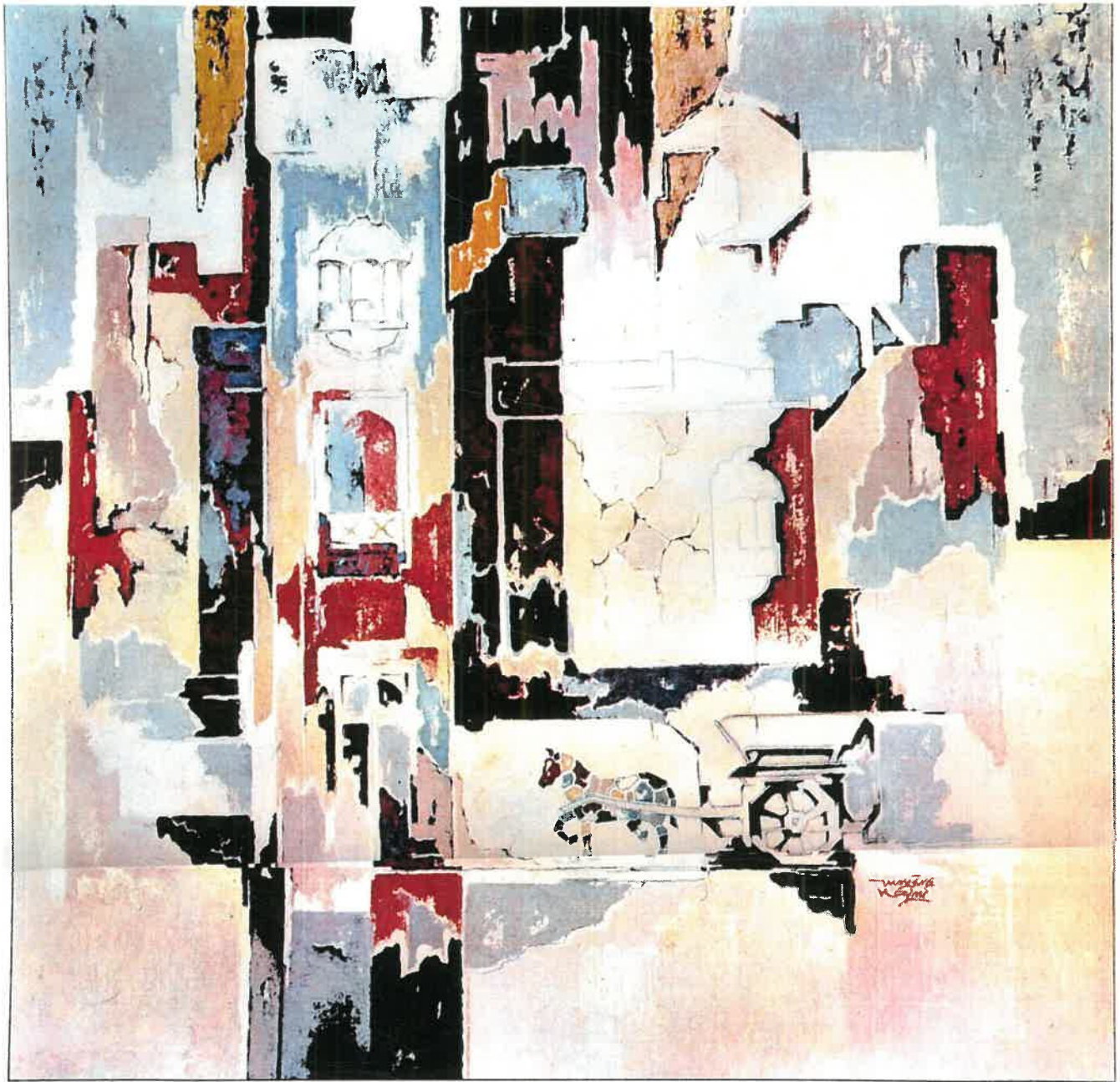
A collage of tracings for the painting on the opposite page



Incomplete painting by Moyene Najmi

Collection: Mrs. Attiya Moyene



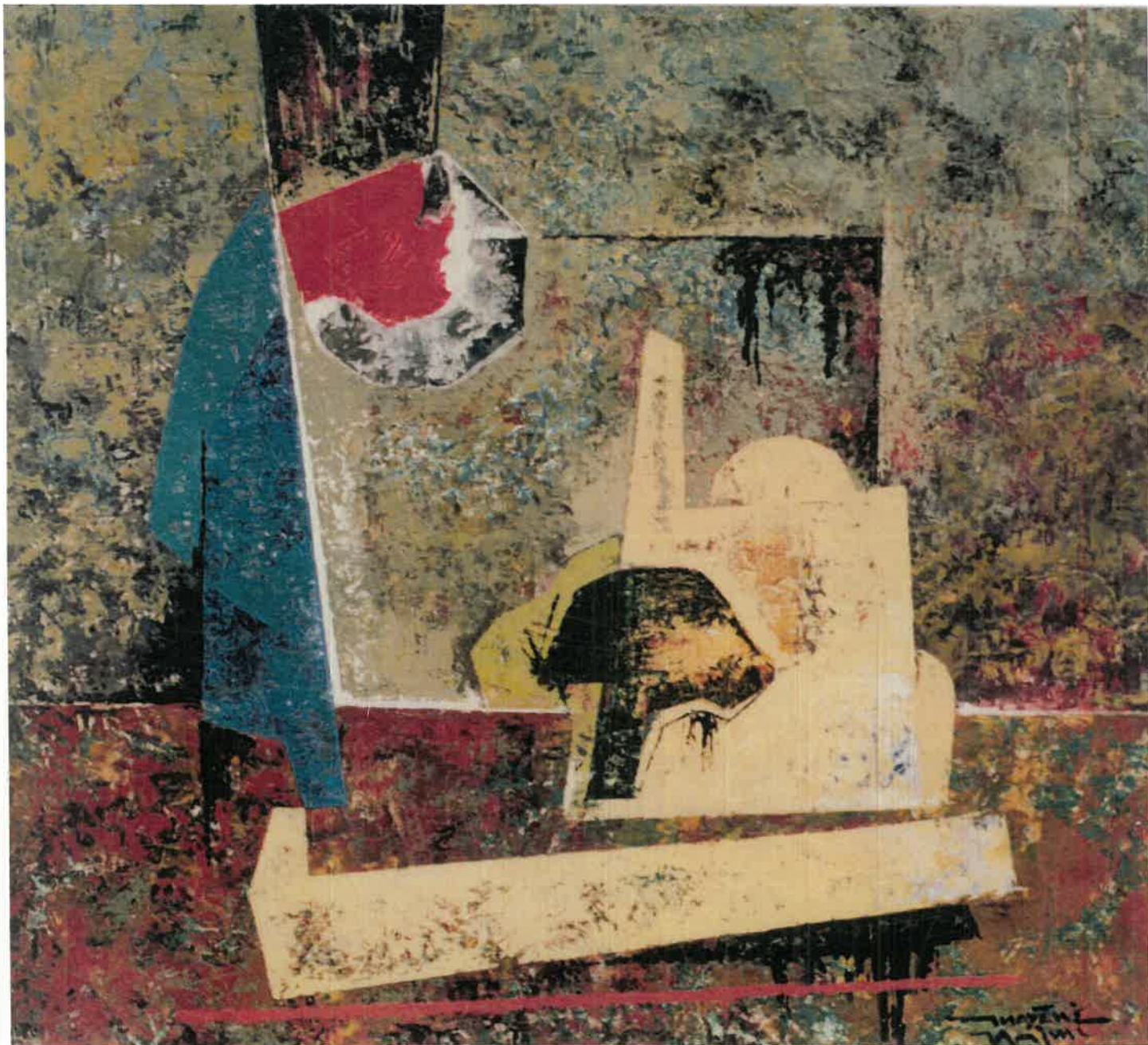


The variation of neutral grey colours in 'Old Lahore' is intercepted by warm rust shades to create contrast. Very dark colours are used next to grey tints. A tonga (original sketch left) is positioned in the painting in such a way that it does not become the focal point although the horse seems to be painted in a mosaic style. The signature becomes part of the composition. This painting is taken from a calender printed at packages Lahore.



Lahore No 2 • Oil on Board • 87 × 79 cm • 1975

This is another composition that incorporates architectural elements, such as a small terrace and balcony, and tall buildings. The colours balance each other. Ochre is equally distributed, balancing the neutral greys, green and blues. Some black vertical lines help move the eye along the canvas. This painting is with the Punjab National Council of Arts (PNCA).

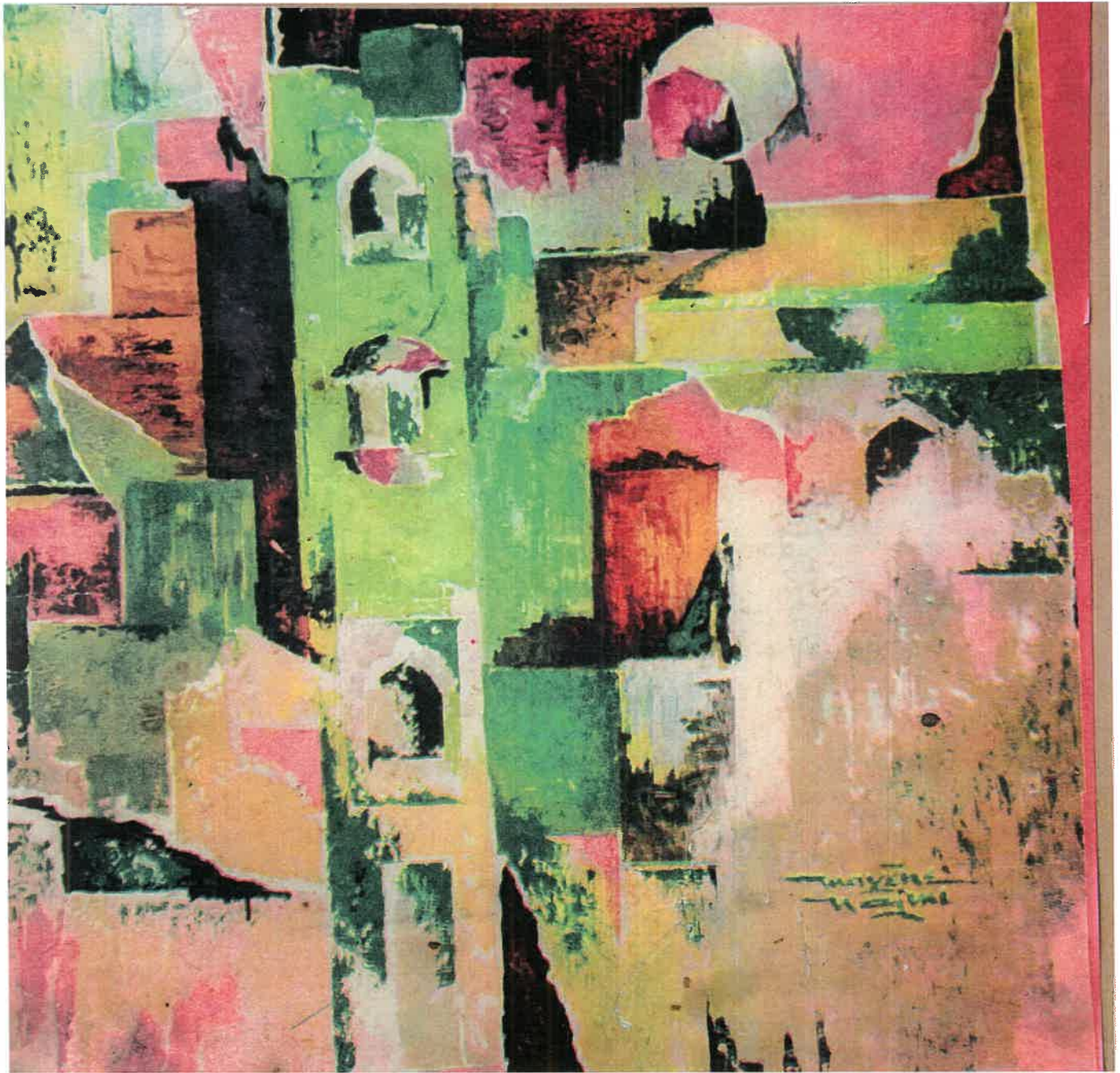


Moon and the Mosque • Oil on canvas • 87cm × 84cm

This painting shows a white mosque contrasting with a black tree. The green colour complements the red moon, in a very unusual compositing with square and rectangular shapes. This painting is also with the PNCA.



In this painting, different shapes float on a table top. It seems as if another type of experimentation was tried here. This painting is also with the PNCA.



Niches, windows and balconies emerge from a very fresh, green colour in this composition. Dark colours are used to create depth and the moon takes an octagonal shape. Through the moon emerges another dark niche. This painting is taken from a calender printed at packages Lahore.



Lahore early fifties • Oil on canvas • 58cm × 58cm

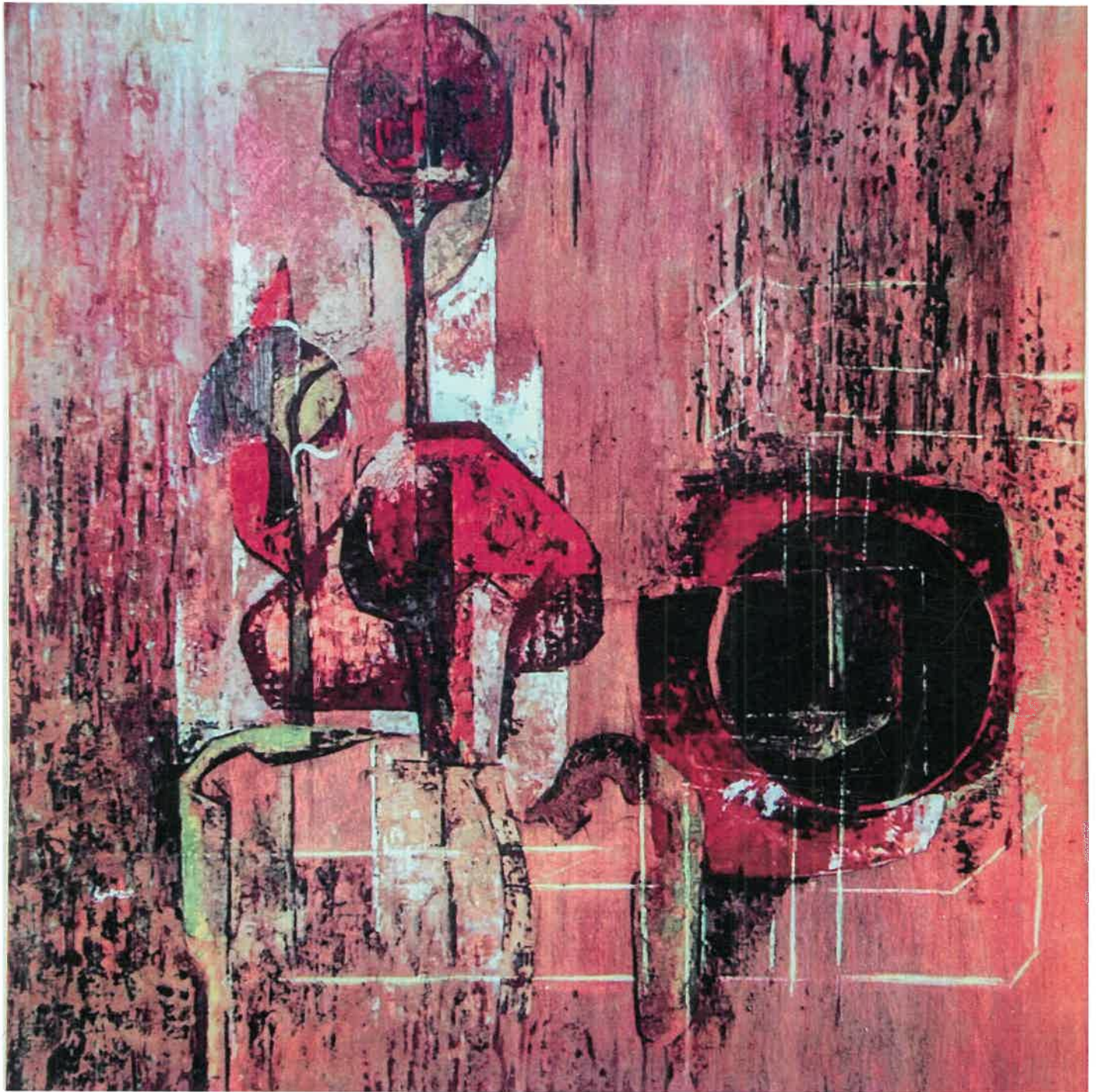
Collection: Mrs Sami

Moyene had a habit of creating two similar paintings with different colour schemes.



Oil on Board

This painting is taken from a calender printed at packages Lahore.

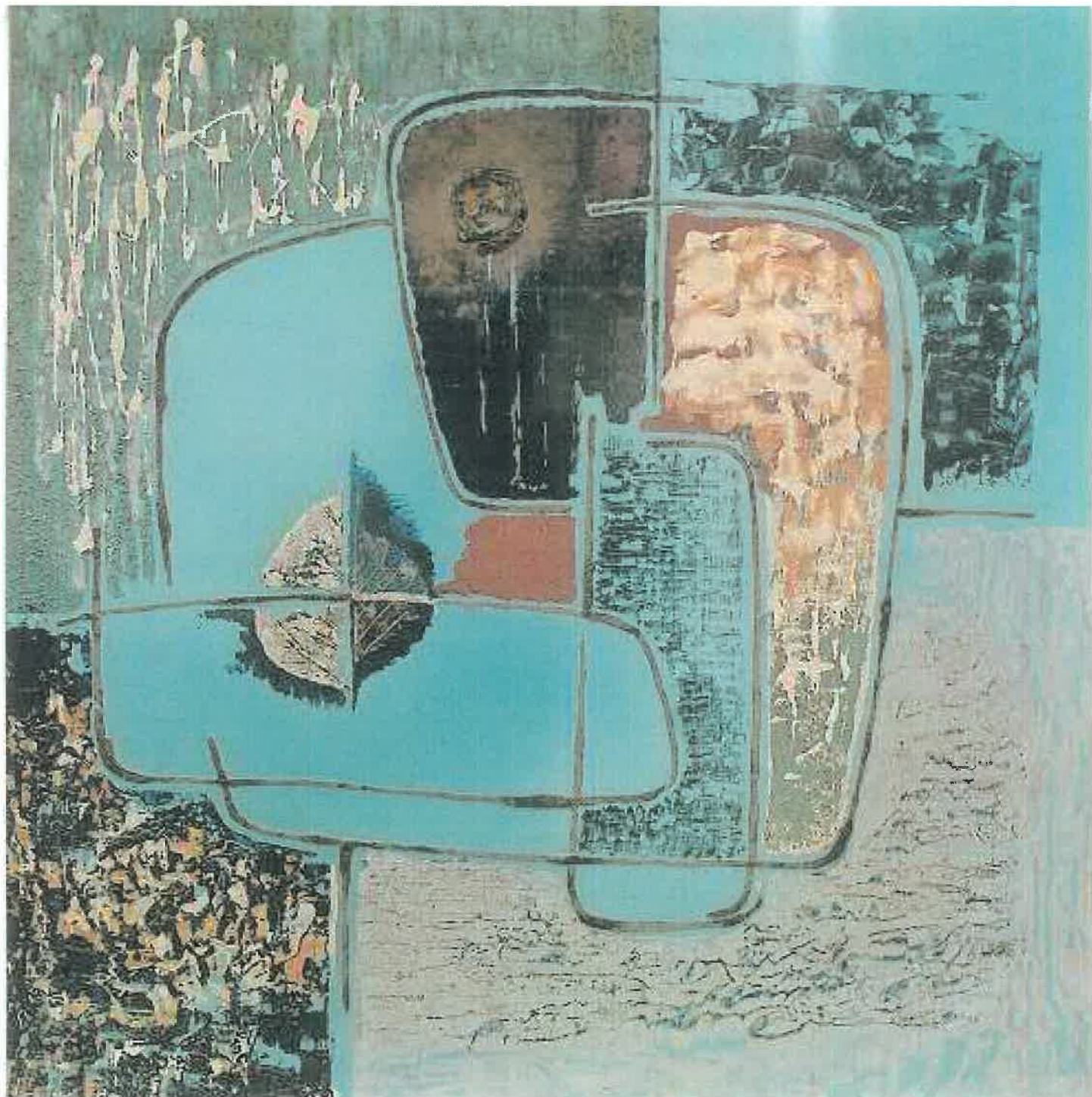


This composition uses bright colours of orange, red, ochre and brown. White and black accentuates the effect. The trees are both rounded and geometrical. The black texture balances the two opposite corners. This painting is with Alhamra Art Council Lahore.



Collection Punjab Art Council

The original sketch for this image is the same as the one on the left but the colour scheme is different.



Demonstration by Moyene Najmi - Acrylic on Formica



Demonstration by Moyene • Acrylic on Formica

Collection: Ijaz Ilahi Piracha

Personal Life

Moyene chose not to paint prolifically. His contribution to the art scene in Pakistan can be measured in the obvious pleasure he derived from teaching art and inspiring young art students, as well as encouraging and promoting other artists through his work in the arts councils, and in his own art gallery.

Even much earlier, his concern for others was evident. After the creation of Pakistan in August of 1947, millions migrated from India. Lahore itself was inundated with thousands upon thousands of refugees, creating a humanitarian problem of gigantic proportions. Moyene, along with friends and family, was active in helping to settle the countless displaced families in Beadon Road and adjoining areas. Ever reticent and self-effacing, Moyene hardly ever mentioned the role he played during this very difficult time.

As with most young men, Moyene went through the usual stages of liking and infatuations but eventually, in 1967 at the age of 39, he decided to settle down. He married Attiya,

daughter of Mr. Mirajud Din Mirza, Director Telegraph, West Pakistan. He was a loyal husband, a good son to his parents, and respectful to other members of the family. He had four children, two boys and two girls.

Moyene firmly believed in the benefits of a sound education and exposure to different cultures and made sure that all his children were well-educated. His eldest daughter Najeeba was a gold medallist in MBA Marketing. She married and moved to Toronto, raising three children. The second daughter Tayyaba graduated from LUMS. She is also married and lives with her husband and two children in Dubai.

Moyene's third child, Zahid, graduated from Switzerland with a diploma in hotel management, and now manages the family's ancestral property. He has a wife and two daughters. The fourth child, Mujtaba, has worked in the banking sector in Pakistan, Dubai and Singapore. More recently, he has established an investment company with other finance professionals.

Moyene seemed inspired by the

vigour of Pakistan's northern region and would frequently hustle his family off for a trip to the Kaghan valley, Swat or Nathiagali. It became a ritual for him, and he felt compelled to travel even if he only had a three-day break. According to him, it was essential for him as a teacher to move out of the city, out of the home, to refresh himself. He also took his family on holidays to the UK, USA, and Europe.

A voracious reader, Moyene was rarely without a book in his hand. He would read even while he ate. But reading was not his only compulsion. Moyene's habit of smoking increased to up to two packs a day. Despite his doctor's advice he was unable to give up smoking. His natural reticence seemed to deepen. Eventually, his health deteriorated.

Moyene died on 18 June 1997, to the end a loving husband and caring father.



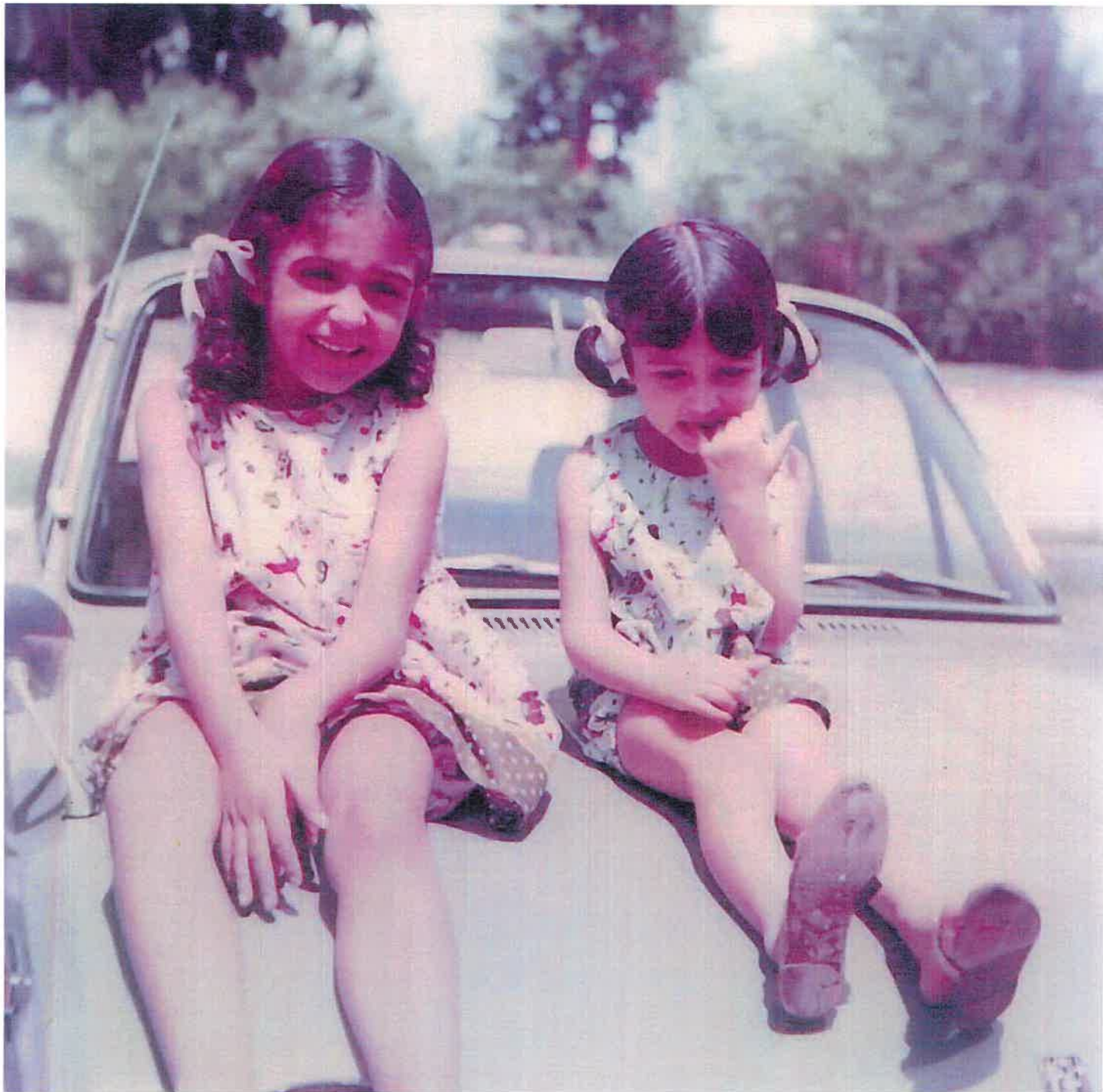
Moyene with wife, Attiya in Lahore, 1967.



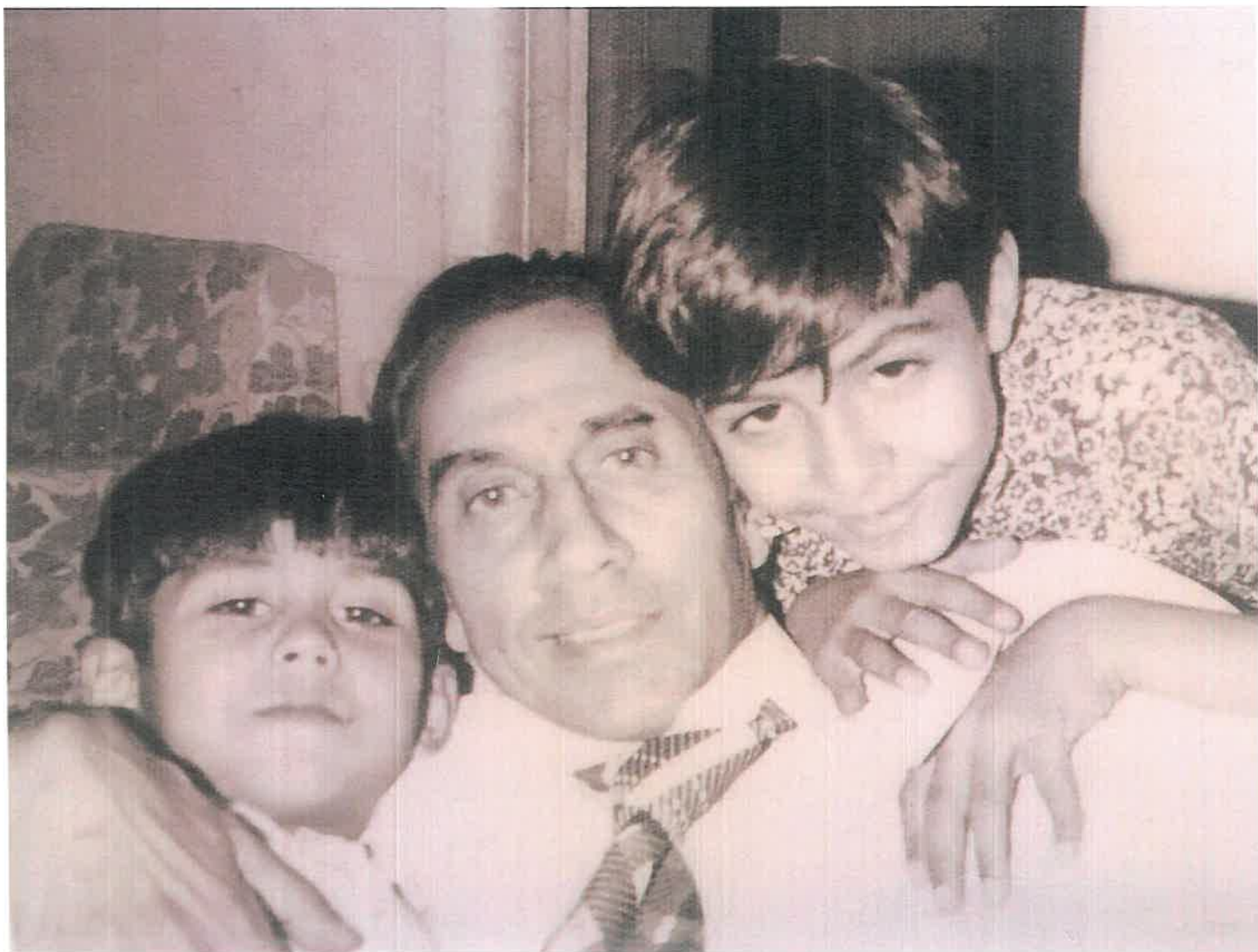
Lahore, 1967



Moyene with his family on a cruise in Greece (1984), returning from a visit to the US and the UK.



Moyene's daughters Najeeba (L) and Tayyaba (R)



Moyene with his sons Mujtaba (L) and Zahid (R)

Portraits of Moyene

Moyene himself became the subject of portraits. He was tall and slim, and very elegant. Many well-known artists asked him to pose for them. Because his physique resembled that of the Quaid-e-Azam, some artists would ask him to pose for them so that they could study the folds of clothing in sitting and standing postures.

Kutub Sheikh, an Indian citizen who

lived in Germany, often visited Pakistan as he claimed to have best friends there. He made a portrait of Moyene with a sitar.

Anna Molka Ahmad painted Moyene's portrait, using a palette knife and thick paint as she tried to reflect his personality rather than an exact resemblance.

Colin David, one of the most popular artists of the 1970s, was a master in capturing small habits and movements. Moyene was a chain smoker and never stood still for long. Colin David painted a full-length portrait of him and somehow depicted his slightly shaking hand.

(Cover image)



Kutub Sheikh made a portrait of Moyene with a sitar.



Anna Molka's portrait of Moyene



Colin David's portrait of Moyene

Recollections



L to R: Syed Jahangir, Moyene Najmi, Syed's wife Anis, Kamal Ahmed Rizvi, the artist Zainul Abedin. Syed Jahangir's driver is in the background. Early 60's

As I Remember Him

Syed Jahangir

It was the end of December 1960 when I landed in Lahore with the intention of exhibiting my paintings at the Arts Council there. The exhibition had been planned by Anis Saidullah, a young lady whom I had met in Dhaka during the Industrial Exhibition held in 1959. She was representing the West Pakistan Handicrafts Show.

I had just returned from the USA after a Fellowship, having visited more than twenty museums and galleries there. Anis saw my paintings and suggested that I come to Lahore and have a show of my works. "I know the Secretary of the Council, the famous poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz," she said. I agreed to her proposal and so there I was in Lahore. The next day I went to meet Faiz Sahib with Anis. She introduced me and explained about my visit to Lahore. Faiz Sahib readily agreed to hold the exhibition of my paintings.

It was late afternoon and Faiz Sahib said, "Let's go and have some tea in the cafe." There was a cafe inside the Arts Council, though not easily recognisable from a distance,

because the hedges that made the boundary of the cafe were high with thick foliage. When we entered the place, it looked very attractive. I was amazed to see the table was made out of a slice from a big tree and I was invited to sit on a wooden chair made from a dug-out wooden log where I was served tea.

I was introduced to the artists sitting at the table. First there was Anwar Jalal Shemza, then Ahmed Pervez, then Moyene Najmi, Raheel Akbar Javed, Safdar Khurdam, Khalid Iqbal and few others whose names I don't remember after so many years.

I was particularly drawn to Moyene Najmi from among them all, as the tall, slender, handsome one. He talked much less than the others but when he did, he spoke very intelligently with a complete knowledge of the subject.

During that period, I was introduced to the artist Shakir Ali, then Principal of the Mayo School of Art, and Zubeida Agha. Then, of course, I met Ahmed Sharif (the miniature painter), Anna Molka

Ahmed (a European painter settled in Pakistan) who was a realist in oil painting, and a few others. Murtaza Bashir from Dhaka was already in Lahore and became known himself as a painter to be reckoned with. There was also another important artist – the writer, actor and producer of *Alif aur Noon* which was a very popular programme on television in those days. This was Kamal Ahmed Rizvi, who played the role of Alif (Allan).

Moyene was an abstract painter, as was Shemza, Pervez, Shakir Ali, Zubeida Agha and a few others. But Moyene's work was very different from the others. He didn't rush with his brush. He meditated and slowly composed the theme he wanted to express.

He was working mostly on the city of Lahore. It is interesting to see that he has painted the same subject twice with two different colour schemes. They are mainly the houses of Lahore stuck together, leaving a lot of open space here and there. We can observe the painting (no title given) with windows and balcony in the centre of tall

buildings. Horizontal and vertical forms with broken patterns of space, masterfully combined, predominantly with green and yellow, yellowish-brown and white. The forms and colour will undoubtedly intrigue and inspire the viewers.

The painting which was done in 1975 (Old Lahore-2 and Untitled Oil on Board) is of the same series or, one can say, the style, form and space co-relates with his other paintings of that time. Blue, light-blue, grey, white mixed with yellow and brown with a tinge of red symbolises the unity and strength of colour and forms.

I must narrate a story! One evening, I went as usual to the Arts Council's restaurant and was shocked to see a few of the artists including Moyene wearing medical bandages.

"What happened?" I asked anxiously. Moyene answered, "Did you see the roundabout on the Mall Road?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Well," said Moyene, "Raheel didn't ..."

As it turned out, they had all been

travelling someplace by car and Raheel, who was driving, didn't see the roundabout and went straight into it. Which explained the bandages. The way Moyene narrated the situation was really very witty and that was what his character really was – very intelligent and witty.

Moyene, as I knew him then, was not a full-time painter. He was teaching at the prestigious Aitchison College and had earned a good name for himself as an art teacher. It was probably in the mid-sixties that Moyene got married to a beautiful young lady, Attiya. She was also a teacher in a school.

I left Lahore and settled in Rawalpindi in 1961 where I married Anis Saidullah and we lived together in a rented house. I immersed myself in painting, as Rawalpindi was the capital at that time and all the foreign missions were there. Consequently, there was a large number of diplomats interested in buying my paintings. Anis had a job as in-charge of a government-run handicrafts shop right in front of the Rawalpindi Club.

I did meet Moyene in Rawalpindi when the government established

the Contemporary Art Gallery. Moyene used to visit the gallery quite often and participated in the group exhibitions held there. Sometimes we used to have a gala evening at our house which artists and civil servants and foreigners attended. And then I used to go to Lahore sometimes with Anis and often met Moyene there. I remember having a dinner one evening at his place after he got married.

When Moyene passed away in 1997 I had already returned to Dhaka and settled there. It is hard to believe that we will never meet again.

My heartiest congratulations to Attiya for her endeavours to bring out a book on Moyene. I wish her every success.

A Gentle Man

You could never mistake him, even far off and in the twilight of a winter's dusk. Because he was the only man I know who actually leaned backwards when walking. We often kidded him about it – Kamal Ahmed Rizvi and I. Part of the kidding was envy, because he was a remarkably handsome man, very tall and very slim, with a textbook ramrod stance, sharp aquiline features and a natural grace. He was always immaculately dressed in white trousers and shirt. It showed off even more while Murtaza Bashir was around, because Murtaza was scruffy and short and round.

It must have been difficult to be unobtrusive looking like that, but he tried. He taught art, quietly, at Aitchison for many years, although he didn't have to work – the family owned about half of The Mall in Lahore. And I do not intend this to be a 'most unforgettable character' from the Reader's Digest, but in 40 years I do not know of a time when he lost his temper or raised his voice. And he did his art too in a quiet way – quite unflamboyant.

That must have been difficult too, for he was of the generation of artists who put modern art on the scene as much by their art as by

their person. There was Khalid Iqbal and Hanif Ramay, and Shemza and Safdar Khurdam, and Shakir Ali; Anna Molka a little older and Raheel and Colin a little younger.

Artists are a volatile lot, and perhaps the very subjective nature of art means that you can only practise it by being very sure that you are right – and everyone else is wrong! A friend was reading *The Journal of Delacroix* at the time, and it is about another group of contemporary artists, the French Impressionists. The journal is a chronicle of petty jealousies, constant bickering and backbiting. That it did not happen too blatantly here was, I think, largely due to Moyene Najmi. It took a very big heart to bring such 'aashufta sar' people together but, for a while, they were together.

Moyene Sahib was persuaded to join the fledgling Alhamra by Faiz and, between them, and for the sum of Rs.5,000, they constructed the 'Artists Hut' of mud and thatch. For a halcyon while it became a Camelot for the thinking people of Lahore. Moyene Najmi was the resident, and Shemza and Mary Katrina came to stay and paint, as well as Jehangir and Murtaza from the East. Shakir Sahib and Khaliq would amble over

Shoaib Hashmi

each evening, and practically all the art produced in Lahore in those years was painted and sculpted right in the 'hut'.

Moyene Sahib seemed to just be the friend of everyone and the fulcrum of all the activity, but I didn't know he was a painter until one day he made these fabulous little drawings for a brochure we were designing for Jackie Kennedy. "Hmm! I still seem to have all the control over the line that I ever had." And when I asked him why he wasn't painting, he said he was 'gathering experience'.

I did get to see him paint. It became the routine for the 'wellas', Rizvi and Asad and me, to stay on and chat after hours. And we hung around sometimes while Moyene Sahib sat and thought and painted. I've seen a bit of his work; I don't think he painted prolifically, and I mean no odious comparisons, but from whatever I've seen, I've always felt that he was the best of his generation. And I have a feeling none of his friends will dispute that with me, even if I have no claim to being an art critic. Maybe I'll ask someone who has ...