



ART IN PAKISTAN

Traditions and Trends

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TRADITIONS AND TRENDS

Dialogues and Essays

Ashfaq Rasheed



Pakistan Writers Co-operative Society, Lahore

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DEDICATED TO

The late **Muhammad Abdullah**
(painter and art teacher Mayo School of Art),

Grandfather, the late **Inayat Muhammad**, Artist,

The late **Ghani Eirabee** (Mamon-jan)

Naureen (my life partner)

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Ashfaq Rasheed

PREFACE

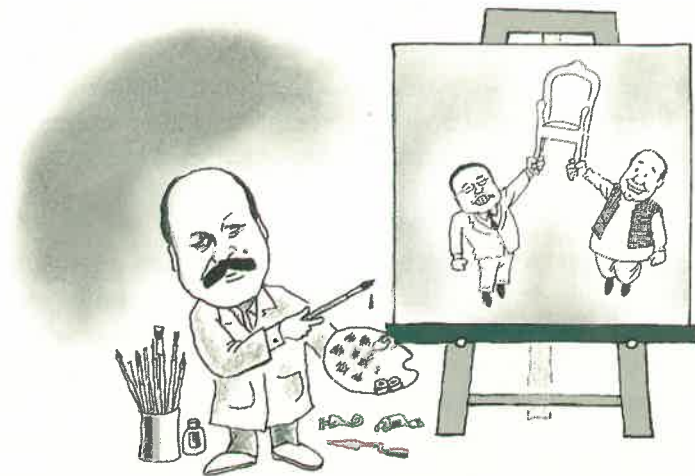
Pakistan is not a very old country. It came into being in 1947. Since then it has faced one problem after the other and the long and unending chain of its perpetual miseries has not ended. Nevertheless this country is blessed with many a treasure and it is endowed with finest brains in the world. These brains have rendered miracles in many fields. The achievements of these brains have been of many dimensions. In science, in technology, in medicine, in education and in arts we have outstanding people and outstanding achievements.

Like the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, an epic poem dated around 2100 B.C., which deals with themes of heroism, friendship, loss, and the quest for eternal life, this collection of dialogues and essays by Ashfaq Rasheed is a fine and comprehensive record of some of our leading painters and writers. In the Epic of Gilgamesh different historical periods have emphasized various characteristics of literature, this book, *Art in Pakistan*, defines character and styles of leading Pakistani artists and art critics.

The candidness with which these dialogues and essays have been composed is remarkable. It is generally observed that writers resort to cynicism and jump into the usual technique of indulging in unnecessary over appreciation verging on sheer sycophancy but Ashfaq Rasheed has fairly recorded the facts. In this book he has covered one artist each of the area of landscape, cityscape, portrait and figure, still-life, abstract forms, miniature, sculpture and so on, as a first step. I hope that he will make further efforts to work on the remaining Pakistani jewels of the world of art like Zulqarnain Haider and others.

It has been my great honour that among the celebrities mentioned in this

book, there are some with whom I had very close association for a very long period of time and Professor Khalid Iqbal is one. I was his student in late fifties and early sixties. It was through his love that I turned into a cartoonist. Colin David was a year senior to me when I joined the Fine Arts Department at the Punjab University. What a lively person he was, I still remember most of the jokes which we shared. Besides some lovely females Colin had two male class



—maxim—
Dr. Shaukat Mahmood

fellows as well. One of them was Aslam Minhas. He laid the foundation of Fine Arts Department at the Government College, Lahore (now GC University). The other was Sufi Waqar son of famous poet and litterateur Sufi Tabassum.

With Muhammad Javed my contact developed at his gallery, the famous Coopera. There are very few people in Pakistan who being painters themselves have dared and ventured to promote art through a gallery as he is doing. His commitment to art is well described by the author of this book. Muhammad Javed is a versatile person having many facets of personality the latest being he is a publisher of literature on art and history. The art circles are proud of him.

Since the work on Pakistani Art in form of books is limited, this effort is appreciable which will of course be very helpful in building the useful material on art for the readers and researchers, as it covers theoretical and practical approach of the artists.

DR. SHAUKAT MAHMOOD
HEC Professor, Research Centre,
College of Art & Design
University of the Punjab, Lahore.



Khalid Iqbal

KHALID IQBAL

Following traditional and modern concepts of art, innovative work on subjective and stylistic patterning of Pakistani art started seriously soon after independence of the country. In this context, painter and educationist Prof. Khalid Iqbal's role is also important like other renowned artists. Landscapists especially hold him in high regard.

Based in Lahore, the family had to shift due to posting of Khalid Iqbal's father to Simla. He was born there in 1929. And then, whenever his father was out of Lahore on official duty, Khalid accompanied him. "During my early age, I travelled a lot with my father," said Khalid Iqbal. However, he came back home at the time of Independence in 1947 after passing Senior Cambridge Examination from St. Joseph's Academy, Dehra Dun. He then pursued an intermediate education at Government College, Lahore.

Khalid Iqbal never claims that he is a born artist. He says, "I don't remember having any interest in art. What I remember is that I loved to see the many faces of nature and its relationship with man."

At that time, people still harboured reservations about Masters in Arts. Such thinking was natural because art had yet to carve a niche as a paying profession. For most people, it was just a hobby or a pastime. Despite an air of pessimism, teachers continued their efforts to turn it into a reputable profession.

For some time Khalid Iqbal attended art classes at Mayo School of Art in the evening to learn the basics of art. "Ghulam Nabi Malik was the Principal of Mayo School of Art when I got a chance to study. Very soon, I found myself becoming part of the activity going on there. Ustad Muhammad Latif Chughtai's



way of teaching drawing and painting was very impressive and communicative. He enabled me to see, draw and colour objects accurately according to the principles of art. Unfortunately, before completing this course, I had to discontinue my studies. Nevertheless, I was learning art very seriously”, recalled, Khalid Iqbal.

In 1949, Khalid Iqbal did his graduation from the University of the Punjab, Lahore, in Economics and Political Science. The same year he was offered an art teacher’s job at Aitcheson College, Lahore which he accepted very reluctantly. “Getting this job came as a bit of a surprise because I’d very little to do with this subject. But, this way, Allah put me back on the track of art.”

Listening to ex-President of Pakistan Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari’s speech, on the occasion of NCA’s Convocation, one could learn how strict a teacher Khalid Iqbal was. Mr Leghari said: “I remember my art teacher Khalid Iqbal who failed me in the subject taught by him when I was studying at Aitcheson. I think he did rightly because I was not fully prepared for his paper.”

Pakistan’s emergence as a sovereign state ushered in an era of change. Khalid Iqbal observed this whole new socio-political scene and was proud to be a part of it. Besides teaching art classes at Aitcheson College, he roamed about in and around his beloved city and painted what ever attracted him.

The next significant change in Khalid Iqbal’s artistic career occurred when he was seen painting on the spot in Murree by founder of the Department of Fine Arts at the University of the Punjab, Anna Molka Ahmed. Appreciating his creative approach to art, she advised him to go to London for acquiring higher knowledge in the field of painting. Considering her sincere advice and realizing





that art-education of that level was not available in Pakistan, Khalid Iqbal went to London and studied at Slade School of Art from 1952 to 1955.

At Slade, Khalid Iqbal studied art under the guidance of Sir William Menzies Coldstream who was head of the school and one of the founders of Euston Road Group.

Interestingly, in the late 1930s, "some British painters who had previously been experimenting with abstract art were turning to a lyrical and restrained realistic style of painting with accents to simplicity. Repudiating the modernist theories of abstraction and surrealism, they reverted to a quiet and intimate art of commonplace themes-----landscape, still life, portraits and nudes. The trend was crystallized at the Euston Road School whose founders were influenced by literary and political trends towards relevance and exactness with emphasis on the factual and anti-romantic and they preferred delicate richness and clarity to emphatic colours or expressive distortions." (Harold Osborne-----Twentieth Century Art)

What Khalid Iqbal was painting at home was not at all abstract. Neither was he inclined to express things in this idiom. Anna Molka Ahmed had appreciated his art because of its socio-cultural relevance. At Slade, besides working on his course assignments, imbibing impressions of masters of realistic idiom like Constable, Van Gough or Cezanne, Khalid Iqbal found himself inspired by Coldstream and the manifesto of Euston Road School.

In 1955, equipped with a Diploma from Slade, Khalid Iqbal landed back in Lahore and was appointed Lecturer of Fine Arts at the University of the Punjab.

At that time the Department of Fine Arts was running under the Chairmanship of Anna Molka Ahmed and course of studies for Master in Fine Arts for boys was just launched. He had brought with him in his baggage a landscape painting, which could remind him of what he had been studying under the guidance of Coldstream at Slade.

Khalid Iqbal had a taste for literature. Before, going to London, he met with Saadat Hassan Manto. Now, he had both writer and artist friends including Shakir Ali, Moyene Najmi, Habib Jalib, Shemza, Zainul Abidin, Nasir Kazmi, Sheikh Ahmed, Taufiq Riffat, Nawab Natiq and Kamal Ahmed Rizvi.

It's a misconception that before the advent of the British Raj forms like landscapes, portraits, still-life or nudes didn't exist in our art. Early impression of these forms can easily be traced through history. In traditional art, one can see all these forms becoming part of one's developed and stylized form which indigenously is known as Mussawari (art of painting). For instance at the time of the Mughals, painters very consciously made landscape a pleasant part of their paintings while illustrating public and private life accounts of emperors and wealthy courtiers.

Similarly, other forms also got full subjective independence now under western influence. Trained at Slade, Khalid Iqbal's art too appeared influenced by western traditions, particularly with reference to nineteenth century landscape art.

After his return from Britain in 1955, using western techniques, Khalid Iqbal expressed his socio-cultural ideas simultaneously in landscape, portrait and





still-life and became one of the first modern realist painters of Pakistan. In 1965, after teaching art at the University of the Punjab for about ten years, he chose to head the faculty of Fine Arts at the National College of Arts (NCA).

He imparted art education at NCA according to the newly structured system and became a favourite among his students. Besides performing his teaching job, he was also anxious to paint. But, long hours of official duty, left him little time to paint on the spot.

In 1981, before reaching the age of retirement, he decided to give up his professorship at the National College of Arts. "The decision to say good-bye to my job was for living with art according to my will ", said Khalid Iqbal.

To be a painter has always been more important for Khalid Iqbal. He says, "Rather than wasting time on fashionably overrating myself as some kind of intellectual, I prefer to remain what I am, a painter. Because, I believe, it's one's purposeful creative art which makes one important in the history."

Throughout his entire artistic career, Khalid Iqbal has been studying the aesthetic relationship of art with reality and creating in oil medium all that has pleased his senses in the colourful environment of Lahore; particularly with reference to landscape and its various seasonal effects and moods.

Working in the landscape genre, (unlike Ustaad Allah Buksh's romantic way of seeing and painting the social-cultural life and environment of rural Punjab), he appears to concentrate on his style in the realistic idiom for painting the existing, changing and vanishing visions and sensations of Lahore's natural

beauty. Very soon, not only his impressions in this form succeeded in attracting viewers but they also earned him encouragement, appreciation and the reputation of being a modern landscapist.

In an innovative manner, rather than creating snap-shot effects of his beloved subject matter i.e. familiar scenes of landscape of rural and suburban areas of Lahore, Khalid Iqbal has always been interested in using his palette for capturing effects of sunlight and shadows, and conveying sensations produced by the landscape. Thematically, the relationship between man and nature as depicted by him thoughtfully and intellectually can be seen in his paintings.

For instance, the changing faces of buildings and disappearing representatives of indigenous trees became a dominant character of Khalid Iqbal's visual vocabulary. And ultimately, in the total silence, happy and sad whisperings of trees can be sensed saying one thing only: "Nature serves you beauty and love."

About his landscape art, Khalid Iqbal says, "after seeing a natural scene, I continue to paint it on the spot until the original impression left on my mind is transferred on the painting surface."

Like Coldstream, conceptually and technically, Khalid Iqbal's landscape has been a dominant source of inspiration for many who take interest in this form. At the age of seventy-seven, Khalid Iqbal does not seem tired. Allah has blessed him with the energy to continue his painting work. In 1977, he won Pakistan National Council of the Art's Quaid-i-Azam Award in Painting. In 1980 he was awarded Pride of Performance Award in Paintings by the Government of





Pakistan. He also accepted Chair of Professor Emeritus at the National College of Arts, Lahore in 1993.

In 2004, National College of Arts published a book “Khalid Iqbal - A Pioneer of Modern Realism in Pakistan” by Dr Musarrat Hasan to pay tribute to Prof. Khalid Iqbal. On the occasion of launching ceremony of this book, admirers of Khalid Iqbal's art were able to see long-awaited Solo Show of his Paintings in NCA which was considered to be close to the reality with emphasis on capturing atmosphere as he felt at the time of painting on the spot. He selects and paints those spots which normally do not strike to a common eye, but his unusual approach and skilful handling makes the same spot very important in his painting. Khalid Iqbal creates interesting and eye catching effects through simplification of form, brushwork, careful composition and use of light and subdued colours according to requirements of the subject. His contribution in the field of art is very valuable.



Colin David

COLIN DAVID

President's Pride of Performance winning painter and art-educationist, Colin David (b.1937) is one of the most senior members of Pakistan's reigning art dynasty. Rather than getting himself involved in art politics or becoming the leader of some lobby, he has always preferred to keep himself busy in teaching art classes and creating on canvas landscape, cityscape, portrait or figurative paintings. As a result, people acknowledge his services for the promotion of art in Pakistan and recognize him as a dexterous master of art.

Retrospectively speaking, Colin David became aware of his interest in art from his childhood. Interestingly, when he held his pencil for sketching any object, he found himself poor in drawing. As he puts it, "while studying at Cathedral School, I was always punished by my art teachers". Realizing that punishment was meant for his betterment, he started to concentrate on improving his knowledge of the subject. "It was very shameful for me that I was weak in my favourite subject", said Colin David recalling his school days.



At the time of his education at Forman Christian College, he found himself greatly interested in learning painting techniques. "In those days, film posters had much attraction for me. At leisure time, rather than taking part in games, I used to those posters. Film stars were my favourite subject. I enjoyed in drawing and colouring them realistically according to my own aesthetic sense". Besides doing this, he said, he remained in search of some ustaad (teacher).

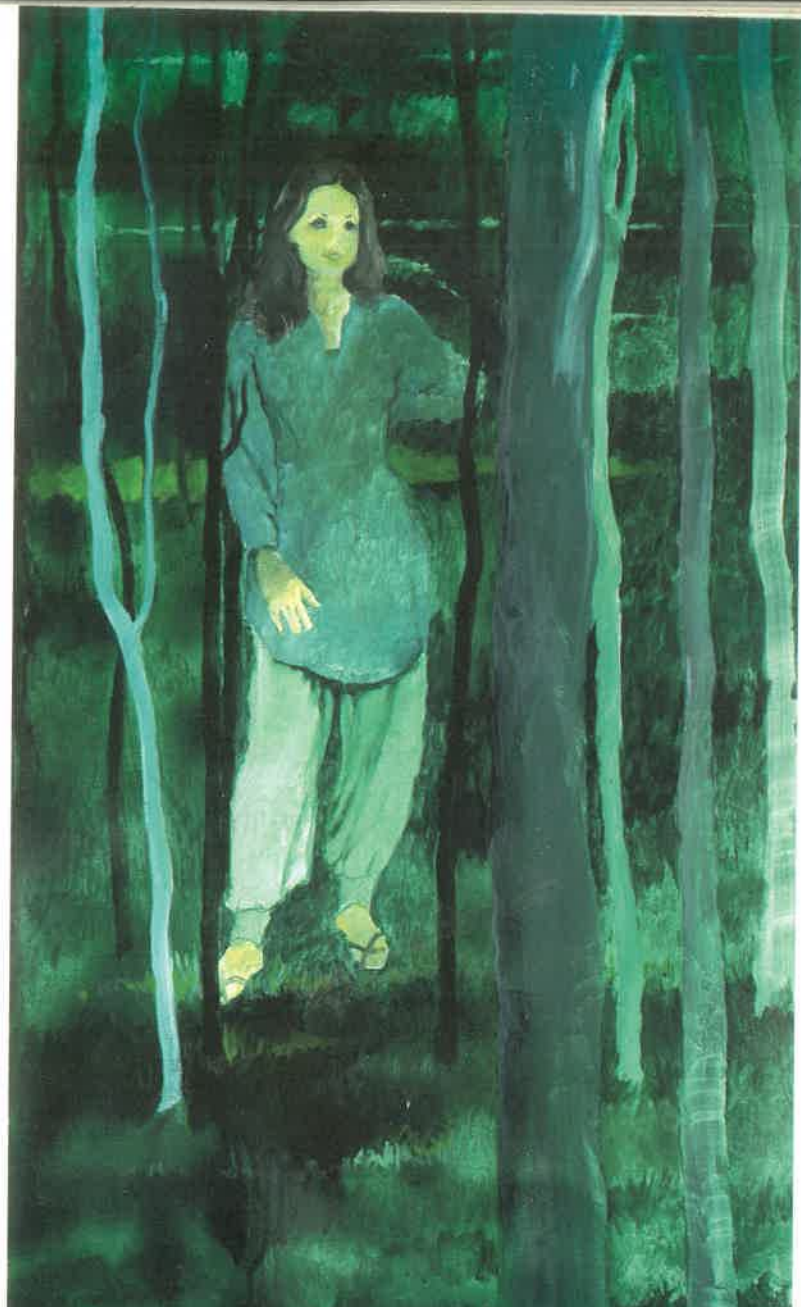
Fortunately, at that time, Shakir Ali had settled in Lahore, started teaching drawing classes at Mayo School of Art, engaged himself in art promotional activities and opened his studio's doors for serious learners of art. Colin David availed the opportunity of studying drawing there. And, in only three months,

his growing interest for the subject led him to acquire proper academic art education.

The Department of Fine Arts at Punjab University set up by Anna Molka Ahmed imparted art education only to girls. Surprisingly, there was no mention in the history of Pakistani art about this Department during the period of 1940 to 56. In 1956, boys were also allowed to study and Colin David was amongst the first batch who sought admission in the Fine Arts Department. Colin David was then studying art under the guidance of Khalid Iqbal. "We were three boys in all. At that time there was segregation but we were free to move around. I graduated in Fine Arts and then proceeded on to do my Masters".

In 1960, Colin David was awarded M.A. Fine Arts Degree. The same year, he was taken as a Lecturer in the faculty of his alma mater. After achieving these goals Colin David displayed his works along with the works of Sufi Waqar. At that time, he was expressing in the genres of cityscape, landscape, still life and portraiture. Mostly painted in realistic idiom, his works reflected his interest in highlighting socio-cultural life around him in Lahore. His impressions displayed in this exhibition had one thing in common, the perfectionist use of art grammar.

After earning appreciation both with reference to what he had been thinking or painting, and, soon after this successful exhibition, he confidently left for London to study at Slade. From this vision-broadening trip, he came back in 1962 and resumed his teaching job at the University of the Punjab, Lahore. Some of his important dreams proved true.





a geometrically well-conceived, constructed and decorated stage, its mysterious optical appearance always had something of metaphorical importance. Particularly, like the illusionist black and white patterns in Colin's paintings, the bottle had many interrelated things to reveal about the case of self-absorbed female figure which was shown moderately experiencing day's social drama and night's existential conditions.

It was not only the bottle that talked this way, Colin's other objects too had what was subjectively desired while composing them together. For instance, in the romantic environment of a painting, objects and characters like the full moon, illuminated landscape, a barren tree, turned-face lonely lady or open book could be viewed and highlighted as metaphorical significations or fascinations of spatial, architectonic and humanistic interrelations.

In 1989, as Associate Professor, before reaching at the age of superannuation (sixty years), Colin David unexpectedly opted for retirement from National College of Arts. However he continued to impart art education with the same devotion to serious learners, till now. Apart from satisfying his urge of teaching art, he remained busy in contemplating and painting.

Colin David draws his inspiration from Gandhara, Ajanta and Mughal art traditions. In Western Art, his favourite figurative painters are those impressionists who've thoughtfully treated ideas in realistic idiom, like Degas or Lautrec. Among contemporaries, Andrew Wyeth's Helga series holds much fascination for Colin.





As far as the philosophy of colours is concerned he has been through different phases such as the black and white phase, grey phase, brown phase, etc.

“ In the 60’s I went through more realistic colours. In the seventies I went through the black and white phase, the eighties saw me going through a brown phase, and in the nineties I was more liberal with greens, mauves and blacks.”

Nowadays, besides impressionistically colouring in oil medium various situation oriented moods, feelings, appearances and expressions of his paintings’ main character, that is the evergreen young woman, Colin David like humanist thinkers is found seriously concentrating on conceptualizing workable ideas and structures about our newly developing visual cultures, mainly with reference to happy homes and happy families.

He has every thing at hand at home that he requires at the time of recreating his anthropological concepts on canvas or board. Nothing takes place there against his will. All characters including the female models remain obedient to Colin’s directions and act. One can see in his masterly painted civic art exquisite metaphorical renderings of emotional and intellectual contents and can say that figurative formations of his lines and colours have heterogeneous meanings. Although with his focus on figures or objects, Colin David constructs composition very effectively by dividing space in such a manner that large flat area left in the canvas, supports to the subject matter by developing interrelationship of the forms with each other. His painting, therefore, attracts to the eye. Colin David died on February 25, 2008.



Zahoor ul Akhlaque

ZAHOOR UL AKHLAQUE

His reputation of being intellectual artist does him, a disservice even while evolving a serious image. Zahoor ul Akhlaq (1941-1999) is one of the few Pakistani painters who have continuously played and experimented with their art; coming up with a diverse and dynamic repertoire. His art defies explanation though and moves gracefully over boundaries created by terms such as postmodernism and deconstructionist.

Here he talks, among other issues, about his personal perception, his work, the various influences on his art, the art scene in Pakistan and the collection of his works exhibited in 1998 at the Gallery of National Collage of Arts, Lahore.

On his initial impressions

My early art education in Karachi was very basic. It was like going to study at the level of primary school. But there were things on and around the school that fascinated me and I used to take interest in them. I think, art education cannot be achieved only within the school boundary. I used to observe life while going to and retuning from the school. I was fond of new ways and new streets. I observed jugglers, peddlers, and people selling medicines. I saw so much on those streets: people working till late hours, busy in welding, doing carpentry jobs and so on. It was in a way very fascinating. And this observation became part of my expression.



Then there were people making commercials like Mustafa Muhammad. Their ads and posters attracted me. I met them and tried to study the techniques they used. Then, there came a time when I decided to come to Mayo School of Arts. But when I came to Lahore this School was devoted and renamed as

National College of Arts (NCA). I was lucky to get admission into the first batch of NCA.

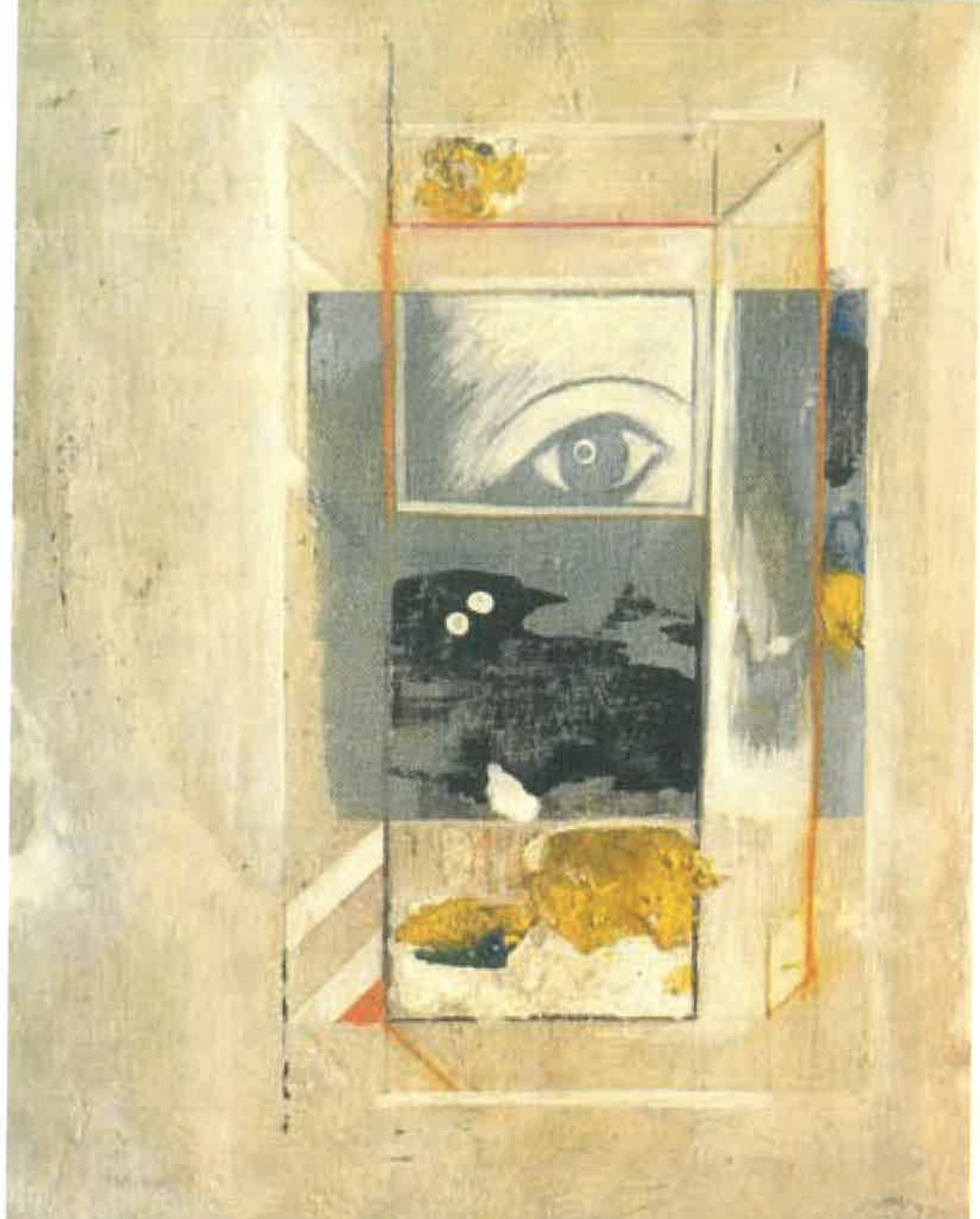
On his art education under the guidance of Prof. Sponenburg

Sponenburg is probably more than eighty years old now. He is an almost forgotten figure but his contribution towards structuring this college is huge. He crafted the college, gave it his energy, attention, experience, depth and intensity. Last year when he came to attend the Convocation, it was touching to see him so attached and emotional about every nook and corner of the college. He remembered everything. I being one student from the first batch of the Collage got an opportunity to complete first three years of my study when Sponenburg was the Principal. He taught us history of Art and Architecture along with his high responsibility of administrative work.

Shakir Ali as an art - teacher

After Prof. Sponenberg, came Shakir Ali. When I joined NCA, he was the first tutor of drawing and painting. In Karachi, I used to go to the exhibitions. It was in 1955 or 56 when by chance I went to Frere Hall where an exhibition of Shakir Ali's works was going on. I saw his paintings and asked him some rather stupid questions. But he tried to answer my queries. Later on when I came to NCA, he was a teacher here.

Shakir Ali was very well-institutionalized into academic aspects. He made us aware about the very basic things. Drawings, drawings and drawings, he stressed on the need of this basic skill before going on to do paintings. Even after





college hours we had to do drawings for another two or three hours daily. My class fellows Muhammad Javed, Mehmood Alam and Dilawar Ali were also very hard working. We contributed money to pay the model for our drawings. For two years, we drew everyday as Shakir Ali had advised us. I think that exercise gave me a very sound ground. It was because of that *riaz* (constant practice), that I was always good in capturing whatever was needed on the surface of my canvas. I always go back to the basics and set out on a new journey.

Shakir Ali would not direct or dictate you. He allowed you to do what you wanted to do. And maybe, if he liked a thing he would make a comment. Sometimes if he didn't like a thing he would just ignore it, and if he stayed behind and looked at your work, that was a compliment.

Influence of Shakir Ali's works on his art

I was very much influenced by his work during my college days. After getting my degree from NCA, I wanted to go back to Karachi. He said that I should continue working here. In those days NCA was also looking for new teachers. So many of us from the first successful batch got jobs in different fields like design, ceramics and architecture; I was in fine arts.

I was living at Shakir Ali's house, which he got as a Principal. It was a great experience for me, because we shared the studio in a sense that when he was not working, I was working there. It was a wonderful time. I was with him when he learnt driving and bought a car. Then he got married. Those were days full of findings. Findings in the sense that exploring things, meeting people, having a get together, organizing exhibitions and things like that, I think Shakir Ali was a very reserved person. But he also liked being with people and his students; this

way he'd overcome his loneliness. We could all sit around him and talk about aspects of Greek art, something on Gothic art and many other related things. Then he would also come out with his own views on art, it was a wonderful time. He would raise some problem and see our response. Then we would all talk about it.

I was really under a spell from his concepts about art and his vision. Looking at my work people started to say that these looked like Shakir Ali's. Those who said this, I knew them very well. For me, he was a teacher as well as a very dear friend. But it was just a gradual change. When I did my thesis, it was very much like under Shakir Ali's influence. Gradually, when I started to teach I experimented a great deal with forms and paintings as such.

I'm talking about 1960 to 1962. In those days, there were hardly any exposures. Not many books to buy and see; to find out what was going on in the world. Change is an inner need. You can't just evolve a form for the sake of evolving a form. So I continued working and looking into new things.

His topics

I wrote somewhere that topics are not important and topics are not to be related to or narrated in paintings. But topics are just a kind of token to realize or identify one from the other, like you say landscape-IV or landscape-V, or Shabana.

Experiments in calligraphy

My problem is it that I've seen and studied the art of calligraphy very





closely. It attracts me aesthetically. But the kind of calligraphy, which everyone seems keen to put into his or her paintings here, makes me doubtful about its future. Spreading of colours on some surface does not make a piece of calligraphy. It's a serious art and you cannot do justice to it without knowing its principles. You should not deform a powerful tradition so carelessly. Only after understanding this art would you be able to use it properly according to its set traditional concepts and techniques.

So far as I'm concerned, I've used calligraphy in a different manner. My interest in calligraphy is not that I make a *kataba*. I use it because it's part of me. I can't deny it. I own it. You can't borrow it. I've great regard for calligraphy. In my paintings I've just used the space division of the calligraphy. I love its linear rhythm. Its aesthetic structure is most important for me. Then its manifestation, its fineness and its complex resolutions of space attract me. I'm just fascinated with the space and rhythm and its linear movement.

Scholarship for higher studies in art

Getting the British Council scholarship was a very thrilling turn in my career. I studied at Hornsey College of Art and Royal College of Art, London for four years from 1966 to 1969 and also did work there, picked up some techniques. In addition, I had access to great art. There I was able to see paintings, which I had only seen in books or slides. It was really a different experience. I still go there to see my favourite paintings, because, every time you look at a painting, you do so from a different view and perspective! I did a lot of work there, which was accepted and appreciated.

This way my scholarship continued. My tutors were satisfied with my work. It was a very positive experience.

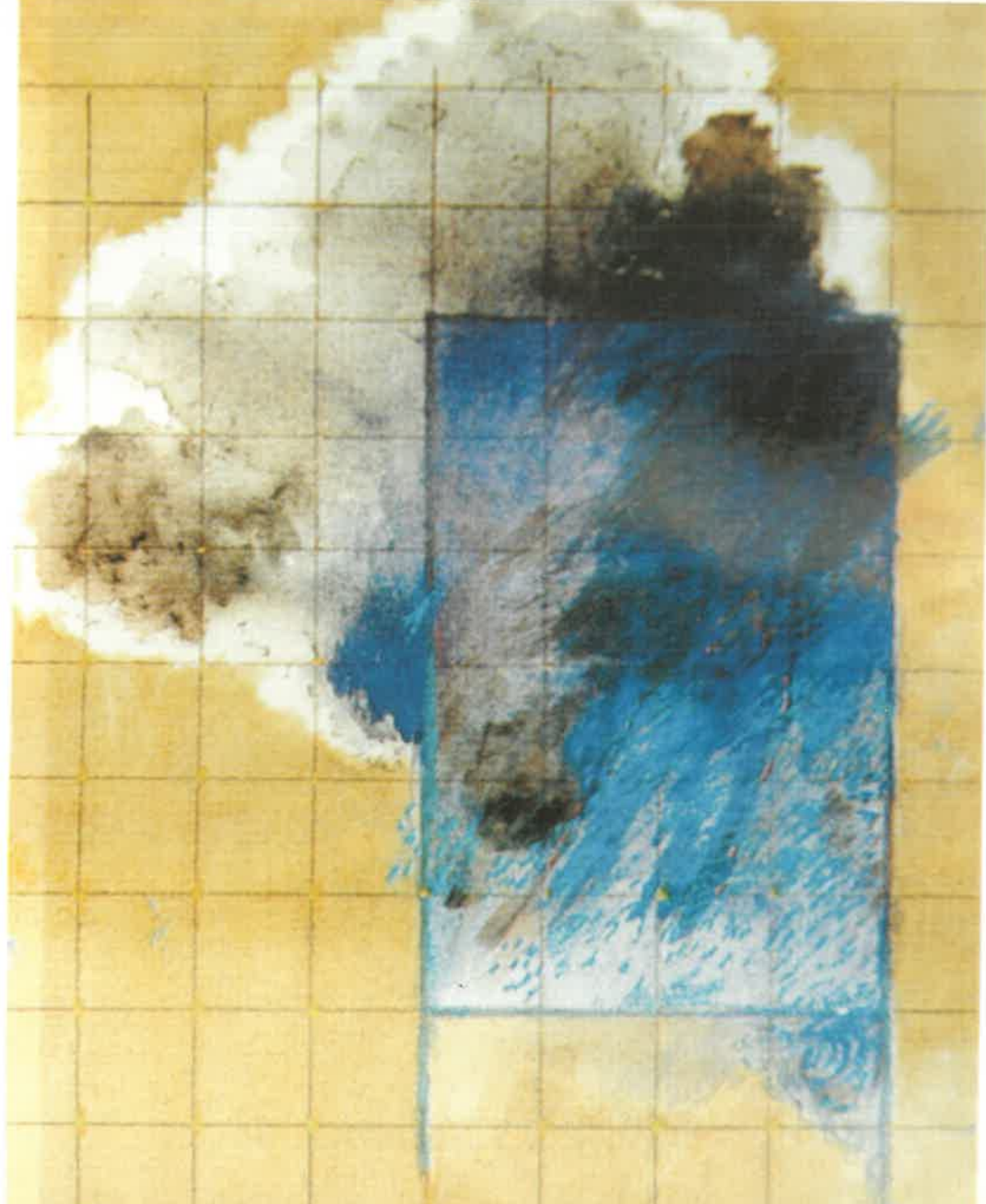
I spent large part of my time looking at miniatures in British Museum in the special area, which you can have an access to only through an assurance that you are a student of art and you are doing research on the subject. I also went to USA on Fulbright Scholarship where I worked at the Institute of Sacred Music, Religion and Art, Yale University.

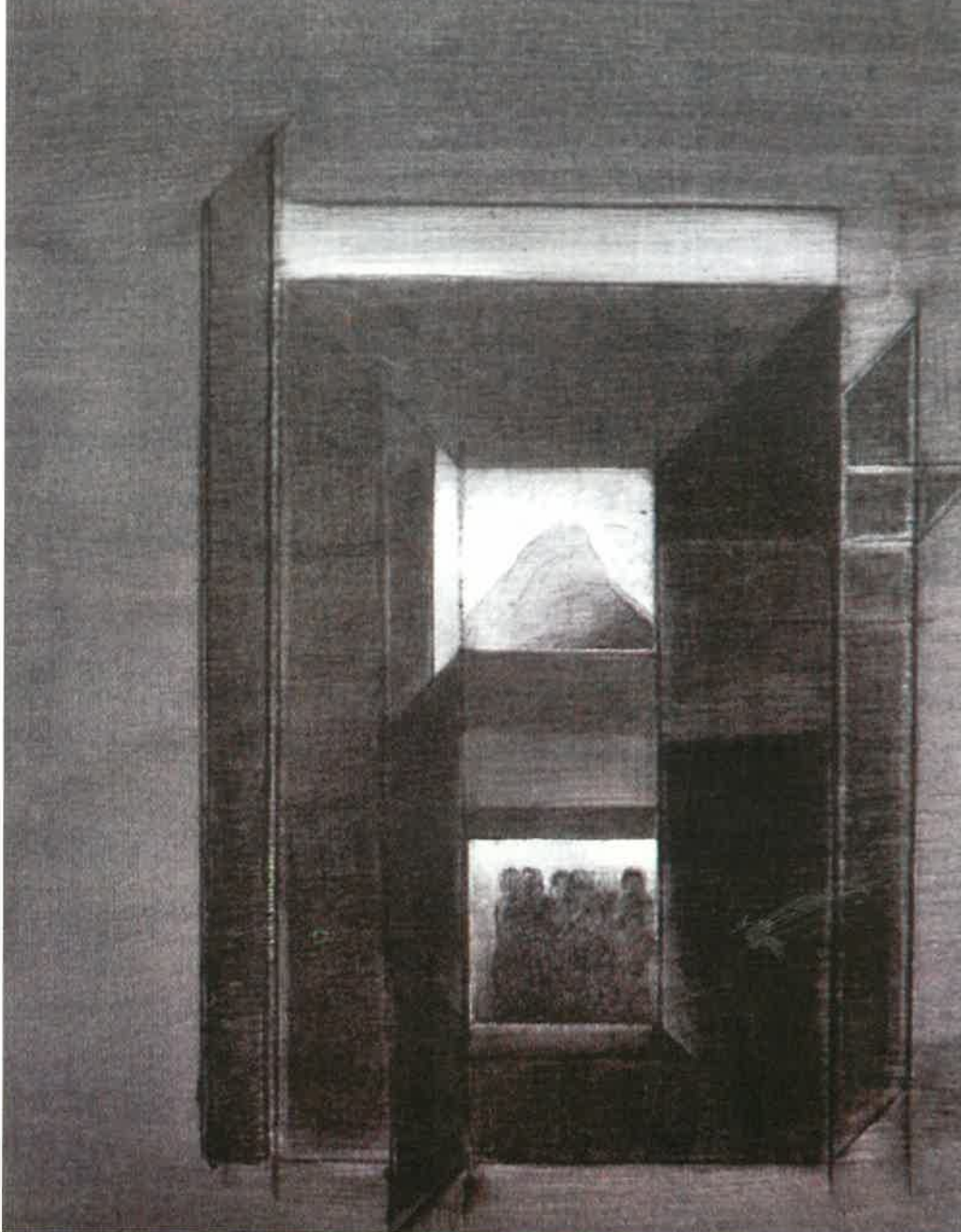
It was wonderful to see works in your hands, which are otherwise safely guarded. I learnt a great deal. I've travelled a lot in different countries at different times. I don't think that being in another place alters my way of looking or my approach. As a person, it was like having an experience of another space, another environment, interacting with different people and cultures and their way of looking at things. Of course it was wonderful!

Difference in eastern and western aesthetics

I've all the necessary skills to use and am able to execute things in a western manner. But somehow my interest in the East remains very strong. My interest is not in the surface of the visual patterns; their technique, execution or creations do not attract me. For instance, in Mughal art, I do not see only the kings, the princes and the princesses or their luxurious lives. What I'm interested in is how painters created space for a certain scene, and related and narrated things. I think its space structure attracts me.

Philosophy of his colours





With colours I don't have any problem. Cool colours and warm colours is an outdated theory. Let's say that really all this doesn't touch me. There can be many interpretations of colour.

Heavy use of the colour black

Black often has the connotation of mourning. I think colour is a matter of your association.

Along with socio-cultural environment, one's personal priorities are also involved in developing an association with colour. The beauty of black attracts me, I can see things in it.

I love it; therefore I use it in my paintings. I'm not afraid of colours. However, I use only those colours, which can express what I want to paint. I want to see how colour, surface and space coordinate with one another.

Using geometrical patterns

In fact geometrical patterns attract me aesthetically.

Figurative images, particularly female form, in his paintings

The female form is a cycle of life, basically. I don't use it as the expression of body or flesh. I take it for what it represents: the cycle of life, say, a regeneration of life.

Sculpture in Pakistan

It's somewhat difficult to address the question that is there sculpture in Pakistan or not? It may be presumptuous to address the question in an affirmative way. But the fact remains that we don't acknowledge the aspirations of common men for their need to express an experience in three-dimensional forms in their day-to-day life. We're ignoring the facts, which are three-dimensional.

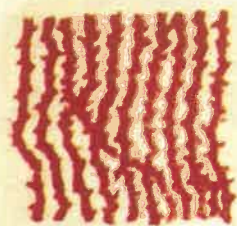
We are oblivious of the fact that the most popular or common expressions of religion entwined with cultural tradition are the *Alam and Tazia*. The symbols of religious sentiments have a form as an expression of peoples' beliefs and their need to show their feelings in a concrete manner. I consider that the expressions or the statements made by the people are three-dimensional.

Present state of modern art in Pakistan

What's known as modern art in Pakistan is, I think a thing of the past. The present practitioners of that genre are a little late because the party is over. However, a breed of people--not on the invitation list of pseudo-modernists—will pave the path.

His Paintings exhibition (retrospective 1961-98)

Retrospective for me is a means to trace my footsteps back and map how far I am from the point of departure. I am not afraid of looking back. But I feel very strongly about accountability, which is carried out by an inner discipline rather than outer forces. Since charity begins at home, 'Retrospect is an exercise in casting a stone at one's own self.'





Jamil Naqsh

JAMIL NAQSH



Shaped by time and tide, President's Pride of Performance award winning painter Jamil Naqsh's artistic career has for us some very significant turning points to note and appreciate. Born in an economically well-to-do landlord family of Kairana (Uttar Pradesh), India on December 25, in 1939, he was his father Abdul Basit's beloved son. In Kairana, Abdul Basit was known among those who had both money and mind. Although he has friendly relations with some practicing politicians and shared with them his point of view too, but, he enjoyed much and felt at ease in the company of friends who belonged to the creative field of Fine art, literature and music. Psychology was Abdul Basit's favourite subject. He published many valuable books on this subject. He was also considered a good practitioner of the Mughal Art.

Jamil Naqsh had great admiration for his father's friends. His writer and artist friends particularly impressed him. By seeing his father painting and his collection of art, he began to paint. His father noticed his son's interest in art and decided to help him in becoming what he had wanted to by giving him some basic lessons.

For Jamil Naqsh, the cultural environment of Lahore was full of fascination. It could nourish his artistic talent. In 1953, following his home-bred literary taste and idea of becoming a fine artist; he joined Mayo School of Art, Lahore.

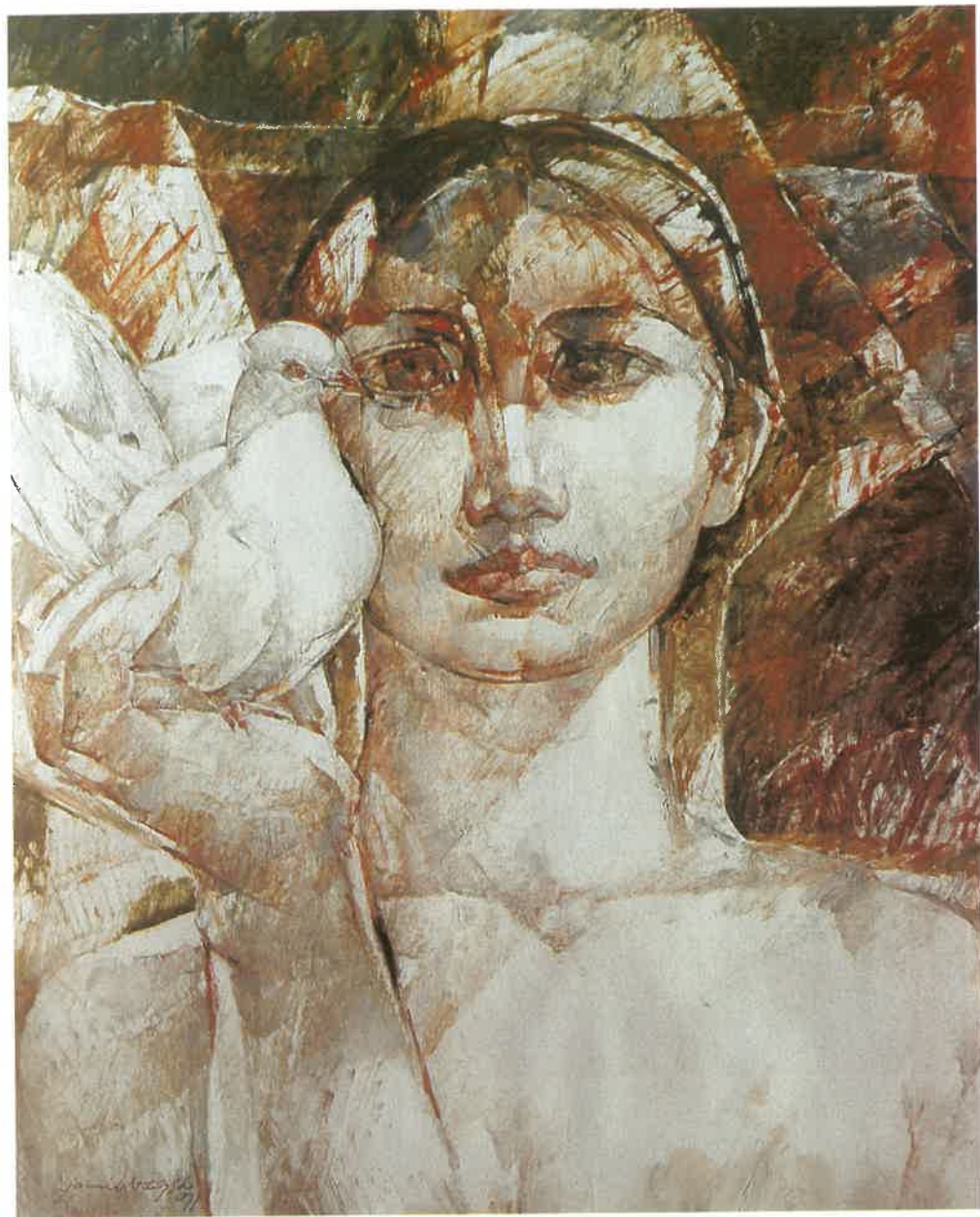
There, for about two years, he remained fondly engaged in learning various disciplines of art. But then surprisingly, he left the school without completing his academic training, saying, "I was not after obtaining some Diploma. "

In 1924, Ustaad Haji Muhammad Sharif's solo exhibition of Mughal style paintings (Miniatures) in London had been successful in drawing the attraction of serious connoisseurs of art and earned him a title of MBE (Member British Empire). The same year, after retirement from the Court of Patiala in 1954, Haji Sharif came to Lahore, joined the faculty of Mayo School of Art and started teaching traditional Mughal art (Miniature Painting). Jamil Naqsh was happy on becoming a *Shagird* (student) of such a great master of indigenous art. At this School and after leaving it, for about a year, he wholeheartedly followed and practiced all that his ustaad (teacher) taught him about the various schools (styles) and techniques of Mughal Art. Although Jamil Naqsh left Lahore for Karachi, but he remained seriously engaged with his painting work. He was also experimenting to create a new style ----- perhaps in the way Rabindranath Tagore or Abdur Rehman Chughtai had introduced a fresh regime in painting by using traditional concepts of Eastern Art.

In 1975's Centenary exhibition of National College of Art established as a result of up-gradation of Mayo School of Art, he displayed a painting which was finely created in traditional idiom although it was not as colourful as it should be according to the familiar style of local art, but its linear quality was an attraction for the viewers. The other significant point to note in this painting was its dramatic setting of characters. A young lady holding a flower in her delicate fingers was enjoying its fragrance and watching two pigeons flying and playing in the sky. As the date was not mentioned, one could only guess that it belonged to the period when Jamil Naqsh was under the tutelage of Haji Muhammad Sharif.

In Karachi, Jamil Naqsh was received warmly and he readily adjusted in the company of serious practitioners of art and literature. One of them was Ali





Imam, painter and art-promoter, and the other was Nasim Durrani, fiction writer who later on became the editor of Seep, a literary magazine.

Thematically, Jamil Naqsh's exquisitely created impressions have always been expressing all that he had been seeing, experiencing or thinking while living in a post-world war era. For a sensitive painter like Jamil Naqsh, the dominant capitalist market-economy had left man all alone to face a world full of fears and phobias. He is helpless before all oppression and destruction. His hands are tied to the back.

This misery has always worried Jamil Naqsh. He believes in humanity as the solution of all problems. That's why his art highlights all those humanistic concepts, which he thinks can bring happiness to life. Seeing his figurative impressions, one finds him very attached to his naturalistic representation of human life. For instance, take his woman-pigeon series, which is considered his first best – a well-composed and thought-provoking creation towards understanding human life and its relationship with nature. In this series, both conceptually and aesthetically, Jamil Naqsh seems to concentrate on two figures – the woman and the pigeon, and finds them synonymous. Because, for him, the woman is the most beautiful creation of Allah and the pigeon represents all that a woman holds dear – beauty and essence of beauty.

Characteristically looking at his stylized figure of woman, sometime one may think that Jamil Naqsh avoids working on curvaceous charms of female anatomy. But, no, it's not so. He works on them too, but, only according to the demand of his subject matter. He doesn't see woman as an object of pleasure. He conceptualizes woman as the most natural and modest symbol of the circle of life

and love. In this regard, his 'Mother and Child' series leaves lasting impressions on the viewers mind and touches their heart and soul.

Through the symbol of pigeon, he highlights the cultural environment of the motherland (*dharti maan*). His symbol becomes more attractive, peaceful, innocent and at the same time more saint-like.

The third important character in Jamil Naqsh's figurative paintings is the horse. Conceptually this character can always assume thoughtful connotations. However, ultimately, it becomes the symbol of power.

Professionally too, Jamil Naqsh is an eminent exponent of contemporary Pakistani art. Confidently he uses his artistic skills to execute his humanistic ideas and they are at once innovative, representational, readable and fascinating. He doesn't seem to restrict himself solely to the East or the West. His humanistic manifesto allows him to go beyond his geo-political boundaries and study human life. As a result he finds himself more enlightened, determined, devoted and enthusiastic in highlighting his point of view about humanity. For instance, after thoroughly going through oriental and occidental cultures, on painting surface, he bridges the divide.

This stylistic success enables him to work, as he has ambitiously wanted to do: art for the sake of life. Giving equal importance to both (art and life), whatever he has up to now expressed visually through symbolic use of figures, layer by layer of sensational textures, representational hues, sensible linear endeavours and suggestive compositions, establishes him as a figurative expressionist artist of master level signature. Working in his signature style, from start to finish in every painting, he seems to move towards understanding different aspects of physical and metaphysical languages/concepts of beauty, love and peace.





Importantly, at the time of expressing his insightful personal vision of the world in art, Jamil Naqsh has never denied his socio-cultural background and identity. Loaded with reality-oriented romantic meanings, his symbolic impression has always depicted humanistic sensations of his dreams and the world on micro and macro levels. This is the reason why his art provokes a variety of responses. Questions arise. How can one go back to the nature? What's nature and its essence? What kind of changes can it bring in one's life? What will be the materialistic sacrifices? Why should one become part of the world, which is called primitive now? And if he joins it again, how will it be fruitful? Like a moralist i.e. the story teller, he figuratively portrays 'life of his choice'. Jamil Naqsh suggestively highlights his expressionistic art in all that he thinks can be helpful in understanding his naturalistic concepts about human life.

For Jamil Naqsh, there's a great difference between inspiration and all alternatives of imitation. He is mainly inspired by the art of Haji Muhammad Sharif, Shakir Ali, Amedeo Modigliani, Ali Imam and Marino Marini. Ali Imam explains what this means: "In his study of modern painters, he was fascinated by the horses that Marino Marini painted. Painters and poets have a tradition of paying homage to masters in their discipline. Jamil Naqsh in his humility, did a series of painting entitled 'Homage to Marino Marini '. But in doing so, he did not lift any element from Marini's imagery. Marino Marini was only a stimulus; the outcome was Jamil's very own. Before embarking on this project Naqsh made hundreds of studies, creating symbols for use in his paintings.

Jamil Naqsh doesn't feel uneasy in using any medium on any surface. His figurative and calligraphic paintings are masterpieces of both traditional and modern techniques. At the same time, he continues to seek new ways of expression.



Zubaida Javed

ZUBAIDA JAVED

Pakistan's renowned cityscape and landscape painter, Zubaida Javed (b.1938) *Pride of Performance*, interestingly, had planned to become a doctor but failed because of her fear of scenes from the operation theater. After finding herself misfit for medical profession, she decided to study any other subject. Since her father was aware of her interest in making sketches, he suggested her to select the field of fine art. She first studied art at Lahore College for Women now known as Lahore College for Women University, and then, got enrolled for a Master's degree in the Department of Fine Art, University of the Punjab, where she wholeheartedly studied various disciplines of fine art under the guidance of masters like Anna Molka Ahmed and Khalid Iqbal. Then, for some time after completion of Master in Fine Art in 1961, she remained busy in creating impressionistic paintings, a style she had already experimented during academic years of her study and displayed in her thesis exhibition. In 1964, Zubaida joined her Alma mater as Lecturer and taught history of Art with emphasis on Islamic Art and basics of art particularly the Composition.



In 1970 she was happily married with Prof. Siddique Javed, who appreciated her artistic expressions because he himself was a creative writer and Professor of Urdu Literature. Sharing her ideas with him, Zubaida Javed gained more confidence and continued painting and teaching. In 1974, she held the first solo exhibition of her new work in Rawalpindi. It earned her appreciation and encouragement. Viewers saw in her art an abstraction enwrapped in vanishing visions, beauties, prides and patterns of Lahore's cultural life and history. Instead of painting the Walled City or its outskirts like many other contemporary realist or cubist painters, she very innovatively and skillfully used her palette knife for creating textures and colouring essence of subject matter. Besides, she participated in the group exhibitions. She worked for two more solo exhibitions, which were

held in Islamabad and Karachi: Her last exhibition of paintings was held in 1995 at the Lahore Art Gallery. It was again in her recognized personal idiom, loaded with freshness that entire she had been seeing, thinking and expressing through art. From Misty Morning to Creeping Darkness, one could read in her tradition oriented modern impressions happy and sad story of her beloved Lahore and -- its people.

On completion of her sixty years of age in 1997, Zubaida Javed retired from the service of the University of the Punjab. She was working there as Chairperson of the Department of Fine Art. Although she was again taken up by the University on contract basis but her health did not allow continuing the teaching job. However, as a painter, she continued to work very dynamically.

At home, in the company of her husband Dr. Siddique Javed, daughter Nida and son Ali, Zubaida Javed remained busy in matching and composing on canvas or paper romantic tunes of past and present with changing tonalities of native hues and lights.

Her initial impressions

I remember, during my school days, fine art was not my favourite subject. Neither had I any knowledge of it. My interest was in the science subjects. But, photographs and illustrations printed in my syllabus books had an attraction for me. I used to admire them. Some time I also tried to copy those beautiful images and enjoy in colouring them according to my own aesthetic sense. My friends at school were the first viewers of my copy works. Their appreciation encouraged me for making more such works. This way, unconsciously, I was found engaged





Zubov Taras 7

in exploring my artistic tendencies. I didn't know this until my father had noticed this change in me. After doing Matriculation from Lady MacLagan School, I got admission in Lahore College for Women. I joined F.Sc (Premedical), to become a doctor. It was only after doing Biology practical, I realized that the medical profession was not suitable for me. How could I become a doctor when I was afraid of operations and surgeries?

Her impressions during studying art at the University of the Punjab

Anyhow I completed my F.Sc and decided to do something else. My father had enough knowledge of fine art and the institutions where this subject was being taught. On his advice, I studied the subject of fine art at BA level, and later on, got admission in the Department of Fine Arts, University of the Punjab for obtaining a Master's degree.

I can't forget my first meeting with Anna Molka Ahmed. Equipped with paintings copied by me, I appeared before her. She looked at them critically and said, "You're being given a chance to study in this department with the hope that you'll not do copy work again. Keep it in mind if you do such work again, I'll throw you out". Studying art under the guidance of veteran art educationists like Anna Molka Ahmed, Khalid Iqbal, Zakia Dil Muhammad and Mrs. Anwar, I found myself fully involved in doing original work. I followed what was being taught to me and expressed accordingly in my realistic drawings and paintings.

At that time, although I was painting realistically but it didn't satisfy my creative impulse. It seemed to me a dry imitation of nature and life around me. Like my early copy work, I wanted to get rid of this style too. In fact, I wanted to

express my ideas creatively, differently and impressively. My problem was solved when I attended lectures of Khalid Iqbal on various types of impressionism. Also, while studying art books, I took much interest in the work of Manet, Pissarro, Degas, Cezanne and Renoir. I was inspired by Anna Molka Ahmed's style of using palette knife for creating impressionistic paintings. Then there was Mr. Nutley who had come from America as a visiting Professor. Every Sunday, he took us to the outskirts of Lahore. We enjoyed a lot while making landscapes on the spot in Watercolour medium. Finally, in 1961, I displayed my thesis work, which helped me to earn a Master's Degree with distinction. I also began to enjoy my reputation of being a stylish painter. I thanked God.

Her career as an art educationist

After 61's academic boost, I didn't stop painting. In those days, I mostly concentrated on understanding what I had been painting and why my impressionistic art was considered abstract or semi-abstract. On canvas or paper, using oil colours with palette knife, I continued painting subject matter of my choice in the same abstract impressionistic style with which I had experimented in the beginning. I was happy to see it becoming popular among my juniors.

In 1964, I joined my Alma mater as a lecturer. The same year, classes for master in Fine Art were started in the University. I was assigned to teach History of Islamic Art. Frankly speaking, initially, I thought it to be a difficult assignment. I was aware of a teacher's responsibilities. Studying history and teaching history were two different things. However, to meet the challenge, I enriched my knowledge and taught students the Eastern and Western art traditions. In the History of Islamic Art, there's a big treasure, which I think is being ignored intentionally.





For instance, the periods of the Saffvids and Timurids have a lot of artistic fascination. Then there were the wonderful works of Behzad. While studying his work, one fails to find undesigned empty spaces. He composes everything, subject matter included, very artistically and thoughtfully. Relationship between representational and non-representational elements is unique, impressive and meaningful in his work. He inspires me. In short, I say, the history of Islamic Art must not be underestimated.

How she trained students in composition making

Besides delivering lectures on history of art, I also taught various forms and techniques of painting. Following Sir Nutely's picnic-oriented adventurous way of teaching art, I took my students out of the Department to places in and around the City. I found them learning a lot while painting cityscapes and landscapes on the spot. Particularly, I trained my students in composition making. It was another major duty, which I enjoyed performing till my retirement in 1997.

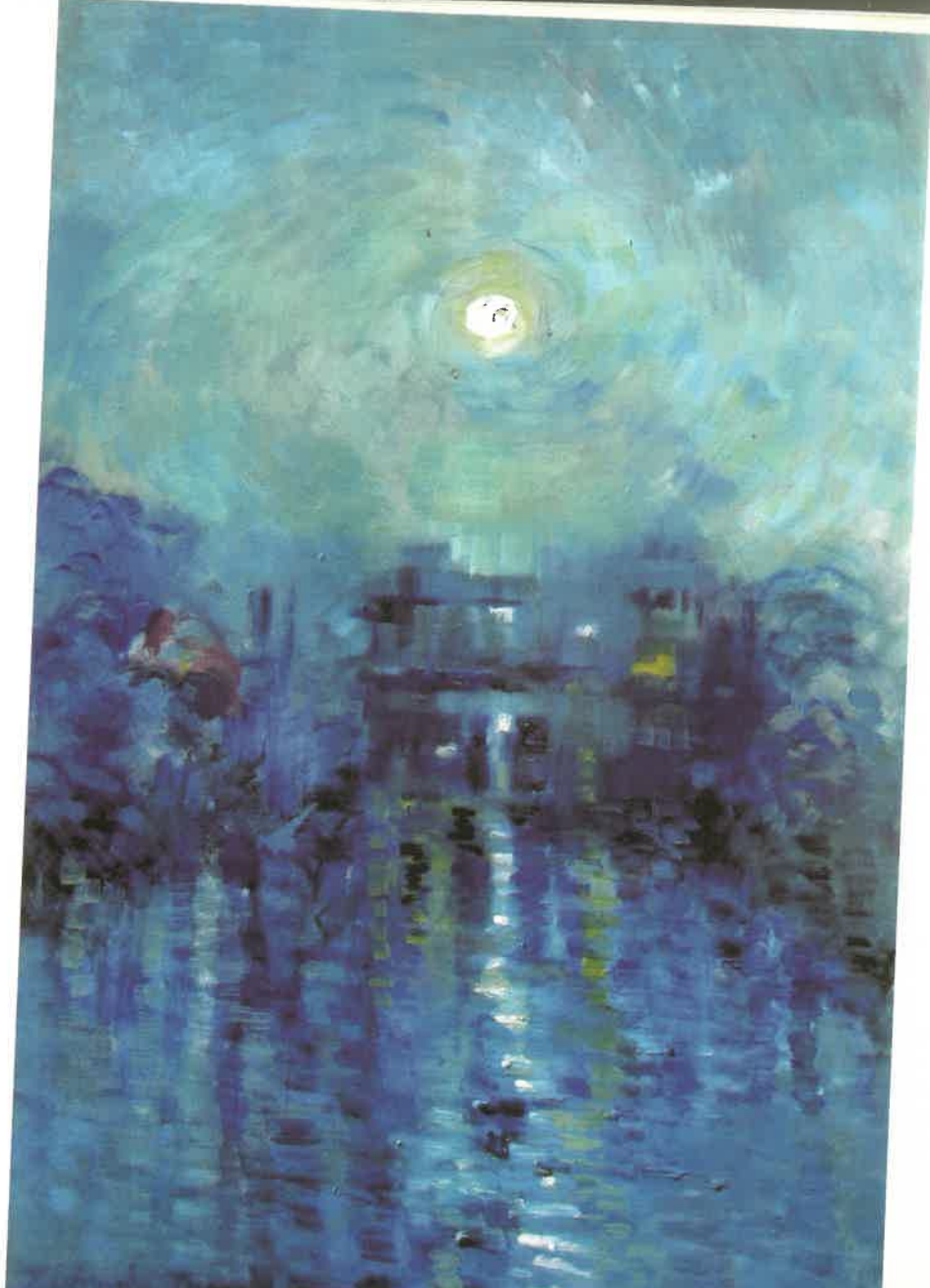
In art, importance of the visual whole cannot be denied. A painting is considered well-composed only when all its elements, including subject matter, surface, spatial environment, colours and treatment form an effective harmony. It's this composition, which makes a painting valuable artistically and aesthetically. The art of composition has also been the subject of experiments. For instance, one finds traditional concept of composition making changed in the 20th Century modern art. A lot of work can be seen created under the title of 'Composition'. In early Pakistani art too, such composition-oriented, non-representational modern visual sensations made their presence felt in painting. In the 60's and 70's, composition remained an essential element of our modern art. Some painters seem to be working on it very seriously and sensibly.

How her art is for the sake of life

My paintings are reflection of my thoughts, feelings and emotions. I always like to say something purposeful on canvas. Painting without any purpose has no attraction for me. There are people who say that this habit makes me a 'slow' painter. But I'm not worried about my slowness. It doesn't affect my freedom of expression. I've never been in favour of works, which are produced only after seeing the market-index. Not all, but now many realists and modernists are found actively taking part in this business. Surprisingly, I see them competing amongst themselves for the sake of winning patronage of bourgeoisie and private galleries. I may be wrong in saying that a piece of art cannot be produced in any industry. How can it be? On the other hand, the good or bad role of industry in human society can become the subject matter of a painting. But such a painting can be expected only from a serious artist, because those who've attained high speed in supplying works according to the market demand will not bother to spare time for thinking and creating unprofitable art. I say this only because of my teachers who encouraged one to learn basics of art responsibly and wholeheartedly, rely on her/his artistic talents and create art independently. I'm proud of being a student of Anna Molka Ahmed and Khalid Iqbal and follow what they taught me about the philosophy of art.

What do her paintings say?

Frankly speaking, I've not yet been able to understand the drama of 'intellectual art'. In fact, I do not want to indulge in such kind of self-promotional activities where art is discussed according to the market demand. I always love to see works of Masters like Abdul Rehman Chughtai, Amrita Shergil, Ustaad





Allah Buksh, Anna Molka Ahmed, Khalid Iqbal, Shakir Ali, Zubaida Agha and Zahoor ul Akhlaque. As far as my art is concerned, apparently, it doesn't say anything unusual. Thematically, it's about the indigenous cultural life-style of urban and rural areas of Lahore. My interest remains on highlighting the traditional loveliness of this City. I paint what I see and feel. For instance, while looking at an ignored historical building, I become nostalgic and start thinking about the people who built it and who lived in it. Similarly, sometimes I find myself romantically recalling my experiences of seeing peasants, green fields, harvesting seasons and colourful *melas* in Lahore. Now, in search of some natural spot for painting a Lahori-landscape, I've to pass through many modern housing societies. I take notice of all such haphazard changes and think about things that we're losing so rapidly.

How colours make her paintings meaningful

In my God-gifted vocabulary of colours, I think, almost all entries are meaningful. Because, colours have always been supporting me in expressing all that I've been thinking sensitively or feeling emotionally. Therefore, even colours, which create an abstract environment around representational areas in my paintings, are readable on many levels. One can see them harmonized with my subject matter in paintings like *Fading past*, *Nostalgia*, *City of the lost*, *Creeping darkness*, *Tunes of freedom*, *Prayer for the Dawn* and *Monsoon*.

Prof. Zubaida Javed has certainly contributed a lot in the field of Fine Art. Her students too have gained a high reputation and are well known artists in the country. Thank God, she is still working despite health problem, which shows her dedication and involvement in the subject of Fine Art.



Saeed Akhtar

SAEED AKHTAR

Saeed Akhtar (b.1938) is an accomplished portrait painter of Pakistan; many of his works depict and bring to life on canvas our cultural life. But his fame rests with his paintings of Quaid-e-Azam inspired by Hal Bevan Pitman. He has worked to go ahead of him. For him, creative originality is a must. Without it, art is reduced to mere imitation, which he regards as dishonesty. He talks in some detail about his art of portraiture, its traditional background, present state and its future in Pakistan.

On the development of his interest in art

It was the art collection of the Command and Staff College Quetta, which inspired me to become an artist. Though the collection comprised of portraits of senior officers of the army, war paintings and landscapes, but the painting of Quaid-e-Azam made by Hal Bevan Pitman caught my fancy.

A well-known calligrapher Yousuf Dehlavi was my maternal grandfather. Thinking that he would advise me better, I went to Karachi and told him that 'I want to become a painter'. He told me that, 'from an Ustaad you could not learn much'. You should therefore, go to Lahore and join the Mayo School of Arts.

On his art education

In 1960, I came to Lahore and got admission in the newly structured National College of Arts. Late Ustaad Bashir, Jamila Zaidi, Abbasi Abdi, Taufeeq Ajaz and Mohammad Latif Chughtai were my teachers. All of them were creative artists and well-known for their individual styles. Despite my instilled confidence, they encouraged me to experiment and select art forms for new



creative expressions. I started to express my ideas in paintings while I was in third year of my study at NCA.

Professor Shakir Ali had seen my work of portraits. One day when I was still in third year, he called me in his office and asked 'would you like to paint a portrait of General Musa!, who was Commander In Chief of Pakistan's Army'. I accepted the challenge. It was my first commissioned work, which earned me, what was in those days, a princely sum of three hundred rupees.

While going through the history of art, I particularly, concentrated on the history of portraiture. I got a Diploma from NCA in 1964.

Then I sensed that commissioned works, which I was doing, had very little place in the field of art, because one could be creative only to the extent of decoration. One had to follow the camera's eye. So I started to draw from the life. 'Portrait of a painter by a painter for a painter' was the title of Muhammad Asif's portrait, which I made in twenty minutes.

Abdul Hafeez Kardar gave me a 5x7 inches photograph of Sir Adamjee for making a life size painting 4x5 feet, which had only Adamjee's face. It was a challenge for me. I considered it another turning point in my commissioned work and arranged a model of Sir Adamjee's physical structure and then made his figure painting.

On Quaid's portraits

In 1970, Prof. Shakir Ali called me and asked to paint the Quaid's portrait for newly constructed building of the National Assembly. Perhaps awed by the





Handwritten signature or mark.

job, my reply was something like how could I do such an important work. Shakir Ali's immediate response was very encouraging, as he told me that only I could paint it. He provided me a canvas of 7 x 9 feet, and I began to work on that. Day in and day out, I worked on the portrait. I wanted to make it a masterpiece, a portrait that would reflect Quaid's personality in the best light. The picture I was provided with showed only his face but I painted him from head to toe from my imagination. I believed that the job was done satisfactorily

On the importance of portrait making

A photograph can capture only one moment, whereas a painter has to work on a portrait till the artist within him is satisfied. While working on a portrait, I talk to my model, and try to discover several aspects of his personality. The camera's eye simply cannot capture such an important dimension of life.

A portrait is not all about the face, though it is tremendously important. If hands are a part of my painting and they are within the frame, then they will certainly be painted with each and every detail including clothes and drapery to get the life like resemblance and expressions. Although I concentrate more on the face, I think it is the eyes, which are a true guide to anyone's personality. They attract me because they reveal the truth. Hands are also like eyes.

With one or two basic colours, relying solely on their different tones, I have created more colourful impressions than others do by using many colours. I do not mix white in brown, but brown gives me a variety of tones, which I create by varying the oil content in the colour.

My palette is monochromatic. I do not play with many colours. With very

few colours, I think, I have succeeded in making my own idiom in contemporary portrait-making. The monochromatic look is creatively original, and attractive. It's my style.

On experimentation in his area of expertise

I have ventured to bring a change in the conventional method of composition. Rather than, starting from off the canvas, I compose figures on extreme right or left in many of my paintings. Empty space behind the model becomes meaningful when one sees the figure's outgoing posture. There may be violations of traditional methods in my art, but I have always been in search of new aesthetic originalities, treatments and expressions.

On the history of portrait-making

Going through the centuries old history of art in the subcontinent, one finds that portrait-making has always been practiced. In search of perfection, artists, from time to time, introduced new techniques. For instance, look at the figurative works of our cave-pioneers in this form. In the second period, artists made Gods and Goddesses. Even today, while making a figure from Hindu mythology, one had to copy the works of old masters. Similarly, unknown sculptors of Gandhara Art contributed a lot to this form. Mughals were particularly fond of fine art. In their period, interest developed in the form of miniature painting. Stylization was a later phenomenon in miniature.

The British painters came here equipped with canvas and oil colours. First they approached different royal courts and got assignments for making portraits.





Then, during the Raj period, they made portraits of their VIPs and painted war scenes. Later, our artists also began to work on canvas with oil colours, but in their own way. I believe that our tradition in portrait-making is no less rich. I am proud of it.

On art education in Pakistan

Soon after completion of my study at NCA in 1964 I was taken up as lecturer, which gave me an opportunity to learn more. I was promoted as head of the Fine Art Department in 1994 and Professor in 1995. I think the education field has broadened my vision.

Being an art teacher, I do not favour the modernists' direct method of teaching art. I attach utmost importance to basics. I know that one who is well-educated in the basics can understand it better. While he can do experiments in technique and ways of expression in a skillful manner, his art can also be modern. Unfortunately, in our art colleges, foreign-educated painter-cum-teachers dominate the scene. They focus only on modern art. In such a situation, how can we expect creative originality?

On modern art

In my view our modern art is rootless. We could have contributed original works in it if we had experience of participating in both the World Wars. Here we could have narrated the experiences of the war of 1965, but we could not do so. When our experience is not like that of Europeans, how can we express it in our art? That is why we see a number of modern artists busy in producing imitations.



Salima Hashmi

SALIMA HASHMI

Salima Hashmi (b.1942) is a many-faceted personality. A painter by vocation, she has achieved recognition for being progressive in terms of techniques and materials. In more ways than one, she succeeded in establishing herself as one of the leaders of Pakistan's modern art in the period, which could be described as Post-Shakir Ali.

The last of the Martial Laws was imposed in mid-1977, and a struggle for the revival of democracy ensued. The art scene at that time on one hand reflected the beauty of landscape, man and his socio-religious beliefs, and on the other resisted the dictatorial laws which were the very anti-thesis of beauty and creativity. Being her parents' (Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Alys) daughter, Salima was one of those who fought against laws, which impinged on women's rights and democratic rights of people. She and likeminded artists of the time created a socio-politically conscious art, which may have on occasions been abstract in form but was expressionistic and communicative at the same time.

Salima Hashmi, former Principal of the prestigious National College of Arts, speaks about her career as an artist, about the milieu, which has been her inspiration and also candidly comments on the evolution of art and art education in Pakistan.

The environment which led her to become a creative artist

I was brought up in a house where literature, music and art were part of everyday life. Paintings were always there, and so was music. Writers, poets and intellectuals used to visit us frequently, due to which a constant feeling of creative activity was there. Also there were other things as well, which I saw as a



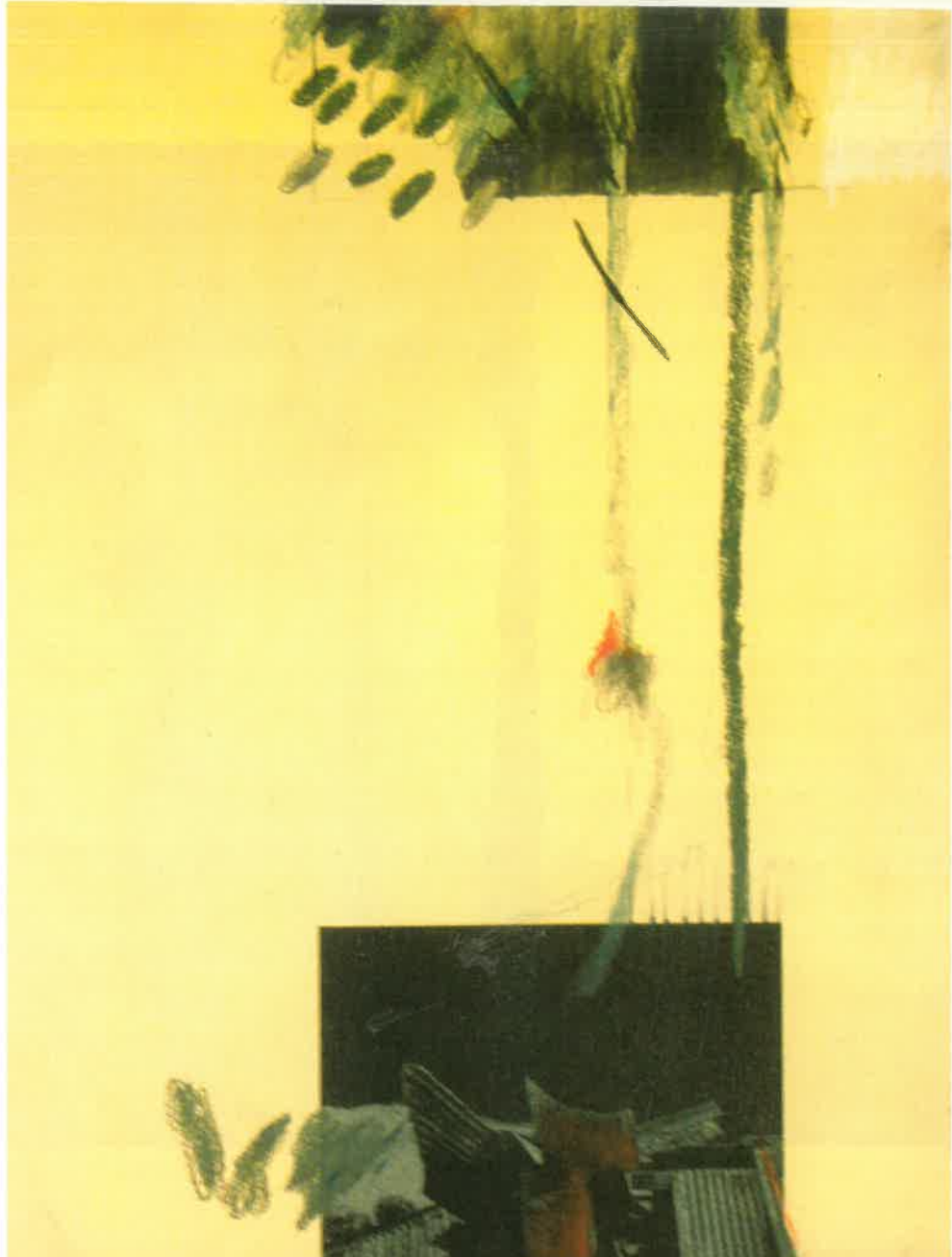
young child, and which left a deep impression, such as my father going to prison. I think it had such an impact on my personality that I became a shy introvert.

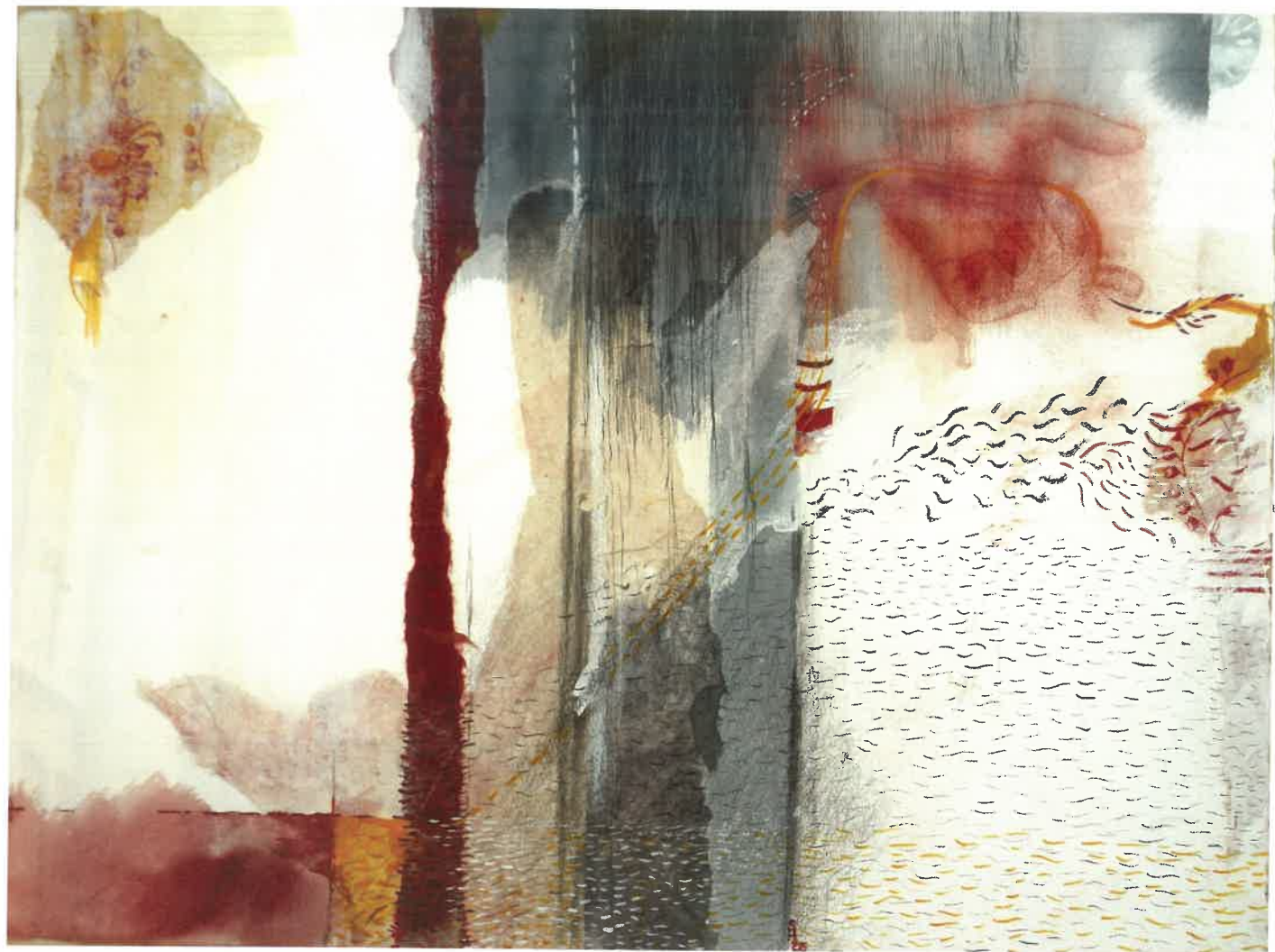
In those early years of my life, art was taken for granted as one of the things one did. My mother provided me with art materials when I was a very small child. On every birthday, I would request a paint-box, crayons or books. These were my favourite things. Since I hated school, home was the place where one could do things, which one truly enjoyed, whether it was drawing or painting or listening to music. The environment encouraged creativity.

Art as a source of her expressions

Well, I never knew that I was going to study art until got to college. And it was really my mother who led me towards painting and designing, rather than pursuing a subject like political science. Also, it was my parents' friendship with Professor Sponenberg, which encouraged me to come to NCA. But before coming to NCA, it was really my mother more than my father who suggested that this was the way I should go. I also believed that one day I would teach; I intuitively felt that I would be a good teacher. It was another thing, which I succeeded at and have enjoyed doing.

Art has not been my only sources of expression; I've also been involved in performing arts. I was an extremely shy person and perhaps acting provided me with a vehicle for pretending to be some body else, and still expressing myself through it. Even as a small child I played with puppets, which my English grandmother sent us. Sister, my cousins, and I used to do little performances, for the neighborhood children. Puppets continued to be a passion in later years,





when I went to television and used them to put across ideas for children as well as adults. So performing arts, whether it was theater, television or puppetry, have all been forms of expression for me. I think, teaching too, if done creatively, is a form of expression.

Her inspirations and influences

There have been many. Firstly, of course, at home my father and my mother, and my father's friends. As a small child I sat very close to people who came to our house to meet my father. I insisted to them to tell me stories, whether it was Patras Bokhari or Maulana Chiragh Hasan Hasrat, Salik uncle or Taseer uncle. I think these people influenced me a great deal, though at that time I was not aware of it.

A strict disciplinarian, my mother was a very strong influence. She was straightforward and pragmatic, and she tried out to pass on these traits to us. She showed her strength of character in those years of struggle when my father was in Jail. What I learnt most from her was that you had to work hard to survive. Contrary to popular perception, my father also was very hard working, and remained so all his life. We always saw him getting up early, reading papers and going to work. Even if he didn't go out to work, he did it at home. So work was something essential. Never in my life have I identified being artistic or creative with being relaxed; it always had to do with inner discipline. Inspirations and influences were political as well as artistic. Major events in the sub-continent, such as the Partition, my father going to prison, the Martial Laws, separation of East Pakistan, all influenced my work but most of all the eleven tragic-years of Ziaul Haq's regime did have a huge influence.

Those many wonderful people who I have come across in life, there have been many inspiring ones. For instance, Pablo Neruda, whom I met with my father, listening for hours to Roshan Ara Begum and Barey Ghulam Ali Khan, watching Gopi Krishna and Krishnamurti dance or listening to Begum Akhtar sing in person. All these were quite inspiring. Then there were some great people in NCA those days, like Professor Sponenberg and James Warren. Not only were they good teachers, they also made one see the essence of art.

When I went to England, Howard Hodgkin then an internationally known name taught me about mediums and materials in painting, Jesper John about film and Adrian Heath the composition. Most inspirational of all, I think, was the discovery that in the sub-continent, I was still living in the 19th century, under the influence of the British academic art education. Clichés then taught in our painting classes thankfully were forgotten rather quickly and the fact that I did photography as well as painting and filmmaking was also crucial. Being a photographer, I was able to understand there was more to object than mere appearance. As a painter, you know that appearance of an object has very little to do with reality. Both these rather contradictory ways of recording the world were instrumental in shaping my style of expression.

There was never a question of art for art's sake in my work. There's always been a purpose, whether it was performing arts or visual arts. For me communication was the name of the game and still I think so.

Her contact with Pakistan while studying abroad

Studying in England was a luxury, I suppose. But I was constantly in





touch with what was going on at home. Then I came back and got married, took part in group shows; the first solo-show came many years later in 1983. And when I was banned from Television in (Ziaul Haq years), I went back to painting. Those were eleven very hard years, the darkest era of my life and it changed me in more ways than I can comprehend. It altered my collective way of thinking, feeling, seeing and did so very deeply.

Whatever happened in the country has always reflected in my work. It was in 1971 when I did a series of works called Sohni Dharti. The title was supposed to be ironic. It was about tearing apart, tearing ourselves apart.

Influence of Faiz's poetry on her work

Influence of my father's work has been very deep on my personality and on my work. Like him, I record my time, and like him I don't do it with anger. Even when the anger is there, it's camouflaged. My work is lyrical and I like to think that I got that strain from him. I'm attached to beauty and I'm attached to all the elements that make a work of art beautiful, whether It's line or colour, tone or texture. Other than that, I suppose, the basic influence is allusion to humanism, and that too comes from my father.

In one series of paintings my father directly influenced me; it was the work which I did in the '80s and in which I used the symbolism of prison bars. My husband had been jailed briefly during Zia's period, and then my father's 'prison poetry' became all the more alive. Also I was very close to the Palestinian revolution, and visiting my father in Beirut, witnessing the massacre at Shatila and Sabra refugee camps had a profound effect. This experience reinforced me

to do a sordid series of paintings called Shatila Mornings. Many years later, I did another series called Dastey Tahey Sung which again is one of my father's titles from one of his anthologies which he in turn, of course, has borrowed from Ghalib. It had to do with one's commitment: the fact that one's hand is under the stone and you cannot remove it because that is your commitment.

Later, in the '90s, I did a series called Dairy of a Terrorist, which had a lot to do with my childhood, using photographs, including those of my father. It also was partly based on the tragic events happening in Karachi. The series looks at the cycle of life and at how today's terrorist can be tomorrow's hero. So definitely my father's poetry has had a very strong influence over my work.

Her subjects

In my early years, in the '60s, I was much interested in the formal aspects of painting. I enjoyed working on still life, techniques, employed glassing, under-painting, textures, the contrast between thin paint and thin paint line, allowing it to drip down so that you felt its flow. Later on, content became primary and the technical aspects were subject to the extent that I felt it more important for the painting to be real in the context of what was happening around me rather than just enjoying its colours or its lines.

Abstraction in her art

I find it rather silly to look at some of the very basic debates that have been going around. One of them is, you know, whether realism is supreme. A line that you put down on paper is real; irrelevant of what it represents, it exists in its





own right. I think that there are two levels of debate about art in Pakistan. One is the very basic level because people have really not grown up much. They're still talking about whether a painting should be representative or not. As far as the other debate is concerned, that one's left behind. So far behind that you really can't look back at it. Because one is very much aware that realism per se never was part of our artistic tradition. Whether you're taking it right back from the rock drawings in Chilas, or you're looking at Gandhara or Mohenjodaro or you're looking at Mughal painting or whatever. It was totally irrelevant to us until the British came here; they changed our aesthetic mood. Unfortunately the British ruled for 150 years, and they passed on to us this chocolate-box type of realist painting. It is supposed to represent a level of excellence but is nonsensical really.

I think painting issues of today have to do with seriousness of purpose and a commitment to the meaning of what one is doing. It involved the realization of the kind of society that we're living in, the requirements of material and medium, a commitment to exploring medium and material in every aspect. It needs a commitment to really understand the world around oneself; both in terms of its physical structure and also with an attempt to understand its inner order and its inner meaning. Because, after all, if art has to be true, it has to be a reflection of what our life is about.

With reference to what the younger people are doing today, I think they understand very well what their work should be about. However, they are weighed down by a dilemma. One is how to survive economically and still be committed to what one wants to do, and, in other words, how not to compromise. And the

second is trying to construct a vocabulary, which takes note of our history. And, it requires an immense amount of search, of thoughtfulness and tremendous hard work.

Special symbols

These have been many, some of them I've already mentioned. Hands are very important to me. I've used them in different ways in my work. They have a physical feeling, a symbol of searching, a symbol of pain and also a symbol of protest. I've used clouds a lot, both as moving images of promise and of turbulence. There are windows in my work, both as ways of looking inside myself and as means of looking outside. They are also symbols of escape and of hope, finding a way out when there's none. I have used doors in exactly the same way. However, they're also a symbol of a passage in times of struggle.

Profile of her favourite contributions

I suppose at different times they've been different ones. I've mentioned Shatila and Sabra. Some of the work, which I did in the '80s was about the female form. The female nude, if you like. The unclothed female form was a symbol of protest. This work was very much with reference to the laws against women during Zia's time. I would often use collage, pieces of paper that were about what's happening. The women's demonstration, police action against the MRD and so on, my work has always shown the nameless, faceless female form, which is protesting and showing up the hypocrisy in society. In Sisters of the Third World this form is used for protest and also to demonstrate strength.

Criticism on her art

Well, I guess, I'm my own favourite critic. Sometimes I ignore my own criticism and that is very comfortable. But I know when the work is not really worthwhile and when it's something that's special, I really value criticism from my contemporaries and from those whom I respect because they know about what current issues are. But usually I do not respect criticism when it is done for the sake of criticism, or one, which is ill-informed. I don't mean to say that people should not criticize my work. Very often, people quite young will say something of such great insight, which really puts you in your place. It makes one realize that one has the responsibility to communicate something through one's work.

History of Pakistani art

The history of Pakistani art, like the history of the country, is very checkered. It's very fragmented. There are names, which are milestones, like Shakir Ali, Zubaida Agha, and Shamza. These are up to the '60s. And then you've names of the 60s, Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Sahid Sajjad, Jamil Naqsh and others who went for the individual journey and individual quest. It's interesting that during the '80s, there was much good work by female artists. At that time most people were engaged in conformist, state-sponsored work but these few were very original indeed. Still they were not patronized officially. I consider Mehr Afroze, Nahid Reza, Qudsia Nisar as women who stood their ground in difficult times. Then today, when you look around, there's a marvellous range of work. Anwar Saeed's work is introspective, yet very strong in its content; Rahat Saeed from Islamabad has depth and thoughtfulness. Then there is Nazia Khan in Karachi, Sumaya Durrani, Durriya Kazi and Samina Mansoori. These are people who

are doing commendable work; highly individual and very thoughtful, it doesn't pander to the market. Despite that, because of its meaningfulness and relevance it finds audience and also market.

Role of contemporary modern art in Pakistan

I don't think that anyone can determine the role of contemporary modern art in Pakistan. But it exists, it's here, taken on its own terms and its own importance. It's commenting on society and recording things, even when one's doing it in a highly personal way.

Art education in Pakistan

Well, it exists of course at a high level at NCA, Indus Valley, the Fine Arts Department of University of the Punjab, Museums or at various Universities. It is also available at private organizations like Studios in Karachi, Hunarkada, BNU, Al-Khair University or it is under foreign assistance in working class schools. But I would say it's a very informal activity, which is going on. Eighty per cent of our population doesn't have access to all this. It doesn't follow that they don't have any art education. I think training in the visual arts is there in our culture; in fact it's an inherent part. Decorating the brides, embroidery, making baskets and cushions, painting a wall or a mud-hut is being done in the society. This level of visual education or visual activity can't be ignored. It provides a base for a certain way of looking at the world, and a certain way of expressing one's feelings about that world.

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Then what do you say about those marvelous moving objects of popular art-----painted trucks, buses, rickshaws or tongas and also cinema's posters and traditional wrestling? It tells you something about our aesthetic style so popular in our culture. I think they're very remarkable in the way that they express some of the fears and hopes that people harbour.

Art education doesn't have to take place in a studio with a teacher. It can take place at many levels in many different ways. What's taking place in the studio, I think, is very uneven. It's very exciting and it's very boring. I think syllabuses are antiquated. On the whole they lack any sense of purpose. In fact, they lack any sense of understanding of what they're supposed to be doing. The quicker we recognize it the better it would be for the art education in Pakistan.

What she thought of art lovers

It is just as art lovers versus art buyers. All kinds of people buy art in Pakistan. Those who have money and have equipped their houses with chandeliers, carpets, curtains etc., now also want something on their walls. They start first with prints of John Constable's works. And then to more or less similar works done by Pakistani artists. It's the beginning of desire to have something on your walls in which you live. I think people at different levels themselves decide what they respond to, what strikes as true to them. There are many more people today who are aware of art and have a desire to understand art than there were ever before.

Her ambition for art

That it should remain committed. It should attempt to reveal facets of truth and it should always be moving forward. It shouldn't attempt to revive the past but there should be an awareness of the past. That it should be full of humanism and a desire to enrich the lives of people. That's my hope.





Dr. Ajaz Anwar

DR. AJAZ ANWAR

In the paintings of Dr Ajaz Anwar (b.1946), one can see his splendid vision about the historic city of Lahore and its cultural activities, illustrated in bright but sober water colours. Particularly, our swiftly vanishing indigenous architectural heritage is highlighted in his paintings. All over Lahore, especially in the walled city and close to its vicinity including Shahra-e-Quaid-e-Azam, old buildings were being demolished to make way for modern construction. The committed conservationists like Dr. Ajaz Anwar agitated against the commercialization of historic buildings and succeeded in saving some of them. The old building of Tollinton Market was one such example.

Through his cityscapes, Ajaz is advocating the significance of these buildings and also portraying the cultural life of Lahore. His contributions in this genre are message-oriented, thought provoking and aesthetically rich. Although Dr Ajaz Anwar, who was Associate Professor in the National College of Arts has retired from the service of the college in the end of 2006, but he seems to be more busy and happy in painting the old city of Lahore.



On his art-education and career as a teacher

My interest in art developed at home due to my father, who was an accomplished Cartoonist dealing with the socio-cultural, economic and political subjects. I wanted to get formal academic education in the subject of fine arts. Therefore, I first studied fine arts with other subjects at Government College, Lahore. Then I got admission in the Department of Fine Arts, University of the Punjab. In 1967, I was awarded Master's Degree in Fine Arts with Gold Medal. My study didn't stop here. After teaching for a short while at my alma mater, I went to Turkey to do my Doctorate in Islamic Art and Architecture on a Turkish

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Government Scholarship. 'Domes of Lahore' was the topic of my dissertation. In 1977, I was awarded a UNESCO scholarship for doing a course in conservation of historical monuments. Although I've equipped myself with academic art-education, I now think there should be greater stress on talent, exposure and practice. And, it is a life long process of learning and effort to achieve.

In 1980, I started my teaching career as Assistant Professor, Department of Academics, National College of Arts, Lahore where I remained till the age of my superannuation.

On what's common between Eastern and Western Art Traditions

My teaching assignment lays much emphasis on Eastern Art that is, the Sub-continental, Chinese and Middle Eastern Islamic Art Traditions. I've found that a thorough grounding in Eastern Islamic Art is important for the education and exposure of the artists of this region. There are a lot of common things between Eastern and Western Arts. Especially, now when we're moving towards the so-called internationalism in the visual arts, music and literature yet, one should look towards one's own history and traditions.

On the history of Pakistani Art

Pakistani art is as old as Indus Valley and the later Ghandhara periods. But its present shape started emerging with Ajanta paintings from where Abdul Rehman Chughtai drew inspiration for colour schemes. Then, the Mughal-cum-Persian miniatures were taken for decorative vocabulary in his works. I think the real emphasis should be on Pahari Paintings and the so-called Company Art.





By 1947, the direction of Pakistani Art had already been determined through the Mayo School of Arts, Lahore and pioneer painters like Ustaad Allah Bux and Abdul Rehman Chughtai. However, painters trained in the West brought in more of the western influence, which was also pouring in through books and art magazines.

On why Art is still ‘English Medium’

Incidentally, the early teachers trained in England, like Anna Molka Ahmed, Prof. Sponenberg and prof. Shakir Ali, and the art books produced in the west, gave the misconception that art-education could be imparted only in English; But Urdu language is quite capable as a medium of expression in the art. However, there is a need to devise and develop art terminology.

On various trends in Pakistani Art

There have been various trends in the art since 1947. There have been rigid schools of realism, semi-abstraction and abstraction—all strongly divided into camps. Whereas painting is primarily a language of colours, in which messages in the form of subject matter are expressed. Painters have been depicting with considerable feelings their reaction to ‘life experience’ around them. Therefore, some took to painting life around them, while others resorted to village and landscape scenes. Some got interested in cityscape, which incidentally is their first hand everyday experience. The pioneers of cityscape school were Miran Bux, Nasim Hafiz Qazi, Aslam Minhas and Moeyne Najmi. Presently, Ghulam Mustafa, Mehboob Ali and Shahid Jalal are painting in this form. They are trying to preserve Old Lahore as it was once upon a time.

On the future of Pakistani Art

The future of Pakistani Art, like other modes of expression, is bright in the wake of information technology. Art is essentially a middle class process. Therefore, Third World artists are more capable of expressing themselves effectively. Although economic factors and lack of exposure have been limiting our artists so far, but with the accessibility and status of the global village, Pakistani Art will be more visible on the international scene.

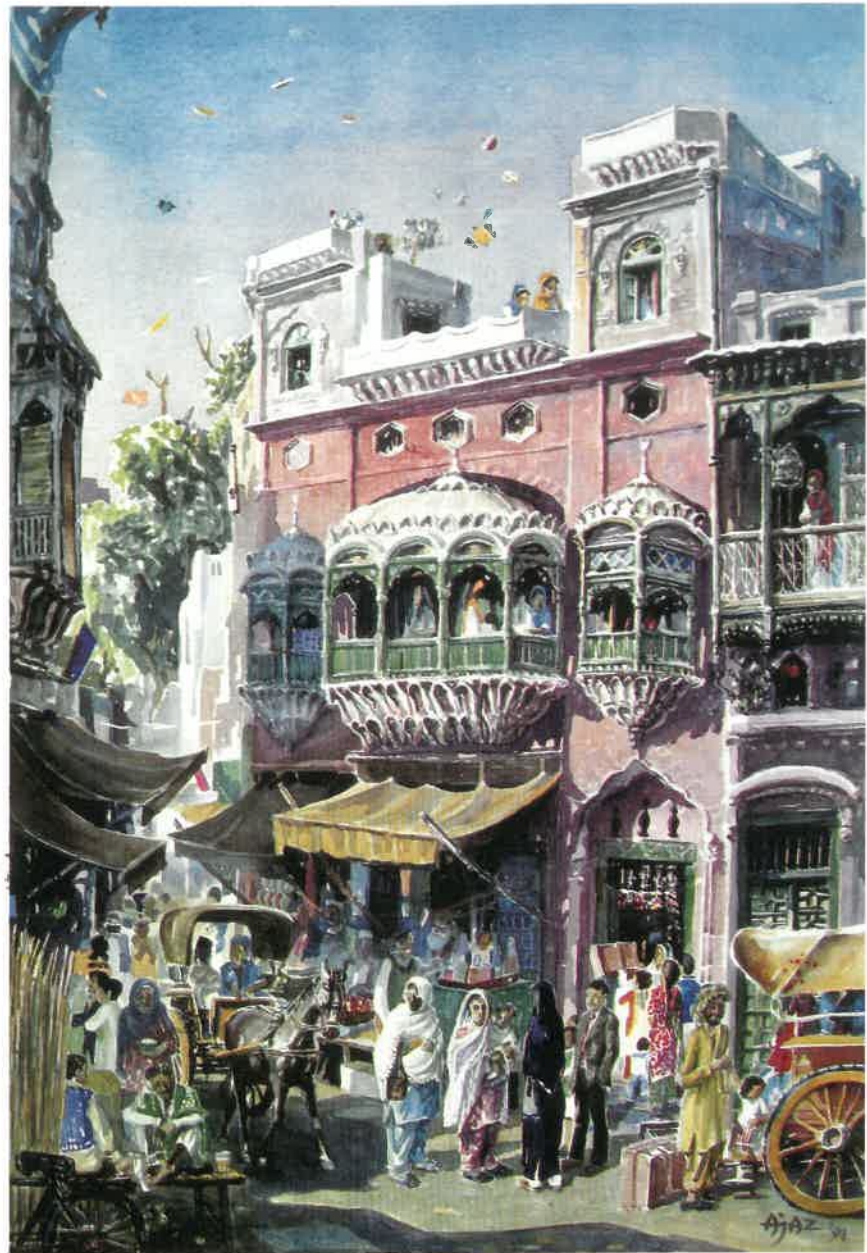
On his inspiration in the form of cityscape painting

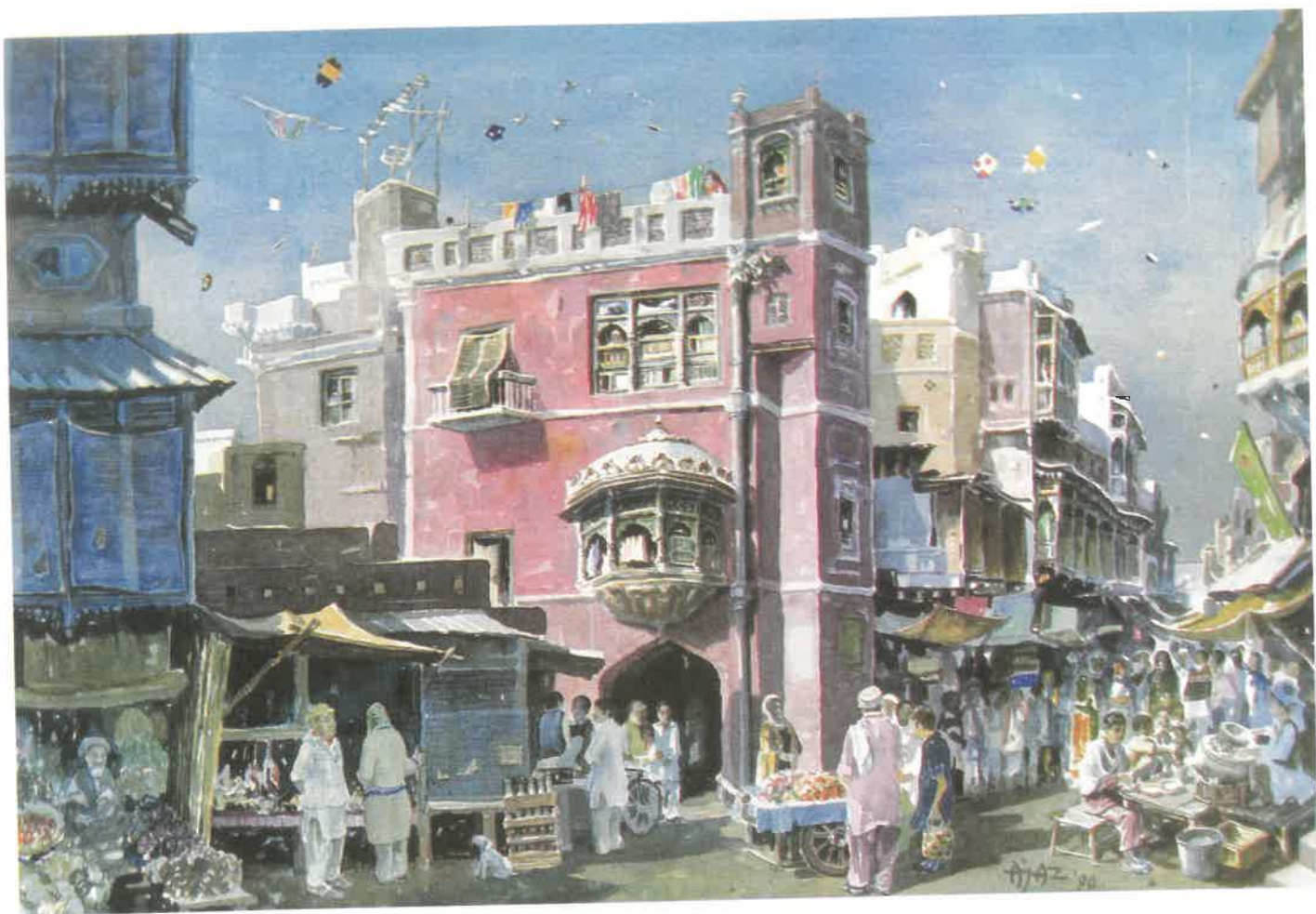
My first inspiration came from my father Anwar through his water colour paintings. His cartoons based on social satire also impressed me. Aslam Minhas, Khalid Iqbal, Anna Molka Ahmed and Colin David are some of the great teachers. Taufeeq Aijaz, who was a sculptor, also influenced me.

In basic design, Dutch painter Pier Steinsma who was teaching at that time in the Department of Fine Arts, University of the Punjab, trained me.

On using water colours and making composition

A city is not merely a group of buildings. It has people, greenery, sunlight, weather and a cultural life of its own. Some painters emphasize on one or more factors out of the above, whereas my focus remains on the fast disappearing historical buildings of Lahore. Especially, as these buildings were designed by very meticulous craftsmen who took care to apply proportions and to finish them in a very refined decorative manner. Incidentally, the mellow colour scheme of





these buildings also imparts to them a rich, harmonizing and fascinating blend.

A painting primarily has to be designed in terms of subject matter, composition, colours and execution. I love to paint in the watercolour medium because it suits the subject matter of my cityscape paintings. My subject matter also requires me to lay emphasis on decorative details. Therefore, some areas in my paintings have to be highlighted and finished in detail, whereas other areas have only secondary importance. My colour schemes may appear to be realistic but they are strongly influenced by shaded and highlighted areas.

On how a spot-painting is different from a camera-oriented work

All academic work during training involves a study of nature for influences/inspirations. All students must learn from nature for subject matter and colour schemes. It is only at a later stage that one deviates from the laws of nature to invent one's own colour schemes. To blindly follow the camera's result is harmful. It can be misleading, although it's very convenient to imitate or copy.

I use a camera to take snaps of the fast vanishing historical buildings. I may use some of these at a later stage, at a time when I would be ready to understand and paint them. For example, I've coloured photographs of Murad Khan's Haveli taken hurriedly when it was being pulled down in 1996. Now this Haveli is going to be the subject of my next painting. I use these photographs as a library and the source of architectural details of arches, windows, balconies, half-domes.

Method of working

I visit to my selected spots frequently, make sketches there and take photographs from different angles at different times and in different seasons. Then a master composition is made in the form of a large drawing. From it, the undesired elements of the spot are eliminated and other aspects from elsewhere or from imagination included. In this way, a new vision is given to the spot that emphasizes the particular building---giving the message that it's worthy of being saved. Photographs are only used as references. Moreover, I don't think one can make a piece of art only from a photograph. Perhaps, in the future, I would be using computer images for making key drawings for my paintings.

On why his cityscapes are limited to Lahore

Lahore is a city that I've experienced since my childhood. I want it to be saved. I've lived in various parts of the world, including Istanbul, Rome, Kampala, London, Damascus, Tehran and Mashhad. They are all beautiful cities but I consider Lahore to be the best among them.

On originality in art

A piece of art should be original. It should be the first of its kind, if not, the only one. Only a well-conceived, well-designed and lovingly created work succeeds in attracting the viewers. A work should not be over-done.





On criticism of his works

One should not be afraid of criticism. I welcome it because it can be an eye opener. Criticism doesn't necessarily mean an outright condemnation. It's the right of a critic and the public at large to like or dislike a work of art. I have received a Pride of Performance award but it doesn't mean that I'm the best. There are others equally good and some better than me---it's only symbolic. The real reward will be as to how history will judge me.

On his achievements and next solo-show

Life is a continuous process. Achievements are never completed. This way an artist does not become complacent but keeps on struggling and expressing himself.

Already, I have had seventeen solo-shows in various parts of the world including last one held at the Gallery of National Collage of Art, Lahore. Since each of my painting takes at least six months to finish, it takes long time to organize a solo show.



Muhammad Asif

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Muhammad Asif, born in Lahore in 1945, is a prominent painter and sculptor. He studied art at National College of Arts, 1963-67. Then, in 1968, he was appointed as a Lecturer in his Alma mater's faculty of Fine Art. By the time of his retirement in 2005, Muhammad Asif was promoted to the position of full Professor. He remained Head of Fine Art Department for quite a long time. His major contributions are in the forms of portraiture and still life. He is considered a perfectionist in both forms. In portraiture, he impresses one by his technique and treatment, use of colours on canvas and study of his model's characteristics. Presently, Asif is a leading exponent of the school of realist painters of still life in Pakistani art. In this form, he explores, focuses and highlights aspects of our social and cultural life in a poetic manner of symbolism.

On his experiences as a student in the National College of Arts

After passing my Higher Secondary School Examination from Lahore Board, I went to a typing school that would ensure a clerical job. But it was Bashir Mirza's very sudden interruption, which changed my mind. He was my next street neighbour in the walled city and gave me the idea of joining the NCA. I took my drawings to Shakir Ali, who was the Principal at that time. After seeing my work, Shakir Ali admitted me to this prestigious institution in 1963.



NCA was a whole new world for me. Its environment was completely different than other educational institutions, which could move one to think artistically. Then there were expert art teachers like Jamila Zaidi, Taufiq Aijaz, Iqbal Hassan and Zahoor ul Akhlaq who could read one's creative talents and train accordingly. We were lucky to sit in Khalid Iqbal and Colin David's classes too. They were considered rebels of the Department of Fine Art, University of

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the Punjab. Thus, getting training from this academy was an honour, which enabled me to see variations of modernism and pre-modernism. Although my main interest was in the form of painting but I did specialization in Miniature. Ustaad Haji Muhammad Sharif and Ustaad Sheikh Shujjah Ullah trained me in mastering this traditional form of art. But I worked in my specialized field once in a blue moon only.

Career as a teacher

In 1967, after graduating from NCA, I was offered a rupees six hundred job by a private sector enterprise. On the other hand Prof. Shakir Ali and Prof. Khalid Iqbal wanted to see me working as an artist. They advised me to join National Collage of Art's faculty of Fine Art. I obeyed them because I too wanted to become part of the artistic environment of this college and concentrate on my creative work which I learned during my study here. Interestingly, salary, which I received for the first time from NCA was half of six hundred rupees.

Being the youngest teacher at NCA, I became popular among the students because, they could talk with me and exchange ideas about art. I enjoyed such an interaction. I was following the traditional method of teaching. Therefore, rather than calling me Sir, my students used to call me as Ustaad Jee. I think, it was an honor for me. In 1976, on the occasion of the Centenary of this historical institution, the government, acknowledging my services in the field of art, education, awarded me its associate ship.

On his first solo exhibition

Although I had displayed my works in different group-shows including





the Artisans At Work held in 1968, which was inaugurated by the President, Muhammad Ayub Khan. My first solo was held in 1974. Rather than inviting some politician, I requested the renowned scholar Dr Nazir Ahmed, the Principal of Government College Lahore now known as Government Collage University to inaugurate the Exhibition. I remember that my artist community and art lovers appreciated both my realistic and semi-abstract works.

On his contribution in Portraiture

Still life was already there in my early semi-abstract works, which I displayed in 1974. But in the coming years, I created only a few such expressionistic paintings. However from '74 to '83, I concentrated mostly on portraiture both for private and public collections.

In fact, portraiture had always been my favourite form of art. It fascinated me a lot. Besides paintings, I also worked on a project of making large-scale sculptures of animals. In Pakistan, this happened for the first time. These sculptures were displayed outside Lahore Zoo, on the Shakra-e-Quaid-e-Azam.

On what portraiture means to him

When I turned to portrait-making I found Saeed Akhtar was already working in this form very seriously. He was my senior in the college. Our common interest was in the form of portraiture. In those days we did a few joint ventures too. I remember, we enjoyed a lot while working together. For him, I was a 'slow painter'. But, he always appreciated my colourful palette and perfectionist treatment of art. Today, Saeed Akhtar is our leading portrait painter. What he has

achieved is the outcome of his serious contributions in this form.

So far as my point of view about portraiture is concerned, I consider it a peculiar and challenging form of art in its own domain. One has to do a lot of homework for becoming a perfect practitioner. Its requirements are many, particularly with reference to technique and treatment. It demands a direct interaction between the artist and the model. Because a portrait is essentially a product of an acute interaction. Therefore, I may say the mood of either personality also plays its role. However, a portrait painter has to be more active in studying 'black and white' characteristics. For me, portraiture is not merely a matter of 'resemblance'. I think, true portraiture comes into being when it's created from an intimate distance because the sitter's whispers too help in featuring his hidden expressions. Works made from camera cannot be equal to the life-oriented art. Therefore, I am not talking about photograph-oriented reproductions. Because I know, in the history of art, only originally created works are mentioned.

On his first one-man show of still life paintings in 1983

When, like a bolt from the blue, Martial Law was imposed in 1977, I was fully involved in portrait-making. I remember people were not ready to accept a new phase of dictatorial rule. For them, it was again an unwanted solution of a political crisis. Also, they had to face strict censorship on freedom of expression. Everybody felt concerned about what was going on. On the whole, pessimism prevailed.

But, one who is equipped with a creative mind comes forward to break the silence. Even in suffocation, he succeeds in finding spaces to breathe freely and





express his impressions about the prevailing order of the day and its setbacks. This happens because of his sensitiveness. In such depressing conditions he becomes more conscious of himself and what's happening all around him in society. Even common objects of utility which normally have no significant meanings other than their use, come under his observation. He studies their role in his life. And in this way these ordinary objects like kitchen-ware turn into objects of some significant meaning for an artist. Now they help him in adopting a mode of expression. And it's the point from where still life painting begins in my case.

The '77 political fallout affected me too. I felt as if I was turned into a robot--an object of utility whose button was in other's control. And it was the same feeling, which led me to start work on still-life paintings. In 1983 I had enough works in this genre to display in my first exclusive one-man show, which was held at Alhamra Art Gallery. It was also the first of its kind in the history of Pakistani Art.

On how his still life mirrors life

Think of the days when every citizen of Pakistan was forced to keep his mouth shut. Helplessly, he had to obey all that was being ordered. On the other hand, I wanted to record my protest. And, to do so, I adopted the idiom of symbolic expressionism and painted what was happening all around me. The Eclipse series is the outcome of that dark and depressing period. In this series, life is shown, as it existed under repression.

There was total eclipse at that time! Things were losing their identity. Then, in the darkest environment of my paintings 'red' appeared as a symbol of

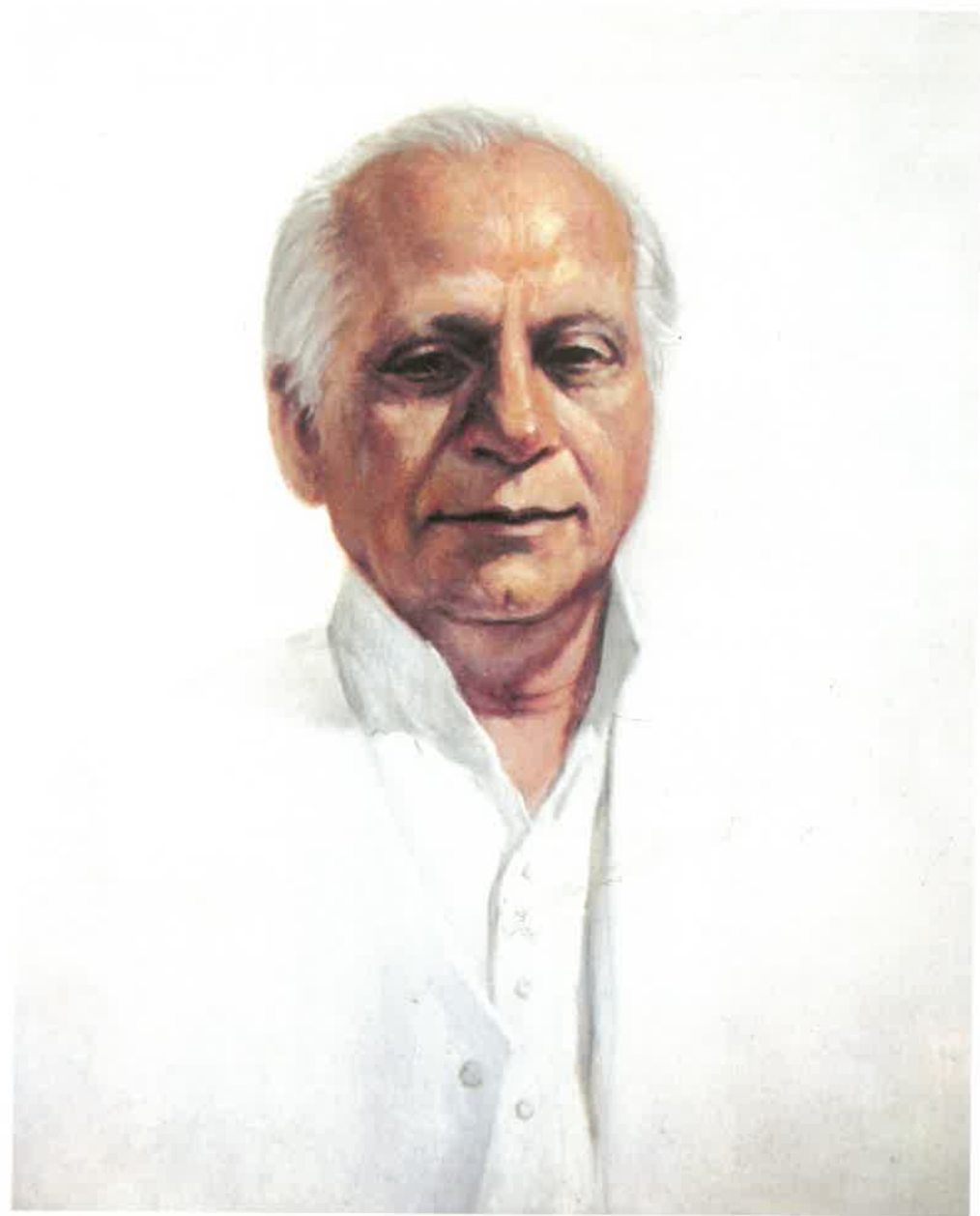
hope and struggle. The bull and scarecrow represented the down-trodden working class of this land and its increased exploitation. All were waiting for the dawn. Similarly, every object, which became part of my dramatic compositions in still life had its own story. Either it was a bottle of Pepsi, a glass of water, or bread, an egg, apple, knife, newspaper, bowl or a vase. They were all symbols of one's feelings—the dominant sense was of being isolated. I painted them in realistic idiom because I wanted to see them attract and impress viewers aesthetically. It happened as I had wished. I remember my works were appreciated and considered thought provoking.

In 1997 I held my solo exhibition of still life under the title of Vision of Truth. It was in continuity of my last exhibition because silence and isolation were again dominating. However, its frame of reference was somewhat different. In these paintings, besides symbolically commenting on socio-political changes, I concentrated much on things which were taken as part of our culture but very rapidly vanished from the scene and found in antique shops. I painted them to pay tribute to the skillful hands, which had crafted them.

On his present interests

Nowadays I paint portraits of my fellow artists and think about new still life and how to depict it.

Although Prof. Muhammad Asif has retired from the service of the National Collage of Art, but he is actively engaged in producing art work. He says that retirement of an artist provides him an incentive to paint more frequently.





Muhammad Javed

MUHAMMAD JAVED

Energetic, innovative and disciplined Muhammad Javed is known in the community of artists in Pakistan as a practitioner of paintings that used to be creative, attractive and symbolically expressive about life and its various shades. Born in 1942 in a village of agriculturally rich district Sheikhupura of Lahore Division in Punjab, Muhammad Javed completed his secondary education from Sheikhupura City's Government High School. His interest in art is natural. He explored this when he was growing up under the control of a father who wanted to see him successful in secondary school examination first, before his doing anything else. But Javed continued seeing, observing and feeling every change of natural scene around his village and on way to school.

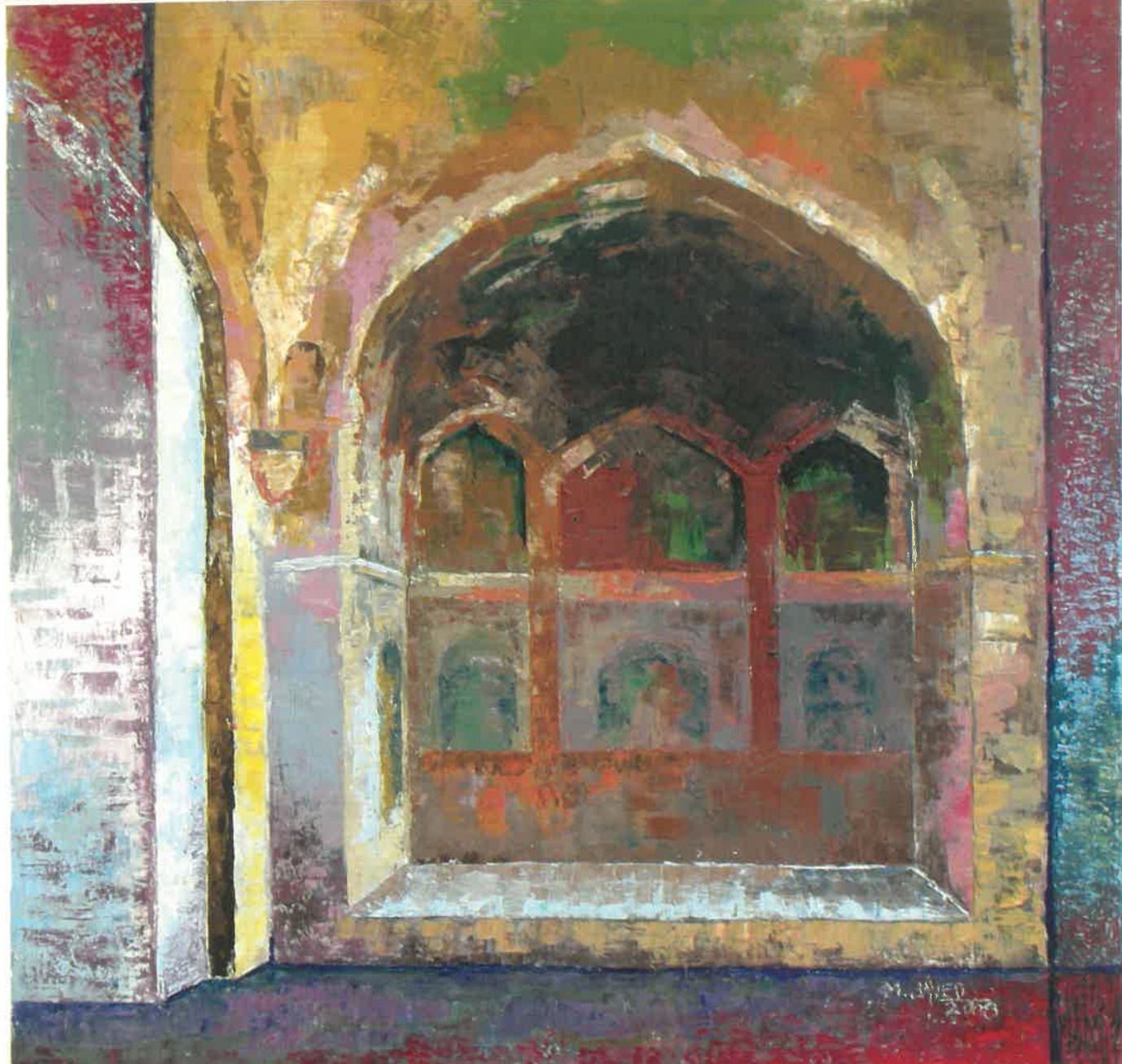


He loved to draw social and cultural life of his village and landscape that was decorated with rice, wheat or corn fields, small streams, fruit gardens, trees, flowers, birds and animals especially bulls and horses. As he didn't want to see his parents unhappy so he satisfied his urge of drawing very secretly and preferred to be according to their wishes. He recalls "it was the determination of his parents that he completed his secondary education." One of his relatives living in Lahore City suggested his father that he must send his son to Lahore for pursuing higher education. This happened because this nice relative had met Muhammad Javed and seen the spark in him that could change his life. He also liked his drawing works. This way he reached Lahore and got admission in the Islamia College. Socio-cultural life and architecture of Lahore fascinated him a lot and he started his hobby of drawing his favourite themes. In those days, in 1958, Mayo School of Arts was upgraded to the status of a college and was renamed as National College of Arts. Muhammad Javed came to know about it and applied for admission in the field of architecture. When he passed the preparatory class which was mandatory for the newly taken up students for all the three disciplines,

fine art, architecture and design, an interview was held for their selection. Prof. Shakir Ali convinced the interview board and he was offered the field of fine art instead of architecture. This happened because of his excellent performance in the preparatory class. At that time painting was not a paying profession. It was considered just a hobby. Then, there was socio-religious sanctions too that didn't allow artists to go beyond the set limits. Accepting the option of studying the subject of fine art Muhammad Javed had to face unhappiness of his parents who thought that by painting figures their son would do something against the spirit of Islam. However, he got the admission and became part of the first batch of the students who were registered to pursue fine art education and training at the National College of Arts. Only four students could qualify including him. The three other were Zahurul Akhlaque, Mahmood Alam and Dilawar Ali.

This way he got an opportunity to receive art education at the time, when there was a very strong faculty comprising foreigners appointed under the Colombo Plan like Prof. Sponenburg, James Warren, Mary Lewis and natives like Prof. Shakir Ali, Haji Muhammad Sharif, Ustaad Muhammad Latif Chughtai, Abbasi Akhtar Abidi, Niaz Ali Shah and Ustaad Bashiruddin. His performance during his stay in the college remained excellent. He was appreciated and encouraged by his teachers for painting according to the learnt-grammar-of-art aesthetically attractive and thought-provoking works. In 1961 there held an exclusive show of paintings at Lahore Museum. Students of National College of Arts were not encouraged to take part in any art exhibition before completion of their scheduled study. Now again, Professor Shakir Ali played role and took keen interest to expose Muhammad Javed's creative talents before the viewers. This was a unique occasion for him. His paintings displayed in the show succeeded in earning appreciation. After graduating from National College of Arts in 1962,





M. JAVED
2008

Muhammad Javed wanted a job that could nourish his artistic guts but it didn't happen. He had to join government service and work against his ambitions. But he didn't allow suppressing his artistic talents and was able to organize his solo shows held at Hyderabad, Karachi and even in USA. However, he disappeared from the Lahore art-scene.

I met him in Lahore in 1997 when he got premature retirement and came back to his beloved city and started working with Pakistan Writers Cooperative Society (PWCS) and its Coopera Art Gallery and Book Centre. I also got a chance to view some of his painterly handled art works, liked them and wanted to see his full contribution in the Lahore art-scene. The late Nawab Iftikhar Ahmad Adni told me that "Javed always on look of finding time to satisfy his urge of painting and created excellent pieces of art. Those were displayed in the exhibitions and are in private and public collections. I love his calligraphic paintings as well." During the last twelve years, Muhammad Javed has been handling the affairs of PWCS, working for the promotion of art and literature, writing articles on art issues in Urdu language, organizing exhibitions and creating in oil medium his favourite subjects on canvas. Now he recalls but very little about his service experience or going to USA for studying at MIT. He is back on the track of painting as a non-stop practitioner of art.

On environment created by Prof. Sponenburg and role of Prof. Shakir Ali in making the First batch successful

It was very tough study as the students had to spend a lot of time in the College over and above its timings. The students who did not have aptitude for art were gradually screened out. That's why out of forty only four students could

pass out in the first batch of Fine Art Department. Principal, Prof. Sponenburgh and other foreign as well as local faculty members were very strict due to which there was high discipline in the College. Fine Art Department was being headed by Prof. Shakir Ali who was working hard for giving his output for the newly established Fine Art Department. He therefore, wanted to see good performance of his students. Ustaad Mohammad Latif Chaughtai, Niaz Ali Shah and Ustaad Muhammad Bashir were assigned mainly to teach drawing. Their drawing was very good and they were also teaching with full dedication. Although local faculty members were found a bit upset due to administrative changes but they were giving due attention to meet with the newly designed curriculum. Therefore, the first batch was very lucky. Prof. Shakir Ali rarely visited the class in the first year of study. Perhaps he was waiting for the start of life drawing. He was working to promote modern art for which a strong base in the drawing subject was necessary. It was felt that he did not mix up with the teachers taken up from Mayo School of Arts. Haji Muhammad Sharif a well known court painter was teaching Miniature Painting. He was very particular about his students and wanted them to work hard. However, he was not happy as English language was a barrier for him. He some time did not speak high even about Prof. Shakir Ali because of his focus towards modern art. I think that first batch of all the three disciplines got a golden chance to acquire latest knowledge in their fields of Fine Art, Architecture and Design, which was not less than international standard.

Prof. Shakir Ali was a man of few words and it was very difficult for us to understand him. It was the third year of my study when I started to pick up his gesticulations. Prof. Shakir Ali always wanted that we should put all efforts and work in the College even after its timings. He used to pay for the model from his own pocket, whereas art material was provided by the College free of cost. He





always approved requisition slips for the art material without any hesitation to encourage and motivate us. During those days the environment of the College was such that every student had to work very hard. I may quote one incident of Prof. Spononburgh as an example of high discipline in the College. He was delivering lecture in the class and suddenly asked a question to one student who perhaps was napping. When student could not reply to his question he at once started striking his head on the black board. All students rushed to save him. But he went to his office and did not come in the class for three days. After this incident every student remained very alert during his class.

On his painting social and cultural issues

I know you saw my work for the first time in 1998 in an exhibition, which attracted you because of its subject, technique and style. You noticed that a hawker was selling some food and he was being attacked by hungry crows under a shadow less tree close to some road side structure and a cyclist was passing without giving any attention to the hawker. The painting was composed in a cubist style rendered with knife work and you surprisingly asked me that where I remained before 1998.

Right from start of my career as an artist socio- economic, cultural, and even political issues functioned like a gravitational field for me. This was perhaps due to the environment in which I brought up, which developed my trend towards such subjects. You may find that my early paintings also reflected labour, poverty, weakness, power and so on, of course with required aesthetics, an important aspect of a painting. I focused on simplification of forms and symbolism and their relationship according to my own experience. Creation of textural value





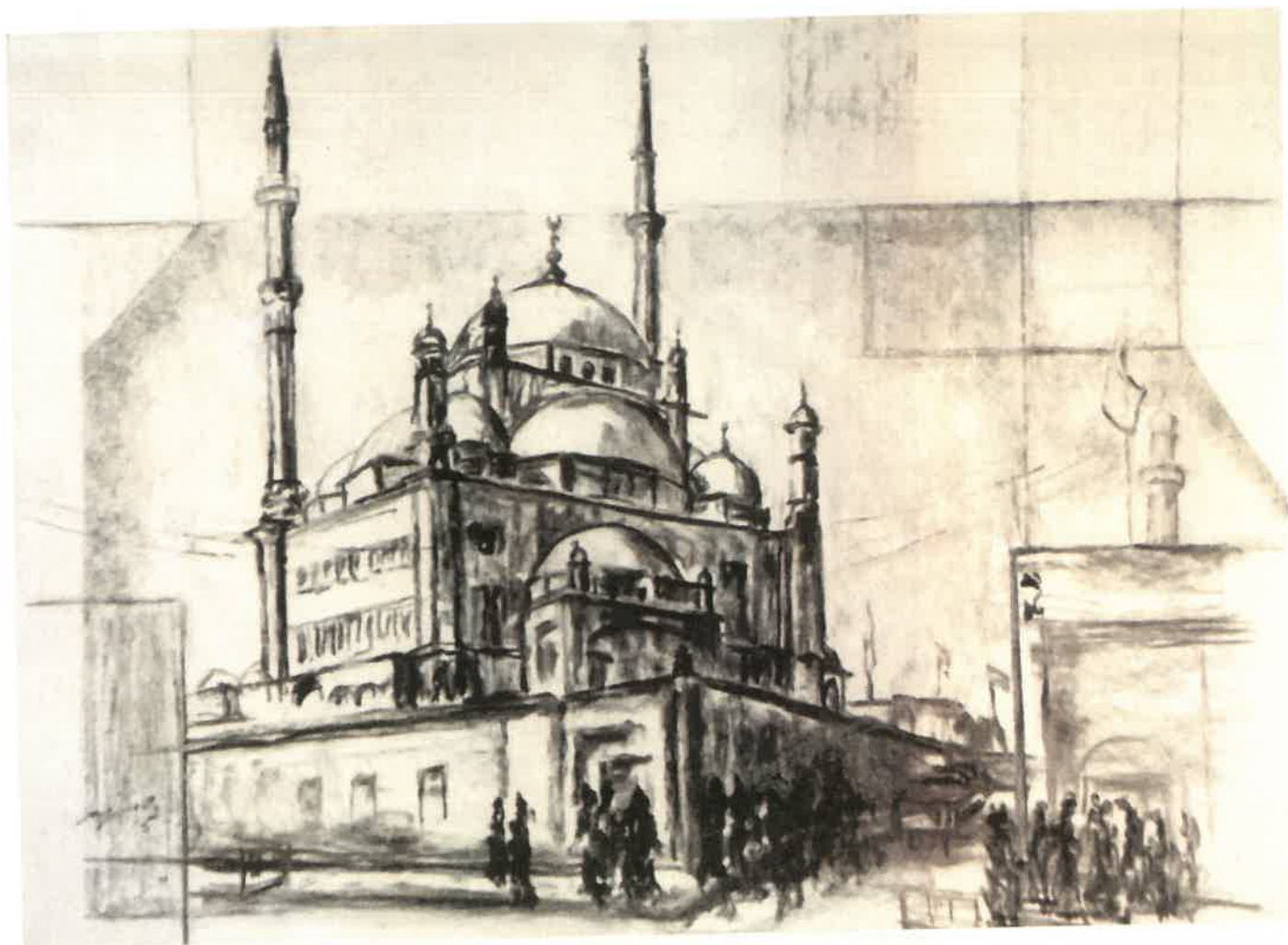
always remained on my priority because one could see variety of colours and their depth to highlight the meaning of the subject. I also some time felt that texture gave a look of third dimension to a painting very intriguingly, but this all depended purely on the artist's way of rendering.

Let me a little bit elaborate that a painting not only provides an aesthetic satisfaction but it plays an important role in strengthening cultural, social and economic values. That's why I tried to communicate something alarming along with aesthetic values.

On influences of Mughal Art on his modern idiom Paintings

Haji Muhammad Sharif taught me the subject of miniature paintings reflecting the Mughal eras, whereas there was a strong influence of Prof. Shakir Ali who was strenuously making efforts to promote modern art. Both these schools of art were quite opposite to each other. My feelings were that a miniature painting was based on traditional technique which could help in making the drawing perfect and learning the colour mixing with its application on a small surface, whereas I found modern art more creative and attractive for expression of day to day observations and knowledge. We have seen that some of our artists have also used forms of miniature paintings in their modern work. But I have tried to create my own style by mixing both realistic and abstract styles, because interaction between art and audience was not encouraging in this part of world at that time. Of course influence of Mughal art cannot be denied. The art critic would be the best judge of my style.





On highlighting Lahore's social and cultural life

Lahore remained attraction for the artists due to its rich and glorious culture. Especially the walled city with narrow streets, interesting Jhrokas, Balconies, Carved Designs and Brick Work, Pillars, Minarets, Wood Work and socio-cultural activities drew the attention of this class. The imposing buildings of Mughal period played very important role in enhancing the beauty of the city. I too was very much impressed and for the first time I went to Mochi Gate and did a sketch on the spot in 1960 during my study in NCA. I made its litho print and later on painted it on canvas with oil colours. That painting was a turning point for me as it was sold at a cost of Rs. 3000.00 in the college when I was short of money. Prof Shakir Ali was very happy on this event. Later on I continued to capture interesting forms of the city at intervals in my own style.

In fact carts, tongas, cows, buffaloes, horses, goats and milk / sweet shops, kite shops, fruit shops and so on added to the interest of the artists. You would see the paintings mainly of the walled city. Railway road have also the similar structures worth painting and preserving forever.

On how his oil on canvas impressions were viewed by connoisseurs

How can I answer this question as all the connoisseurs will have a different point of view? I paint my expressions what I see and feel.

On circumstances that stopped him for painting

You might not be aware that I participated in an exhibition held at

Lahore Museum in 1961 and after graduation my work was displayed in the National Exhibition of Professional Artists held at Karachi Arts Council in 1963. My first solo show was held at the time of opening of Coopera Art Gallery at Hyderabad in 1965, which was inaugurated by a renowned writer and scholar Mr. Mumtaz Hassan, MD, National Bank of Pakistan where Faiz Ahmad Faiz was also present. The second solo show was held in 1969 at US Information Centre, Hyderabad which was organized by Sindh Collage of Commerce. My third solo show was arranged at National Institute of Public Administration, Karachi in 1985 which was attended by a selected gathering and Mr. S. Amjad Ali reviewed the exhibition. There was again a fourth solo show in 1987 inaugurated by Haji Hanif Tayab, Federal Minister. Fifth solo show was held in US where Annual Distinguished Artist Award was given to me by MIT in 1989 during my study there. Sixth solo show was held at Al-Hamrah Arts Council, Lahore in 2006 which was inaugurated by Lt. Gen. (R) Khalid Maqbool, Governor of the Punjab. Besides, I participated in different group shows. I remained regular painter despite my official duties. How an artist can keep himself away from art? However I could not move freely in the art circle due to limitations of time till 1997.

According to Iftikhar Ahmad Adni you had been painting Islamic themes

Yes, one solo show was held at Karachi in 1987.

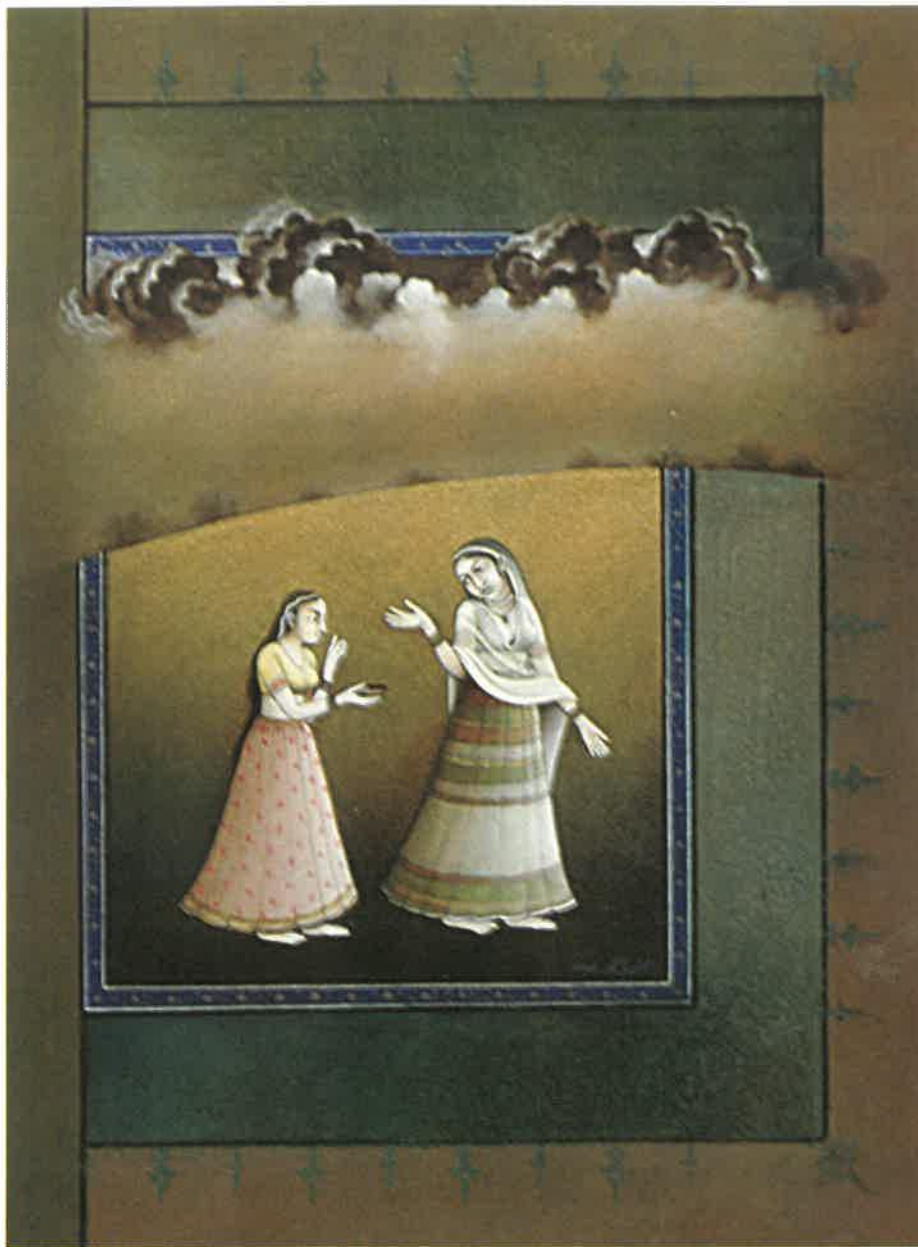
On when did he come back to Lahore

I came back to Lahore in 1997 and since then I am on the art scene of this city.

On making drawings of Islamic structure during his visit to Cairo in 2005

Actually I didn't visit Cairo with a specific plan to draw or paint, but the Islamic structures of that city impressed me a lot and I started to make sketches with charcoal on the spot. The exhibition of this work titled "Perceptions of old Cairo and past experience in Lahore" was held in 2006 at Al-hamrah, The Lahotre Arts Council, which was inaugurated by Lt. Gen.(Rtd.) Khalid Maqbool, Governor of the Punjab. You know that this exhibition received considerable appreciation from the artists, art critics and art lovers.





Bashir Ahmed

BASHIR AHMED

Undeniably, Prof. Bashir Ahmed (b.1953) has played a remarkable role in the revival of traditional miniature (Mughal Art), which had lost its patronage and identity after the fall of the Mughal Empire. During the British Raj (Reign) it was relegated to the level of a mere craft. Bashir Ahmed felt great concern about its decline and decided to do something for the revival of this dying genre. After completing his graduation in the Fine Arts and learning the techniques and styles of the various schools of traditional miniature from Ustaad Haji Muhammad Sharif (d.1978) and Ustaad Sheikh Shujaullah (d.1980), he concentrated on the miniature paintings and became one of the greater practitioners of this form. In 1980, he was honoured with the First Chughtai Award by Pakistan National Council of the Arts.



Bashir Ahmed is convinced that miniature painting is an evergreen form of native art. It makes the artist capable of expressing his ideas provided that he follows traditional techniques. In 1976, he was inducted in the faculty of the Department of Fine Arts, National College of Arts (NCA). He was overjoyed at becoming a teacher but could not adapt himself to the existing system of teaching miniature art. At that time miniature painting was a minor subject and he wanted to see it upgraded to the level of a major one. His initiative in this matter was loaded with great expectations. Some did not favour his idea but he continued his efforts. In 1981, after thorough research, he succeeded in developing the first-ever syllabus of miniature painting. Degree-level classes started at NCA in 1982 using the syllabus he had devised. Up to now, more than one hundred students have obtained this degree.

His dreams have come true and the revival of miniature art has become a reality. 'Contemporariness' of miniature art is continuing but the future of

miniature art is in safe hands. Prof. Bashir Ahmed is happy over his successes. He is the Incharge of his self-founded Miniature Section and as well head of the Fine Arts Department at NCA. Although, he is known as an outstanding miniature painter, he loves his professorship more.

On his art education at the NCA

I think it was the cultural environment of Lahore's Old Anarkali areas, which led me to discover my artistic talents. Soon after sunset, I used to see people sitting together outdoors and in various tea stalls busy in gup shup (chatting). Upon asking, I learned that they were teachers, writers, artists and musicians. As a school-going boy, I had also seen artists from NCA and Department of Fine Arts, University of the Punjab making paintings. Unconsciously, I followed their styles, and made colourful charts for my school classrooms. My early impressions in art were appreciated by my Drawing Teachers. Interestingly, my father knew all about what I was doing at school with reference to art, and when I completed my matriculation, he took me to the NCA for admission. In 1970, I was enrolled there in the Design Department.

NCA was altogether a new world for me. Entering into its art-oriented environment, I found everybody involved in some creative work. I joined them happily and felt that this was the right place where I could learn and do something creative to express my thoughts in art.

During the first year, while attending classes of veteran art-educationists like Khalid Iqbal, Zahoorul Akhlaque, Colin David and Muhammad Asif, my interest in Fine Arts developed further. Thus I switched over to the Fine Arts





Department in my second year of study. At that time, one had to study all the major forms of art including painting, sculpture, print-making and miniature. I wholeheartedly learned the various techniques of these forms. I also experimented during my training and particularly my experimental works of print-making were considered innovative. However, while studying miniature art under the guidance of Haji Muhammad Sharif and Sheikh Shujjaullah, I found myself interested in learning this traditional art.

On becoming a member of the faculty of Fine Art's at NCA

In 1974, after completion of my graduation in Fine Arts, I decided to specialize in Miniature Painting. I was proud of being a *shagird* (pupil) of an Ustaad whose ancestors were Khawaja Abdul Samad and Meer Ali---pioneers of Mughal Art in the sub-continent. In 1976, I was taken up in the faculty of Fine Arts Department. For me, teaching was the most respectable job.

On his training in Traditional Miniature

Traditional Miniature had always aesthetically fascinated me. But I could learn very little about its technique and way of expression during my study at NCA. I realized that to become a miniature painter, I would have to work hard and become an apprentice with some Ustaad (Teacher) of this art form. I was impressed by the Miniature Paintings of Sheikh Shujjaullah and wanted to be his disciple. When Sheikh Shujjaullah found me serious about learning his style of painting, he accepted me as his pupil. After finding me devoted student, he started giving me the lessons.

Following the traditional way, I too served him day and night and did whatever he assigned me. Step-by-step, I gained a lot from him. He educated me in the traditional discipline of Persian, Mughal and Indian Miniature. He trained me in using techniques of Siyah Qalam (black and white), gadh rang, and abri. He also gave me formulae for making wasli and colour pigments from precious stones and minerals such as pearls, garnets, silver and gold. Making a brush from a squirrel's tail was an adventurous assignment in itself. In short, ustad jee (my teacher) trained me to understand the technique, composition and subject matter of this traditional art. I remained his pupil till his death in 1980.

On his first Solo Show of Miniature Paintings

I was exhibiting my paintings in the group shows since 1976, but my first solo exhibition was held in 1980. The work which I displayed in this exhibition was the outcome of what I had been learning, practicing and experimenting. Viewers considered my work skillful with reference to the use of traditional techniques and composition. They particularly appreciated the creative freshness of the subject matter in my paintings. In the same year, my traditional works succeeded in winning the First Chughtai Award.

On starting degree level course in Miniature Painting

After 1980, there were two paths open to me. Either I should adopt the popular trend of making a studio or do commercial work so that I could earn money. Although it was attractive to do commercial work, but I felt that it was against my nature and approach to art. Therefore, I opted to become a true artist





by producing real creative work in the traditional miniature form which was being considered as dying art at that time.

After the loss of Haji Muhammad Sharif and Sheikh Shujjaullah, the art of miniature painting was left totally un-patronized. There were some artists who had training in this school of art but most of them were working for the promotion of other forms of art. At that crucial stage I was made responsible for the survival of miniature art. Realizing this challenge, I engaged myself in teaching as well as planning to bring about some revolutionary changes in the existing teaching methodology. I wanted to see sufficient number of pupils becoming miniature painters every year.

To achieve this objective, I planned to draw up a syllabus, as it was not done before in Pakistan in the history of miniature painting. Without it, I felt that my idea for starting a degree-level course in this subject could not mature. However, regardless of all problems, I concentrated and studied various aspects of this traditional art. After working day in and day out, I succeeded in composing a practical course of traditional miniature art. On June 6, 1981, I handed it over to the Head of Fine Arts Department for approval by Board of Governors of NCA.

The board was reluctant to approve the syllabus, but I didn't lose heart and continued my struggle to raise the status from a minor subject to a major one. However, in 1982 NCA allowed me to start a degree-level course on an experimental basis. In its first session I could attract only two students who opted for Traditional Miniature as their major subject.

On the performance of NCA's Miniature Department

I have always given emphasis to our centuries-old socio-cultural traditions, which have deep roots, a decent language, a powerful religion, a civilized society and a strong artistic background. Tell me, how many countries in the world have such strong cultural roots as Pakistan has? Fortunately, we belong to a progressive society. In the past too, we have been welcoming new ideas, arts and crafts from other lands but without undermining ours.

For instance, the history of traditional miniature has seen many turning points particularly with reference to subject matter. Under Persian influence, at the time of Mughals, it reached its zenith with reference to both technique and style. After the fall of the Mughal Empire, miniature art lost its patrons. It was forced to move into small states and stay there up to the period of Sikh Rule in Punjab. How could we ignore such an important form of expression, which is a record of our socio-political and cultural history?

For the viewers, it had always been a familiar art. They liked its visual impact and the stories it told. This way, even in the absence of royal patronage, it survived in our society. One could buy a fine copy of an old art piece. At that crucial time, copy work played a significant role in the art's life but restricted the artist to express his own feelings. Only the traditional technique was preserved. Perhaps due to this reason, miniature was taught as a craft in the Mayo School of Arts. Retrospectively, we learned a lesson from the rise and fall of this traditional art. It reminded us of what we had lost and forgotten.

I think that I have more or less succeeded in achieving my objective. Since



1982, more than one hundred students have become degree-holding miniature painters. Day by day I see the popularity of this art is increasing and I feel happy. I'm satisfied by my Department's performance. It's functioning according to my designed programme and is offering the only professional degree in miniature painting in Pakistan.

On modern miniature

I don't know what modern miniature is, neither have I seen it. For me, miniature is a traditional form of art and I am working for its revival and promotion. My success is because of my students. They are all using the traditional technique. However, they are freely experimenting with subjects of miniature painting. By the way, what is the difference between " traditional " and " modern ". How is one different from the other? Can anybody have answer?

Today I am happy because our revived miniature art is representative of Pakistan in the world. It is being accepted as a major form of Pakistani Art. This is because now miniature is traditional as well as contemporary in reference to its subject matter and visual vocabulary. Then again, miniature is not a borrowed form of art. It is a part of our own cultural heritage. Whether it is modern or not is of little significance. It has its roots in the society. For the viewers, it's a readable visual art.

On his miniature paintings

In my work one can see the treatment of the technique, study of space, characterization and overall composition. As I have already said, I am inspired by

traditional miniature. It fascinates me artistically and aesthetically. I find it a good medium for expressing one's creative ideas provided one follows the traditional technique. It's not a conservative form of art. For me, it's like ghazal poetry. In 1998, after a gap of eighteen years, my second solo exhibition was displayed at Lahore Art Gallery. It earned me appreciation and encouragement and was considered a major exhibition. In fact, I don't have much time for painting as I remain busy with my favourite job of teaching. Now I am heading the Fine Art Department.





Shahid Sajjad

SHAHID SAJJAD

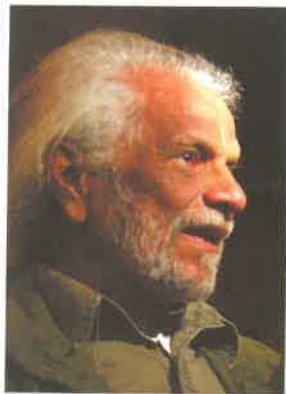
For years now Shahid Sajjad (b.1937) has been based at Karachi, hermetically stationed in his studio, because he has 'interiorized' his wanderings. The only master he has known is the urge; call it his daemon, as Plato knew the word. This daemon has made him vulnerable. It has also prompted him to break established ties in search of uncertainties. Vulnerability has led him to eventful experiences. In this interview, he talks about his life, works and contemporary sculpture in Pakistan.

On how he became an artist

After my school hours I used to watch a policeman learning calligraphy. 'He is our relative' I was told. In school Takhti (a Tablet-small wooden plank on which students write) writing was a part of my daily work. I was inspired by calligraphy. I thought of becoming a calligrapher.

I was still in primary school when another change took place in my thinking. It happened after seeing the drawings of one of my class fellows. I gave up the idea of becoming a calligrapher, and started focusing my efforts only on image-making. I did not know if there was any artist in my family. My father was not a skilled person but my brothers and sisters had strong tendency to do skilled works.

Then came a time in 1952-53 when circumstances were not in my favour. I had no home and had to give up formal education after passing seventh class. I started to learn commercial art from a man who was already established in this field. Then I learnt designing skill, which was something new in Lahore. I also made illustrations for books and magazines.



In 1957 I became the Chief Artist in Lintas Advertising Agency, Karachi. But the feeling of restlessness, of having missed something remained alive within me. At last, in 1959, I requested a Japanese company for a motorcycle. Fortunately, my request was accepted and I got a new motorcycle. For four years it took me to every nook and corner of Asia. I stayed in the youth hostels and worked at different places while passing through India, Bangladesh, Burma, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, South Vietnam, Hong Kong and Japan. I consider those years as a part of my self-art-education, the knowledge for which I was very anxious. I returned to Pakistan in 1963 and again went on journey, but this time I visited countries of Europe. Particularly I found the exhibits of Louvre Museum in Paris very interesting, which greatly inspired me.

On his first major exhibition

I had started to express myself in the genre of painting, but I felt that its two-dimensional surface had limitations which missed something very important. By applying layers of colours, I was able only to make it heavier, which gave me a look of a relief. It certainly didn't satisfy my thought and aesthetics.

In 1963 I was in Paris. There I saw a carving of Paul Gauguin in Tahiti, Louvre Museum, which attracted me at first-sight. Inspired by that carving I was back in Karachi equipped with a new medium. My friends arranged chisels and other tools from Japan. In this way I started my career as a sculptor.

First solo show of my works was held in Karachi in 1964 in which paintings, drawings, prints and my wood-carvings were displayed. This exhibition earned for me what I should say reputation as well as encouragement to do more work.





Particularly my wood-carvings, wall-based reliefs were a major attraction.

In 1965 while I was in Chittagong in East Pakistan, I found life close to nature. Everything was in its original form. I started to work on full-scale wood carvings. Primitives were my subjects. For two years I created a body of great, chiseled sculpture.

Again in 1967 I came back to Karachi, where I became the Creative Director of an advertising agency and got a chance to attend a printmaking workshop being conducted by master printmaker Michael Ponce de Lyon. When Michael left, I supervised the workshop.

On the philosophy of his art

Rather than being confused, frustrated or pessimistic by hardships, I've been struggling to shape my life according to my wishes.

I discuss in art what I've experienced in the life. I want to expose the primitiveness of human psychology. I think man psychologically has still not come out of the jungle. Intellectualism seems to me a cover, a support for mediocrity. Art for the sake of life is my philosophy.

On sculpture in Pakistan

There are only one or two senior practitioners here in this field. But they have never done enough work deserving to be called sculptors. I am sorry to say that their emphasis was only on their own image building. Their names were big

but their deeds were small. I entirely devote my energy to experiment in bronze casting and other medium for creating a real and original work of sculpture. I always felt that some outside force was providing me help and strength in producing my creative work of sculpture. When I was a Set Designer for PIA performing Arts Academy, I travelled with the troupe in 1973 and got a chance to meet with eminent Japan's bronze caster, Akio Kato who incited me to watch his work. With the knowledge obtained from Kato, I started working in bronze casting. This work was exhibited with the sculpture carved from the wood. For two years I worked on a bronze relief depicting the history of the cavalry through the ages in 13.50 x 5.50 feet sized panorama installed by the Armoured Corps at Nowshera as a monument.

On usable past

Sculpture has a centuries-old tradition in this land. Personally, its past reference has never been in my use. There is a need to understand the difference between an idol and a work of art. For me the division of time into past, present and future is superficial. If there is a future, it is now. Similarly Ghandhara is a living art for me. It was created as a result of a collective psyche.

On religious restrictions on sculpture

Islam specifically prohibits idol-making and idol-worship. If sculpture is an idol then a house, chair or a tree is also an idol. I've no ambiguity in saying that idol-making is not art-making. We're taking sculpture just as an art form





and a medium of expression. It has succeeded in achieving its due status as an art form. I'm hopeful of its future.

On the extent of necessary formal academic training

We're part of a cultural system in which learning of any art was possible only through some Ustaad (teacher). Importance was given to perfection rather than invention. It was a central point in any reference of art-making.

People nowadays are busy discussing another imported issue of global village. They don't allow you to rake your ashes. Whatever is in vogue is becoming part of our formal training institutions. What is our relation with creative originality, sorry to say, we've forgotten it. Neither do we bother to think about it.

But at this stage, unless we see, probe and be aware of all the situations, we shall leave our students confused. What we're doing, we should be clear about it and make it clear to our students.

On contemporary sculpture

Sculpture demands hard work, and this is why this form has not fully developed here. The reason is simple; a sculptor has to study many subjects in addition to knowledge about engineering, physics, and chemistry. Then there is the problem of aesthetics and communication with which he has to equip himself to avoid weak rendering and poor content in his art. I think those who're working in this form are very brave people. It's a fact that for a sculptor, it's difficult to

survive in this country. But, if he is committed nothing can stop him from going ahead.

On nudes

Sculpting nudes is necessary in this art form because you can't feel warmth, softness or hardness of a body without touching or caressing it. In fact, I've used the human body merely as an art and a motive to show the nakedness of human knowledge.

Entirely self taught Shahid Sajjad, is a most celebrated sculptor of the country, who has done lot of work in the field. He is considered to be a great contributor to the modern movement based on his own philosophical enquiries. His achievements have earned him a Fellowship of the National College of Arts, Lahore. A retrospective exhibition of his work and launch of book titled "Shahid Sajjad's Sculpture: Collected Essays" by Dr. Akbar Naqvi held in the National College of Arts from November 6 to December 2, 2007 is a witness to his struggle and love for the sculpture.



MARCELLA CARLA



Archaeological excavations show that Pakistan is a land of human development. Man here lived in caves, jungles, huts, mud-houses and cities like Harrapa and Mohenjodaro. 5300 years ago, he was found aware of the humanistic aspect of life, and learnt to live civilized and economically prosper. He didn't go in wars. He had no enemy. In his political system, there was no ban on freedom of expression. They could sing a song and dance. The Indus-man was progressive by nature. He was as strong as a bull. He never denied nature's role in his life, both in the fields of art and architecture. He chalked out new ways and disciplines and creatively expressed his socio-cultural and political experiences. He was after truth. He made image gods. Then he was enlightened. Finally, he believed in one and the last denying none but asking all for joining good. He was fundamentalist in the good sense. Even in 1857, he was undividable. Then Indus-kings were killed by Company's priest-kings. Evil changes came in society during this divide and rule period. Bulls were separated. Although the Indus man was left all alone on each side, he was optimistic. He struggled for freedom and succeeded. Pakistani art has witnessed a long dramatic life.

Marcella Carla Sirhandhi has retrospectively studied the history of Pakistani art. During her dissertation work on the topic of 'Abdul Rahman Chughtai: A Modern South Asian Artist'; she realised the need for a comprehensive study of art in Pakistan. This way, after Jalalud Din Ahmed's book 'Art in Pakistan' which published in 1954, Marcella has succeeded in bringing out an outstanding work on this topic in 1992. Although after her book, a few new books have also come in market but 'Contemporary Painting in Pakistan' remains a standard and unbiased contribution.

In 2000, Marcella Carla was an associate professor of art history at the

Oklahoma State University. In those days she was in Pakistan for developing a course of study for the newly introduced degree of M.A. Visual Arts at National College of Arts. She was also contributing articles on subjects of Pakistani art in English newspaper.

On interest in Art History of the Sub-continent, Chughtai and her book

As a very young child I was interested in art and culture of my own country and of other countries. I loved to draw birds, animals and people in traditional costumes from National Geographic magazine. I drew all the time so I became recognised as the class artist in high school days. Naturally, I majored in art in college and became a high school art teacher after graduation. In 1970 I went to Europe with my sister. She returned to the USA after a few months but I joined other American and Europeans who were travelling to India. It was an exciting and educational trip. We travelled by car, bus, train and hitchhiking through Turkey, Yugoslavia, northern Greece, Bulgaria and Iran to Afghanistan. We arrived in Afghanistan in 1971 and the same year Pakistan-India war had started so all the borders were closed. I stayed in Afghanistan for about 9 months and later went to Rawalpindi where I became friends with a Russian girl who was working for the Director of UNICEF. I was ready to do research for my master's degree in art so the UNICEF director sent me to the northern areas to write a thesis on pit-loom weaving of Fatehpur, Swat. I travelled from Swat to other cities of northern area and photographed the crafts and architecture. Unfortunately, I caught hepatitis in the north and had to return to the USA.

When I returned home, I submitted my research work on Swat to my University as thesis of my M.A. With a little more work, it was accepted and I

earned an MA in art. Because of my newly found interest in Pakistan, I decided to pursue a Ph.D in South Asian Art History. The best place for me to do this was at Ohio State University under renowned professors like Dr. John and Susan Huntington. We studied South Asian art in its social, political, religious, economic, historical context from Indus Valley to the Colonial period. Susan specialised in Hindu Art and John in Buddhist. I took classes in Islamic art from Dr. Howard Crane. When it was time to choose a topic for my Ph.D dissertation, I chose Abdul Rehman Chughtai as my subject because I had seen his paintings in Pakistan and had fallen in love with his art. Except for Dr. Susan and John, everyone tried to discourage me from doing research on Chughtai because he was a 20th century artist and no one in America was interested in or knew anything about 20th century South Asian art. I got a research scholarship from the American Institute of Pakistan Studies to travel to Pakistan to write my dissertation on Chughtai and I arrived in Lahore in 1978, seven years after my first trip there.

I travelled all over Pakistan to interview anyone who knew Chughtai or had his paintings so I could photograph them. It was very exciting and I even impressed more with his artistic talent and creativity. Naturally, I learnt so much about 19th and 20th century art and Punjabi culture while doing my research. My Ohio State University professors and outside evaluators were very impressed with my dissertation. Several individuals offered to publish it but the son of the artist did not agree.

I interviewed artists and teachers of NCA and artists in Karachi and Islamabad during my research on Chughtai and was greatly impressed. I felt that there was a need to bring out a book on contemporary Pakistani art as there was no such publication. In 1986 I returned to Pakistan to do this project. I had a

Fulbright grant and stayed for two years to complete my work. I signed a contract with M/s Ferozsons, Lahore and gave them the text and slides in 1989 - 90 and returned to USA. In 1992 I came back and spent a very hot but a very educational summer working with Ferozsons and its printing press daily.

My original plan was to get the book published in America so the people of the west could learn about paintings in Pakistan. I was interested in how the art had changed after Independence of Pakistan. When Zaheer Salam from Ferozsons called me to talk about my project and offered to publish the art work in colour. I could not refuse, because I wasn't sure that an American company would be able to undertake this work. I was dismayed, but not completely shocked when several illustrations were taken out because they were nudes (albeit abstract) or political paintings. I am very glad about the publication.

On Painting in the Sub-continent before Independence

As the Mughal empire declined and the British moved closer to becoming the Raj art in the sub-continent was to undergo a dramatic change. Without patronage, Mughal, Pahari / Rajput and Sikh painting lost variability. Many of those painters learned western perspective and shading techniques to paint for the British East India Company. As more foreign artists arrived, art deteriorated into bazaar art, although there were talented artists who made excellent work in both styles. Government art schools---the Mayo School of Art in Lahore, representing the Punjab, were directed toward "improving native crafts rather than creating fine art painters", and the whole identity of the artist had changed. Oil on canvas depicting realistic scenes drawn from nature or water colours in a mixed East, West

(Bengal School) style supplanted the hereditary painter using handmade colour and wasli. From the mix of styles emerged several outstanding personalities such as Abdur Rehman Chughtai and Allah Bux. While their styles differed, Abdur Rehman Chughtai painted stylised figures in water colours and Bux is best known for his more realistic work in oil (he used media and even painted in Bengal School style), they introduced Punjabi themes to the subcontinent.

The 1920s were a turning point in Indian Paintings. While the Tagores and the Bengali intelligentsia were fostering Hindu nationalism in Calcutta, Chughtai, his group and a few independents like Allah Bux were fostering Punjabi nationalism. There was an undercurrent of Islam vs Hindu and Calcutta, the cultured British city vs Lahore, the untamed west Lahore was asserting its literary superiority in the 1920s and 30s in the face of Calcutta's reputation as the new literary capital of the Sub-continent. Chughtai allied himself with the great Muslim writers and poets of the day and illustrated Ghalib and Iqbal. He painted Islamic heroes and heroines, Punjabi culture and Sufi poetic metaphors like the *bulbul* (nightingale) and the moon, the lamp and the moth. These artists also painted Hindu and Buddhist themes.

On Post-independence art

Little was happening in Karachi in terms of art until Zubaida Agha exhibited her 'modern' paintings there shortly after independence. Then she went to France to study art for a year and half and came back with great fanfare, strongly influenced by Marce Chagall and Matisse. The urge to be modern and international was taking hold in Lahore as well and in other major cities

of Pakistan. With thickly painted brush strokes Anna Molka Ahmed fostered an Expressionist style, adopted by many of her students at Punjab University. Shakir Ali, teacher and principal of National College of Arts, introduced Modern Art which became most popular in Lahore during 1950s and 60s.

The 1960s and 70s were perhaps the most diverse and complex years of the 20th century art of Pakistan. These were years of political extremes and extremes in art. Realism was competing with non-figurative art, the calligraphy movement was going strong. American Abstract Expressionism had taken hold in Karachi under the influence of Gulgee, and Sadequain was the center of attention in Lahore for his controversial exhibition (firebombed) that had infuriated the ultraconservative (religious) factions. Women were organizing themselves and making their presence felt just as a number of determined women painters were entering the field. Government and big business began to patronise art., particularly calligraphy and artists like Gulgee or portrait painters (for Jinnah, military heroes and deceased relatives). A number of Bengali painters made their presence felt in the sixties but disappeared in 1971. Galleries started up, failed, and new ones appeared. The PNCA took hold and exhibitions were a source of excitement and good paintings competition. No doubt, those 20 years laid the foundation for what might be termed as the 'Modern Pakistani Art.'

On recent art

The last few years have been event-filled but not especially eventful. Pakistan lost several of her greatest painters, one much too prematurely – Zahoor ul Akhlaq, Zubaida Agha and Anna Molka Ahmed were under appreciated. Social

constraints in art have hardly loosened, witness violence against art with nudes and the much-publicised Iqbal Hussain debacle at the PAC for his non-conforming ladies. On the more positive side, miniature painting is making a giant comeback, albeit some of the dignity of the art form has degraded considerably. Not every portrait, nor family situation, nor current event translation into successful miniature painting. Why has the potential for sculpture or even Islamic sculpture not been explored? There are a few nice calligraphic monuments in Lahore but is this all? Sothebys and Christies have probably made the biggest impact on the art world of Pakistan. Chughtai is a household word. Allah Bux is finally getting his due place.

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