Artviews

Encounters with Artists in Pakistan

Marjorie Husain

fOmma
Foundation for Museum of Modern Art

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Dedicated with love
to all the artists of Pakistan,
past and present,
who have enriched my life
with their rainbow optimism and creativity

My involvement with art in Pakistan has been an exciting and humbling experience. I have been fortunate to meet most of Pakistan's 'Old Masters' who responded to my interest with kindness and trust. Younger artists can have no concept of how difficult life was for artists in the early days of Pakistan, without the support of galleries and an art market. Yet in some ways, senior artists were extremely fortunate, they had the respect of their peers, warm friendship and they painted according to their own dictates. Tenacious and courageous, they pioneered an art scene, which today is diverse and lively.

In my years in Pakistan a great expansion has taken place in art circles and continues to develop. There is every reason for optimism.

The single regret is that no National Museum of Art exists to store the precious work of artists of an earlier era, the National Treasure.

Marjorie Husain

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Contents

Dedication
Acknowledgements
1. The year of the Gallery 3
2. *Chughtai* and the West 11
3. Relics of glory ... *Fyzee Rahamin* 14
4. The first lady of art ... *Zubeida Agha* 19
5. The art matriarch ... *Anna Molka Ahmed* 24
6. *Sadequain* 27
7. A dream come true ... *Gulgee Museum* 32
8. Search for beauty ... *Laila Shahzada* 36
9. World of his own ... *Jamil Naqsh* 40
10. Return to the sphinx ... *Nagori* 44
11. Quest for knowledge ... *Shahid Sajjad* 48
12. In search of enlightenment ... *Mussarat Mirza* 53
13. Artists in harmony ... *Mansur Rahi* and *Hajra* 58
14. Painting in the classic genre ... *Colin David* 63
15. The avant-garde realist ... *Iqbal Hussain* 66
16. Despatching art across the miles ... *Adil Salahuddin* 71
17. A life-long experience of sculpture ... *Rabia Zuberi* 76
18. An artist looks at human fate ... *Qudsia Nisar* 81
19. Walking to make a difference ... *Jimmy Engineer* 86
20. Pages of a diary ... *Nahid Raza* 91
21. Finding beauty in Karachi ... *Athar Jamal* and *Mehtab Amar* 95
22. What colour is your soil? ... *Riffat Alvi* 99
23. Not enough hours in the day ... *Ghulam Mustafa* 104
24. The colours of Balochistan ... *Akram Dost Baloch* 110

25. Shedding light on the landscape ... *Kalim Khan* 115
26. A very personal narrative ... *Sumaya Durrani* 120
27. A cosy world in a big universe ... *Naheed Afridi* 125
28. Symbols of innocence and joy ... *Tasaduq Sohail* 128
29. Pakistan's favourite New Yorker ... *Shazia Sikander* 132
30. An on-going joy ... *Wahab Jaffer* 137
31. Myths and metaphors ... *Ahmed Zoay* 142
32. The vision of an artists' artist ... *Saleem Mansur* 146
33. Flights of imagination ... Najmi's Collection 150
34. Pakistan's 8th National Visual Arts Exhibition 154
35. Looking at art in Peshawar and Quetta 159
36. Examining fresh viewpoints ... *R.M. Naeem* 164
37. Exhibition 2003 ... *Amin Gulgee* 168
38. Ordinary souls ... *Abdul Jabbar Gull* 173
39. Merging life and art ... *Ali Azmat* 177
40. A vision of infinite space ... *Mughees Riaz* 181
41. Working in the third dimension ... *Jamil Ahmed Baloch* 185
42. Studying the contrasts within a reality ... *Usman Saeed* 189
43. A dialogue of the times ... *Khadim Ali* 193
44. Biodata of Artists 196

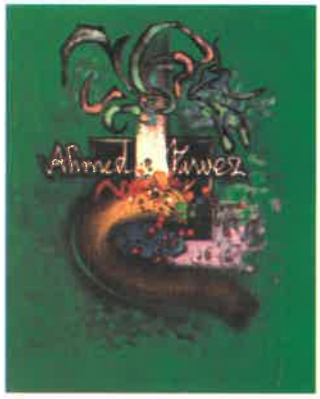
Saeed Akhtar
Oil on canvas

Mian Salahuddin
Ceramic Pot

Saeed Akhtar
Oil on canvas

Ali Imam
Oil on Canvas

Mansur Aye
Oil on Canvas



Ahmed Parvez
Oil on Canvas

Shakir Ali
Oil on Canvas

Shakir Ali
Oil on Canvas

Ahmed Khan
Oil on Canvas

The year of the Gallery

The Year of The Gallery, 1970-71, was one of the most interesting and rewarding episodes of my life. What led up to it was an intense period of involvement in the development of modern art taking place in Pakistan between the late '60s and early '70s. A lot of very exciting work was being done in Lahore and Karachi. The Gallery run by Bashir Mirza on Kutchery Road was a great meeting place and focal point but the sale of paintings was not high on the agenda. The double-edged sword of a flourishing art market was yet to come.

Most of the artists dropped in at The Gallery in those days, including an interesting stranger recently returned from London and holding forth eloquently on art, life and himself. This was my first encounter with Ahmed Parvez, who talked of Van Gogh and his death at the age of 39 and theorized that his own sufferings were greater as he was already 41. If we could have looked into the future, we would have seen that fifteen more years of extreme suffering were in store for Parvez.

The setting up of a printmaking workshop at the Pakistan American Cultural Center by the USIS in 1968, was a tremendous event. Printing inks, paper, and all the media and tools a printmaker could possibly need accompanied the up-to-date press. The Director of the workshop, Michael Ponce de Leon, was a well known innovative, printmaker who numbered Jackie Kennedy amongst his many admirers. Under his guidance, artists from both wings of the country shared their first experience of printmaking. Some really outstanding work resulted and several editions are included in the collection of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC. Ponce de Lyon was impressed by Ahmed Khan's work and offered him the post of his assistant in the States, but Ahmed Khan had reasons to stay in Pakistan.

It was largely due to the urging of Saeed Akhtar, Ahmed Khan and

Colin David that I eventually got into running The Gallery in 1970. B.M. had moved to Europe and sold the goodwill to Sultan Mahmood, one of the country's earliest collectors, had the paintings and the premises but no one to organize it. He had transferred the Kutchery Road gallery to a spacious, one storied house in the Sindhi Muslim Housing Society, where there was a very large entrance hall and several smaller rooms. Surrounded by a garden with a fishpond and shady trees, it was an attractive venue. We started off like an artist's cooperative; there was such a group feeling of enthusiasm about the project. Saeed Akhtar in particular was a tremendous practical force in assisting me to set up a working gallery.

The process of organizing The Gallery necessitated regular visits to the artists in Lahore. At the National College of Art, Professor Shakir Ali was always quietly encouraging in the jargon of the period, a man with very good 'vibes'. He was highly amused by the way I travelled around visiting artists on the back of Saeed Akhtar's motorbike. We called on Ustad Allah Bux, Haji Sharif, Anna Molka Ahmed and other distinguished artists. Only Chughtai's house was impenetrable. One could never get past his brother, who invariably poked his head out of an upper-storey window and shouted down that the artist was 'out.' Saeed continued on the bike with his lovely wife and children until his fourth child was born then he turned it in for a car.

As time went by Saeed Akhtar became increasingly in demand for official portraits. At one stage he had been commissioned to paint a general with numerous ribbons and medals. Completed after the subject's tenure in office it remained unclaimed. Loath to waste so much hard work, Saeed promptly painted in his own portrait and hung it in his house. Hamid and I, who thought he had high-up military relatives, were very impressed. Years later I teased him when I found on his easel the portrait of a *dopatta* draped lady.

In Karachi we put together the first group show of artists at The Gallery, and the finest paintings from Lahore and Karachi were supported by glowing reviews from the media.

The Gallery was firmly 'on the map.'

Many people contributed to the success of The Gallery, particularly the media. Sultan Ahmed, S.Amjad Ali, Mohammed Jami and Hameed Zaman seldom missed an art event or exhibition. Sultan Mahmood, the owner, was highly enthusiastic. He loved paintings, and money was only a secondary consideration. Over the years, he acquired over a thousand paintings of his own and was forced in later years to open a gallery once more just to house his private collection. He had a soft spot for would-be artists of the fair sex, all of whom seemed to paint nicely posed self-portraits. I resolutely refused to hang them, but he was always so agreeable that in the end I compromised and set aside one room for Mr Mahmood's protégés. What was so surprising was that many of these efforts sold!

In hindsight, it was a well-organized project. We had one room set aside for A.R.Chughtai, another for Ustad Allah Bux and his contemporaries, storage space, a room for weaker paintings and the large hall reserved for contemporary work. There was a section in the office which held inexpensive prints and B.M's elegant portfolios, 'Portrait of Pakistan', which sold by the hundreds. There was something for everyone who came by, so that no one needed to go home empty-handed.

Preparing Ahmed Parvez for his solo exhibition was an unforgettable experience, but he managed to complete a wonderful collection, and on the opening night we sold quite a few paintings. Just as well, as on day two he took the lot off the wall in a fit of pique. Afterwards, he tried to make up to me, inscribing a watercolour 'to my loving Godmother'. I still treasure the artwork, but ever after treated him with caution.

At that time, S. Ali Imam was the Principal of the Central Institute of Arts & Crafts and a respected artist and teacher. He was soon to open the Indus Gallery and became a major influence on art developments in the country for three decades. The subjects of his own paintings were groups of sturdy rural womenfolk or local craftsmen and musicians, robust subjects painted with a delicacy that belied his theme. White-on-white or fragmented pale shades suggested he found great delicacy

in unexpected areas. As an artist and as a man, he questioned conventions and norms, offering an alternative, surprising viewpoint of his own.

Laila Shahzada was a very quiet person until one got to know her, then she revealed a marvelous sense of fun. She was in her 'Drift Mood' period at that time. Painting meant a great deal to her. She entered another dimension and left it very reluctantly for the material world. A garage, which had an entrance through a wardrobe in her bedroom, had been turned into her studio. For those unaware of this, it was impossible to find her in the house.

Sadequain, most revered, the recipient of a prize from the Paris Biennale, was extremely generous in gifting drawings and paintings to friends. Yet he would not sell his work to anyone he didn't like. He went his own way and wasn't really into galleries, but he did support us with some fine pieces. One of his paintings, acquired from The Gallery, is now part of Wahab Jaffer's collection and whenever I see it, I feel a pang of loss for the lean, quizzical, but essentially kind and gentle artist.

Gulgee was busy with metal murals, mosaic works and drawings as well as painting. He always was, and remains, enormously energetic. On one occasion, a businessman approached us with a request to duplicate – at a fraction of the cost – a metal sculpture Gulgee had created for a local bank. It was a work of enormous delicacy, a visual joy, and the would-be client's presumption was greeted with the indignation it deserved.

The Gallery became a great success, as we continued to exhibit innovative and exciting work. Ahmed Khan, was at the height of his considerable brilliance; Ahmed Zoay then a young art student, contributed dazzling pieces that went as soon as they were displayed, but one day he abruptly left the National College of Art and the country. Zahoorul Akhlaq returned from abroad and confided that he was collecting money to get married, so we made extra efforts to promote his work and not to charge a gallery commission. He had given us a series of exquisite drawings that went immediately. The problem with Zahoor always was to collect enough work to satisfy market demand, a factor which continues to this day.

Even in those days, Jamil Naqsh was special. We had a number of his pieces on display, courtesy of Mr Mahmood, who had been collecting them for some time. We were thrilled when an American art writer wanted to arrange exhibitions of Jamil's work in the States. A meeting was set up, but Jamil didn't show up for it, his contention being that an artist must first become known in his own environment. At that time, I was very disappointed, but now understand his point of view.

There were several beautiful examples of Zainul Abedin's work displayed at The Gallery. He was a modest man, but very supportive in his own quiet way. He had been instrumental in setting up the Dhaka School of Art and remained Head of the School for two years, but he preferred to be a full-time artist and later went to London where he joined the Central School of Art to continue his interest in etching and printmaking.

Maqsood Ali's Bhit Shah collection was quite outstanding; he was one of the few artists exploring Sindh at that time. Mussarat Mirza, then a very young, extremely talented artist from Sukkur, dropped in from time to time to see us, as did Nahid Raza, a young art student already showing signs of intense motivation.

A good artist, and very fine person, was the Bengali artist and teacher, Hamidur Rahman. He held a solo exhibition of abstract paintings at The Gallery and sold a record (for those days) 16 canvases and we were all delighted. Though offered the post of Principal of the Central Institute of Arts & Crafts, Karachi, he felt compelled to return to Bengal, although his friends urged him to stay on in Karachi. From Dhaka he wrote of the many difficulties he faced and he later settled in Canada, but his going was a great loss to the art community. He was such a mature and balanced person, an excellent influence for good. In temperament, he was the closest person to Shakir Ali I have ever encountered.

Mobinul Azim also left for Dhaka. He had a mischievous streak, but was otherwise extremely likeable. He would try to lure gallery visitors away from exhibitions to his own studio. Hajra Mansur, Rabia Zuberi and Mansur Rahi were busy with the Karachi School of Art, but all three were very active artists. Lubna Latif was another very pleasant person who

often dropped her work off at The Gallery. Mansur Aye and Mohammed Sardar, who were both great favourites of Mr Mahmood's, also exhibited there.

Shakira Masood held her first solo exhibition at The Gallery, titled 'Don't Kill Birds, an Environmental/ Peace issue', which was then an entirely novel concept. She was way before her time in her approach to art and her concern for the environment. Her 'floating figures' were extremely avant-garde and I see them now reflected in the work of Moeen Faruqi though Moeen has never seen Shakira's paintings.

Kohari, who was very much a painter in those days, was one of the nicest of artists. Always smiling, he attended every art exhibition with interest and would give a 'thumbs-up' sign from across the room.

A Fulbright scholar, the ceramist Salahuddin Mian had his first solo exhibition at The Gallery on May 1st, 1970. It was the first time a collection of studio pottery was displayed in Karachi and was enthusiastically received. A wondrously wrought collection was accompanied by a sequence of enamel paintings on metal surfaces. Veteran artist Nagi visited The Gallery and proceeded to give an amazingly accurate assessment of the artist's temperament through his paintings without ever having met him.

A.R.Chughtai's brother would regularly visit The Gallery, carrying paintings from the maestro in Lahore. There was quite stiff competition between clients as to who had the first viewing. It was always a wrench for Mr Mahmood to part with any of the paintings.

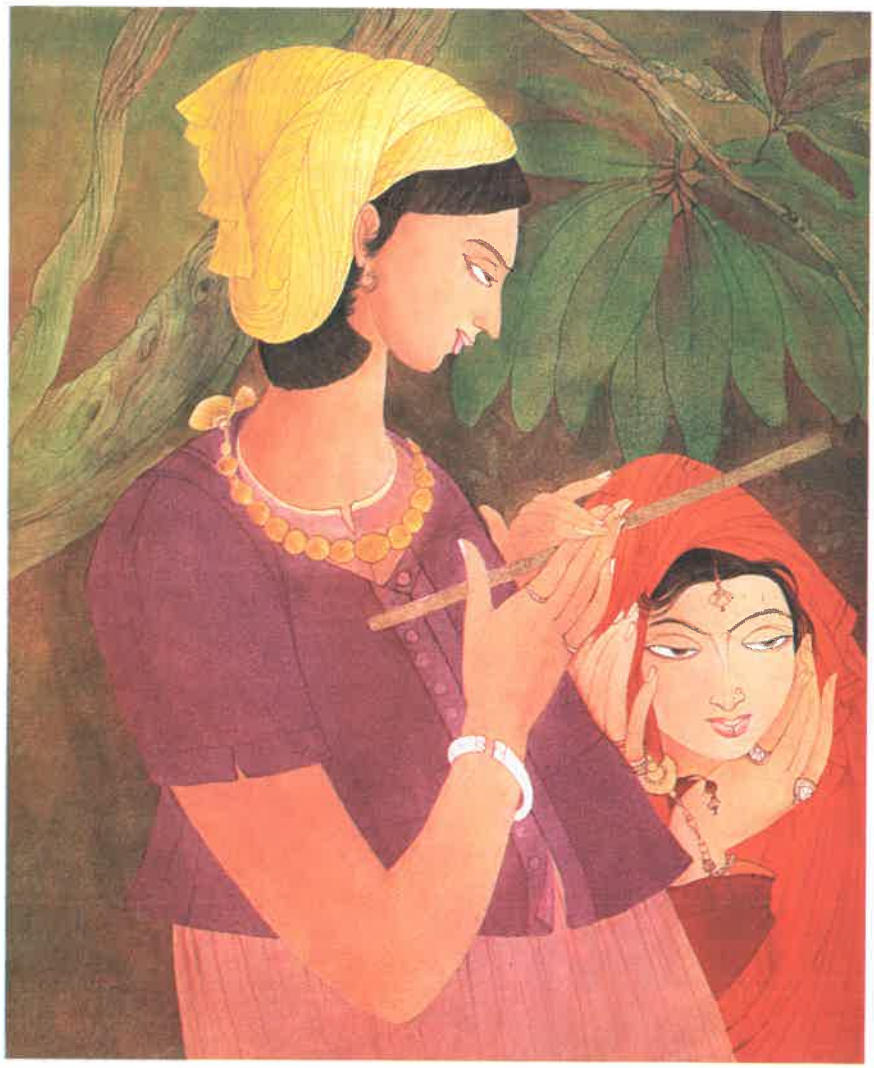
Up to that time I had been an active painter, taking part in group shows, including one at the Commonwealth Institute in London. I admire artists such as Jamil Naqsh and Gulgee, who work all the time. They deserve their success. In fact, many of Pakistan's more successful artists have a punishing schedule, in particular the women, who juggle multifarious duties and find their own time in the quiet hours of the night.

Encouraged by our success, other galleries opened, notably the Indus Gallery which stayed the course throughout Ali Imam's lifetime. Bashir Mirza returned and opened Atelier BM. He initiated a Shakir Ali Award

in 1975, which was conferred on Kohari for his exciting experiments with ceramics and what he called `fire paintings', the wall based ceramic shapes fastened to metal surfaces. Always encouraging and supportive to others, Kohari was bitterly hurt when his peers objected to his award, but by then, the age of innocence was over. The art market was a formidable reality.

Particularly I remember the camaraderie that existed in those earlier days, the joy of painting, and the excitement as artists came closer to discovering their aesthetic problems. Solutions came much later. I am glad I was around at that time.

Dawn Review: November1997



Chughtai, Water Colour

Chughtai and the West

At Sotheby's auction in London of contemporary Indian and South Asian paintings 1998, there was a major contribution by artists from Pakistan. The organizers were somewhat taken aback by the powerful response to the traditional work of A.R.Chughtai, which far exceeded expectations. The paintings were sold for vast sums to Asian and European collectors, leaving several would-be-buyers disappointed. With further auctions of this kind planned, a search is on for A.R.Chughtai's paintings, but it is a pity that the works of this magnificent artist are not to be displayed in a prestigious museum or gallery in Europe, as befits his stature.

Abdur Rehman Chughtai first exhibited his work in England at the massive British Empire Exhibition, held at Wembley in 1924. The display featured cultural exhibits from all the countries associated with the British Empire and even contained an exact replica of Tutankhamen's tomb in Luxor. Chughtai, who up to that time had been head of the Photo Lithograph department of the Mayo School of Arts and Crafts, Lahore, was the single largest contributor from India with a collection of eleven paintings selected for display.

Accounts of the Exhibition were documented in detail and described how the fine art exhibits were displayed according to country and region, from India the three sections being Bengal, Bombay and the Punjab. From each area, regional coordinators had been appointed to select the works and it was Lionel Heath, in those days Principal of the Mayo School of Art and Crafts who was appointed curator of the Punjab section.

By all accounts it was an impressive showing. The `British Empire Review' printed an article stating that the works of the Punjab promised well for the future of a strong North Indian School of Painting.

Writing about his own work and comparing it with that of the Bengal School of Art displayed at the event, A.R. Chughtai stated: "The Bengal

School of Art represented gods and goddesses Siva and Parvati...it was full of pessimism and gloom. Naturally, my artistic inclination and views were radically different."

The artist had a shared passion for art and writing. He wrote numerous essays and short stories, a passion he shared with Picasso. Chughtai's love of literature led to a visual interpretation of the poems of Allama Iqbal long before they met in 1924. 'Murraqa-i-Chughtai', published in 1928, was the artist's first book. It was reviewed by major art journals in Europe and introduced art historian Laurence Binyon to Chughtai's work. When Chughtai visited London in 1932, Binyon purchased a set of his line drawings for the British Museum. Chughtai's object in visiting London was to study etching techniques and to visit renowned centres of art. While in London, the artist's painting titled 'A Mughul Princess' was selected for display in the 179th annual Summer Exhibition held at the Royal Academy, Burlington House.

Had he been less shy and retiring, no doubt A.R. Chugtai's fame in the west would have spread decades ago. As it was, the artist avoided meeting people who wished to talk about his art, preferring to work alone and undisturbed in the 'Shish Mahal', as he called his studio in Lahore.

Dawn Review: February 1999

Fyzee Rahamin, Oil on Canvas
Begum Attiya Rahamin

Relics of Glory – Fyzee Rahamin

The story of artist Fyzee Rahamin and his wife Attiya Begum, could have been written by one of the great Russian tragedians. From a cultural pinnacle of art, music and letters, the two became in their later years, as anachronistic as the Russian aristocrats after the October revolution.

After graduating from the Royal Academy of Art, London, in 1904, Fyzee was invited to join the studio of the renowned portraitist, John Singer Sargent, where he remained for four years. Rahamin's classic portrait studies were painted with the impeccable, academic method of his era, but the artist's own innate sense of elegance and sensitivity, brought distinction to each of the artworks. In 1912, he returned to India in the hope of revitalizing the art of the region. In New Delhi he was commissioned to paint a mural covering the ceiling of the central dome of the Imperial Secretariat.

Fyzee was also a successful playwright whose play `Daughter of Hind' was staged in London in 1937. Details of the event with copies of British media reviews were available at the Fyzee Rahamin Art Gallery in later years.

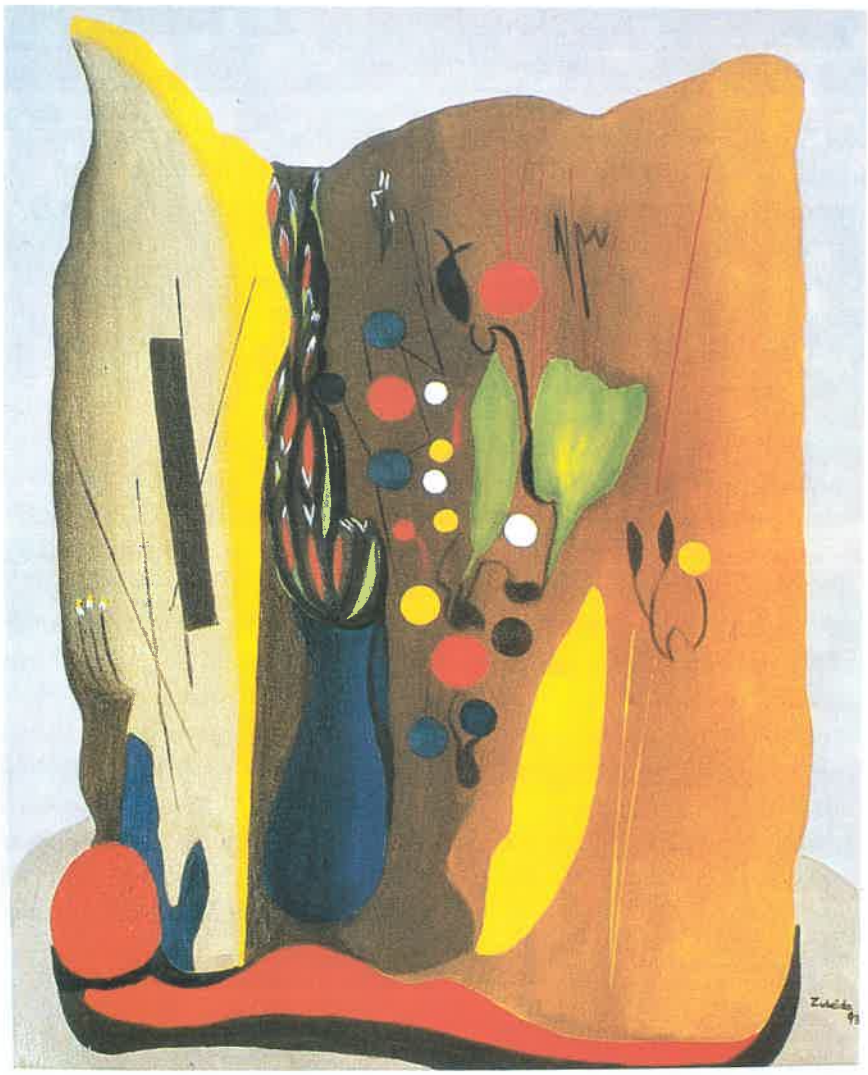
After the partition of the subcontinent Attiya and Fyzee Rahamin left their home in Bombay at the request of the Quaid-e-Azam, and in 1947 migrated to Pakistan where they settled in Karachi. A plot of land was allotted to them and in 1949 they built the `Aiwan-e-Riffat, the cultural complex named for the one they had left in Bombay. It was designed in two sections, one the artist's residence, the other a museum to house Rahamin's paintings and Attiya's collection of costumes, jewellery and precious artifacts. The structure was surrounded by a beautiful and well- tended garden, where tea parties and cultural events regularly took place.

There are still people around who remember the unique pair. Laila Shahzada related how every Friday afternoon a tea party-cum-open house would be arranged where an interesting group of art lovers and intellectuals would meet and exchange ideas. Young talents were discovered and introduced at these 'teas'. At one such event Laila made her debut. Still in her teens she was asked to exhibit her work in her first public display.

After the death of the Quaid-e-Azam, the couple were abandoned. Their house, the Aiwan-e-Riffat, was requisitioned and taken over by subsequent government departments and the old couple were forced out of their house and into a shabby room in a seedy hotel. Their precious paintings and collections were stowed in motley boxes where they remained for many years. Laila tells of meeting them at another tea party; this time at the Karachi Arts Council. There, with anguish and compassion, she observed Attiya Begum surreptitiously stuffing biscuits into her handbag to take home. How the world treats its artists!

In 1985 when Martial Law was lifted, the Aiwan-e-Riffatt passed into the hands of the Karachi Municipal Corporation who made efforts to re-establish the building as a museum for Fyzee's work. When the 'Aiwan-e-Riffat' reopened to the public a couple of years ago, it was a major landmark in the art events of the city as the first Museum designed to hold a permanent collection opened in Karachi. It revived artists' hopes of a National Museum of Art in the country sometime in the future.

Recently, I again visited the "Aiwan-e-Riffat", feeling the need to link in to the past by meditating on the carved Russian emeralds that Attiya Begum clung to and wore to the end of her life. I found patchy, flaking walls and a dank dustiness created an atmosphere of 'shabby gentility', reminiscent of the couple's last, desperate years. Sad looking plastic shrubbery scattered around, added to the general air of depression. Exquisite watercolour paintings were hung without glass and white flakes from the damp walls clung to the backs of canvases. The section of the Museum housing Attiya Begum's personal treasures, is strongly atmospheric. A compelling personality is discernible in the distinctive



Zubeida Agha, Oil on Canvas

The First Lady of art – Zubeida Agha

Meeting Zubeida Agha was an unforgettable experience. She is profound, unexpected, crisp and witty. A woman with the courage of her convictions, she has lived her life for art, creating paintings that will enable future generations to share her extraordinary vision. With a petite frame that carries a prodigious inner strength, Pakistan's First Lady of the Arts emits an almost palpable aura. Living with pain as a constant companion, she transcends bodily discomfort and entrances rare visitors with her large, luminous eyes and totally honest, perceptive opinions. Zubeida relived for my benefit her days as a young art student, opening a window on an era when women had begun to make their presence felt in art circles.

The time was the early 1940s: a posthumous exhibition of Amrita Sher Gill's work was held at Fallatti's Hotel, Lahore. Sughra Rubabi made her studio in that city. Anna Molka Ahmed had recently opened a department of Fine Arts for girls at the Punjab University. A 22 year old girl had graduated in Philosophy from Kinniard College and cast about for explanations for her wildly coloured dreams about painting.

One of eight children, Zubeida had an extremely happy family life, a facet of her past that still holds great significance for her. An elder brother spoke to the painter Sanyal about his sister's dreams and the senior artist, who had a studio over the Regal Cinema, Lahore, was intrigued.Sanyal quickly recognised the creative potential in Zubeida and began to guide her in the basics of art. Delighted by the rapid unfolding of her talent and grasp of art, Sanyal introduced his student to painting within a mere three weeks,starting her off with the medium of tempera. Zubeida worked ceaselessly and her restless dreams calmed down. In her early work, she attempted to capture the rhythmic movements of land workers and continued to explore the theme in the medium of sculpture.

In 1944, she began to study with Mario Perlingieri, an Italian prisoner

abroad. Zubeida curated displays from Germany, Austria, Turkey and Iran. One day, a friend turned up with a painting by Amrita Sher Gill, discovered in a Lahore junk shop and purchased for thirty-five rupees. These were exciting days with a camaraderie among the artists that is lacking today. In 1965, Zubeida Agha was Awarded the President's Medal for Pride of Performance.

Looking back, she was most proud of her achievement in maintaining high standards of art throughout her sixteen years of work in the gallery.

After fifteen event laden years, Zubeida was exhausted. There was constant work and worry, limited funds and little time to spare on her own work. She tendered her resignation, but another year passed before it was accepted. Finally in 1977, she was free to devote time to her own interests.

Never one to court publicity, Zubeida rarely ventures outside her home.With crisp humour she explained that while invited to numerous art events and exhibitions, on the rare occasions that she attends she is immediately surrounded by people and thus unable to see the artworks. Her opinions on modern art developments are definite. She has little interest in gender accented movements and feminist art. "Where does gender come into art? An artist is an artist. What is the point of painting problems, does it solve anything?" Galleries, she feels, are more interested in sales than standards and the artists are complicit in this. "Without sincerity there is no true art," she concludes.

Dawn Review: November 13, 1997

Anna Molka Ahmed, Oil on Canvas

Anna Molka Ahmed
Oil on Canvas

The Art Matriarch – Anna Molka Ahmed

Anna Molka Ahmed was the first art teacher in Pakistan to take her students outdoors to paint their surroundings. Her own work, thick impasto impressions, often appear to capture the very essence of sunshine. Professor Emeritus, Punjab University Fine Arts Department, her pioneering work in the field of art education is incalculable. Recognition of her work is documented by way of national awards which include: The President's Medal for Pride of Performance, the Tamgha-i-Imtiaz, and the Khudeja Tul Kubra Medal.

A child of mixed Russian and Polish parentage, she was born in 1914 and was drawn to art at an early age. Defying parental disapproval, Anna achieved first a scholarship to St. Martin's School of Art in London, followed by a scholarship from the Royal College of Art. In London, she met and married a fellow artist, Sheik Ahmed, and left her native London to make her home in the Punjab. A dynamic, energetic personality, on her arrival at Lahore in 1939, she was initially disappointed with the art milieu. The Mayo School of Arts and Crafts, founded in 1875 during the days of the Raj, was functioning but with the emphasis on crafts and several artists gave private painting lessons in their studios. By Anna's exacting standards, professionally trained artists were non-existent. She set forth to change the art situation and launched the Fine Arts Department in the Punjab University in 1940, which she continued to head for over three decades.

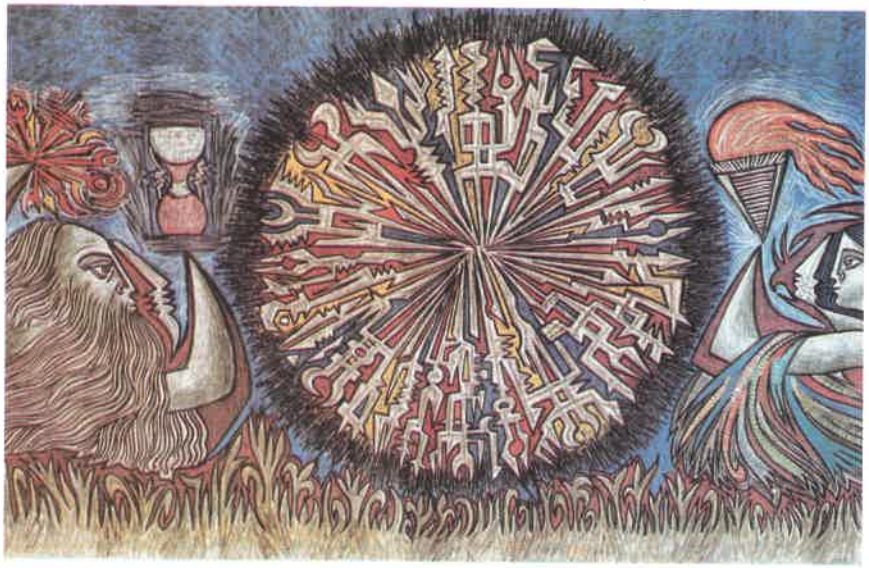
The department began by giving admission only to women undergraduates, but in the 1950s a full-fledged M.A. course was introduced and the department expanded to include young men. The distinguished landscape artist, Khalid Iqbal, a student of Sir William Coldstream at the Slade School of Art, taught the first group of boys. In 1952, to enable

artists to display their work, Anna Molka Ahmed initiated an annual series of major art exhibitions at the Punjab University. The early art icons of the country, A.R.Chughtai and Ustad Allah Buksh, contributed to the exhibitions by not only showing their own exquisite work, but also donating gold and silver medals to the best paintings displayed by young artists. In 1952, top honours were awarded to Ahmed Parvez's entry, figurative work boldly outlined with a black marker on newsprint.

Professor Anna Molka Ahmed's students were instrumental in establishing Fine Arts departments throughout Pakistan and many have gained recognition in the art world. Anna encouraged her students to apply for scholarships and extend their studies abroad, whenever possible. Working constantly for the promotion of art left her little time for her own painting. Though she held two impressive exhibitions in Karachi, it was only after many years that she found the time and opportunity to show her work in Lahore in a solo exhibition. Throughout the years until her retirement in 1979, Anna Molka Ahmed was constantly busy. After her retirement, she took great satisfaction in concentrating on her painting, still vibrant and full of interest in spite of health problems. Anna Molka Ahmed was part of the beginning of art developments in Pakistan, she knew everyone and is a wellspring of information. "I am," she says "the Mother of all the artists." The artists are fortunate, she is a gallant matriarch and a great lady.

The Star 1990

Sadquain, Oil on Canvas



Sadquain, Oil on Canvas

Sadequain

Sadequain, who is considered one of Pakistan's most gifted and original painters, is currently on every art enthusiast's mind in Karachi. The definitive, awe-inspiring retrospective exhibition of his paintings at the Mohatta Palace, spanning the years from 1954, when his work was first exhibited in Quetta, until his death in 1987, is a mind-blowing experience. The massive murals appear quite at home on the palace walls, though the artist intended his work for public sites. As one wanders through the halls, where over 200 of his works are displayed, one cannot help but marvel at the extraordinary output and inner strength of the frail artist we knew Sadequain to be. He of the gaunt frame, lopsided smile and oversized hands is very much present in his work, whether at the core of enormous murals or in drawings for an illustrated version of Camus's 'The Outsider' that was never published. The distorted shapes of the leitmotif cacti, like the artist's arms, are eternally reaching up to the stars.

How can one explain the phenomenon of an artist who appears to have grown, like his famous organic subject, through hard soil and vicissitude? In a brochure brought out in 1957 to commemorate an exhibition by Sadequain at the Karachi Arts Council, the artist's childhood companion, Saiyid Ali Naqvi, elaborated on the circumstances of his early attempts at drawing in Amroha.

"We sat in a potter's house, which was close to ours, watching a fine jug springing up from a revolving wheel. The potter swiftly plucked the finished jug and put it on the floor. Picked up some clay and started making the next one. His wife is making figures of peacocks and other birds with lime on the walls of the hut, freshly plastered with clay and cow-dung. Sadequain would level the ground of the hut near him with his palm and draw the figures of birds and jugs with his finger. He

would look at his work, rub it off and try again."

According to Naqvi, in time the entire locality became Sadequain's canvas, every hut the recipient of illustrations worked in charcoal, red clay or white chalk in spite of the scolding and punishments that he earned in return.

Unable to afford the fees of the Calcutta School of Art, where he longed to study after high school, Sadequain took up a job with All India Radio in Delhi. There he met a wide range of cultured art enthusiasts and began to read about art and artists. He completed his education privately, and began to teach art in a school, until he moved to Pakistan in 1948. In Karachi, he worked with Radio Pakistan for a year. After that, he gave up his job and from then on devoted himself entirely to art.

Artists remember Sadequain in Karachi in those days, never without a sketchbook in his hand and always accompanied by his great friend, the Bengali artist Sultan. By all accounts, they were inseparable. Sitting in teahouses, sketching passers-by, they were well known in local art circles, until they parted company in 1954, Sultan to settle in Bengal, while Sadequain headed for Quetta. The rugged scenery of Balochistan appealed to Sadequain, whose work expanded in size. He held his first solo exhibition there and returned invigorated to Karachi after six months.

In 1955, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan arranged a private exhibition of Sadequain's work. That same year, while recuperating from a breakdown in health at the Jinnah Hospital, Sadequain painted a large mural for the hospital. The explanation of the inspiration initiating the artist's renowned 'Cacti' series has become part of the annals of legend. It is said that, always frail in health, Sadequain spent some time near the foothills of Gadani, where great clumps of cactus bushes dotted the sandy wastes. Here Sadequain began his mystic musing on the qualities of darkness and light. He confided to writer Thomas Dawling that the rising vertical lines of the cacti paralleled the strokes in Kufic script and, thus, in a sense forced him to rediscover calligraphy. "For Sadequain it was the gestation of a style."

To what extent he felt the impact of the theme, which was to become an obsessive element in Sadequain's work, began to be apparent when he travelled to Skardu in Baltistan. "Baltistan in spring was a country of flowers and fruit trees, but I only painted cactus in blacks, dark reds and greys. At last, in the anatomy of these gigantic plants I found the essence of calligraphy. Everything I have painted since then has been based on calligraphy, which in itself issues from the structure of the cactus."

1960 proved to be a significant year for Sadequain: he was awarded the Tamgha-i-Imtiaz by the government, won top honours in a National Art Exhibition and was invited to Paris by the French Committee of the International Association of Plastic Arts.

I first met Sadequain in 1964, when he visited Karachi prior to mounting several exhibitions of his work in France. The art community had taken great pride in his success in the Laureate Biennale de Paris, where in 1961 his painting from the Cacti series, 'The Last Supper', earned him a prize reserved for foreign painters. He had already had several solo exhibitions. Bashir Mirza was in the process of setting up 'The Gallery' in Kutchery Road at that time and eagerly shared his plans with Sadequain, but the senior artist wasn't particularly enthused. "What!" he exclaimed, "Sell paintings like soap?" That was his only comment.

Sadequain changed the concept of art exhibitions in Karachi. At that time, there was a formula procedure. A chief guest would be invited, usually turn up late, burble a few irrelevant words and then proceed to cut a ribbon, accompanied by flashing bulbs. For the first time, at Sadequain's exhibition in 1965, the exhibition opened without the blessings of a chief guest. We all walked straight into the exhibition, where discreet music played, and Sadequain, appearing very relaxed, strolled about among his admirers, cigarette in hand, treating all alike. The subjects of the artist's paintings were deep and sombre: crows, cobwebs and scarecrows, which he used to express his fears concerning society as he saw it. Somehow this viewpoint deeply offended Ahmed Parvez, who, never one to keep quiet, started off a controversy in The

Leader. "Let us not think we are entangled in webs," he wrote. A quick comeback from Bashir Mirza declared, "I support Sadequain." Letters flew in fast and furious, both for and against, but in the end Parvez had the last word: "We have to choose between a deep wound in the soul of man or the soul which is scarred without a wound, burning and devouring." Sadequain took no part in this debate; he was too busy painting.

Sadequain travelled intensively for long periods of time, showing his work in London, New York, Australia, Romania and Russia. He journeyed through India for two years, showing his work in major cities, painting and sketching ceaselessly. I next met him in 1972, when he was engaged in painting the ceiling of the Lahore Museum with the epic mural, 'The Evolution of Mankind'. He was the most relaxed I had ever seen him, smiling and looking well. By that time, he had already completed the giant mural commemorating the Mangla Dam project, 'Saga of Labour', and also painted murals in the Lahore Public Library and the Punjab University.

On returning to Karachi, his rare mood of optimism continued as he painted a series attesting to man's ability to break the fetters of society. The last epic task Sadequain undertook was to paint a mural covering the ceiling of the Sadequain Gallery in Frere Hall, which had been dedicated to him in 1985. The painting remains unfinished, a testament to the artist's life, and to his death in 1986.

Dawn Sadequain Souvenir: March 16, 2002

Amin and Gulgee

Gulgee, Oil on Canvas

Gulgee,
Oil on Canvas

A dream come true – Gulgee's Museum

It was Gulgee's night and he was on cloud seven. Shrugging off an indisposition, the renowned artist spoke with guests radiating happiness on the recent opening of his museum in Clifton. With charming deference he applauded the efforts of his supportive wife and son, giving credit to Zaro and Amin for guiding the project to fruition. The structure of the museum has taken two years to complete, two years of hard work overseeing builders, materials and all the problems that go with construction. The concept of the museum, a place to house his large body of work, has been a long-standing aspiration; its materialization a dream come true.

The first impression of the museum is one of space and light. Tall ceilings, corridors acting as galleries for drawings and smaller works which demand close observation; large halls a background to Gulgee's epic pieces in order that the viewer may stand back to absorb the totality of the painting. Wandering through the rooms the visitor contemplates the work of five decades, half a century of the artist's life and times. A sequence of drawings constitutes a history of the country. A parade of presidents, kings, heads of states, and their aides are documented in artworks commemorating important national occasions. Indeed these are museum pieces. Then the mosaic portraits, worked in lapis, marble and jade, a superb representation of the present Aga Khan's revered grandfather.

As a young artist in the 1950s, commissioned to paint the Afghan Royal Family in Kabul, Gulgee visited a marble plant and noticing the remnants of the stone, chips of marble strewn across the floor, conceived the idea of working with mosaic patterns. As early Muslim artists had done he began to induct the marble, then gradient blues of lapis lazuli in his work, creating masterpieces; portraits for palaces and great houses.

The greatest peace of mind an artist can achieve is to know his work will be cared for, that he may continue to live through his art. Abdul Rahman Chughtai, who imagined a Rembrandt style museum in which to house his collection of artworks and books, died without attaining his dream. The paintings of Allah Buksh, Ahmed Parvez, Sadequain, and many other important Pakistani painters are scattered, in some cases almost unknown to the young. In spite of periodic bouts of publicity and groundbreaking ceremonies, a gallery to display Fyzee Rehamin's work in Karachi is till unresolved, his paintings steadily deteriorating. The efforts of artists themselves appear to be the only recourse; Shakir Ali's house, built over a period of six years, was converted after his death into the Shakir Ali Museum. In 1998, the Friends of Jamil Naqsh Trust opened the first stage of what is hoped will be a full-fledged museum of the artist's important work. These individual efforts by artists themselves are heartening, a commitment to the future. Others may plant their wealth abroad; the poor artists bravely seed their country's soil with their own God given talents.

Back to the museum and the ground floor where a dazzling collection of Gulgee's large, gestural calligraph-art works are shown. As a young artist, he was called upon to paint portraits, but the artist yearned to devote his time in experimentation with abstract and action painting. As far back as the '50s, while engaged in portraiture in Kabul, the young Gulgee held his first solo exhibition of non-figurative art. Gulgee's genius has taken him around the world documenting men of power and decisions, but his fondness for ordinary human beings, people who are the backbones of their individual countries, is seen in the artist's sketches. Faces compassionately drawn, groups of men intent on their own day to day affairs; sometimes seen as bystanders gazing at the men in power. A much-travelled man, Gulgee has shown his work in many countries of the world and is the recipient of many awards and honours. Yet he is invariably accessible to the young students and others who seek his advice. He is a popular guest of honour, attending art events of local schools, speaking to children, attending galleries and exhibitions. His life is divided into the intensive periods of work that energise him and

give him spiritual fulfilment, and his pleasure in interacting with people from diverse walks of life. Sharing his joy at the realization of his goal with a variety of friends, artists, old friends and distinguished art devotees, Gulgee greeted each one to the museum with warmth and eagerness. Each individual felt he was a guest of honour. It was a truly celebratory event.

Zamin 2000

Laila Shahzada,
Oil on Canvas

Laila Shahzada,
Oil on Canvas

Search for beauty – Laila Shahzada

Kneeling on the floor of her Clifton studio, Laila Shahzada was surrounded by a mass of material: photographs, slides, brochures, invitations and reviews of her work. These covered many years of painting and exhibitions in various parts of the world. Laila, far from taking a trip down memory lane, was briskly putting them in piles to be disposed of, making room for up-to-date data. Her most recent exhibitions have been shown in prestigious galleries in art capitals of the world and she is determined her next exhibition will be held in Karachi, possibly at the end of this year. Among the papers strewn across the floor were invitations from galleries in Europe to exhibit her work; they lie unanswered. The artist informs me she is too involved with the process of painting to spare time for paperwork.

I sat down with her, slowing the process down considerably as I picked up photographs and asked questions: there was Ali Imam, debonair in a smart suit and a tie; a sleek bachelor Gulgee; and Sadequain, relaxed and smiling. Old friend Ahmed Parvez clowned for the camera; M.F.Husain caught barefoot on the steps of the Hermitage in St.Petersburg. Among the photos were two foreign artists she met abroad, Salvador Dali and Emma Sargeant, the granddaughter of Fyzee Rehamin's mentor, the Edwardian portraitist John Singer Sargeant. I rummaged about, upsetting Laila's piles and came across a photograph of a dance performance by Rafi Anwar, Madam Azuri, Bulbul Chaudhry and a very young and slender Laila. "Tell me about this," I insisted, waving it under Laila's nose and she explained that years ago she had to choose between dance and painting. Both were demanding disciplines. The artist was not in a mood to talk of her past awards and honours. She is a person who lives very much in the present and is more involved in on-going work and future plans. Since her first exhibition titled

'Experiments', held at the Karachi Arts Council in 1960, she has shown her work extensively, including exhibitions in London and New York. Through the years, her approach to painting has resolved into a simplified assurance. Brush strokes sweep into long, curved lines with dramatic force. There is no clutter on the canvas, she moves between graceful form and scenic grandeur according to her moods.

Laila sees beauty everywhere: in the curve of a limb, the contours of a reclining form; outlines and silhouettes, elegance and grace. These elements become the subjects of her paintings, echoing perhaps the rhythm and discipline of classical dance movements. Laila's work does not speak of women's concerns or feminist issues. In her work, forms manifest the beauty of symmetrical design, each line an essential factor in the overall pattern. In her paintings she creates an order, balancing space, line and curve. In contrast, the scenic paintings that pay awed tribute to nature's splendour - the soaring, jagged mountain-tops that change their hues as an artist changes moods.

A = 8814

Laila Shahzada's early years of schooling were spent in England. Adolescence was spent in the family home in India, where she was surrounded by the traditions of the past. She spoke of silver furniture, bowls of pearls, iridescent ornaments cool to the touch that were intrinsic ingredients of this period in her life. Reality came with Partition, when life itself became the only object to be considered. Her earliest paintings of the 1950s were delicate, tentative, in marked contrast to the later forceful work executed as 'Drift Moods'. Initially trained in England in drawing and watercolour, Laila received early encouragement in Pakistan from Fyzee Rehamin and his musicologist wife, Attiya Begum. In those days, there were few women artists in Pakistan, and it was Nagi who taught her to use oils. She made a great impact on the media when the 'Drift Mood' paintings were exhibited in 1964, a series inspired by pieces of driftwood battered into distorted forms by the power of the sea. These Laila compared to the human condition, forced into unnatural shapes by stronger powers. Later, inspired by the artifacts of the Indus Valley Civilization, she worked on a series titled 'Moenjodaro', shown in New York, where she was awarded a gold medal and the key to the

city.

I traced the artist's story through the growing piles of assorted paper, but they conveyed only the basic information. Even to close friends, Laila Shahzada remains an enigma.

The STAR June 1992

Jamil Naqsh, Oil on Canvas

Jamil Naqsh
Water Colour

A world of his own – Jamil Naqsh

Jamil Naqsh is an independent spirit, a man with deeply thought-out convictions on art and life. In his younger days, as an emerging artist in the '60s, his work excited the imagination of foreign visitors with art interests who made him tempting offers to show his work abroad. An American diplomat was so impressed by his work that he offered to adopt Naqsh as a son in order to further his art career, but Jamil withstood all such glittering inducements. It was his contention that an artist must work and be acknowledged in his own environment before exploring a foreign experience.

In recent years, Naqsh has begun to travel frequently, enjoying the anonymity of the streets and the great centres of art in Europe. With Najmi Sura by his side, he once visited Modigliani's grave and sent his friends laurel leaves picked from the graveside. In Najmi's words: "We left a tear in place of the leaf." But it is London that is the artist's favourite foreign capital, and there he finds a growing appreciation for his work.

One was often curious about Jamil in the '60s; how had such a young man developed so unique a personal philosophy and such intensely felt beliefs? As one got to know him better, it became clear that life had taught him early on to make his own decisions and to resolve his own problems. He was eight years old when, in the company of his elder brothers, he left the centre of his universe, his home in Kairana, at the time of partition. His beloved father stayed on and they were destined never to meet again.

The ensuing years were hard and Naqsh grew to adolescence without the carefree years of parental love. A few years on, he determined to visit his home once more and began an epic two-year journey. Sadly, the home as he remembered it no longer existed. Even the pigeons and animals he had loved in childhood were gone. From there he made his

way across India, visiting historic sites and monuments. The exquisite sculpture he discovered at ancient temples stimulated his desire to examine a shared history. The earnest boy studied first-hand the ancient arts, listened to old men's tales, talked philosophy with sages and mystics and learned the art of meditation. He slept wherever he landed up at the end of the day, ate whatever came his way and was fascinated by his daily encounters with places and people. Inspired by the poses of the dancers of the temples, he made his way to a famous academy of classical performing arts. There he found that the requirements necessary to a dancer included particular physical specifications, such as the back of the calf of the leg must be broad to cradle a man's head.

Naqsh's journey continued through Chittagong, Calcutta and Kathmandu to Colombo. A kaleidoscope of impressions and a great respect for the art traditions of the past was a legacy of the boy's journey, factors that were to influence his work, his life and his thinking. His journey ended in Lahore in 1953, when he began a new chapter as an art student at the Mayo School of Arts and Crafts. A recent arrival from Europe, the Principal, Shakir Ali, introduced the students to western contemporary art developments. Naqsh absorbed the aesthetics of modern art but maintained his determination to make a thorough study of the various schools of traditional miniature paintings.

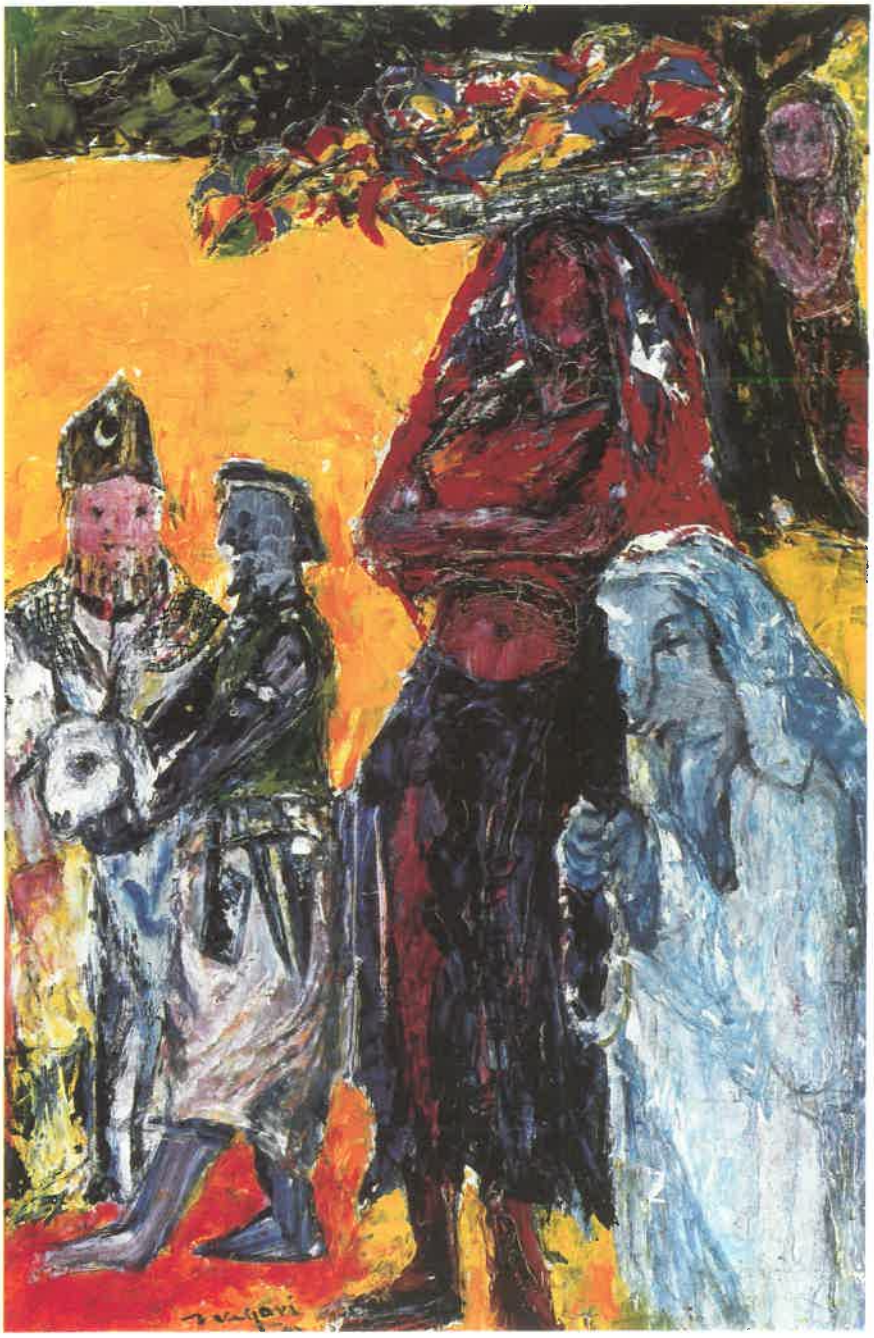
Knowing his background, one understands why he sacrificed the ease of an art student's life to become a disciple of the master miniaturist Haji Mohammad Sharif. Thrust into the world at an early age, subsequent experiences had taught him independence, but the opportunity to live a structured life, to focus wholly on the discipline of miniature art with its connotations to his father's interests, under the guidance of the Ustad, who treated him as a son, fulfilled a deeply felt need. Numerous factors may have played a part in his actions at this time. Naqsh never lost sight of his dream of a home of his own, filled with love, books, birds and animals. A wish finally fulfilled in the early '80s.

A warm personal memory is of a group exhibition abroad when Naqsh generously allowed two superb examples of his work to grace the show. These somehow were 'misplaced'. I dreaded breaking the news

to the artist, fearing a justifiably furious reaction, but was deeply moved by his gently voiced concern for my own anguish. It eventually ended happily, with the work safely returned, but it revealed yet another facet of this complex, sensitive man.

Though a master of modern art, Naqsh never abandoned his roots in the classic traditions of the east. Calligraphy was metamorphosed in his 'Modern Manuscripts', in which he redefined mass as a complex linear labyrinth. The moods and motifs of the miniature tradition penetrated his psyche, and from the beginning work was an obsession. Naqsh found the freedom to analyse content, tonality and value. For over three decades, he painted his companion as Bonnard painted Marthe: forever loved and beautiful.

Souvenir, Exhibition 2003



Nagori, Oil on Canvas

Return to the Sphinx – Nagori

In 1970, Syed Nayab Hussain, the widely travelled journalist and Professor of English Literature and Journalism at Sindh University, wrote of A.R. Nagori:

"Battling with the demons of his own imagination, Nagori went to every Sphinx in places like Lahore, Sargodha, Kohat, Dacca, Chittagong, Kaptai, Rangamati and others. As far as I know, these Sphinxes still stand there in one piece. Nagori has come back alive but deeply clawed and bloodied from within. For his own intellect is the one great Sphinx to which he is destined to return continually..."

In Nagori's current exhibition in Karachi, which he declares will be his last, he doffs his cap to Syed Nayab Hussain by titling his exhibition 'Return to the Sphinx'. The work continues to articulate protest against the injustice and cruelty of man to his fellow beings, tempered with a mood of sardonic observation.

His art is directed towards raising serious socio-political issues while retaining pictorial and aesthetic values. Referred to by Shakir Ali as "a scholar as well as a painter", Nagori is well versed in eastern history and philosophy. His work resonates with symbols that refer to ancient myths and legends. Using oils on canvas, the artist depicts the problems faced by urban and rural populations.

Expressing his fears for the environmentally threatened cities: Islamabad is depicted in 'Chand Raat' as an empty landscape, with a lonely jackal seen among the trees. Karachi is seen as a parched, denuded form adjacent to a blackened, polluted sea. A broken ship broods in the static, poisoned water while a woodcutter armed with an axe, having finished off the trees, contemplates the possibilities of the Quaid's mausoleum.

A painting titled 'Push Cart, Delivery and Ruins' portrays Hyderabad, a city dear to the artist's heart. Seen in the gloaming, it stands like a

Incomplete – missing pages 45 – 46.

work but did not necessarily show it; she was not, she explained, at a stage where she "wanted to put it out".

"I was interacting a lot with activists and people working in the community and found that bridging gaps between the audiences was an experience of who the people were, and where I felt connected. Those types of extensions were very worthwhile, helping me to get involved in a different way. I ended up doing a project in a very low income African-American neighbourhood housing scheme in Houston."

'Project Row Houses' was the brainchild of Rick Lowe, an African-American who turned his creativity to improving the environment of twenty-two shotgun houses in one of the city's poorest neighbourhoods. This project interested Shazia immensely and she accepted the challenge of developing her allotted shotgun house and its surrounds. Talking of the difficulties in getting her acquaintances interested, Shazia explained, "It was difficult to get local Asians to come around. There was a lot of racial insularity in the southern part of America." Shazia, who had lived part of her childhood in Somalia, found the project an inspiring experience. She met numerous people including Rick Lowe – those who had spent their childhood picking cotton. The neighbours began to drop in at Shazia's house in the evenings to sit on the porch and talk. She arranged workshops that were eagerly responded to, and the artist's serene, consistent presence paid off. Gradually, outsiders began to drop in and the interaction was firmly rooted and continued after she moved back to New York in 1997.

That year, an exhibition initiated by her in 1994 materialized at the Drawing Center. As Shazia says, "You can make anything happen if you work towards it and work hard." At the Drawing Center, she worked directly on the walls and earned a glowing review from Roberta Smith, the well-known art critic. The same year, the Whitney Museum invited her to exhibit her work in a group display and she found that "everyone wanted large spaces, floors and walls", so she took an opposite stand, choosing a small space to hang her pieces. Save for two pieces, which Shazia kept for herself, the Whitney Museum bought the entire collection of her work. This gesture from the renowned art centre was a milestone

to talk, it was obvious that she is actually a very strong person endowed with tremendous courage and conviction. Shazia appears to be totally lacking in arrogance and learning about her early, character-forming years in the States was extremely interesting.

"School gave a lot of freedom and in that respect was very confining, because I had been working in very strict parameters of discipline and had been frustrated with that type of discipline, so extreme freedom had the same effect. There were no parameters, one could do anything, and I found that very confining. My experience and familiarity with some type of structure was still where my mindset was, so it took a while to unlearn certain habits. I had a lot of reading to do, western philosophy, art history, just a general understanding of the critical dialogue among artists, and how to articulate, talk about your work, an extension of what I was doing. So there was no desire to flip sides and discard what I had, to acquire something new. The audience I met was receptive and eager to learn but I was not interested in educating anyone. The perception at home was that you went abroad and somehow learned something and returned home with that.

Actually, it was quite the opposite. I was absorbing so much. I started making urgent, fast, gestural work and drawings. From doodling, I brought the doodles into my critique and people became very excited about my work. I wasn't sure what was happening and in that process, expressed my experience of how to work out of memory and how to abstract an idea, abstract an emotion and abstract the expression of miniature work in a short gesture, so that type of exercise opened new territory for me. I actually produced work after leaving school."

Finishing with the RISD in 1995, Shazia found New York daunting and began to look elsewhere to continue her work. Offered a residency at the Houston Museum of Fine Art, Texas, she bought a car for $300, packed it with her belongings and with road map in hand drove down to Houston. The residency allowed Shazia a studio and paid the monthly expenses. Seven other artists from various regions of the country were similar residents, and in this ambience the young artist developed her work and started "pushing it". From 1995 to 1997, she created a lot of

Shahid Sajjad, Wood Sculpture

Shahid Sajjad, Wood Sculpture

Quest for knowledge – Shahid Sajjad

Lightning seared across the clearing in the jungle and before the awestruck young man's eyes a tree was rent into two pieces. This dramatic scene was part of the reality of an area where nature ruled supreme. Wild animals roamed at will, snakes rustled and slithered in the undergrowth, and leopard tracks were often to be spotted around the brooding, abandoned dwelling where an artist had taken up residence.

Each dawn he experienced a rebirth, the first pale streaks of light that invaded the deep darkness of the night sky filling him with a comforting sense of peace. Here he worked, creating from the trunks of trees wooden sculptures of great energy and intensity, torsos carved with genius. The place was the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the sculptor Shahid Sajjad.

The house he used as a base was originally intended for guests of the government, but no guest cared to visit the lonely, isolated site. Servants were too afraid to stay on, and superstitious stories were woven around the house. Shahid Sajjad, child of the city, lying awake at night when the jungle came alive, was often fearful, but there was great beauty to be experienced along with the ever-present sense of danger. At the same time, he was happier than he had ever been before, filled with a sense of weightlessness, conceding man's lack of choice in the face of the starkness of nature.

Sajjad trekked for miles in the hill tracts, meeting shy tribesmen, whose trust he soon won. He shared their simple meals and watched them distil their country brew. He worked constantly, sculpting into his forms acceptance of the elemental forces of nature. Figures of monumental magnificence emerged, moving in their purity of form. The sculptor's experience here was to continue for two vital years before the world called him back. Receiving urgent messages via Dacca recalling

him to Karachi, Shahid gathered together his belongings, vowing to return. It was a vow he was destined never to fulfill.

The sculptor had been questing for knowledge, of himself and the world, all his young life. He grew up in Lahore in a family that traced their origins to the Turcoman of Central Asia. Some dormant source had endowed Shahid with extraordinary qualities of intellect and artistry. As a child, he easily mastered calligraphy while observing an uncle practicing the art. He discovered drawing and covered every available space with sketches. His talent was a gift and also a source of pain. He was a solitary child, a 'changeling' in his family. There was no one to answer his questions, no mind attuned to his own. In his early teens, he left his home and school and started his first steps on his personal voyage of discovery.

The young man joined the studio of a graphic designer who, delighted with his diligence and ability, took him under his wing and taught him many aspects of graphic design. Shahid spent several years as a freelance designer and in his spare time studied many subjects from books. In 1956, he made his way to Karachi, where he became part of a large, advertising agency. He longed to travel and in 1959, equipped with a motorbike and one hundred dollars in cash, he set off on a journey that was to last four years. Staying in youth hostels and working at a variety of jobs, he passed through India, Bangladesh, Burma, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, South Vietnam, Hong Kong and Japan. He met and made a number of good friends, and studied the arts in each country, visiting museums and art centres, and seeking out artists. He felt that at last he was beginning to assimilate the knowledge he so desperately needed.

In 1963, Sajjad returned to Pakistan, then in the same year set off again on his motorbike, this time for Europe. Again he covered many countries, but it was in the Louvre Museum in Paris that his creative genius became truly focused. Wandering through the museum, intently studying the art works on display, he became riveted by a small, wooden figure carved by Gauguin in Tahiti. Immediately he was filled with the certainty that this was what he must do. In Frankfurt, Shahid was

reluctantly forced to sell his motorbike in order to reach London, but he sensed that a pattern was emerging in his life, and in due course he returned to Karachi to work towards his first solo exhibition.

The 1960s were a significant decade in the development of art in Pakistan. There was a great flowering of talent, backed by an enthusiastic media. This initiated a public response to art such as had never before been experienced in the country. Shahid Sajjad was an integral part of that movement. His unique talents and originality were very much in evidence in the paintings, drawings and carved, wall-based reliefs exhibited at the Karachi Arts Council in 1964. Then, desperate to work in solitude with unlimited material at his disposal, he set off in 1965 for the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where for two years he industriously created a body of great, chiseled sculpture.

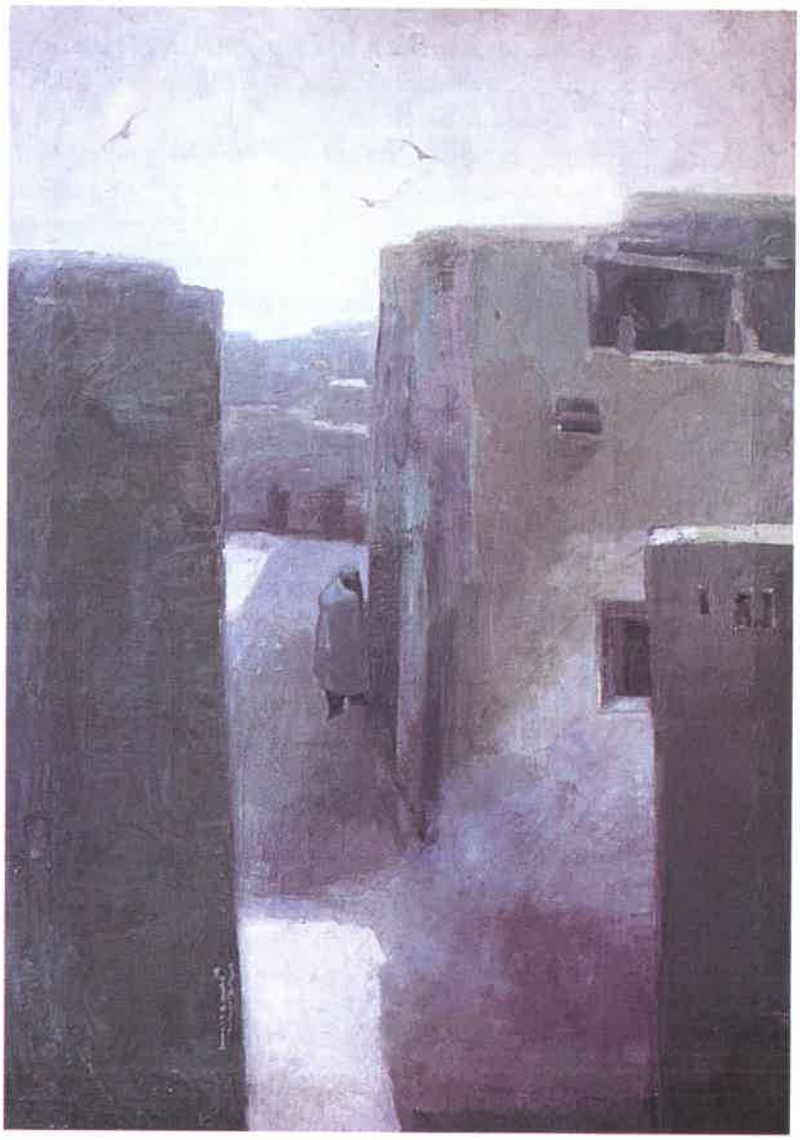
1967 found the artist once again in Karachi, where he became the Creative Director of a prestigious advertising agency. Here he availed himself of the opportunity to join the printmaking workshop of the USIS-sponsored master printmaker Michael Ponce de Lyon, who had travelled from the States with press and materials to conduct a three-month course for established artists in printmaking and etching. The three months stretched to six, and when Michael was unable to put off his departure any longer, he left the workshop to function for a further period under Sajjad's supervision.

Throughout his career, he has felt that an outside force was often guiding his path, providing help and strength from some unexplained source. Asked to take over as the stage set designer for the then celebrated PIA Performing Arts Academy, Shahid travelled with the troupe in 1973, and was fated to have a meeting with the distinguished Japanese bronze caster, Akio Kato. Although Kato-San had little English and Shahid even less Japanese, they proceeded to communicate on an almost telepathic level. Sajjad was invited to watch Kato-San at work and made copious notes and diagrams detailing the techniques and methods involved in bronze casting. He was very excited by the medium and strongly felt that at some subconscious level he had longed to work in this medium for years.

In Karachi, with the notes he had taken from Kato, Shahid began to work in bronze and one year later exhibited the results of his labour along with sculpture carved from wood.

After that, for some years, the sculptor devoted his energy entirely to experimenting with bronze casting and, by a painstaking method of trial and error, after years of patient work, began to feel a sense of achievement. For two years, he worked on a bronze relief portraying the history of the cavalry through the ages, a stunning thirteen-and-a-half by five-and-a-half feet panorama. It was installed by the Armoured Corps at Nowshera, where it stands, a sublime monument for all time to come. In 1988 came the opportunity for further travel and renewing contact with old friends. Shahid travelled to Tokyo to meet Kato-San, who embraced him warmly. This time, communication was easier and the two proceeded to talk of their work. Kato was astounded at Shahid's achievements, repeating, "Now you are my teacher!" Akio Kato's words of appreciation and acknowl-edgement of his achievements were Shahid Sajjad's ultimate reward. To the sculptor, they justified the often hard and lonely years of work and sacrifice.

The Star: October 1989



Mussarat Mirza, Oil on Canvas

In search of enlightenment – Mussarat Mirza

"Where is enlightenment found?
In the rays of sunlight entering a dark house
Is the answer found on silent stairways?
Within high walls or on the wings of a bird in flight
Is it a journey of the mind or a half-opened window?
Perhaps it is a person sitting alone in the shade
Or a door veiled by a fine curtain that if lifted will reveal all secrets of the universe."

I roughly translated into English the philosophical Urdu poetry Mussarat Mirza recited to explain the symbolism found in her latest paintings. 'Quest for Enlightenment', recently exhibited at the Canvas Gallery in Karachi, consisted of fourteen paintings rendered in oils on canvas, work that could only be painted in an artist's maturity. Mussarat's imagery encompasses light and darkness, stairways, windows, rooftops, religious emblems and birds. Shadowed figures and birds appear together constantly, perhaps representing the body grounded by circumstances and leaving the spirit free to roam at will.

Thoughtful and reserved, yet warm and accessible, Mussarat smiles in the same engaging manner I remember from three decades ago. The first time we met she had recently graduated from the Punjab University and was exuberantly looking forward to joining the faculty of the newly opened Fine Arts Department of Sindh University. Intense, sensitive, introspective, Mussarat has used her vision of her hometown, Sukkur, and its cultural ambience as a wellspring of inspiration since her childhood. Her aesthetic idiom is strongly influenced by her background and surroundings.

She spoke of her childhood growing up in a large, loving family. "I was number six and I loved to sit in the kitchen, where my mother made *chappatis* for us on the coal range. She would make tiny ducks from *atta* and hand them to me to bake on the *tawwa*. I began to make forms myself. Birds, animals and people would be fashioned from the atta mixed with water. I had a gift for drawing, which was particularly appreciated by my father. He would take me out to sketch by the river banks he loved, and tell me about the lives of the people of the area. 'They would not like you to sketch them,' he explained, and I understood. The doors, windows and the rooftop of our house were open to me, thus the world was revealed from an observer's point of view. I loved the streets surrounding our home, the vast panorama beyond, the mystery of changing light and the birds that came for a while and flew away into the vast skies. All these became symbols etched on my psyche."

Mussarat exhibited her paintings for the first time at the Karachi Arts Council in 1968, where her concerns were for the social problems of the people of her area of Sindh. She approached her subject in a contemporary method, but it was integrally nurtured by her environment, the colouration filtered through dust prisms. In the mid, 1970s she disappeared from the exhibition circuit, reappearing a decade later to show her experiments with abstraction. Explaining this development, Mussarat said: "For ten years I worked spasmodically and did not show my work, I was so angry. People around me were killing each other. It was the time of the language riots; imagine people fighting about language! I felt the crows were better than people, and ever since then have had a fondness for the crows. I painted them a lot. I used to paint and destroy my work; I thought: 'For whom am I painting?' My room at Jamshoro was full of half-finished works and experiments, paper-based works; I destroyed them all. I still do that. During that period I studied a lot, did a lot of reading. Whenever the opportunity arose, I would go home to Sukkur, to my family. My work during those years was disturbed, now it is entirely different. I have become profoundly concerned with issues of the spirit, an inner journey, still on a quest. Ten more paintings on this subject are in my studio, unfinished. I feel

I have a lot more work to do on this subject."

Renowned for her exquisite mastery of oils, she was awarded the Asian Shield for Watercolour from Osaka, Japan in 1988. The half-opened windows, doors and stairways appeared in the artist's work in the new millennium, reflecting a more personal, inner-directed striving. Emotions were expressed through barely visible, draped female forms. Religious symbols of domes and flags appeared. Birds and walled interiors suggested dreams, aspirations and unfulfilled desires. While the figures are undefined, a strongly evocative atmosphere is created around.

Studying her recent work displayed at the Canvas Gallery, one finds the richly textured canvases resounding with unseen nuances, as if a presence has moved across the canvas and left a shadow behind. Talking about her work, Murrarat explained: "My experimentation is concerned with the technique, not the subject. Painting is a painstaking process. I think about my work a lot. Preparing my colours takes time. I am uncomfortable with loud noise and bright colours. I prefer dusty shades. I don't remember ever finishing with a few sittings. When using a knife, I give the paint time to dry and then scrape certain areas. Where adding form, I use a brush. Then I apply a thin layer of colour and again leave the paint to dry. Some of my paintings have taken six months of work before I am satisfied. This current sequence is from the 'Quest for Englightenment' series. What is it? Where is it to be found? Will I find it standing alone on my rooftop, or should I follow the birds and fly away?"

Mussarat's elder sisters left Sukkur to study medicine in Lahore and her mother urged her to join them. "I could not face the thought of it," she said. "I was saved by my father. He loved art and he arranged for me to join the Punjab University Fine Arts Department, so I joined my sisters in Lahore, but studied art. Khalid Iqbal was a great teacher. He wasn't a prolific painter, neither did he lecture for hours on end, but he knew how to get the best out of his students. People in the Punjab are very fond of landscape paintings and the Punjab has produced many landscapists, some good, some bad, but Khalid Iqbal is the best. My life as a mature person started at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro, where

I joined the Fine Arts Department. There I made my friends. I stayed for 27 years, between 1972 and 1999, when I retired as professor of Fine Art."

Now living in the family home in Sukkur, Mussarat Mirza talked of the studio-cum-gallery she has opened in the town and of her future plans. "If I had a magic lamp, I would make a wish that Sukkur becomes a beautiful town. Since there is no magic, I have to work in a practical way. A workshop is open for two hours a day and is conducted by a colleague of mine who trained at the National College of Art. We have about six students and give them a thorough grounding in art. They hang their work in the gallery and people stop off to visit and look around. One of our former students was a very poor boy from the interior of Sindh. We taught him English and painting and in six months he learnt so much. Now he is studying at N.C.A. and that confirms my faith in what we are doing. Another burning ambition is to reactivate the Arts Council in Sukkur. During my father's time, it was very lively; there were *mushairas,* musical evenings, and arts programmes. It all came to a halt through lack of encouragement, but I am working on it. My most challenging ambition – but I am determined to see it through – is to have a Museum of Handicrafts in Sukkur. The town was once a cultural centre, it has a proud history and brilliant craftsmen. My aim is to contribute to keeping the rural arts alive and to introduce modern innovations into the traditions. I envisage a museum that will display a permanent collection and will also market handicrafts to encourage the craftsmen; otherwise the arts will die out. One good thing that has happened is that the local people now refer to me by my own identity instead of as 'Mirza Sahib's daughter' or as the doctor's sister."

At the idea of being singled out, Mussarat Mirza's delightful smile lit up her face.

Dawn Gallery, May 11, 2002

Hajra Mansoor, Water Colour

Hajra Mansoor, Water Colour

Mansoor Rahi
Oil on Canvas

Artists in harmony – Mansur Rahi and Hajra

"A good artwork should combine creativity, a perfect control of the technical principles and mastery of the media." So says Mansur Rahi, one of Pakistan's most distinguished painters and a teacher of note. Speaking to Mansur and his wife Hajra, one discovers they are in total accord as to the problems facing young artists today. On a recent visit to Karachi where the couple exhibited their paintings, Rahi at the Chawkandi Art, Hajra at Canvas Gallery, the couple spoke freely about their art concerns including art education in the country, a subject Mansur Rahi and Hajra take very seriously.

"Art education has suffered chiefly through lack of experienced teachers. Promising students are taken on as teachers by art institutes before they have matured enough to develop an art philosophy and the circle becomes increasingly smaller. Generally speaking professional status is missing among educationists and the student comes out of school after four years, lacking the proper guidance. By cutting corners and practising a lot of rhetoric, he prepares to take his place in the art world, happy in his ignorance. The criteria are to sell paintings like commodities and gain `name and fame'.

Both artists settled in Karachi in the 1960s, Hajra from the Lucknow College of Art, and Rahi from the Dhaka School of Art where Zainul Abedin and Kibria had been his teachers.

As advertising and textile businesses flourished and a TV Studio was established in the city, the demand for trained artists grew. With Mansur Rahi's help, the Zuberi sisters established the Karachi School of Art, Karachi's first art school.

Rahi spoke of Zainul Abedin as his friend and teacher and Kibria as his `inspiration, and reminisced about life in the `60s."I was involved with the KSA and also painting, it was a tremendously fruitful time.

Friends used to visit the school and hold discussions with the students, and their education was the focus of our time. Once Zain brought me a message from my parents in Dhaka who though it was high time I returned home and got married. My ideas were a bit different. `Don't you think Hajra looks right for me'? I asked Zain who was quick to agree but I had to convince Hajra's parents. First I consulted Rabia who was very sympathetic and advised me as to how to approach their parents. With all the formality I took my proposal to Hajra's mother who laid down three conditions, these were: learn Urdu: make a name for yourself: get your own house. It took me three years but I managed all of it. My close friends were Mansur Aye, Jamil Naqsh and Mobinul Azim, and it was quite a news in art circles - Rahi's getting married!"

During all this discussion Hajra sat smiling and detached, insisting she had known nothing about it at the time.

After their marriage Rahi started painting a series of `Queens'. They were beautiful studies, rendered in a modern, cubist style, of women wearing crowns, all bearing an uncanny resemblance to Hajra. A legend in art circles, Hajra and Rahi have lived happily together, in perfect harmony for over three decades. National award winning artists with distinguished reputations, they have been in the public eye since the 1960s. Together they are a united team, each highly appreciative of the other's output. Incredibly, neither has influenced the other's viewpoint in the slightest way. Mansur Rahi is known as a neo-cubist, Hajra Mansur is a romantic, rooted in tradition, and both are accredited with countless exhibitions in Pakistan and abroad.

Rahi and other Dhaka trained teachers initiated an interest in watercolor landscape painting in Karachi that was on par with the Punjab Landscape School of Art inspired from Lahore by Khalid Iqbal. Countless superb watercolorists have emerged from the KSA from Abdul Hai to Zaheen Ahmed and the tradition continues.

" Today there are numerous galleries in the town and the owners should be able to differentiate between good work and bad. Discussions on the subject with experienced, established artists, of which there are a considerable number, would help. Bad paintings are being bought out

of galleries because of the lack of knowledge of the technical skills involved in the pursuit of art. There is no rationale regarding prices. It is the duty of the galleries to create a `norm', not to tell artists how or what to paint, but to guide buyers as well as aspiring artists."

Rahi takes `workshops' for selected students in his Islamabad studio several times a week. Hajra prefers to devote her time to painting and has a studio of her own. Using an oriental `wash' method, she paints in acrylic, having several paintings in process at the same time. Her romantic, classic style harks back to the courts of the Mogul Emperors, with ornate elements of eastern design, but her technique is steeped in the present. She commands a bewitching luminosity of surface that has made her one of the most popular of the country's painters today. Of late, Rahi has brought about changes in his work while remaining constant to the root style of analytic cubism. His subject is contemplative; he speaks of his work as 'purely structural with formal, bold forms taking human shape'. Mountains reveal forms in the rocks that will remain entwined forever.

Describing his unique style, Rahi talks of "Rayonism – referring to rays of light, forms and colours creating 'a new dimension of illusion". Rahi spoke of his advanced study research in Japan, France and Germany and of the success of Hajra's exhibitions in foreign countries. They enjoy talking to each other, discuss numerous subjects amongst themselves, and are in total accord. A statement by one includes the other. They exchange glances and smiles and look to each other for confirmation of an opinion.

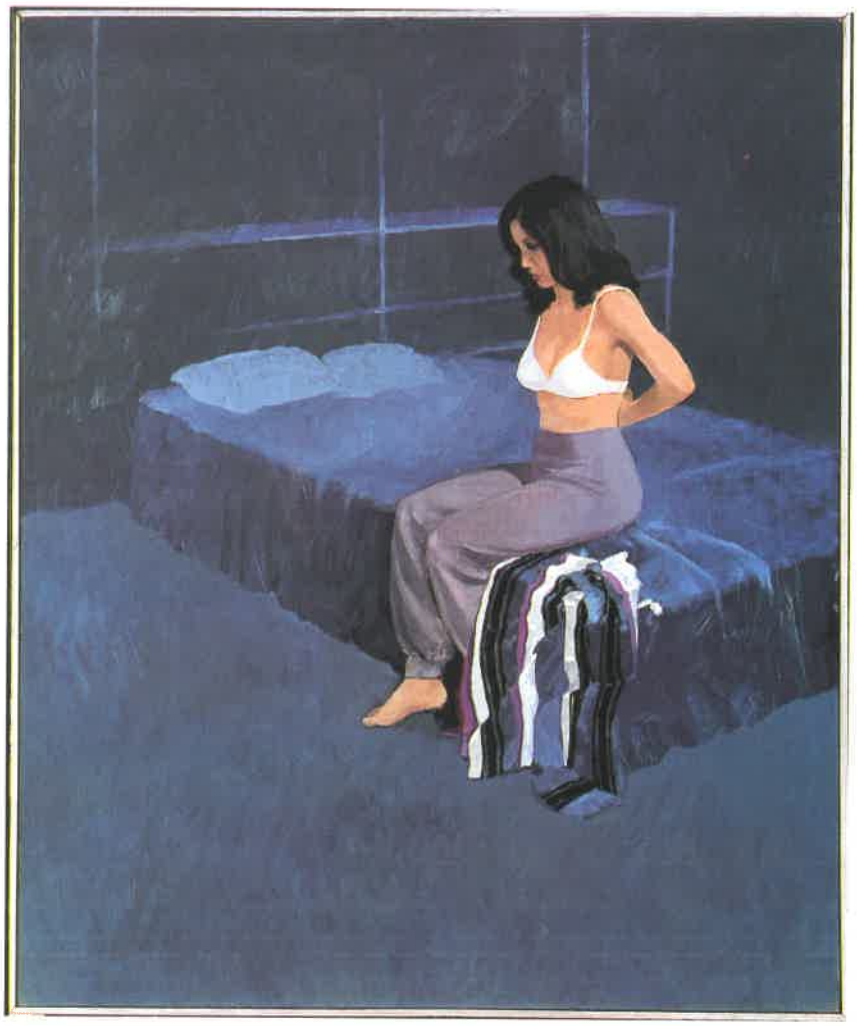
In recent years they have made several visits to the States where their two children have their homes. In the process they took the opportunity to gauge the art ambience in various states. Rahi regularly lectures and conducts workshops in art colleges on these trips, Hajra paints and declares she is disappointed with the general standard of art.

"I'm talking about galleries not museums. Compared with Paris and London and what I have seen in the galleries the work appears to lack feeling. There is no apparent enjoyment of art or colour or the medium. I find it very disappointing. Of course the museums are full of beautiful

works."

"In Karachi I can see a lot of activity and artists coming up. Those outside Karachi have a problem, especially sculptors because it is so difficult to transport their work for exhibition and there is no official help for artists unless they have influence. Still the work continues." It was time to go and off they went smiling to live their dreams: Rahi with sculpted forms carved from the rocks with a brush: Hajra in a world without violence.

Dawn Gallery: April 26, 2003



Colin David, Oil on Canvas

Painting in the classic genre – Colin David

In the early 1970s, Colin David's work in the genre of the nude created considerable interest in nascent art collectors emerging in the expanding city of Karachi. At that time, he had taken an MA Fine Art from the Punjab University and had then proceeded to the Slade School, London, for postgraduate training. When David returned to join the National College of Art, Lahore, as an instructor, he was a painter who combined an intuitive grasp of composition with tactile understanding of the human form on skilfully painted canvases. His work was much in demand by the existing galleries and praised by the media.

As the climate of art changed, the artist's signature work in the classic genre was seen less and less in exhibitions. In the changing atmosphere, he was represented by contemporary, minimal 'Still Life' paintings and mysterious 'Landscapes' with barren trees. In a curious way, the human form, overtly absent from these canvases, was to all intents and purposes part of the scene. It was there in the spatial contents of the work; to the imaginative, the air of strange anticipation reverberating from the surface of the work made it seem a figure would step out from behind the tall form of a tree and take its rightful place in the overall composition. Often David incorporated elements of 'Op' art in his imagery, the optical illusion of lines, rings and squares that created an illusion of movement as explored by artists in the 1960s. Colin David never abandoned his muse, but he showed his studio work only to a select audience. Many of his pieces went to foreign art collectors and are lost to us.

Through the years, Colin David has exhibited his work regularly in Karachi and maintained his popularity. Now after decades, currently at the Clifton Art Gallery he exhibits a collection of 30 pieces dominated

by a central figure seen in an atmosphere of playful domesticity. Unconcerned by our gaze, the subject is absorbed in weighing herself, washing, thinking, resting, involved in small private daily matters. We see her seated on the floor, with feet turned inwards, gazing at nothing in particular, lost in thought perhaps and unaware of the patterns of light on her body or the tactile sheen of flesh painted by the artist. The domestic settings are recorded with love and a wealth of detail fascinating to behold. The natural and direct treatment of the subject conveys an innocent celebration of nature's handiwork, the miracle of the human body rendered with superb draughtsmanship.

A cool composition in shades of gray offers a glimpse of a figure through an open doorway where she stands beside a checkered bedcover. The only colour element in the painting is a child's striped ball standing neatly outside the room as if reluctant to disturb the meditative neutral shades. There are figures placed in surreal surroundings, seemingly floating off-centre, in a muted setting that holds a brilliant green pole. Another image is of a figure seated on a scarlet, grass-like substance from which spring thin green sticks or newly planted trees. Yet another canvas has as its subject a green parrot seen seated on the moonlight-illuminated branch of a tree, half-hidden by soft cloudy areas of paint. A surrealistic landscape shows a crimson sky with a black sun that looks down on emerald green grass and suggestions of narrow trees. Colin's work is always interesting; painting in the refined tradition of the Slade, he is an unsung art hero. One of the most popular artists of the '70s, unable for decades to exhibit his genius, misunderstood by lesser men, he has ultimately made his sufferings a triumph. His is a story that may fascinate artists in generations to come.

Dawn Gallery: September 2003

Iqbal Husain, Oil on Canvas

The Avant-garde realist – Iqbal Hussain

"*I* want to paint huge murals." Animated while talking of painting in general, Iqbal Hussain dislikes being questioned on his individual pieces. While we talked, various visitors including art students wandered up to him hoping to probe the narrative element in his work and I saw the 'shutters come down'. His work is very close to the surface. He says it all with his brush. Hussain's work has been compared to that of Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec, but his vignettes from Lahore's historic Heera Mandi are closer in ethos to the work of Emile Zola. While Hussain's execution and composition is quite traditional, his subject makes him an avant-garde realist exposing the secret interior world of society's unfortunates caught in a vicious circle of poverty and compromise. His exceptional drawing skills and mastery of his medium bring together technical brilliance and social taboos, more compelling for the flaws perceived in his subjects.

Among artists in Pakistan, there are several who focus on women as a symbol of social injustice and inhumanity. None of them paints like Iqbal Hussain. For two decades he has stunned audiences in Pakistan with a unique contribution to the myth of the Heera Mandi through intimate cameos of life in 'the Bazaar'. The painter knows his models as people and gives them identities by portraying them with the observations of an on-going association. This phenomenal artist, born in the confines of the Heera Mandi, grew up with an intimate knowledge of exploitation and victimization, survived to transcend his origins, and in the end, made a triumph out of a losing hand.

'My childhood was very hard. I was a late-born child growing up with a mother aged before her time. I had one sister, and it was she who

made me stay at school and matriculate. There have been three significant influences in my life, my sister, who now with her four children lives with me; Khalid Iqbal, who guided me off the streets and into art; and Shehla Saigol, owner of the Lahore Art Gallery. It was she who had the courage and perception to exhibit my work in the first place. Displaying pieces on an easel, she forced people to really 'see' them."

Where did it all come from, this extraordinary talent, the ability to manipulate light, the rawly perceptive sensibilities? Perhaps these gifts are the wellspring of an integral sense of 'otherness.' "There were no school friends, no one wanted to visit my home. I ran with the boys in my community, carried a gun and a knife. I had no thought of art."

But there was culture in the Shahi Mohalla as well as grief. Poets, musicians and dancers made gold from dross. Drifting off to sleep at night to the rhythm of the disturbing noises brought forth by the darkness, the young boy woke soothed by the sound of his mother coaching his sister in the art of classical singing after the morning Azaan. Hussain had no idea what the future would hold. "I was sitting on the steps in my lungi one day when a friend from the neighbourhood stopped by and asked what I was doing. He told me that admissions had opened at the National College of Art – this was the first I had heard of the college – and asked me to try for a place. His reason for urging me was his interest in a young student. He needed an excuse to get inside the college and meet her and visualised me as his entry pass." Thus, on the impulse of another young man's whim, Iqbal Hussain began a life in art.

"The following day, my friend and I set off along The Mall to the National College of Art. The Head of the Fine Art Department at that time was Professor Shakir Ali, who spoke to me at length and then asked me to draw a flowerpot. On the strength of that interview, I got admission to the NCA., never dreaming I would one day be a faculty member. The first year, I went to College every day with a loaded gun. I had no command of the media but I persevered and the following year Khalid Iqbal came into my life. He compensated for the father I never knew. I wonder what would have been the outcome without Khalid Iqbal as

a teacher. He helped me to express my feelings on canvas, encouraged me and told me my paintings would sell one day. I abandoned my gun and under Khalid Iqbal's guidance, became an artist."

Hussain was awarded his diploma in fine arts from the NCA. in 1974 and enrolled at the college as a research scholar. In 1976 he joined the National College of Art as a lecturer, beginning a career that was to span twenty-five years. During these years, the artist continued to make his home in the Shahi Mohalla, where from his balcony he could view the Badshahi Mosque. As one of the few educated members of his community, Hussain is the spokesman for his area and has been its president. He chose to remain close to his roots, contributing to the lives of his community and assisting them with their numerous and varied problems. "In my house, there are sixteen family members to be supported. I have five daughters and I'm proud of them all. The eldest will shortly be leaving to take admission to a well-known foreign university, number two is married with a baby, and the youngest three are in school. They all have a lot of confidence. Every day, people call at the house with their problems, bills, letters, stories of injustice and harassment. I try to help them and do what I can."

Hussain's models are obviously at ease in his company, posing without inhibition or self-consciousness. Older women, seemingly bone-weary, slump in their chairs, all façades put aside; the curtain is down. Younger models evoke more optimism, "Trim me down," they request (he doesn't), "Don't forget to paint in my beauty spot." Seemingly forgetting the artist's presence, they sprawl across beds, exchange secrets, hold their children and brush their hair. Iqbal Hussain's work belongs to the school of Social Realism, in which he excels. The painter refers to the repetitive pattern of his model's lives echoed in the flow of light and shade falling across furnishings and forms.

Talking about current views among art students today, Hussain is of the opinion that 'short cuts' have diverted them. There is, he says, a tendency among the young to assess art in New York terms without relevance to their own experience. One must, he points out, take into account the road that led individual artists to their conclusions if there

is to be any meaning in art.

An incident that reverberated through art circles in Pakistan occurred in 1984 when the artist was pressured to remove his paintings from an exhibition mounted in Lahore. The incident became an issue that roused artists and the media, resulting in an invitation from Alhamra to display his work in 1985. That same year, adjudged the winner of Pakistan's 5th National Exhibition of Art, he was awarded a scholarship by the government of France enabling him to visit the great museums and galleries of Paris. Now the recipient of numerous honours and awards, respected as a distinguished painter and teacher, a hero in his community and the owner of a trendy restaurant, Hussain looks back on an amazing life. His dream is to visit the major art capitals of the world and see first-hand great works of art, and to fill huge vacuums with great murals. Whether one finds Hussain's stark realism disturbing or exhilarating, one cannot remain unmoved by his haunting works of art.

Dawn Gallery: September 14, 2002

Zahoorul Ikhlaq by Adil Salahuddin, Etching

Adil Salahuddin, Postage Stamps

Despatching art across the miles – Adil Salahuddin

When Adil Salahuddin graduated from the National College of Art, Lahore in 1966, he brought with him to Karachi some of his fourth-year work including a horizontally formatted wood-block print. Outlined in white on black cloth, it showed a back view of a gracefully reclining form. It looked good displayed in Bashir Mirza's gallery, but something about this image disturbed me and I attributed it to the very thick ankles of the model. Candid as always, Adil admitted that unable to get hold of a female model, he had painted a male fellow student but slipped up when it came to the feet. Even so, the figure proved to be very popular and sold in several editions. Adil Salahuddin was and remains a fine artist who majored in miniature painting, a discipline that has added many dimensions to his work as Pakistan's top stamp designer.

Growing up in Lahore was exciting, where he had friends such as Zahoorul Akhlaq, Nayyer Ali Dada , S.Imtiaz Hussain and Mian Salahuddin. In the evenings, they would sit together and talk about art and Adil would often hear about the National College of Art.

"I was very good in drawing and used to sit sketching while we talked. At that time I was in college studying science, and Zahoor was insistent that I should leave science studies and join the National College of Art. So in 1962, I switched over. I applied to NCA and was given admission in the Fine Arts Department, and all this happened without my parents' knowledge. I got scholarships from the first to the fourth year at NCA, and eventually told my parents what I had done when I was in the third year. By that time, I had some work to show them and they were very good about it. It was a wonderful time at NCA. Professor Shakir Ali was Principal and Khalid Iqbal was the head of the department;

both of them were great teachers and great human beings. We all took our work very seriously. Shakir Sahib would make the rounds to inspect our work and if he didn't approve, he would ask, 'Are you in the first year or the third year?' If he liked the work, he would often pick up a brush and paint a corner of the canvas. He always held Zahoor, Bashir Mirza and Ahmed Khan up as examples to the rest of us. 'Go and see what Bashir is doing...go and see what Zahoor is doing... go and see what Ahmed Khan is doing,' he would say. Khalid Iqbal gave everything of himself to the students; before exams, he would be with us night and day."

Studying the art of miniature painting, guided by Ustad Haji Sharif, the students received a thorough training in all the detailed aspects of the discipline. They made brushes out of hair from squirrel's tails, ground minerals to make paints and used wasli in the traditional manner. Extremely interested in the art of restoring and preserving paintings, Salahuddin did a lot of research in this field on his own and it has proved very useful through the years.

Adil Salahuddin graduated with distinction in August 1966, and the same day made his way to Karachi, where BM was waiting for him in his gallery. He had several commissions lined up and the young artists worked on them together. "Bashir was a real go-getter," Adil says.

The Security Printing Press had opened up in 1952 with a design department that was run by British designers. Bashir Mirza joined the department but could not contend with a '9-to-5' existence. He invariably arrived late and his attendance was irregular. He left after a few months and Adil was offered the post of senior designer. With his background of miniature painting, it proved to be the perfect setting for him, and his very balanced personality ensured that he had no problem following a routine. Adil joined SPP in 1967 and Bashir was disappointed as he wanted Adil free to work with him on various projects. In spite of a work filled schedule, Adil kept close contact with his friend and was often in the gallery. After office Adil worked with Bashir and together they continued with the commissions.

"I became deeply involved with the Pakistan Security Printing Press and worked without a thought of time. I really enjoyed the design aspect and changed the entire concept of stamp design. For a series on the Indus Valley Civilization, I stayed a week in Moenjodaro, then designed the stamps. Altogether I designed over 2000 stamps, 400 of which have been printed, 50 of them for foreign countries."

In 1983, a national stamp exhibition took place in Lahore at the Alhamra. To commemorate the occasion, Salahuddin designed a series of six stamps depicting the walled city of Lahore as it appeared in 1852. Each individual piece was a feature which joined with the others in the series created a panoramic experience of the old city. Gandhara art, Pakistan's heritage and history, landscape, old masters, wildlife, environment, sports, and numerous other issues have been the subject of this brilliant designer's work. Millions of stamps have been printed from his designs and have travelled overseas.

"The design I am most proud of is the Quaid-e-Azam centenary series, brought out for the Quaid's centenary and printed in France. My favourite of them was about two-by-three inches, and printed with gold."

In 1979 and in 1980, his genius in the field of design was recognized by way of several national awards. In 1986, he was declared the best stamp designer among the ECO countries, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, and was awarded a Gold Medal at an exhibition titled ECOPHILEX '86.

In recognition of his great contribution in his field in 1988, he was awarded the highest accolade in the land, the President's Pride of Performance Award.

Salahuddin undertook a fascinating project in 1991, which resulted in an exhaustively researched book on the postal history of Pakistan. In collaboration with the authors, Ron Doubleday and Usman Ali Isani, he examined the practice of overprints on Indian stamps that continued between 1947 and 1949. Two years later, a voluminous, informative book was published, containing a history of Pakistan stamp overprints and how to identify the genuine articles. Designed by Adil Salahuddin

with over 13,000 illustrations, even the layman who has never collected stamps in his youth would find much in it to hold his interest.

In 1998, Adil Salahuddin was made a Fellow of the National College of Art, Lahore, an honour that perhaps pleased him more than any other, for it is to his alma mater and its great teachers that he attributes his success. In homage to Pakistan's art pioneers, he designed a set of stamps featuring the artworks and portraits of Ustad Haji Sharif, Ustad Allah Buksh and Professor Shakir Ali, which were displayed at the National College of Arts.

In 2000, the Pakistan Embassy in Singapore arranged a very exciting exhibition of Pakistan's stamps. It was held at the Singapore Philately Museum, and portrayed the history and environment of the country through an exquisite collection of stamps, which attracted a large number of Singaporeans. They viewed the miniature artworks that comprised the stamps and marvelled at the intricacy and detail of the designs.

Retired after 35 years working with the Pakistan Security Printing Press, Adil Salahuddin was assigned the project of setting up a Philately Museum in Karachi. It will be located in the GPO building and will consist of three large halls on the third floor reached by a separate entrance. He is full of plans on what the museum will contain, besides an archive, a research department and relics of the past. "I want to trace the postal history of the region through drawings, photos and paintings starting from the early days when the runner would set off from Peshawar with letters intended for Calcutta. A team of runners would transport the mail over hundreds of miles. Presently, we are working on the interior and it will hopefully be ready within two years." With these words, Adil Salahuddin went off about his business, looking forward to the day when the city will boast a full-fledged, Philately Museum to rival any in the world.

Dawn Gallery: June 21, 2003

Rabia Zubairi, Bronze Fibre Sculpture

A lifelong experience with sculpture – Rabia Zuberi

Meeting Rabia Zuberi at the Karachi School of Art is a lively experience. The outer spaces, lively with movement and colour, may be glimpsed through the opaque glass doors of her office, where paintings, drawings, and a series of forms rendered in the media of bronze, fiberglass, clay and metal are displayed. I admired the artworks, as students and teachers bustled in and out of the room. KSA, Karachi's premier art institute, founded in 1965, has produced successive generations of distinguished painters and is now the 'nursery' for potential art teachers, who are to be found in art departments and schools throughout Karachi. Located in the centre of the city, the school has trained hundreds of young people for successful careers in art and art-related fields, a phenomenon that has directed the course of Rabia Zuberi's life, but at that moment she wanted time for herself. "It's too busy here," she said, "Let's go home." So we made for the peace of the artist's residence, with its furniture designed in a highly distinctive manner by one of Rabia's first graduate students, now with a flourishing business of his own.

Rabia Zuberi, Pakistan's foremost woman sculptor and the recipient of numerous awards, is a smiling, warmly approachable person, who has dedicated her life to her art and to art education. I asked her who was the first woman in the subcontinent in the 20th century to venture into the field of sculpture. "Novera Ahmed of Bengal was the first, and by the '50s she was well known. I believe I am the second woman to become a sculptor. My journey into the third dimension was a natural progression. My family was all artistic in one way or another. Mother was good at sewing and she used to make us toys and dolls out of cloth. I copied her, but using clay as my material. I loved to be outdoors making shapes and baking them in the sun. There were clay shapes of babies and animals and flowers, all the things little girls like, spread all over the house and garden. I continued doing this for quite a long time.

Meanwhile, my sister Hajra was showing signs of being a talented painter.

"After finishing our formal education at the Aligarh University, there were no parental objections when Hajra and I sought admission at the Lucknow College of Art in 1960. By that time, I had won a National Award for sculpture from an All-India Youth Festival. We were fortunate that our college was very well equipped and well staffed by distinguished teachers. All the students worked hard to match their standards and were very serious about the work. I was the only girl majoring in sculpture, but my work received as much consideration as that of the boys. I am essentially a 'hands-on' sculptor who enjoys modeling soft materials such as clay or wax as an initial process. I have also worked with cement and used carving as a method."

Although, during her years of training, the staff and students made no gender distinction, Rabia's early work was obviously that of a woman. Looking at photographs of her work in the early 1960s, one finds they are a continuation of her youthful inclination towards gentle images. A sleeping dog with her pups is shaped from cement. There are crested cockerels, chicks, and children sleeping or playing. The entire sequence of her work of this period is devised with precise detail and it appears to be a celebration of unspoiled innocence. At college, Rabia recalls that she was encouraged to sketch the various images that appealed to her, later to render them in clay. At home, she continued to mould clay forms from life. Encouragement followed in the form of top honours for sculpture awarded from National Youth Exhibitions held in Calcutta and New Delhi in 1961, 1962 and 1963.

After graduation from the Lucknow College of Art in 1963, Rabia migrated to Pakistan along with her family and settled in Karachi. Both she and Hajra were initially disappointed in the art scene and, apart from Laila Shahzada, found few women practicing art. At that time, the only sources of art education in Karachi were casual classes held at the Arts Council and foreign cultural centres. Gulgee and Sadequain had established reputations and among the younger group were dynamic artists such as Bashir Mirza, Kohari, and Mansur Rahi, the painter who became Hajra's husband.

The changes in Rabia's life were echoed in her maturing work. She began to experiment with the idea of abstract thought and feelings

expressed through form. Strangely, her work from this period resembles the uncluttered distinctive shape of the streamlined Cycladic period of art. Responding to the uncertainties and realities of change, she stripped her sculpture of details and pared the forms to basics in order to reassemble them, just as her life was stripped of the surroundings of her youth to re-form in a new country and circumstances. From these times Rabia concluded that the artist is a product of his circumstances, the source of his own inspiration. "An artist is never finished with the learning process. Life is a source of discovery and every day brings its own miracles."

1964 was a landmark in Karachi's art history. The Zuberi sisters set up Meena Art Academy, a forerunner of the Karachi School of Art, and enlisted Mansur Rahi's aid. Bashir Mirza opened the first commercial gallery and Laila Shahzada created ripples in the media with an uncharacteristic series of paintings titled 'Drift Moods'. There was a lot of optimism in art circles and although there was no art market to speak of, there was a small and friendly art community.

It was during the '70s, when the Karachi School of Art was well established, that Rabia began to analyse the human form, working in a simplified method that gave reference to abstraction. Mohammad Jami, one of Karachi's earliest art critics, wrote a monograph on Rabia Zuberi in which he referred to her work of the '70s as the most significant in her life. "Throughout this period, she worked very hard and made a deep study of human forms and transformed them in her sculpture in a very significant way... She inducted inner and outer spaces as an element of her work."

Rabia explains the areas of investigation involved: "Delicacy of texture, the beauty of line, balance and weight were vital to the issues I addressed. The 'Dignity of Labour' series was a body of work inspired by the labourers working on the Karachi School of Art, which opened in Gulshan. Between the dream and the realization was a span of seven years. While the building was in process, I would spend hours sketching the workers, fascinated and awed by the rhythmic movements they brought to their work. My homage to their strength, grace and the practical beauty of the human form gave rise to the extensive series interpreted in various media: drawing, sketching and sculpture developed in single forms and groups of figures."

In the 1980s, Rabia looked at 'design' as an element of sculpture while retaining a simplified form. She approached drapery as a gender issue raising the question of identity. "The tradition of the *dopatta* or veil in Muslim culture is recognized as a vital aspect of female identity. Customs and circumstances are the tools that form our personal outlook on life – our vision. Incorporating the *doppata* into sculpture was an enjoyable process. My aim was to create the suggestion of a flowing accessory to the pure lines of the form. I used this motif in a sequence of relief work, paintings and collage."

Attempts to merge traditional values into contemporary views on three-dimensional arts were curtailed by the violence that had erupted in the province of Sindh and in Karachi. During the latter years of the '80s and the early years of the '90s, an entirely new, very troubled mood was discernable in Rabia Zuberi's work, manifested in the anguished series of works collectively titled 'Quest for Peace'. "The futile loss, sense of injustice, fear and suffering prevalent at that time dominated my work. It was by way of being a personal protest, a demand for peace. I and many of my teachers and students were living almost in a state of siege. Many artists expressed their outrage during these years and by documenting their work, one may preserve the history of the era. Those who lived through them will certainly not forget those times." In Pakistan, Rabia's work in the field of sculpture has been acknowledged by way of National Awards in 1986, 1987, 1988, and in 1996, when she was awarded top honours during the 7th National Visual Arts Exhibition.

Talking about art in general, the sculptor mused: "The major issue concerning art in Pakistan has been the direct foreign influence in terms of form and its appreciation. Over the last two decades, global perspectives have changed; everything is being redefined. But this is not a new phenomenon; art has changed from era to era from the beginning of history and will continue to do so. All that is good and worthwhile will survive and adapt."

Dawn Gallery: February 3, 2001

Qudsia Nisar, Water Colour

Qudsia Nisar
Water Colour

An artist looks at human fate – Qudsia Nisar

Qudsia Nisar's identity lies in her work. Her life, thoughts and feelings, pain and joy, are conveyed with vibrant energy through painting. Since the 1970s when I first met her it was never without a background of painting, whether in her office, her studio or carried in the voluminous bag. Nor have we discussed subjects unrelated to art. She is a very private person and does not care to talk of her life outside art. It is her art that continues to be the ultimate source of pleasure and her solace. As was the case with Ahmed Parvez, Qudsia reacts to anguish with stunning kaleidoscopes of colour.

Acknowledged as one of Pakistan's most high-profile artists, with three decades of art achievement and experience to draw upon, had she acquiesced to the expectations of her family during her formative years, Qudsia may have been lost to the field of science and the world denied the delightful playfulness that pervades her treatment of the most profound subjects.

Born in Karachi, Qudsia grew up in Faisalabad, where her father headed the Department of Physics at the Agricultural University and her mother practised medicine. In the family tradition, Qudsia studied science subjects until it was time for her matriculation, when she took her fate in her hands and switched to art subjects. After completing a B.A. degree, she was offered a scholarship from the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University, and there she met the woman who became a lifelong 'role model'. Qudsia's own approach to art education owes much to the extraordinary educationist and artist, Professor Anna Molka Ahmed. It was Anna Molka who encouraged Qudsia to study for a Master's degree in Fine Art and was delighted when the young woman

graduated as a Gold Medallist.

Qudsia remained at the University, where she taught for several years. In those years, her work was inclined towards a strong, rather academic style, but there were differences with her professor when Qudsia developed a viewpoint that increasingly explored dimensions outside the tangible. I enjoy Qudsia's recollections of Anna Molka Ahmed and invariably lead the conversation in that direction. Qudsia related how, after her graduation from the Punjab University Fine Art Department in1968, she felt a change was needed and applied for a teaching post through a government commission. Says Qudsia: "The papers were all completed and only Anna Molka's signature was needed, so I approached her with trepidation and the papers to be signed. The professor promptly tore them up and threw them in the basket. 'Do you think I would let you go?' was her reply."

Qudsia fared better than A.R. Nagori, who had an ashtray thrown at him when he announced his own departure, but she stayed on at the university, after all, to teach until the early 1970s, when she rejoined her parents, who had by then settled in Karachi. Qudsia acknowledges the invaluable experience that teaching under Anna Molka Ahmed's guidance proved to be. In Karachi, she was to bring to her teaching career the dedication and sense of vocation learnt from her own art mentors.

The artist's first solo exhibition was held in Karachi in 1973. Many others followed, in which various series, probing human thoughts and feelings, were expressed in the medium of watercolour. She took spontaneous action painting to new dimensions, preserving the intuitive aspect of the painting process by escaping rigid, pre-conceived aesthetics. For the first time in Pakistan, watercolour was used as a medium for Abstract Expressionism.

Qudsia muses, " The individuality of my work compared with the art scene of that time can be described as (a breath of) fresh air for Karachi artists. I was welcomed by the established names in art and it was interesting to feel the communication. The media and art enthusiasts alike received my work with encouraging interest. I endeavoured to

break the perceptual complexity of 'seeing', and this purified abstraction was a new concept and as such was initially shocking for some. Then painters such as Ghalib Baqar and Zahin Ahmed came out of their established forms and achieved some remarkable work. The opportunity to exhibit abroad in groups and in solo exhibitions was a very educative experience. My work was viewed from different dimensions. Critics considered me an artist of modern sensibilities using watercolour, which they considered the media of the east. In my paintings, the mood of this media moved far from tradition."

In the 1970s and 1980s Qudsia Nisar was one of a trio of young women artists who dominated the Karachi art scene. The invigorating boldness of their work and individual viewpoints heralded a fresh view of art and art education. Nahid Raza opened her own dynamic establishment, StudioArt; Meher Afroze was one of the first members of the faculty of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture; and Qudsia, after several years as a senior instructor, was appointed Principal of the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts, a post she held for a decade.

When we met recently, Qudsia was wearing her favourite, full-skirted style of dress in gypsy colours: every inch an artist. Talking of scheduled exhibitions and describing the enormous body of work completed in recent months appeared to energise her. She darted among her paintings, pointing out the diverse aspects, selecting pieces for display.

"In my numerous series, I have constantly brought changes into the idiom, initiating numerous versions, retaining and advancing the diversity of approach. I agree with Jackson Pollack's statement that painting is a state of self-discovery; every good artist paints what he is. To me, every painting is a voyage of discovery and that is enormously exciting."

As one committed to art education, Qudsia is concerned at the dearth of trained art teachers in schools. "An art teacher's training programme is desperately needed," she states, and abhors the custom of placing promising students in the field without proper guidance or the opportunity to widen their experience.

Some of the paintings we examined in her studio evoked a lighthearted mood inspired by a visit to the famous gold and silver market. On a

variety of dazzling surfaces to a layered watercolour wash technique she introduces metallic paint, vertical lines with crayons, gestural marks and glyphs illustrating an intricate idiom of shapes, circles, grids, printed from a wooden block.

Qudsia looks back over her many experiences of foreign travel, beginning with a study visit to Germany in 1985. Invitations to exhibit her work in that country followed in 1986, and that same year she was awarded an Honorary Diploma in Fine Arts from the Academia Italia, Italy. Two years later, the Academia Italia again conferred an award on her for 'Significant Contribution to the Progress of Modern Art'. In 1987, she was chosen to represent Pakistan in a Conference of Women Painters in Paris and has lectured on modern art in China and in Japan and shown her work in the USA, Canada and London. The artist commemorates all the many journeys, mental and physical, undertaken in her life, with tiny marks appearing as footprints on surfaces that assimilate myriad abstract designs. Her characteristic style owes much to transparent watercolour washes, brush strokes moving freely across the surface and elements of calligraphic graffiti that have become signature elements in the work. From the beginning, her work has been spontaneous. She allows the brush to transmit a landscape conveyed from an inner source. "Colours, symbols, marks and innovation travel from an inner landscape through my arm and spill their way to freedom through my brush."

Dawn Gallery: October 27, 2001

Jimmy Engineer, Oil on Canvas

Walking to make a difference – Jimmy Engineer

Chaos. A tangled confusion of bodies and despairing cries. Blood, carnage and violence. These spectres haunted the dreams of Jimmy Engineer for ten years. Between the years 1970 and 1980, his troubled parents witnessed their son's disturbed nights, saw him talking in his sleep as though to another presence. When he described his dreams to an elder in the Lahore neighbourhood in which he lived, Jimmy was told that he was describing the partition of the subcontinent.

Jimmy Engineer had no knowledge or experience of the turmoil of partition. His family, Parsi by birth, were not personally affected by the circumstances and never talked of those days in his presence. He believes the horrifying dreams were echoes of an earlier life, one that perhaps ended in violence during the riots of the times. He is convinced that for good or bad, deep impressions may be carried into further lives and sometimes an 'overlap' takes place. Déjà vu.

During the period 1973-80, Jimmy painted panoramic scenes of the migration of people between the newly divided countries. Usually the paintings were large in scale, great landscapes filled with lines of people carrying their children and hastily wrapped belongings. The process of painting these epics gave him some mental respite. The period of restlessness abruptly ended in '81. Just as the dreams had appeared, so they vanished. The artist described how, in the process of painting a railway station peopled with panic-stricken hordes struggling to board a train, the force urging him on was suddenly gone. After a long, troubled spell, he was able to sleep in undisturbed peace.

A tall, bearded kind-eyed man, restless in his movements, he is an individual deeply concerned with causes. Jimmy Engineer devotes his

time to giving help where it is needed and painting landscapes and figurative works; the earlier experiments with Abstract art have been abandoned. As a socially conscious activist, his 'walks for causes' are justly famous. In an epic expedition, he spent a year walking from Karachi to the Khyber Pass, journeying through villages and speaking with the people of rural areas. There have been many shorter walks in Karachi, and he has led groups to Hyderabad and Sukkur. He has walked with children for causes related to them, ending up at the Pizza Hut for treats.

He walks with purpose, striding along the roads in a pristine kurta-shalwar outfit, his full beard neatly trimmed. The street people call out to him, "Haji Sahib...." People hail him in the streets of Karachi, stop him to relate their problems. He listens patiently to all, speaks on their behalf at police thanas, writes them notes introducing them to doctors, and advises them on innumerable matters.

On his long walks, Jimmy spends time with villagers en route; he talks to them about communal projects, asks them to work together, to help each other, and mediates small squabbles. He firmly believes that by working together, many ills may be eradicated. "It's not always money that people need," he says.

He is often asked to initiate walks in order to create awareness; to interest sponsors for a multitude of causes. His causes vary, encompassing the lack of health facilities in rural areas or towns, the problems of special children and groups or beleaguered individuals. "When you need my help," he says, "I will know and I will be in touch." This is the only contact one has with Jimmy and he does invariably turn up when needed.

As a boy, he dreamt of walking in different environs, streets and jungles. These dreams became reality when he began his long walks for diverse causes in 1990. Born in Quetta on August 13, 1954, most of his childhood memories are of Lahore. Jimmy grew up imbibing his parents' concern for the people around them. They believed in giving practical assistance according to individual needs, whether lending a hand, listening to problems, or feeding the hungry. Engineer senior was

a great admirer of Faisalabad's Sufi Burkhat Ali and, accompanied by Jimmy, visited him several times. When Jimmy grew older, he visited the Sufi on his own. Both father and son drew great spiritual strength from the saintly mystic.

Longing to express himself in paint, Jimmy joined the National College of Art, Lahore, but admits to being a far from model student. His primary concern was for "space in which to paint". Most of his time as a student was spent painting on the campus during the night. In his third year at the NCA, he acquired a studio of his own and left the college. In spite of his independent attitude, the teachers were kind to him and he speaks with admiration of Khalid Iqbal, Colin David and Shakir Ali. He has great respect for Anna Molka Ahmed, Sadequain and Ahmed Parvez, all of whom he found a source of encouragement. But there were also negative attitudes to be contended with. There is a particular incident that, he claims, significantly influenced his thinking. It occurred, the artist relates, when the Lahore Museum held a group exhibition of paintings which included, on merit, a large canvas painted by Jimmy Engineer, at that time an art student. A few mature artists reacted so vehemently that their will prevailed. The painting was removed from the display. To this day, the Jimmy muses on the insecurities shown in artists' circles.

Sufi Burkhat Ali was extremely interested in Jimmy's work. Shown photographs of the 10x4 feet mural illustrating the transmigration that took place during partition, the detail and power of the work, even in the reproduction, was evident. The Sufi was quiet for a long time and then predicted that the painting and its message would be seen far and wide. Sure enough, it is a work of art that has been reproduced through transparencies in books, museums and institutes.

Between 1978 and 1985, the artist participated in numerous group shows in Lahore and Islamabad, and represented Pakistan at an art congress in Japan. In 1985, he shifted to Karachi and became active in local art events. His paintings were acquired by various business houses, and his work was shown in exhibitions abroad. At a time when he was rapidly acquiring recognition as an artist, Jimmy began to spend more

and more time on social work. His causes encompass the aged, the handicapped, special children, and individuals without recourse, in fact anyone in need of help, regardless of class or creed. He recalls that a highlight of his social activism was when he was able to present Mother Theresa with a substantial cheque and in return received her blessing.

In 1998, several exhibitions of his paintings were mounted. In Karachi, a series of his calligraphy-art exhibitions took place in aid of poor women and children, another was held in aid of an Islamic Hospice in London. Simultaneously, there was an exhibition of his work held at the Pakistan Consulate, New York. Meanwhile Jimmy led an anti-smoking walk organized by the Cancer Society of Multan. The new millennium began with the artist's large mural on the freedom movement of Pakistan being selected as the object of the month at the Karachi Museum. Several sponsored walks followed; many more are in the pipeline.

Since 1976, Jimmy Engineer has notched up numerous awards for painting and humanitarian services. His siblings are all settled abroad, but Jimmy will not consider living elsewhere. He vows he loves this country and lives by the words: "Make a difference".

Dawn Review: August 2000

Nahid Raza
Acrylic on Canvas

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Acrylic on Canvas

Pages of a diary – Nahid Raza

Nahid Raza's studio glowed with light and colour reflected off the paintings prepared for an exhibition. Individual works of varying sizes and sequences of three panels continued the saga of women, described as a 'diary' of intimate emotions, the sorrows, joys, strengths and weaknesses of a woman's life expressed with disarming honesty. Bold and adventurous, the artist's very personal style is focused on the experiences of a woman struggling to define her own space and identity, guided by the strength of her belief in the invincible resolution of the female spirit. Portrayed as figurative images, personal and biographical allusions often appear in the form of motifs.

The woman series began in 1990 with a collection of paintings exhibited collectively as 'To Speak without Words', in which she expressed in a unique personal idiom, and without inhibition, her feelings as a single parent, breadwinner and concerned daughter of aging parents. "There are times in life," she said, explaining her recent work, "when one sees one's surroundings like a mirage, a shimmering beautiful potential which is actually an illusion. As a contemporary artist, with every new collection of work I try to initiate a dialogue inspired by life and its memories of good and bad chapters along the way."

She spoke for all women in further sequences such as 'I'm not a Peacock, I'm a Woman' and, as the series developed, she visualized her thoughts with a technique, originality and compositional maturity that amplified her themes. The artist's perception of women's lives universally is interpreted with changing emotions, veering from admiration to despair in the complexity of paint and textured surfaces. Yet the essence of her work evokes a personal experience of life. While I examined tactile surfaces, the artist explained her work process, starting with surfaces covered with a coat of white paint followed by a coat of beeswax. The

surface is then lightly layered with acrylic paint, at least four coats, in a technique that allows varied tones to emerge, creating a veiled metaphor for past and present experience. The work is vibrant with the sensuality of colour and form and the phenomenon of how one defines the other.

Widely travelled, her ability to depict the problems common to women of her generation in many parts of the world has made her one of the most admired artists of her generation. She is of that school of artists who, as independent observers, correlate the outside world to the central realities of their own existence. Obsessive about her work, she paints constantly, reflecting various periods in her life with intuitive awareness.

"I try to dispel sorrows, using light, bright paint to throw away sad thoughts. Particularly in this current exhibition, colours overlap, just as in life sorrow overlaps happiness, and in the process often decorative elements enter the work."

The textures in Nahid's work are lively, resounding with energy. "See the depth of the texture, and you will see the depth of life," she says. The expression or observation differs in each painting. The timeless issues raised are accented with figures that may be compared to the solitary subjects of miniature art. "One always thinks one is loved or appreciated, often deluding oneself. I've overheard women asking each other, 'Are you happy in your family life?'" This conversation was reflected in a painting featuring two seated figures and flowers without petals, titled 'Loves Me, Loves Me Not'. The artist contends that this questioning relates to all situations in life, the home, the workplace and relationships.

The recipient of national awards, Nahid Raza's work has also been exhibited in many other parts of the world, including Germany, the USA and Austria, where in 2002 her work was featured at a solo exhibition at the Vienna Museum accompanied by an extensive catalogue. The introverted subject she explores reflects the struggle of an artist to analyze modern sensibilities and the desire to demolish stifling limitations. This sensitive issue is touched upon in the vertical panels that are sectioned off with bars of paint. A figure confined to one of three spaces

is seen within the limitations of the bars. In these pieces, there are none of Nahid's signature motifs; she has done away with all but the essential elements. As she explained: she needed the space and so created it. Here the artist celebrates the surface of her work by her use of colour: rich vermilion highlighted with lustrous gold, creamy yellows, blues and ochres darkening into earth shades. "I feel I must show the important colour aspect of a woman's life, it surrounds her like an aura. Though her own life may lack lustre, she gives colour and sustenance to all around her."

The artist's idiom is a narrative of metaphors. Sturdy figures without heads represent her opinions of the common resentment against intellectual women in society.

"The body remains strong," she explains. "Women are blessed with physical and mental strength to draw upon throughout their lives to equip them for the pivotal roles they must play." There is gaiety, too, an inherent resilience and unquenchable optimism; flowers appear as symbols of comfort and solace; friends get together. "We enjoy the happiness of friends, gather together in our homes, like to sing and exchange ideas. My paintings show strong women, who fulfill all their responsibilities. I have come to the conclusion that women are miracles and I juxtapose decorative elements with distortion, which is about survival."

Perhaps her philosophy is best summed up in the title of a painting of a recumbent figure. "I'm not sleeping – Even in dreams."

She Magazine, 2004

Mehtab Amar
Water Colour

Athar Jamal
Water Colour

Athar Jamal
Water Colour

Finding beauty in Karachi – Ather Jamal and Mehtab Amar

Painting in the classic style that is recognizably the work of Ather Jamal, the artist shows his latest work in exhibition at a Karachi gallery in a two-artist display shared with his wife, watercolorist Mehtab Amar. While continuing the realist approach of their individual art idiom, both have introduced changes in their work.

Mehtab Amar paints the plant life that brightens the Karachi landscape in cheerful profusion, whether growing against the brick walls of large houses or the cracked facades of old cement structures. A frequent visitor to local garden nurseries, Amar adopted the custom of painting the blossoms and shiny leaves of growing plants at various times of day. Observing the flowers that grow unbidden outside of the nurseries, virtually unnoticed except to the sensitive eye, she began to make a study of how and where these plants grow and found them in the most unusual spots. Carrying her paints with her she sketched and painted the plants on the spot and later adopted these blossoms as a symbol of the city. Marvelling at the tenacity of nature growing through neglect, lack of water and even, in some cases, without soil. Amar has discovered plants growing from crevices in a wall from seeds deposited by birds.

Taking her subject further, Amar made a study of a variety of crotons, creepers and trees that grow in Karachi and in the process discovered a variety of colourful species, flame dotted leaves of a croton, delicate white zinnias, lilac coloured sheflara blossoms and other exotic hardy plants. In previous exhibitions the artist had painted her subject against a soft, abstract, cloudy white background. In her latest work the larger surfaces are filled with flowers and leaves that have taken on a new boldness and sharper edge. An accident to her right hand and wrist kept her away from

her paints for a period of time but she continued to visit nurseries and discover species of plants new to her.

Now back at her easel, the artist paints with a spontaneous method, often using a wet-on-wet technique to create luminous areas of gradient colour. In some areas the paint is allowed to dry before adding further layers. Soothing and optimistic, Amar's work pays homage to the gifts of nature shining through dust, parched earth and often, despairs. She reminds us that there is beauty everywhere for those who are able to see it.

Talking of his work Ather Jamal explained: "As an artist my concerns are with the numerous separate levels of actuality that co-exist without interaction. Karachi is a prime example of this phenomenon. All around this sophisticated city are small pockets of rural life, settlements that spring up overnight complete with livestock. It is amazing how the people cling to their own way of life and traditions, creating their own space and norms of existence."

As well as a selection of superb watercolours, Ather Jamal shows a number of pieces in oils. These are large, dramatic works that centre on the figure as the subject of the painting, while assimilating the surrounding area as a vital factor of the successful composition. In Jamal's figure studies, the geometrically inclined vertical and horizontal planes of the background contrast with the soft form and drapery of the subject. Focusing on the strong, dark form of a woman, the artist started his oils with the steel blue toned head of the subject and worked from there. It is an exciting study rendered dramatically in contrasting dark and bright colours, dark skin tones, yellow, pink and blue draperies, and shadowed in the style of the Impressionist with colours taken from surrounding objects. Thus blue, gray and earth tones reflect on and from the face of the subject.

Another large scaled work showed a strong figurative element that was, Jamal explained, his point of departure'. Seen from an unusual angle the painting of a reclining figure against a pattern of abstract planes of colour, gives emphasize to the division of the surface. Ather Jamal is a pioneer of the `en plein air' painting method and excels in capturing the many facets and moods of Karachi, its diverse building and vehicles, scurrying crowds and surprising signs of nature. In Jamal's paintings trees bring relief to

busy streets and offer a resting place for birds in transit. Vital to the artist's work is the relationship between form and colour, he seeks inspiration in the source of human existence and the ability of simple people to add colour to the drabbest surroundings or chores.

Dawn Gallery: May 10, 2003

Riffat Alvi, Mixed Media Artwork

"What Colour is your Soil?" Riffat Alvi

Her studio is interesting. On several surfaces there is work in progress in various media: clay, metal and paint. Household items have been ingeniously requisitioned to contain the numerous accoutrements of art. A four-wheel tea trolley, the recipient of tins, bottles and brushes, brings to mind the battered pram habitually used by Sir Stanley Spencer to transport his painting materials around Cookham in England. Against the walls are shelves holding glass jars filled with substances of varying colours. For the uninitiated, the contents of the jars might be mistaken for spices, but those familiar with Riffat Alvi's work are aware of her soil collection, earth acquired from all over the world: Yellow and blue from Africa, pink from Spain, green, orange and shimmering beet-dyed red from France, off-white from England, rich browns and ochres from various sites in Pakistan. These are the pigments used by the artist in her paintings, a technique that has earned her kudos from numerous artists and environmentalists, culminating in an exhibition of her work titled 'Lost Civilizations' held at the Commonwealth Institute, Leeds in 1993.

Since her graduation from the Karachi School of Art in 1973, Riffat Alvi has been 'on the go'. Blessed with enormous drive and energy, her enthusiasm for the 'project in hand' is unflagging. Whatever she takes on is researched, followed through and implemented with precision. Enormously happy with her circumstances, it seems she is on a permanent 'high'. As she says, " I am involved with an on-going affair with the earth."

Born in Poona, one of seven sisters and two brothers, Riffat comes from an army family. Her father, an engineer, was in architecture and

design and it is from him, she believes, that she inherited her great passion for art. After finishing her formal education at the Presentation Convent, and with the family settled in Karachi, Riffat began her art practice with Hamidur Rehman at the Pakistan American Cultural Center. "From him I learnt about watercolour." She experimented with sculpture, hiding the three-dimensional pieces behind flowerpots, out of range of her mother's sight.

"Eventually, unable to withstand my deep interest, my parents allowed me to join the Karachi School of Art and became very supportive and tolerant of all my experiments."

Talking about her student life, Riffat spoke with warmth of the established artists of the those days: "Ahmed Parvez, Shakir Ali, Zainul Abedin, Sadequain, Laila and Bashir Mirza visited the KSA informally and encouraged a dialogue with the students. Initially, we didn't know who the artists were, and when Rahi introduced us to Zainul Abedin as his own teacher we were quite excited. The art atmosphere was cordial. I don't find that happening these days. An artist I met in America explained that artists needed to spend more time in their studios in their old age. Perhaps the fault lies with the schools that should, but rarely do, schedule visits by established artists as extra-curricular activities. Our generation was unsophisticated, eager to please, holding the senior artists in great esteem.

As a student, her lively personality and eloquence led to a Radio Pakistan project which involved interviewing well-known artists. She remembers Ahmed Parvez as an outstanding speaker. "People had told me how difficult Parvez could be, but I found him very nice, extremely kind and gentle to the young. I remember his advice: 'Tell the students not to take their brains above their height.' - in other words to preserve humility. Parvez came across as a patriot, praising the freedom he enjoyed to paint any subject he liked. He died, of course, before the restrictive '80s."

Talking about her post-graduation period, Riffat described time spent as the Cultural Coordinator of the Pakistan American Cultural Center, where she began pottery classes for children. It was then she began a

practice that continued spasmodically for years. Travelling with her lunch in a paper bag to New Karachi she explored the properties of clay and learned the art of the local potters. Always a go-getter, in 1982 Riffat landed a job that was the envy of her peers, as Handicraft Designer with the Sindh Small Industries, under the auspices of the UN. There she worked with a team of international design advisors. "This was a very influential and important phase in my art career. I was working with the Sindh Small Industries for the orientation of the design of handicrafts, and there were designers of a very high stature coming from the UN. My job was to coordinate with them and work on designs. We worked on a project coming from Geneva to help other nations develop their handicrafts. This was a wonderful experience for me. It involved pottery, textiles, onyx, jewellery and lacquer crafts, et cetera, and we travelled through the interior of Sindh and the Punjab. It was my first introduction to the rural areas and I realised how much had been lacking in the curriculum of the college. I explained to these experts the reasons for my lack of background knowledge in various handicraft techniques, and they were marvellous. They taught me so much and I was an avid learner."

In 1986. Riffat was given a scholarship for a project that took her to Dallas and Los Angeles, USA, to study design orientation. There she participated in setting up craft exhibitions, then went on to Mexico and New York. On her return to Pakistan, she found it was not possible to implement any of her research, nor to use the knowledge she had acquired. "The policy makers here were quite satisfied to go on as they were. Now many of the old crafts are dying out. The younger generations are not willing to work as their fathers and grandfathers did. I was keen to share my acquired knowledge and I went back to teaching art and design."

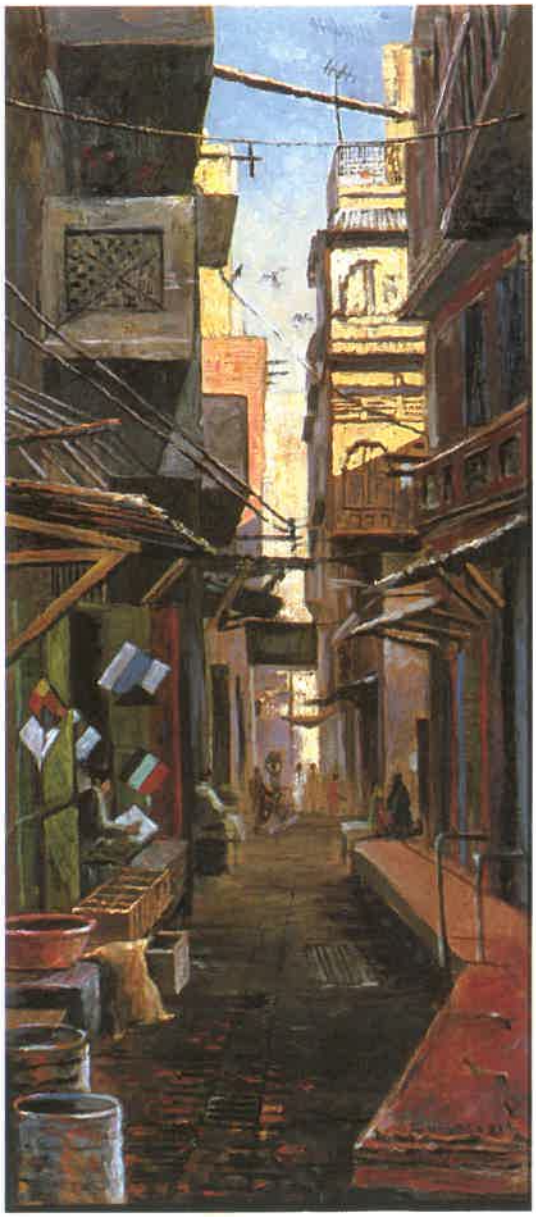
Riffat Alvi held her first solo exhibition at Bashir Mirza's Gallery 2, in 1985. She worked in oils and watercolours and experimented with graphite and pastels on coloured paper. Rothko heavily influenced her earlier style. "I loved the peace and serenity I found in his work," she explained. Later the characteristics of her abstract methods displayed

the predominance of gentle moods and mysticism. Arabesques were perfected and used as a spiritual metaphor for the 'Azaan'. She began to explore ancient civilizations, focusing on Moenjodaro.

The opening of the V.M.Gallery with Riffat Alvi as director was memorable. She had collected the paintings of Pakistan's 'Old Masters', including Fyzee Rehamin, which many people viewed for the first time. Her account of finding the artist's shamefully treated paintings is both fascinating and horrifying, but through this exhibition art enthusiasts became aware of their existence. This event was followed by a slide lecture on Amrita Sher Gil by the artist's nephew, Vivan Sundran, and the V.M.Gallery was up-and-running.

Riffat Alvi has exhibited extensively on an international basis, but there is one journey that changed her life. This was to Zimbabwe in 1990, when she exhibited her work at the National Art Gallery in Harare. In Africa, an artist asked her: "What colour is your soil?" and that question changed her entire outlook. She discovered earth pigments, and from that time on her work evolved into a complex synthesis of ground earth, resins, oils and binders. In London, the veteran artist Alan Davie told her: "Your work is getting deeper into ceramics", and his words appeared prophetic. She continued her personal exploration with the assistance of local potters and studio trained ceramists. In 1999, Riffat attended the Ceramic Millennium Festival in Amsterdam in which 5,000 ceramists participated, and in 2000 took part in an International Ceramics workshop in Athens. That same year she was elected the representative of the Asian Continent at a UN sponsored event in which ceramist Neil Tetkowski created a Mandala, a symbol of the universe constructed of clay and sand contributed by all member states of the United Nations. It was an event tailor-made for Riffat. "it is a mitti se ishq" she said, " Just say I'm married to the earth."

Dawn Gallery: Feb 16, 2002



Ghulam Mustafa, Oil on Board

Not enough hours in the day – Ghulam Mustafa

The walls of Ghulam Mustafa's office at the Punjab Arts Council, where I dropped in recently, were lined with paintings stacked three deep. These, he explained, were part of the exhibition of 75 paintings that he was taking to the Arts Councils in Multan, Faisalabad and 'Pindi the next morning. It is an exercise he has organized numerous times. "People say nothing happens on the other side of the Ravi, and since we can't bring the whole of Multan here, we take exhibitions to them." To Ghulam Mustafa, Deputy Director (Fine Arts) of the Punjab Arts Council, it is all in a day's work. With characteristic energy he makes the final arrangements, never losing his cool or his smile.

Awarded the National Prize in the genre of landscape painting in 1996 at the 7th National Visual Arts Exhibition, Ghulam Mustafa is the recipient of numerous prizes for painting and for designing Punjab Cultural Floats. An active painter, Deputy Director of the Punjab Arts Council and General Secretary of the Artists' Association of the Punjab, he has known and worked closely with many of the outstanding personalities in Pakistan's short art history. He is very much at the heart of art activity in Lahore, with a wide variety of experience in the visual and performing arts. He is frequently on call in various capacities and always there to untangle the knots.

"My family was initially keen I should go into practical studies, commerce and accounting subjects, areas I was very poor in, and I realized that sort of life was not for me. I applied to the National College of Art and got admission in 1970 and life began.

It was a golden age: Professor Shakir Ali was the Principal of NCA at that time, Mian Ijazul Hassan taught us the History of Art, and our

teachers were Khalid Iqbal and Colin David, who were to become best friends. My class-fellows were Iqbal Hussain and Bashir Ahmed. During our second year, a lot of people used to come to the NCA and buy our paintings. As they say, buy an artist before he is known and while he is affordable. I sold my first painting while I was in the second year for 500 rupees and that was quite a sum in those days. I had a lot of things going on. I was into set designing as well as painting and we worked very seriously. Shakir Ali took a great interest in the students and their work. He was very close to Khalid Iqbal and often came to his office or the studio where the students worked. He was a very supportive principal."

Ghulam Mustafa is well known as a painter of dramatically luminous cityscapes, exploring the lives of the people of the walled city. Less known as a portraitist, he is equally at ease in that genre. Although he remains very close to Khalid Iqbal, his approach to landscape is quite different. Speaking of Khalid Iqbal's influence on his students and the Punjab School of Landscape Painting, Mustafa explained the influence of Khalid Iqbal to be found in the great teacher's total integrity. " The essence of Khalid Sahib is that he paints with 'Sutchi' and in that lies his true influence, with me and many of his students. Khalid saves his energy for his work, sees only close friends and still goes out everyday on a motor bike with his painting materials."

Mustafa, who was born in the walled city in his grandfather's house in Bhatti Gate, is a real Lahori, one whose roots are firmly embedded. His work resounds with the culture of the walled streets, a culture he knows and loves. "I started painting street scenes in 1972; I still have the first street scene I completed. I relish the old architecture, which is sadly dying; there are wonderful spots that have vanished. I can show you lots of streets and balconies with marvelous features."

In 1975, the Arts Council was formed in the National Assembly and Ghulam Mustafa who graduated from the NCA in 1974, was selected for the post of designer.

"I was so happy to be selected for the post and the best part was that my boss was Moyene Najmi; he was the deputy director, a very fine

person. I was hired as the assistant director, and after Moyene Najmi left I became the deputy director. Whatever I have learned about the Arts Council was from Moyene Najmi. He trained me and supported me very much. He was a brilliant artist who painted very few but very fine paintings."

A diverse programme of cultural activities was initiated by the Punjab Arts Council, and Mustafa described the circumstances in which he became involved, first as teacher, then as principal of the art classes held in the evenings. "Khalid Iqbal called me one day and said, 'Look, I've been teaching here for some time, now I must have time to paint, so please take over." Mustafa complied and working with him was Naseem Qazi. When Sadequain was in Lahore, he would call Mustafa to assist him with his work in the National Bank and the Lahore Museum. "Sadequain used to say 'Mustafa, come and help', so I would assist in filling up the inks and covering texture."

A founder member of the Artists Association of Punjab, as its General Secretary, Ghulam Mustafa is active on many fronts. The association was established seventeen years ago, with Miss Qazi as the first Chairperson, assisted by Khalid Iqbal, Mian Ijazul Hasan and other senior artists. The association was very clear in its aims: to promote the work of artists and educate artists and citizens about art and their cultural tradition. Only practising artists were invited to join and the AAP began with 30 associate members. Now there are about 160 members, all 'working artists' and the initial aims of the association remain the same.

Mustafa says, "It is my pleasure to work for art and I have done so for many years. We have a very good team in the AAP, such as Rahat Masood, Kahkashan Jafri and Shella Farooq. Now Sardar Asif is on the committee and he is painting too. When he was in Aitcheson College, he was another student of Khalid Iqbal's, and he did some very good work until he went abroad for his education. He has done a lot to encourage art and artists. We invite all members to exhibit annually and for the last four years, have invited artists from other regions and made it a National Art Exhibition, followed by a seminar on art-related topics.

Lots of students attend the seminar and the month-long exhibition. We inform the local schools, who respond with enthusiasm, and sometimes there are as many as 200 visitors a day.

"A lot of new artists have emerged from the annual exhibitions, like R.M.Naeem, Ali Asmat, Mughees Riaz. Artists are coming closer together, selling their work and getting good exposure from the association. I believe that buyers will be created when there is good work. During the exhibition, paintings are hung on condition that they are recent work and not previously exhibited. There is keen competition and everyone wants to give their best work for display. We are trying to encourage associations in other provinces. Quetta is doing well and have mounted a number of group exhibitions at the Arts Council, Quetta."

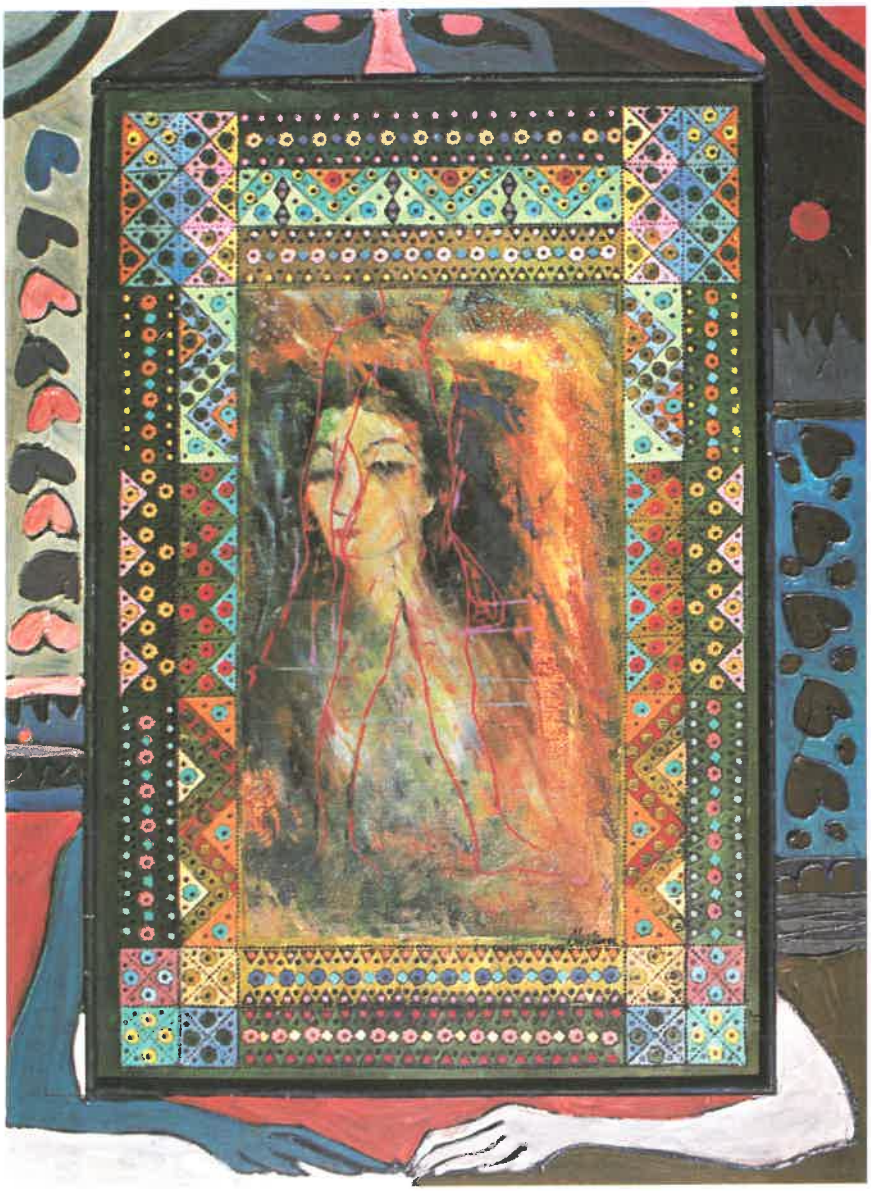
A veteran of numerous solo and group exhibitions, Ghulam Mustafa is renowned for his large canvases, the unique treatment of light and shade opening areas that add mysticism to the practicability of busy streets and their inhabitants. A large horizontally formatted panorama hanging in Mustafa's home was painted from the rooftop of Iqbal Hussain's studio. It consists of two, seven-foot wide canvases, which had to be pulled up to the roof from the street with ropes.

"I have always been a hands-on painter, taking my paints to the streets. Sometimes my wife and children are concerned that I'm out in the streets in hot weather, but when I'm painting I don't notice the heat, I'm so wrapped up in my work. Everyone knows me in the areas I work in and they are so friendly and keep on offering me chai-khana. In fact," he says, laughing, "I could get elected from there. The shopkeepers and residents find it interesting to watch me paint, and they often make suggestions. Particularly when I am creating texture, they say 'When you go home, you will clean the picture.' Sometimes I must find a balcony to work undisturbed and I take someone with me to assist and to talk to people when I want to be left alone. I take several canvases to work on and paint at three intervals during the day: morning, afternoon and evening."

Talking of his experience of travel to the United States, where he began to work in pastels in 1990, Mustafa spoke of the thrill of seeing

original works of art with the naked eye. "In books, you can't get the same presence or feeling. In China, traditional work is going on, one finds sculpture, oils and other media and some very creative work is happening. I would love to travel, to see Italy and Paris. Maybe I'll get some (travel) lines in my hand and see the world." Meanwhile, the phone was ringing, the paintings needed to be packed and another challenge lay ahead.

Dawn Gallery: June 22, 2002



Akram Dost Baloch, Mixed Media

The colours of Balochistan – Akram Dost Baloch

The work of Akram Dost Baloch is direct, uncompromising and dominated by emotion.

Extraordinarily gifted, his powerful multi media work earned him a National Award in 1996, and although he has the ability to paint visually pleasing, 'drawing room' work, he has never compromised on the integrity of his subject or the media used. He expresses his deep concerns for neglected social issues with haunting compositions strengthened by distortion. Posterity may look upon him as the most important painter of his era.

Akram is presently head of the fine arts department of the Balochistan University, a department he was instrumental in setting up in 1984. After his graduation from the National College of Art, he planned to take a post-graduate course of printmaking abroad, but his plans were set aside when faced with the urgent demand for his services. Instead he focussed on establishing the department, in which he has been involved ever since. The genetic propensity towards art in his family is very strong. Brothers, sisters, nephews, cousins and his own children show inherent artistic gifts. In Quetta recently, at the fine arts department of the university, the Quetta Arts Council and in Akram Dost's home, I found many examples of a vibrant legacy. Akram Dost has a deep-seated pride in his heritage and of the handicrafts and arts of his female ancestors.

"My interest in art surfaced when I was a child watching the weaving of carpets, rugs and scarves designed and made by the women of my village. I began to help in small ways and I was fascinated in the designs they created, the materials used and the way the women made dyes

from roots and other organic matter. They managed to get the colours so well calculated and had the process down to an art. I used to copy the geometric designs of the carpets on the walls of our home. Those were my first expressions of art, but my mother wasn't pleased with that."

The artist's work is a marvellous synthesis of two and three-dimensional disciplines. Adept at combining colour and design, he has always avoided painting 'pretty pictures'. His paintings are true museum pieces, works that should be hung to speak to generations to come. In his studio, Akram Dost prepares rolls of canvases with block print borders reflecting the exquisite embroidery of the region. On wooden panels he carves patterns, penetrates the outer veneer of the wood to the pale, soft interior, creating curving lines and zigzag formations. His subject is the oppressed people of his region, a microcosm of the entire world expressed with heart-rending intensity. He uses female imagery to depict exploitation, although he points out that men, too, are downtrodden and without recourse.

Describing his early ventures into art, Akram Dost explained: "I was very interested in art but in our area there were no visual artists or art materials. I discovered art materials when I was doing my matric, but I always had a feel for colour. My direction was unconsciously guided by my roots towards an original and particular point of view. I felt my identity was linked to a deep involvement with the processes of the `hands-on' crafts, the history, antiquities and traditions of my native place. I felt that my family, my village, my surroundings were ripe with creativity.

"I continued my education in Quetta. There was no art movement as such, but I discovered art classes at the Arts Council and joined in the evenings at the same time as Jamal Shah and Kaleem Khan. It was there I first learnt of the National College of Art in Lahore and I was advised to join, but at that time my brothers were medical students and I couldn't raise the necessary funds. I completed a Bachelor of Art degree and then worked as a carpet designer and I created designs with original Balochi folk symbols. I incorporated animals and other ancient motifs. I saw no need to copy Afghan or Irani carpets when our own traditional

designs are so rich and colourful."

"I joined the National College of Art, in 1980 and the atmosphere was completely new to me; everything was strange and it took time to familiarize myself with the new routine. In my second year, the classes became more interesting. Zahoorul Akhlaq was a very good teacher, he did not force his views on us and gave us plenty of freedom to grow and express ourselves. Often now I remember his wisdom. You don't teach people by telling them what to do, but by allowing them the space and the opportunity to develop. We were very fortunate to have a great teaching staff to guide us. There was a healthy spirit of competition amongst the students at that time and lots of group discussions on the concerns of our work. I was very keen to learn print making and wanted to explore etching but there was no press available. Because of the lack of equipment, I worked on other forms of print making and found lithography very interesting. I still feel I would like to explore printmaking further."

In the four years Akram Dost spent at the NCA his work was very different from that of the other students. He combined wood block-printing and carving as well as painting and became interested in the preservation of wood, a subject he examined in relation to doors and furniture. The artist took the exploitation of women within the country as a symbol of oppression that addresses an entire population. He relates that among artists in society it has become a trend to depict socio-political problems as a subject but has never painted for the art market

Two years ago Akram Dost visited Paris, Amsterdam and London for the first time. His exhibition in Paris was very much appreciated, the multi-dimensional artworks were bought by local artists and art lovers who marvelled at the diversity of his expression. For the first time the artist had the opportunity to work from life and he built up a portfolio of masterly drawings.

"At my first exhibition in Paris I sold half of my collection. To interact with French artists, to view paintings of the world's masters and the beautiful museums that house them was a great experience. Though, of course, sales encourage artists, works of art must convey a message,

interact with society, involve art lovers, raise questions and establish a dialogue. I have a socio-political background and I try to reflect this through a subject that contains human depth. In my construction of enlarged wooden panels the colours are dark reflecting the problems in society and referring to roots."

Akram and his wife, a busy doctor, showed me their extensive collection of Balochi embroidery, which they are presently documenting. They explained the philosophy behind the work and the six colours that dominate the patterns of the region. I was dazzled by the beauty and variety of the handwork. Across the floor the pieces were spread, the shining silken thread work each bearing the imprint of a woman's life and dreams.

"Baloch society is rich with arts and crafts like beautiful embroidery but, sadly, no cultural centre has been established and there is noone interested to project these things. Widespread exhibitions of work assimilating the history and culture of the region would foster an awareness. There are three or four active archaeological sites where teams are working, but there is no museum."

Visiting Akram Dost's studio was an unforgettable experience. It is piled high with paintings and numerous surfaces are primed for fresh paintings. There are wondrously wrought panels linked as screens, painted, carved, penetrated with tools. Every process is the work of the artist who finds consolation in the knots and grain of wood. Paintings are executed in a contemporary method, intricate, the artist's aesthetic vision and his energy poured out in often painfully expressive imagery.

Dawn Gallery: October 27, 2002

Kaleem Khan, Oil on Canvas

Shedding light on the landscape – Kaleem Khan

Kaleem Khan is an artist well known for his impressions of Quetta, its environs, and the particular way of life of the area, coloured by the austere beauty of the landscape and its nomadic traditions. Regarded as a 'harsh' area, Balochistan as seen through the eyes of an artist takes on the majesty and beauty of a place unchanged through centuries. Describing this phenomenon, Kaleem explained: " With the passage of time, I have realized how the mountains, which once appeared austere and cold to me, are in fact rich in colour and complex in mood. I am fascinated by the people living in tents, their livestock, their poetry and their legends. Time and dimensions acquire an altogether different dimension in Balochistan."

A collection of the artist's paintings exhibited in Karachi marked his reappearance in the city after an interval of fifteen years and gave art enthusiasts the opportunity to witness the maturing of an artist in his prime. A collection of simplified, superbly painted pieces, autumnal in mood, portrayed a perceptive awareness of his homeland, addressed by a disciplined palette. On canvas, Kaleem Khan creates a vibrant, mysterious atmosphere informed by history, folklore and the seasons. Like the city of Paris, Quetta is suffused by a light unique to the area, a quality the artist strives to capture.

Acknowledged for his work in the field of landscape painting, Kaleem owns that his first love was music and he still sings on occasion. His youthful ambition was to play the piano, but in his neighbourhood there were "no Ustads" and few opportunities to learn music. Speaking about his early art experience, Kaleem explained: "From our area, the first graduate of the National College of Art was Tareen Sahib, whom we all regarded with great respect. He was a very encouraging influence, advising me to try for the National College of Art, so I set off for Lahore

to apply for admission and was delighted to be accepted. Now for this I had to pay a fee of fifteen hundred rupees. I remember it very well because at the time I had completed two portraits for the Consul General of Iran who had commissioned the work for a fee of four thousand rupees. So everything was all settled and I really think that it all came together with help 'from Above'."

Kaleem Khan joined the National College of Art in 1980, along with Jamal Shah and Akram Dost, and on the first day of college, instructor Saeed Akhtar called the three boys from Quetta and told them to forget whatever they knew and to concentrate on drawing. "Without a mastery of drawing, you can do nothing," he pointed out. Kaleem Khan took his words to heart. "I used to fill sketchbooks with drawings and that habit has remained with me. I usually carry a book around and when I'm waiting for my children or have a few minutes to spare, I automatically start drawing whatever is around me."

Kaleem has an inherent skill for capturing a likeness. Before joining the college he had painted several portraits but has no idea from where his talent sprang. His family was more inclined to practical matters; they were agriculturists and suchlike, and there is no record of artistic talent in his background.

"In the first year at NCA, I was instructed by Saeed Akhtar. I loved painting, enjoyed using oils and initially thought I would focus on portraiture. In my second year I was taught by Khalid Iqbal, who looked at my work and said, 'Up to now, I don't know what you can do, or where you are. Start using watercolours, show me a landscape.' Till then, I hadn't attempted to paint landscape, so I undertook the class assignment and was very excited and inspired by the views around Lahore. I found painting street scenes and landscapes very absorbing and began to see more and more natural patterns."

Kaleem Khan's achievements in art were recognized by the college with the award of a Gold Medal in 1982.

"Before my graduation in 1983, I decided to take 'landscape' as the subject of my final exams. Both Saeed Akhtar and Khalid Iqbal advised me not to remain in Lahore. They advised me to bring a landscape from

Balochistan, something new and different. And true enough, my colours are unlike those found in other landscapes...the sky is altogether different. I find my homeland with the Chiltan Mountain range and its folklore very inspiring. I see the shadows the sun casts on Quetta Fort, and the cosmopolitan town itself with its busy markets and varied modes of transport. I constantly find something new to motivate me."

Around that time, it was decided to open a Department of Fine Arts at the University of Balochistan and Jamal Shah was put in charge of the project. "Jamal Shah informed me that he was setting up a Fine Arts Department at the University of Balochistan and Akram Dost Baloch, Ferial Gauhar and I were involved in the project and we were all very excited about it. To start with, we had made provisions for fifteen students and about forty applied. In the end we gave admission to twenty and they were really serious and of a high standard."

The Fine Arts Department opened in 1984. It started off with a one-year course, progressed to two years and continued to grow. There are plans to extend its facilities to include a Masters in Fine Arts course in the future.

"There is a lot of artistic talent in the area; we have produced several artists of note, including Ramzan Hamidullah who teaches at the Quetta Arts Council, and Fazil Mousavi who now teaches at the Iqra School, Quetta, all very talented. These are the ones that come to mind, but there are several others, including girls who got married and confined their work to the home. Two of our students, one of them a girl, have now gone into fashion design and are doing well. We do emphasize the drawing aspect and hold regular daily sessions. We would very much like a state-of-the-art graphics department, but at present there is a small cell. There is no outlet in Quetta, no advertising agency in town."

We talked of the lack of communication between towns and the difficulties faced by unknown artists trying to show their work in well-known galleries. "It's very hard for artists outside Karachi to arrange their exhibitions. It is a matter of contacting galleries and the finance involved in framing the work and getting it to the gallery with the required paperwork. Through lack of opportunities many good artists

have been discouraged."

Speaking of his experience when undertaking a one-month USIS-sponsored trip some time back, Kaleem enthused, "I had a wonderful opportunity to travel through America. I visited several cities and got to see some great galleries and museums. Surprisingly, I found Santa Fe the most culturally vibrant town. The Director of the Santa Fe School of Art, Carrie Benson, was born in Sialkot, and she knew several of my acquaintances. Of course I would like to travel further, but in my opinion the beauty of my own area cannot be surpassed. Tareen Sahib, who eventually settled in Australia, came home on a visit in recent years and when I showed him my work he turned to friends standing around and said, 'What I had wanted to do, he has done exactly that.' I can't think of higher praise."

Dawn Gallery Sept 28, 2002

Sumaya Durrani, Mixed Media Artwork

A very personal narrative – Sumaya Durrani

"The art work that Ms.Durrani produced in painting, metalwork and jewellery design was original, serious and observant of the trends and styles that were new to her. Ms Durrani was also diligent, untiring and dedicated in seeking to find a new path or direction. She distilled and instilled an originality in her artwork that produced unique solutions. Because of her ability in synthesizing western perspective and objectivity with the finer sensibilities of her culture and traditions, contradictions resulted that were resolved into a fresh new context or format."

Hiroko Sato-Pijanowski, Professor of Art
The University of Michigan –
School of Art and Design

Sumaya Durrani's first solo exhibition in Karachi was held in 1989. Little was known about American Post-Modern art in local art circles at that time, and her work, large colour-saturated surfaces containing linear, box-like shapes, was new and exciting. She had returned from the States in 1988, after earning a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Michigan in 1984 and a Master's in Jewellery Making, Design and Metalwork in 1986. Joining the National College of Art, Lahore, as a lecturer in 1988, Sumaya initiated a two-month workshop on environmental sculpture, which was the first of its kind in the country and a great success with her students. The artist, who had exhibited her work in the USA, Canada, Norway and the UK, proceeded to take part in group shows in Pakistan. She held a solo exhibition in Lahore in

1988, followed by the Karachi exhibition. Sumaya was a new and welcome addition to art circles in Pakistan and was spoken of as 'a very exciting and promising young artist'. Then followed marriage and a two-year tenure in Turkey, where she joined the department of Design, Bilkent University, as assistant professor.

The artist returned to Karachi with a solo exhibition in 1991. It was a remarkable *tour de force*, in which she eschewed the colour elements she felt were interfering with certain concerns, "bringing attention to itself rather than things outside..." It was a strong collection of work that potently addressed basic gender issues. Integrating mixed media effects was an attempt to eliminate the barriers between fine arts and graphics. The work was described as "a woman's view of man viewing woman", but it also carried acerbic undertones of the way women feel they are 'viewed'. A dialogue had been initiated and questions had been raised; one waited for more of the artist's complex and stimulating assertions, but for ten years Sumaya maintained her silence.

We talked of the intervening years. "As an artist, you need time to process your work. Whichever creative work you are doing, there are life experiences that come in to your studio and it is the engagement that interests me. It was all very creative and it has spilled into my work. One might say my work did not come first. I put my life first, my relationships with my family, with my community, with the students that I have taught, and with students that have taught me. Many people have been my teachers in the last ten years. As an artist, it was all concepts and figures and a dialogue, some of which had to do with Pakistan, some on a global level. We were trying to appropriate that discourse into our system, so there were many questions that needed to be answered. I felt that perhaps these questions don't necessarily reside in art practice, they come from the choices that you make in your life."

For some years, Sumaya held the post of director/designer of a custom-made jewellery establishment and, as well as creating her narrative images, she produced unique and delicate jewellery. "Designing and handcrafting jewellery is not a commercial enterprise. I undertook just a few private commissions and, since most of my work is not machine-

oriented, I barely manage more than one piece a month. I have a workbench in my studio and work with a very thin blade that has to be perfectly controlled; in fact, the saw is very like a pencil. The jewellery school was a project I found very exciting. I interacted with craftspeople of all ages and in the process discovered a lot of initiative and talent. There was no transition as such. I had not come away from painting into jewellery; ideas come from all your experiences. I enjoyed working with people who have been trained in this discipline and to articulate their understanding. My aim was to make a bridge where we could assimilate shared experience. We were looking at all kinds of things – design, architecture and jewellery."

Until 2001, Sumaya was the Principal of the Pakistan Gem and Jewellery Institute and visiting professor at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. She continued to paint and has been praised in art circles as a gifted painter. Her work was an intensely personal expression, articulating her feelings and recording her life, but it was shared with very few. Recently, Sumaya decided it was time to exhibit the sequences she had completed over the years. She plans during this year to display the entire range of her work in a retrospective mood, beginning with work completed between 1993 and 1995.

Her studio contains literally hundreds of canvases and mounted surfaces stacked against the walls. They range in size from medium to the most enormous canvases, bringing vivid recollections of the '93 show. The subject, an anonymous nude figure, is placed amidst varied visual metaphors that act as the fragmented elements of a puzzle. Blank picture frames, balanced by an assortment of delicately wrought vases and urns, fill corners of the exquisitely textured surfaces. Empty and grouped together, they create an air of expectancy, as though placed in a particular way in anticipation of being filled. The images appeared throughout the sequence, until the focal subject appeared in a garden-like setting, a touch of colour entered the visual and one of the containers was filled with a leafy organic shape.

Changes in the sequence assimilated organic elements, large feathery-pencilled forms, ethereal like the petals of a full-blown rose ruffled by

a breeze and filling the surface with irregular outlines. Sensual, exuding the illusion of transparency, they hold myriad connotations. A dove appears, partially covering the form. A delicately drawn four-poster bed has a side table adorned with a bonsai tree. In a fascinating narrative, the tree takes over the story, blossoming joyously with green leaves against the delicate tracery of a textured background. Infinitely subtle, there is no single interpretation of Sumaya's work. Those who are willing to explore a new language may discover ample reward in the complexity, texture and refinement of the immaculate works of art.

Dawn Gallery: May 10, 2003

Naheed Afridi, Oil on Canvas

Naheed Afridi, Oil on Canvas

A cosy world in a big universe – Naheed Afridi

Naheed Afridi's long list of sacred things include mother, colour, people, sky, evening light, moon, beloved, wedding, love letters, no beginnings and no end... She uses these words in her paintings and uses her paintings to illustrate a gentle, thoughtful view of life. Confronting gender issues, she celebrates the ability of women to be extraordinary beings, able to play many roles and to offer the daily grind as a gift of love.

Her kitchen is magic. "There is a magician in the kitchen who cooks everything in a fraction of a second. Abracadabra!" She plays with the notion of a magician casting a magic spell on her housework, and at the same time takes the trouble to write out a recipe for a pineapple cake. She refers to her grandmother and her friends and the chess games played all night, with insects flying between the chess pieces. Dedicating the exhibition 'Sacred Journey' to the memory of her mother, Naheed maintains a measured balance between the solitude of the artist and the intimacy of close relationships. She incorporates a photograph of her mother, young and smiling, in the manner of a miniature work of art, surrounded by a decorative pattern and bordered by leaves representing her children. It is the first painting in a sequence that offers life, however long or short, as a tremendous gift, filled with the awareness of the fragility of existence and of the simple pleasures that ease the heart.

Musing on lost siblings, the artist regards death as a deep sleep. Her own sleep is peopled with dreams and she puts out a hand to seek reassurance in the sleeping figure by her side. Through her imagery, Naheed shares common fears and joys. Her paintings are a journal of her thoughts and she deploys magic realism to summon up the ambiguous,

the changing equation between self and shadow, between male and female.

A widely travelled young woman, Naheed studied art at the Cornish Institute of Allied Arts in Seattle and, after obtaining certificates in drawing and ceramic designing, returned to Karachi, where she joined the Karachi School of Art. In 1987 she topped the diploma examination and in 1990 won the first prize at the Sindh Artists' Exhibition held at the Karachi Arts Council. That same year she joined the faculty of the KSA, and two years later held the first solo exhibition of her work. A love of colour unites her work through varying sequences. The current collection is no exception: standing at a distance and gazing at the paintings collectively constitutes a rich feast for the eyes and the senses. Textures are applied in layers, like the weave of a fine carpet. Naheed's sacred list and her motifs include birds, both exotic and the common garden variety, her father's pet Samoyed running after a ball, flowers, water and prayers. Four larger canvases rendered with oils on canvas act as Valentines, sharing the title 'Romance'. She paints a self portrait titled 'Fears', in which colour is abandoned and striped spiders signify her weak spots, though judging by her work she is a strong woman armoured by love and commitment.

Dawn Gallery: April 27, 2002

Tasaduq Sohail, Oil on Canvas

Tasaduq Sohail, Oil on Canvas

Symbols of innocence and joy – Tasaduq Sohail

"I start from scratch," explained Tasaduq Sohail to a group of art students recently,

"I make a line on a surface and a story evolves. Like the writing of James Joyce, it's a stream of consciousness expression coming from multiple, fragmented thoughts."

We met during the seasoned artist's exhibition of fifty artworks held at the local art gallery where he held forth on life, art and his personal philosophy. On display were a range of works rendered in his particular inimitable style: the dense textural surfaces; storyboards of miniature-sized pictographs portraying leitmotif figures that are symbols of innocence and joy, animals, landscapes peopled with gnomes. Best known for his caricature-like portraits of robed and bearded groups of travellers in a strange environment rife with symbolism, Sohail continues an art tradition that started in the west in the 16th century, the playful distortion of portraiture referred to as caricature that cloaks serious concerns with humour.

The 17th century art critic Filippo Baldinucci, who in a dictionary of artistic terms (1681) defined the art of mock portraiture (caricature), could have been speaking of Sohail:

"Among painters and sculptors, the word signifies a method of making portraits in which they aim at the greatest resemblance of the person portrayed while yet for the purpose of fun and sometimes mockery, the components are changed."

Hogarth, with his grotesque crowded scenes in sequences of moral statements, was known through the focus of his themes such as 'The Rake's Progress' and 'Marriage a la Mode', as a very 'contemporary artist', and that he has in common with Sohail, who has lived through times of

violence, upheaval, relocation and hardship. Between the artist's work and the viewer there exists a fine-drawn interplay; what the viewers see depends on their own insight and life-style. The stories told, although he insists the 'links will be made by the viewers', raise universal issues, past and present human focusing on the significance of good and evil forces in the world. In the ideal country of his unique creation, animals play an important role as superior forms of life. It is the grotesque, stunted figures that mar the innocent surrounds, travelling an endless journey together in the spirit of playwright Samuel Becket's 'Godot' characters.

Larger paintings shown in the exhibition were dominated by ruined tower-like structures, the gaping dark spaces acting as windows and doorways, hinting at relics of a former era. These tall formations are the background for stylized, impressionistic figures happily interspersed with animals and seemingly touched by sunshine. Wooded hills in the background rise to blue skies filled with scudding clouds and birds that fly in groups or sit on distant trees. As Sohail so rightly explains, he describes a scene, but what we make of it is up to us!

A man of the universe, the artist has evolved his symbols from many ancient eastern and western cultures, including allusions to the Swedish and Norwegian legends encountered while showing his work in those countries. He states: "I work in a style called symbolism. In this one never says anything directly. It has been said I use symbols for decorative purposes; for the record I do not. It is in my symbols that lies the essence of my work."

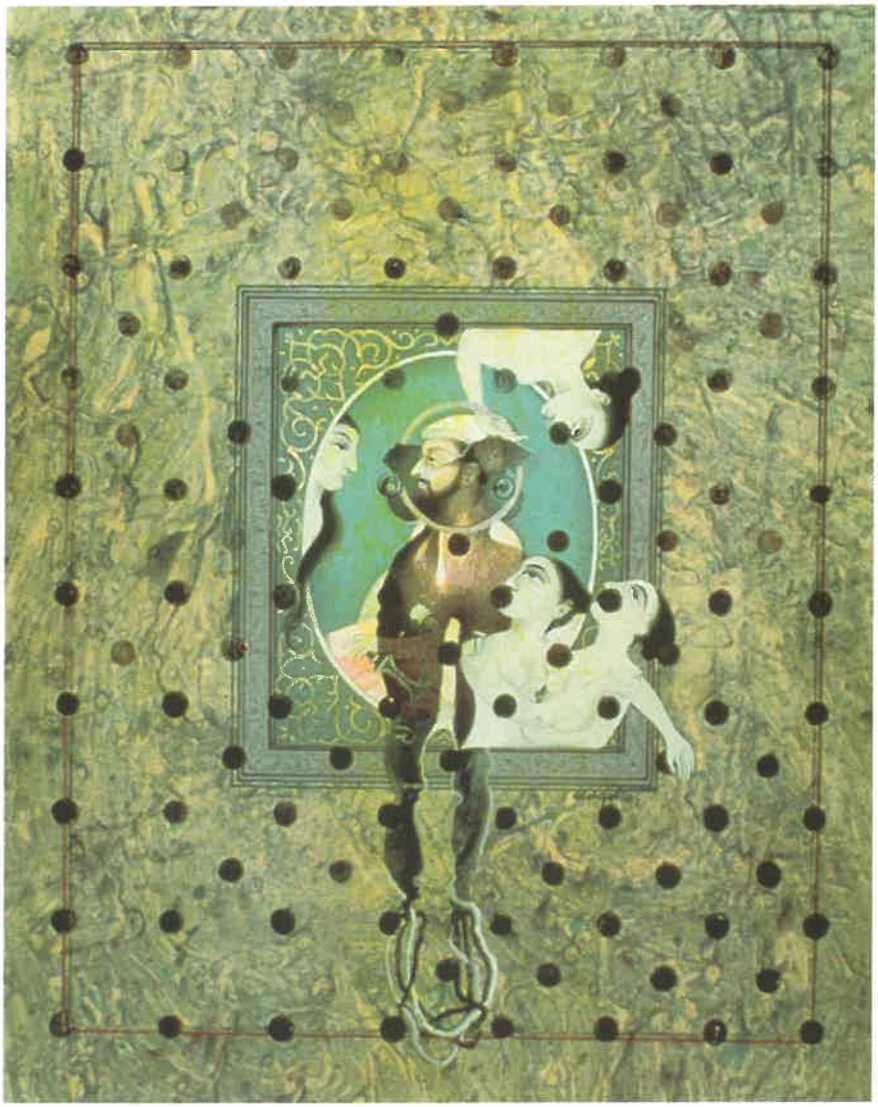
Using oil on canvas, paper or board, he creates tactile surfaces by a 'frotting' device, pressing paint-layered surfaces with textured glass. Deeply felt sensitivities are protected by irony, sadness garbed in colour. The pictographs are to be read like pages in a book, and therein lies the connection with the Urdu short story writer currently working on his autobiography. Sohail began to write as a student and continued to publish his stories in England, but the need for company and a wider expression led him to the study of art. His writings are as quirky, wickedly funny and tellingly moral as his paintings, revealing an artist who has retained his integrity, sense of 'right and wrong' and fair play though often victimized

in his own vast and esoteric experience.

Sohail spent almost four decades in London, living close to an overgrown churchyard where at night foxes, driven out of decimated woodland, scavenged for food. There he made a habit of feeding the foxes. Now living in Karachi, Sohail has gathered around him a host of 'dependents' in the form of birds and plants, which makes it difficult for him to make travel plans. His success is also story-like and well documented. From the railings of Hyde Park, his work was taken up by galleries, exhibited abroad and is contained in important collections. He appeared several times on TV, lived with his cat and pleased only himself.

How has he settled down in Karachi? "Very well," he says. "It's like if I broke up with a girl, I told myself she was dead, cry for a day, then forgot her." Talking to Sohail is a stimulating experience, his verbal repartee expands as the conversation continues and one enters a world of surreal humour, strange happenings and bewildered humans, it's rather like stepping into one of the artist's landscapes.

Dawn Gallery: February 28, 2004



Shazia Sikandar, Miniature Painting

Pakistan's favourite New Yorker – Shazia Sikander

I am often asked what tradition means to me in relation to experimentation, whether I am consciously blurring boundaries. While my aim is not to subvert, let alone reinvent a tradition, such boundaries are blurred in the act of painting miniatures. I knew from the start that I was engaging in an anachronistic practice – labour-intensive and limited in its impact – but I was attracted to an art form whose present was of the past. I am interested in the play, the flirtation with tradition, but it remains primarily conceptual, focusing on issues between scale and labour, precision and gesture, the norm and its transgression."

(Shazia Sikander 'Conversations with Traditions' 2000)

In 1992, the final examination work of Shazia Sikander, displayed at the National College of Art, Lahore, included a wondrous scroll painted in miniature style. Its theme, aspects of the young painter's life, and its execution became for me from that time on a yardstick of excellence in the art of modern miniature work.

Shazia graduated with a BFA. from the National College of Art, Lahore, and in search of "distance" exhibited her work at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington. Unable to obtain a visa to continue her work in India, she applied for admission to the Rhode Island School of Design and found the examining board warmly encouraging. "Don't worry about finances," they told her, "we'll do something". As Shazia pointed out, the move wasn't about studying art; it was about experiencing a new environment, and doing some work. In 1993, two vitally important years began.

Meeting Shazia Sikander for the first time recently, I was touched by her lack of 'side'. Slight, with a delicate appearance, when we began

to talk, it was obvious that she is actually a very strong person endowed with tremendous courage and conviction. Shazia appears to be totally lacking in arrogance and learning about her early, character-forming years in the States was extremely interesting.

"School gave a lot of freedom and in that respect was very confining, because I had been working in very strict parameters of discipline and had been frustrated with that type of discipline, so extreme freedom had the same effect. There were no parameters, one could do anything, and I found that very confining. My experience and familiarity with some type of structure was still where my mindset was, so it took a while to unlearn certain habits. I had a lot of reading to do, western philosophy, art history, just a general understanding of the critical dialogue among artists, and how to articulate, talk about your work, an extension of what I was doing. So there was no desire to flip sides and discard what I had, to acquire something new. The audience I met was receptive and eager to learn but I was not interested in educating anyone. The perception at home was that you went abroad and somehow learned something and returned home with that.

Actually, it was quite the opposite. I was absorbing so much. I started making urgent, fast, gestural work and drawings. From doodling, I brought the doodles into my critique and people became very excited about my work. I wasn't sure what was happening and in that process, expressed my experience of how to work out of memory and how to abstract an idea, abstract an emotion and abstract the expression of miniature work in a short gesture, so that type of exercise opened new territory for me. I actually produced work after leaving school."

Finishing with the RISD in 1995, Shazia found New York daunting and began to look elsewhere to continue her work. Offered a residency at the Houston Museum of Fine Art, Texas, she bought a car for $300, packed it with her belongings and with road map in hand drove down to Houston. The residency allowed Shazia a studio and paid the monthly expenses. Seven other artists from various regions of the country were similar residents, and in this ambience the young artist developed her work and started "pushing it". From 1995 to 1997, she created a lot of

work but did not necessarily show it; she was not, she explained, at a stage where she "wanted to put it out".

"I was interacting a lot with activists and people working in the community and found that bridging gaps between the audiences was an experience of who the people were, and where I felt connected. Those types of extensions were very worthwhile, helping me to get involved in a different way. I ended up doing a project in a very low income African-American neighbourhood housing scheme in Houston."

'Project Row Houses' was the brainchild of Rick Lowe, an African-American who turned his creativity to improving the environment of twenty-two shotgun houses in one of the city's poorest neighbourhoods. This project interested Shazia immensely and she accepted the challenge of developing her allotted shotgun house and its surrounds. Talking of the difficulties in getting her acquaintances interested, Shazia explained, "It was difficult to get local Asians to come around. There was a lot of racial insularity in the southern part of America." Shazia, who had lived part of her childhood in Somalia, found the project an inspiring experience. She met numerous people including Rick Lowe – those who had spent their childhood picking cotton. The neighbours began to drop in at Shazia's house in the evenings to sit on the porch and talk. She arranged workshops that were eagerly responded to, and the artist's serene, consistent presence paid off. Gradually, outsiders began to drop in and the interaction was firmly rooted and continued after she moved back to New York in 1997.

That year, an exhibition initiated by her in 1994 materialized at the Drawing Center. As Shazia says, "You can make anything happen if you work towards it and work hard." At the Drawing Center, she worked directly on the walls and earned a glowing review from Roberta Smith, the well-known art critic. The same year, the Whitney Museum invited her to exhibit her work in a group display and she found that "everyone wanted large spaces, floors and walls", so she took an opposite stand, choosing a small space to hang her pieces. Save for two pieces, which Shazia kept for herself, the Whitney Museum bought the entire collection of her work. This gesture from the renowned art centre was a milestone

and her second experience of New York was very different from her first in 1995. All of a sudden, her work was in demand. The Whitney Museum invited her back for a solo exhibition in 2000, other galleries sent her messages, magazines wanted to write about her work and the pressure grew. The Drawing Center mounted a historical show on Indian miniatures, specifically focusing on the aspects of drawing, and Shazia participated. She was quite definite that she did not want to be categorized as a South Asian artist and was intent on showing her work at mainstream places.

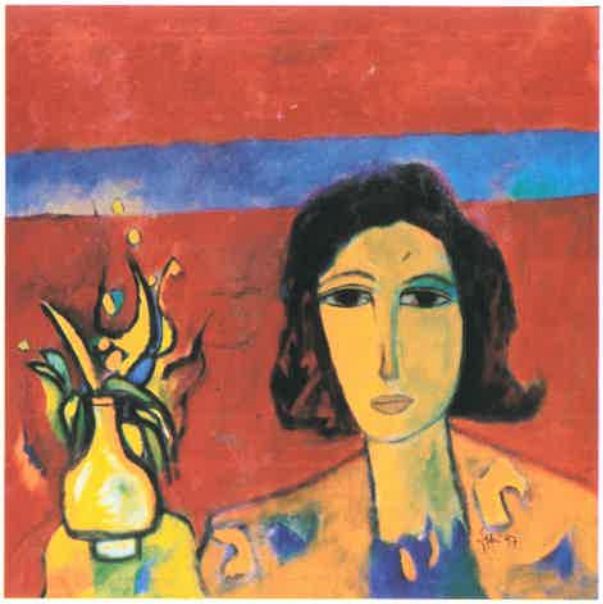
"My relationships were built around work, and suddenly I was interacting on a good platform with a type of professionalism that made one much more responsible on what one produced and how one presented it." She had accumulated a large body of work and continued to add to it. Exhibitions that followed in quick succession included: Miniatures and Murals, Deitch Projects, New York 1997, and in 1998, a show organized by the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago. For an exhibition at the Queens Museum of Modern Art, New York titled 'Out of India', her sequence of work 'Maligned Monsters' was executed on banners displayed outside the museum. Exhibiting outside in public places helped her to conceive new ideas and Shazia proceeded to work on a site-specific project for the Museum of Modern Art, Paris. A series of solo exhibitions were shown at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, the Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, the Whitney Museum in 2000, and at Art Pace, San Antonio in 2001.

Shazia Sikander's work has taken on a global aspect. She is one of twenty-one contemporary artists featured in a documentary film 'Art 21'. A book of the same name was published with an edition for schools that came with a teacher's guide. Recently she was also included in a book by Edward Lucie Smith, 'Art Today 2', and a bi-annual publication 'Fresh Cream', showcasing 100 artists.

In New York, Shazia met her future husband, Salman, and the two returned to Pakistan to marry according to family traditions on the 20th April, 2002. But first there were lectures to be given and things to share. "My work is there and the vocabulary is there; if you need to understand it, do your homework. The more you let go, the more comes your way."

Dawn Gallery: May 25, 2002

Wahab Jaffer, Acrylic on Canvas



Wahab Jaffer, Acrylic on Canvas

An ongoing joy – Wahab Jaffer

A preview of his latest exhibition at the Canvas Gallery blazed from the walls of Wahab Jaffer's home in cheerful anticipation. Exotic faces like androgynous masks were gorgeous, the stylized features shaded by reflected colour. The well-known artist and art collector is a modest man who customarily fills his walls with the work of others: Gulgee, Anna Molka Ahmed, Ali Imam, Ahmed Parvez, Bashir Mirza and M.F.Husain are but a few of the 'old friends' he likes to live with. His own domain is a washroom converted into a studio, where he spends hours every day reveling in colour. The walls are splashed with acrylic paint, finished and semi-finished canvases line the walls. High up, a message from Ahmed Parvez is hung, scrawled on a sunny yellow-painted Styrofoam board. Wahab works rapidly, totally absorbed in the surface before him and in the interplay of form and colour, the two elements merge until they are indistinguishable, created by an intuitive impulse that permeates the work and is his greatest gift.

For over three decades, Wahab Jaffer has been deeply involved in and with art, but for years before that he conformed to the expectations of his socially and politically prominent business family. As a child, he had been interested in painting and drawing, and had a passion for cricket which he retains to the present time, but the educational curriculum mapped out for him did not include art as a subject. He studied engineering in the UK – an element that emerges in his work, particularly in the drawings – then returned to Pakistan, where he took up his assigned role in the family industry. Before the emergence of the art galleries, Wahab started looking for paintings to decorate his and Shireen's home and gradually got to know the artist community. In the early 1970s, the family industry was nationalized and, finding himself without a job, his life took a U-turn. "It was Mr Bhutto who made me

an artist," he says good-humouredly.

Wahab began to frequent the Indus Gallery, and in 1971 joined Ali Imam's studio and under his able guidance spent several months learning the technicalities of paint. During those months at the Indus Gallery, he met the man who was to become his art mentor and a close friend, Ahmed Parvez. The two men bonded at some deep, cosmic level: Wahab, softly spoken, personable, with impeccable manners; and Parvez, compulsively articulate, overwrought, volatile. Wahab considers Parvez one of the most candid, honest people he has ever encountered. One saw them together often at exhibitions or in the studio, each regarding the other with the utmost respect and affection. Wahab took the study of art seriously, reading books on art history extensively. He particularly admired the work of Degas, Van Gogh, Kandinsky and Jackson Pollack and luxuriated in the sensuous richness of colour.

Wahab Jaffer empathized with Parvez's obsessive occupation with his muse and sat for hours listening to the senior artist talk about art and artists, watching him paint and admiring the complexity of the compositions that developed in brilliant colours under his brush. From 1972 till 1979, Wahab worked and studied with Parvez. He experimented with abstraction, eventually finding a personal idiom rendered with acrylic paint or pastels or, in a contrasting mood, fantasies woven with pen and ink drawings. He began to show his work in group exhibitions in 1974, and eventually emerged from the influence of Ahmed Parvez's style. Few today would confuse the work of the two artists. Wahab enjoyed the drama of contrasting colours, and his easy style had to be sensed rather than interpreted. Behind a lush green, one might discern the violence of red, and behind that the coolness of grey. Though he found his own inner landscape to draw upon, Wahab retained his admiration for Parvez and became the most important collector of his work.

A phone call from the writer Victor Anant in London introduced artist F.N.Souza into Wahab's life. Souza, who stayed with Wahab while passing through Karachi, renewed his ties with Ali Imam and subsequently became a frequent visitor. Wahab's circle of artist friends grew; Gulgee,

Shakir Ali, Colin David, Ahmed Khan, Laila Shahzada and Shahid Sajjad were among the friends whose work he deeply admired.

"The painters were very genuine in the sense that they invited artists into their studio and they were very encouraging to younger painters. Gulgee used to say, "Just give a ring and come over, and if I'm working you're most welcome to watch me paint. That doesn't happen any more." We concluded that one reason might be that artists now feel the need to protect themselves from imitators, a phenomenon of recent years. There is much difference between being 'under the influence of...' and outright imitation. Galleries could play their part in discouraging this sort of illicit activity."

Once Wahab Jaffer unleashed his muse, he was a prolific and obsessive painter. Ali Imam was delighted to introduce his former protégée to the public in a solo exhibition in 1981, and at the Indus Gallery was displayed a collection of small-sized, luminous abstract works, rendered in the medium of gouache. It was a celebratory occasion, well received by the media and by art enthusiasts. The soft explosions of colour contained by 'speed-breakers' painted on the outer edges of the canvases heralded the emergence of a new talent and the paintings were almost all snapped up on the first day.

In 1982, he began to experiment with acrylics and found the medium suited his spontaneous style. Solo exhibitions followed in Islamabad, 'Pindi and Karachi, as well as numerous group shows. In 1985, a major setback in his life led to a 'branching out' in his work in the form of a series of pen and ink drawings he called 'Life-Lines'.

"In April I had a heart attack; in May I was taken to Houston for heart surgery; and in June, my heart was back in its familiar place in Karachi. During those three months in hospital, although everything around me was white – the hospital walls, the clinical white uniforms, the mocking white sheets in which I lay – my world appeared totally black. It occurred to me that even beautiful, brightly coloured objects cast dark shadows. And so I bought a sketchpad, held it in my lap and started drawing. Deep inside, I felt a restless, desperate need to create. Slowly, painfully, like a blind person trying to learn Braille, I scratched

with my pen. Gradually light, life itself began to peep through. I drew parallel lines, and then across them I drew another set of parallel lines. They produced sparkling, diamond forms. More light. I drew the outlines of a woman's face and birds began to fly in the cage of the tunnel. I could feel once again my heart beating and I drew with the rhythm of a new beat. I searched my way out of the darkness of the tunnel and saw again every object in its own light. Once I had chosen to draw in the darkness, I discovered a new light."

Wahab kept his drawing under wraps for several years, filling countless sketch pads and reams of paper for his own pleasure. Then in 1989, they were seen by the Director of the Goethe-Institut, who was browsing in the artist's studio. Excited by the strange, exotic black-and-white world peopled by strange beings and intense designs, he insisted on exhibiting them. He selected a number of pieces and in May 1989, Wahab Jaffer's 'Life-Lines' were shown at the Goethe-Institut. The public was confronted by an expression that appeared to celebrate without the aid of colour, and a new chapter began.

Dawn Gallery: January 31, 2004

Lahore in 1974 where he was employed by the National Council of the Arts. With the job went the opportunity to spend time in the Kalash Valley, where he carved forms from blocks of wood and confirmed his belief in the supremacy of nature. His first solo exhibition of sculpture and paintings was held in Lahore in 1974. He stayed around until 1977, then took off again with everything he deemed necessary for living crammed into a knapsack carried on his shoulders. Zoay never stayed long in any one place; crossing boundaries and borders as the urge took him.

His drawing skills earned him a welcome among the groups of 'flower children', as they were known in those days; he sketched their portraits, and drew impressions of sights that attracted his eye on the trail. There were solo exhibitions of his work held in Germany, and in the '80s he exhibited work executed in a variety of media in Holland, Sweden and Italy. He described his meeting with a lovely young woman, who married him and then moved on, taking her pet Alsatian with her. No hearts were broken, and as Zoay looks back on an era that witnessed young people of all nationalities moving around the world, his memories are welcome companions.

The travellers formed groups, separated and regrouped like amoebae reproducing. In their company, Zoay sought the sun, easy living and sandy beaches where they spread their gear and camped. Everything was shared. Desiring to expand their minds, they practiced consciousness-raising exercises. Their key words were 'turn on, tune in...'; they aspired to embrace all of humanity and eschew violence. The flower children shared a universal language that assimilated words like: love, peace, freedom and joy. They walked barefoot and saw rainbows. Similar in appearance, they grew their hair long, wore kurtas and bands across their foreheads – the girls with long flowered skirts. They played guitars, were vegetarian and preached against the materialism of 'gainful employment' while dreaming of a simpler, more loving world. When the sun deserted them, they took off for youth hostels filled with like-minded young people from around the world.

On a boat traveling to Norway, Zoay met a young woman who was

to become a close friend. She was an intellectual with no desire for close ties, and soon she, too, moved on. Zoay described his amazement when recently Margaret, as she was named, traced him from an article on his work and e-mailed him from Naples. They are in close touch again, but unlikely to meet in the foreseeable future. Zoay's travels belong to the same era as B.M.'s inspiration for the 'Lonely Girl' series, and of Ahmed Parvez unable to handle the stresses of success in a foreign capital, each to return to his roots. It was the time of a proliferation of art in Pakistan, when the seeds of an art market were sown. It was a unique time in history that ended with the 1980's. Hostility, often manifested by violence, accompanied an upsurge of racism that drove Zoay back to Pakistan.

The artist's apartment is furnished with paintings that are stacked against every wall. Large piles of scrapbooks carry reviews of his work written in many languages. Photographs and faded newspapers reveal a curly haired young man with a gentle expression. He relates his interest in the mythology and symbols of diverse cultures. As a child, he discovered Greek mythology and was visited by dreams filled with fantastic images. He talks of his research and the conclusion he reached that the true Sindhu culture belonging to the Indus Valley area was appropriated by successive invaders from the time of the Aryans on. His palette of primary colours – true blues, reds and yellows and the secondary shades of violet, green and orange – reflect distant memories of his mother; a recollection of the childish delight found in the bright skeins of silk she used for embroidery.

Impressions of the fragmented components found in miniature paintings: parrots, pointed leaves, flowers and architecture comprise the artist's vocabulary, representing the germ of all things that with the will to create imply a cosmic energy related to the triangles that symbolize the first mystic act of creation.

Dawn Gallery: April 27, 2002

Saleem Mansur,
Oil on Canvas

Saleem Mansur,
Oil on Canvas

The vision of an artists' artist – Saleem Mansur

Saleem Mansur is an extremely interesting artist: `an artist's artist' as Ali Imam used to say. Bashir Mirza who juried Mansur's thesis work at the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts in 1983, was also numbered among the artist's admirers and on that occasion was greatly excited by the audacious innovations of the young `avant-garde' artist. Mansur was even then into installations, happenings and conceptual art, and soon tired of the art market demand for his detailed architectural pieces. Other artists tried to follow this particular style, every brick delineated in a style that confronted reality with hints of surrealism. In spite of the success in terms of the work, Mansur returned totally to the conceptual language that few understood. Those who did, considered him the most innovative and promising artist of his generation.

Throughout the years he has continued to study and research Islamic art and history, studying Arabic in order to read the original text. From his student days he made it a practice to travel to the interior, where to the great interest of local people, he created installations and photographed them. His aesthetic direction set the pattern of future times when he placed objects in natural settings that created an ambience of time suspended.

Now Saleem Mansur is unable to continue with his research or to travel to the interior as in previous years. He suffers from a debilitating illness that curbs most of his pursuits except painting. For this reason he has based many of the paintings on photographs of previous installation in Sindh. "Now I cannot make the installations", he explains, "I record in paint previous installations from memory or from photographs often

other elements arise and I find changes automatically take place."

In his exhibition shown at a Karachi Gallery one finds boundaries separating reality, imagination, and things remembered. All appear to be in transition and an art language of diverse symbols gives clues to the artist's inner journey. Describing the collection of forty mixed media artworks, the artist spoke of his imagery as `signs for future scientists to unravel. Perhaps they are a subconscious message of things past and things to come'. He creates a dialogue for the observer involving past history, the uncertainty of notions passed down to us and raises doubts on past events as a fixed narrative. The fragmented images that float through his mind are triggered off by certain surroundings. I questioned a particular piece that portrays a woman's head drifting along a suburban street. Open windows offer interior glimpses and an arm cups the ear of the disembodied head while the facial expression registers vicarious interest. "Is that the local busybody?" I asked Mansur, but he shrugged his shoulders and said it was an image that came to him in a certain street.

There is an image of Pir Patho in Tharparkar. A wide empty street, no sign of habitation and the eye makes out a Well and a few shops. A Sculpted brass coloured form creates a V that spans the centre of the painting and the beginning of the road. "I really liked this place" said Mansur. "During the months without water, the people move to other regions to graze their flocks. Houses are unlocked and there are no reasons to guard the street, there is little to steal. I visualized a sculpture here." Another image reflects the architectural work of the past with a form that combines roots with compressed fragments of clay based architectural features that appear to grow between seemingly organic matter.

In a painting combining the textures of slatted wood floors and plaster walls, the artist refers to a place of worship and the direction one faces in prayer. Shadows create patterns on the floor, the prayer mats adding focal colour points. Getting past the strangeness of the images, one discovers a superb painter, with an adventurous approach. He has

mastered media and tools and puts them together skilfully demonstrating the ability of painted images to both inform and conceal concurrently. Several artworks have carved areas creating raised bordering panels. Toys, slightly distorted, add incongruous touches to otherwise `standard objects. Saleem Mansur is a movement on his own. Not always easy to read, his work is always worth the study and somehow creates its own brand of normality.

Dawn Gallery: May 7, 2003

Jamil Naqsh, Water Colour
Painting from Najmi Sura's Private Collection

Flights of imagination – a gift of the artist

Words are finite: they cannot express what is in my heart or Jamil's. That can only be discerned in every stroke and line of his wonderful paintings: my collection. Treasured in my innermost being: 'From Jamil to Najmi'

Najmi Sura

Sir Kenneth Clark, well known internationally as an art authority and collector, once mused, "Why do men and women collect art?" He answered himself: "As well ask why they fall in love: the reasons are as irrational, the motives are mixed..."

Art collectors are often undervalued in the history of art. From Michelangelo to Picasso, artists have survived and their work has been preserved for posterity through the support of art collectors. In Pakistan, where as yet there is no National Museum to conserve national art treasures, genuine art lovers and collectors are as important in art circles as the galleries and the media.

Acutely aware of these problems, Pakistan's modern master Jamil Naqsh has independently taken the first step in establishing a museum to house his work, the Jamil Naqsh Museum, adjacent to the Momart Gallery. It is an on-going project, which blueprints Naqsh's desire to preserve his artworks safely for generations to come.

Close by his side, Najmi Sura, Naqsh's companion of over three decades, has acquired a significant collection of his work gifted to her by the artist, several of which are personally inscribed. Najmi Sura's collection is the symbol of a unique regard, the offerings rarely viewed except by Najmi and a few close friends.

Speaking of the collection, Najmi mentions Gabrielle Munter, Kandinsky's companion, to whom he gifted a collection of his 'Blue Rider' paintings.

Gabrielle eventually bequeathed her collection to a museum, and presently Najmi is considering how best to preserve her own precious collection.

Perhaps only a true connoisseur and art lover can fully appreciate the deep and continuing joy Najmi Sura finds in the paintings. Those privileged to view the works will find here some of the artist's finest and most inspired pieces. There are the great genre works, exquisitely painted forms, the sensual textures creating strong tactile elements that induce Najmi to run her hand caressingly across the surface of the protective glass: the 'Modern Manuscripts', 'Homage to Marini', 'Mother and Child', and the famous series reputed in art circles in which the artist employs the pigeon as his leitmotif. It is this series, in which Jamil Naqsh expresses a gamut of emotions through the winged creatures, which Najmi Sura has selected to exhibit for the first time. Appropriately, the chosen venue is the Jamil Naqsh Museum.

Jamil Naqsh began to paint pigeons in the early 1960s. There were many implications in his choice of subject. As a thoughtful child he had watched the birds strut fearlessly in the grounds of his home in Kairan. Girls sifting wheat, birds picking up the grains, these were images imprinted in his memory: years later to be diffused into a symbol of domestic harmony. Then came the pigeons of the miniature schools of art, studied with Naqsh's esteemed Haji Sharif, tiny, perfectly formed transient visitors. Till the present time Naqsh loves pigeons and they are a regular feature of the artist's studio. He studies them at length, is familiar with their habits and they sit fearlessly on his hands and shoulders. Naqsh maintains that the birds have instincts similar to humans. "They are protective of their nests, fight for a mate, are aware when dangers are nigh and whom to trust. They are 'engineers', says Jamil," "They build their nests in layers in a fascinating structure. The first layer is strong material, often woven with bits of steel or whatever they find. Then come the softer layers to prepare a comfortable home for the newly hatched birds."

The first of the celebrated pigeon series was a composition showing five birds, two pairs and a single pigeon, light infusing the feathers with a plethora of shades and shadows.

In 1967 Naqsh exhibited a collection of fifty paintings focusing on pigeons. He made art history by combining the mobile birds with the classic forms he painted, a wondrous melding of movement and stillness. Thirty years later, Naqsh was to refer to his exhibition of 1967 when at the Momart Gallery, he exhibited 100 paintings of pigeons, each differing from the other.

Najmi's collection assimilates a variety of media and styles. There are sketches, intricately drawn pieces, those executed in water colour, others in oils. There are groups of birds soaring in flight; wings spread wide, sunlight sparkling on feathers. There are birds in coops, city birds, others concentrating on food grains or pools of water.

Naqsh's remarkable genius in creating endless variety by means of a limited subject confirm his conviction that subject matter in painting is secondary to the plastic problems the artist must resolve. Seen together, Najmi Sura's collection of 'pigeon' artworks create an awesome visual experience, the expression of a complex artist who transcends prosaic explanation. To see them is to find one's spirit soaring with the weightless movement of the birds.

Dawn Gallery: August 16, 2003

Participants of the 8th National PNCA Exhibition at Al hamra Lahore 2003

• Zulfiqar Zulfi, Kaleem Khan, Sardar Asif Ahmed Ali, Naeem Ehsan, Musarrat Naheed Iman, Zafar Ullah Sajida Vandle, shahina Zaidi, Shahnawaz Zaidi, Farah Mustafa, Akram Dost, Raja Changez Sultan.

• Zohra Hussain, Marjorie Hussain, Naheed Raza, Saeed Akhtar, Ahmed Jehanzeb Malik, Ramzan.

• Shehla Farooq, Dr.Musarrat Hassan, Mian Ijaz-ul-Hassan, Rabia Zubairi, Jabbar Gul, R.M.Naeem, Tariq Javaid, Ghulam Mustafa.

• Rukhsana David, Mubashra Sami, Jamil Baloch, Rahat Navced Masood, A. Khan and Colin David

Pakistan's 8th National Visual Arts Exhibition

The 8th National Visual Arts Exhibition, organized by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, opened in Lahore on May 5th, 2003 in collaboration with the Alhamra Cultural Complex. It came after a gap of seven years, and since then much water has flowed under the bridge. The 7th National Exhibition was held at Islamabad in 1996, where established artists dominated with a collection of compelling work. In the years between, national award-winning artists, such as Akram Dost, Unver Shafi and Hajra Mansur, had successful exhibitions of their work abroad; Ghulam Mustafa won the President's Pride of Performance Award. Zubeida Agha, who was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award, and S.Ali Imam, Chairman of that Exhibition Committee, are no longer with us.

This latest exhibition was of a different flavour. Exciting work produced by younger artists put forward their points of view with verve and confidence. It was heartening to note the emergence of a promising group of practising young artists, many of them teaching their respective disciplines, strongly supporting the work of an earlier generation.

The Pakistan National Council of the Arts decided the criteria for inclusion: Work offered for the exhibition should not be more than three years old and would be selected for exhibition by appointed provincial selection committees, while senior artists were invited to display work of their choice.

Eventually, approximately 350 artworks by over 200 artists from all parts of the country were assembled, executed in diverse styles and media. The artworks demonstrated sundry viewpoints and had to be hung in a way that gave every piece breathing space. It was a question

of 'what fits with what'. The difficulties of mounting the display proved to be daunting. Paintings hanging side-by-side fought with each other; stronger works dominated their weaker neighbours and had to be replaced, and so the juggling continued. Meanwhile, paintings and sculpture continued to arrive. Eventually, it seemed to come together quite naturally, and the exhibits created their own ambience. The process of display started from Alhamra's Gallery 1, up to a wide passageway leading to further spacious galleries, a circular gallery on the third floor, then down to a final space parallel to the first gallery. Further hanging space was contrived by way of panels, and a section was created for the miniature works exhibited, most of them very good indeed. Watercolours needed special attention as strongly realistic portraits loomed over impressions, and rural scenes faded into illustrative charmers. Light was an all-important factor, and over a period of five days the display committee, including Saeed Akhtar and Colin David, were lost to the world. With time running out, still critical but aware that they had done their best, the working committee fixed their last panel.

Planned in two stages, the exhibition opened with Federal Minister Hafeez Sheikh officiating as chief guest. Evidencing a sincere concern for the problems faced in promoting art, the minister assured a packed audience that he would address these issues in the future. A series of seminars discussed relevant art topics such as:

* The Impact of Islamic Traditions on Contemporary Art
* Gallery Management – Ethical and Unethical Practices by Galleries and Artists
* Art Criticism and the Role of the Media in Propagating Art
* Merging Arts

The exhibition finished on June 5th 2003, and at a closing ceremony a number of prizes were awarded to younger artists. These are artists who have shown promising work in group and solo exhibitions over recent years and made their presence felt in art circles.

Sculpture was very much in evidence. Rabia Zuberi had shown a monumental piece, with a message of peace to the world, which made a powerful contribution to the display. The work consisted of seven ten-

foot figures worked in bronze fiber. A montage of photographs of the work currently underway in sculptor Shahid Sajjad's studio added a novel touch, and allowed the public a glimpse of the large wood carvings he is currently working on in his studio and has planned for display in future. A number of younger sculptors also contributed to the three-dimensional aspect of the display.

The logistics of transporting work and potential damage to the delicate artworks are reasons why artists are reluctant to show their larger pieces outside their own city, but in the national interest many artists rallied to the cause. Rehma Iqbal contributed a beautiful metal sculpture of a tree complete with leaves and birds and Gulgee exhibited a huge triptych calligraphic piece. Jimmy Engineer sent two landscape murals, on which someone commented, "They could be 18th century French landscape scenes with buffaloes." Riffat Alvi had expressed fears for her mixed media work, consisting of a gathering of porcelain birds on a windowsill, but it withstood the journey well.

Well-known artists from the NWFP were represented, and there was a strong contribution from Balochistan. Akram Dost's table model six-panelled screen drew tremendous admiration from Colin David and Saeed Akhtar's very striking 'Baraq' painting attracted much attention from visitors. Ghulam Rasul's latest work, displayed in the exhibition, glowed softly with lilac, blues, sunset pinks and palest lemon, inspired by the Skardu regions. At one time very much a 'green' painter, he has made the most of his retirement to expand his vision and his palette, working in a soft, impressionist way.

Zulfikar Zulfi's large landscapes were almost three-dimensional in their realism, while close by was a signature-style, pink-shadowed landscape by Ghulam Mustafa. Qudsia Nisar's strong colourful abstracts looked good, as did the translucent work of Ghalib Bakar. Jamil Baloch fulfilled his ambition to create tall, burqa-clad forms clustered in a group. Cassim Mehmood, who showed audacious promise in last May's national sculpture exhibition, contributed three very dramatic, emotive heads. Maira Hashmi was represented by terracotta figures. Munnawar Ali mixed moulding and carving in his work creating a habitat for tiny

birds as well as people. A piece by Talat Dubeer who contributed a ceramic `Jharoka' wall based relief was much admired by visitors.

Askari Mian Irani's recent painting showed the artist was in great form, as was award wining Naiza Khan. Mian Ijazul Hassan's three-panelled mural was a focus of attention. Nahid Raza's bold figurative work made its presence felt and among the younger artists, very different work in the field of printmaking by Fatima Saeed and Imran Ahmed added interesting diversity to the event. There was a lot to admire, but it is impossible to mention each by name.

At the country's earliest exhibitions of art, arranged by Anna Molka Ahmed at the Punjab University Fine Arts Department, virtuoso painters such as Abdul Rahman Chughtai and Ustad Allah Buksh not only showed their own work, along with younger artists such as the Lahore Art Circle, but also awarded gold and silver medals to promising emerging talents. This spirit needs to be revitalized in the country for a healthy art movement to exist. To those concerned with the logistics of organizing this event, the promise of younger artists appeared as a validation, justifying the efforts it took to finally get the 8th National Visual Arts Exhibition mounted.

Gallery: Dawn May 24, 2003

Tayyeba Aziz, Oil on Canvas

Jehanzeb Malik, Oil on Canvas

Looking at art in Peshawar and Quetta

Unlike their peers in other regions, artists living in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad are fortunate to have galleries available to display their work, and media that supports art activities by reviewing exhibitions and art-related events. There are few restrictions on the subject matter of the artist and a variable art market is gradually expanding. The primary business of the galleries is to sell art and most of them work very hard to do so. Not so in areas such as Quetta and Peshawar, whose many notable artists survive on talent and commitment alone.

At the recent National Art Exhibition organized by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, artist Jehanzeb Malik, the recipient of awards and prizes for art and the promotion of art in his region, described some of the hardships artists in Peshawar are currently facing. The Abasin Arts Council is a place where certificate courses on art subjects have been conducted since the mid-'50s. Many artists started their art education here and it has been a venue for art exhibitions for years. Now, we are told, the centre is no longer available to the artists. There is no art market to sustain galleries in Peshawar and little motivation for new talent to enter the field.

Jehanzeb is an engineer by profession with a passion for art. His initial training in art, followed by a course of advanced painting, was acquired at the Abasin Arts Council. He has a diploma in interior and exterior design and another in fiberglass moulding. The artist has eight solo exhibitions to his credit and is well known in art circles. His work has been included in important national exhibitions. Derived from reality, Jehanzeb's paintings belong to the realm of modern art sensibilities. In the field of portraiture, he paints his subjects with revealing sensitivity, using colour to create ambience and mood.

An articulate man, Jehanzeb's account of the current situation of art

in his region added a sombre touch to the seminar that took place during the exhibition. The artist's message was sincere and from the heart: Though established artists continue to paint, few new ones are willing to join their numbers. "What can you expect to come out under these conditions?" he asked. There was no answer to that. Existing artists from the NWFP are well known in art circles and are featured in publications. There has been a lively art movement in the area, starting with the emergence of the Abasin Arts Council, and the department of Fine Arts with a strong faculty at the University of Peshawar, set up in 1964.

The first to gain prominence among the Frontier's artists was painter and sculptor Arbab Muhammad Sardar, who took a B.Sc. in Agriculture from Peshawar University and was among the earliest students of the Abasin Arts Council. He held his first solo exhibition in 1962, and in 1975 proceeded to Italy where, in Carrara, the hometown of Michelangelo, he studied sculpture. From 1979, Sardar conducted art classes at the 'Abasin Arts Council and went on to achieve the highest award for art in the country, the President's Pride of Performance in 1994. Whether painting the landscape of his homeland or working in the third dimension, there is a dynamic strength to his work, addressed by a dexterous command of the media.

Tayyeba Ahmed is a gifted watercolourist, who has been acknowledged by way of prizes and awards since the 1970s as a landscape painter of repute and one of the foremost portraitists in the medium of watercolour in the country. In 1988, Tayyaba was made Chairperson of the Fine Arts Department, Peshawar University, a post she holds to date. She has curated exhibitions for display overseas and contributed to numerous group displays as well as mounting three solo exhibitions of her work.

Ghazala Misbah, who is currently working on a Ph.D. in Islamic Architecture, has a Master's degree in Botany, an M.Phil. in Archaeology and a Master's degree in Fine Arts and is an Assistant Professor of Fine Arts at Peshawar University. Ghazalas's concerns are for the neglected monuments of Muslim architecture that, without preservation, are in

danger of vanishing.

Running an art gallery and studio in Peshawar, S.Imtiaz Husain graduated in Fine Arts from the NCA Lahore, in 1972. He teaches art and sculpture on a freelance basis and is a visiting lecturer at the Abbottabad School of Arts. Imtiaz held his first solo exhibition in 1981 in Peshawar and has won awards in the fields of art and design. His skill at capturing the mood of the landscape owes much to his adept use of oil paints. Well known in the genre of landscape painting, Nasir-ud-din Mohammad obtained a Diploma in Fine Art from Peshawar University in 1968. He is the recipient of several prizes for his art and float designs.

Saeed Ullah Khan and Arif Naveed Khattak have both taken Masters in Fine Arts from Peshawar University and are lecturers in fine arts at the university. Both are versatile artists, with experience of photography and design as well as of fine art. Saeed Ullah works with uncluttered forms that maintain their contact with reality, while Arif paints traditional subjects, assimilating a unique perception of design elements.

Here we acknowledge the efforts of some of the outstanding artists working in the NWFP to maintain and expand a significant art development. There are others too and we look forward to a closer cooperation between our town and theirs.

From the NWFP, we move on to Quetta, with its historic landmarks, history and rich culture. Here one finds an abundance of talent and an active Arts Council established in 1972, but few outlets and no art market to speak of. The celebrated artists, Jamal Shah, Akram Dost and Kaleem Khan, began their initial art training at the Arts Council before joining the National College of Art, Lahore. In 1984, these artists, each now among the foremost artists in the country, established the Department of Fine Arts at Balochistan University. They were joined by lecturers trained at the Punjab University, NCA and Jamshoro University, among them Abid Husain Qureshi who studied in Japan and joined the department in 1990.

Sculpture, painting and drawing appear to be effortless expressions for the young of this region. At the university, where a two-hour drawing

class starts the day, or at the Arts Council, where classes are currently conducted by Kaleem Khan, the work in process is far above the average. Sadly, most of the output will not be seen outside Quetta as unknown artists have few links with sophisticated galleries. That the artists continue to work is no surprise, art is in their genes. At the university, there are a number of girls studying art and producing good work, although no one outside the family may get a chance to see it. In fact, the visual image that continues to haunt me from that visit was produced by a young woman art student who paints for her own satisfaction - what potential! Ultimately, that is what art is all about, the ability to express a viewpoint and the satisfaction of doing so.

Dawn Lifestyles: May 2003

R.M. Naeem
Oil on Canvas

R.M. Naeem
Oil on Canvas

Examining fresh viewpoints – R. M. Naeem

R.M. Naeem is one of a group of young, talented and ambitious artists who emerged in recent years to make their presence felt in the country's art circles. He left his hometown in Mirpurkhas, Sindh in '89, to begin student life at the National College of Art, Lahore. Up to that time, his experience had been limited to painting trucks, buses and cinema hoardings at a centre known as Jamil's Art in Mirpurkhas. At a government-organized exhibition of paintings in the town, Naeem had been accorded top honours and had his sights set on getting the best possible art education available. In Lahore, the young man, with a background of years of art-related work, was finally living his dream and was determined not to waste one minute of his time. Accustomed to hard work, he soon made like-minded friends and won the approval of his teachers, who became his role models, and for whom he retains the highest regard. From 1991 till 1993, he was awarded an NCA merit scholarship.

"I was so happy to receive admission to a great environment with an opportunity to study art and learn from experienced teachers. But when I reached the National College of Art, I had a crisis of confidence that had to do with my simple background. My fellow students seemed to me to be so much more worldly and knowledgeable than I was. I determined to work very hard and overcome these complexes and I made friends with serious, intelligent people. I spent my time with these friends and my teachers, and began to learn about art, life and human values. At the same time, I did all sorts of labouring jobs to pay my college fees. I value that experience too."

Naeem's thesis at the National College of Art, was titled 'Everything has Two Sides'. The work described the duality that threads through his work like a leitmotif. Colin David empathized with this phenomenon

a decade later during another of Naeem's exhibitions: "After he shed his early influences, there was no going back. Being a child of the '70s is no easy task for a painter brought up in the modern era and having his own culture as a constant reminder of his not-to-be-forgotten roots." Speaking of his work, Naeem explains:

"I began by painting isolated figures, but at my second solo exhibition held in 1997, titled 'Configuration', I started concentrating on the structural and technical values of miniature painting with realistic discipline. I did not consciously break or design the anatomy of the human figure, that was a later development."

Meeting R. M. Naeem at his first solo exhibition in Karachi in 1999, the initial impression was one of an artist completely invested in his work. There was a lot of energy and excitement in his paintings, he was not afraid to take risks while evoking a curiosity about the world outside and his own perception of it. His approach to the medium was sensual, rich textural effects made a backdrop for figure studies and portraits based on direct observation. It was reality diffused with surrealistically flavoured expressionism. One found in the artist's work a spark of fantasy that leavened the truthful power of observation. This perhaps echoed his interest in drama and mime, an interest that earned him a Special Prize from the NCA in 1993.

By the time of his first exhibition in Karachi, Naeem had already mounted several solo exhibitions in Islamabad and Lahore and, from 1994, had been a visiting lecturer at the National College of Art. He had the experience of several group shows behind him and was the recipient of scholarships, awards and prizes. He assisted professors Saeed Akhtar and Muhammad Asif in their drawing studios, and in 1996 began to teach drawing and painting in a studio of his own. Viewing Naeem's work, one became an observer sharing the artist's perception and his unique sense of 'self' enveloped in dreams. It became clear that he was first and foremost a painter of the human form, a genre followed by few painters in Pakistan.

In a further description of his work ethos, Naeem said: "When I am painting, I concentrate on that rather than injecting a concept into it.

These days, people find it quite easy to get information about the outside world from the web and other sources, but I feel strongly that you cannot with justification buy or borrow ideas which do not relate to your culture, society, economy or your intellect. For instance (talking of Christo), you cannot wrap buildings in a country where people don't have the means to clothe their bodies."

The recipient of a National Award from the 8th National Visual Arts Exhibition, organized by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in May this year (2003), he is currently engaged in a bold new series that combines organic images with stylized forms and faces worked in strong colours. It is a departure that echoes the artist's interest in mime and masque. At this exciting stage of his career, R. M. Naeem is engaged in enjoying the entire process of art and exploring its possibilities, rather than being confined to any one viewpoint.

Dawn Gallery: July 19, 2003

Bronze Sculptures by
Amin Guljee

Exhibition 2003 – Amin Gulgee

"Metals such as bronze, steel, iron and aluminum remain the characteristic materials of our civilization and have decisive virtues for sculpture – they can be cut, welded, moulded, cast, polished or patinated, and the final result has a durability that exceeds all but the hardest stone."
Herbert Read

Amin Gulgee's workshop was in full swing and the metal pieces waiting to be joined and other sculptures in the process of being welded made an exciting cacophony of sound as well as a vibrant visual experience. Several beautiful forms were ready for the finishing touches, based on the concept of the Mughul 'Char Bagh' image – the symmetrical, four-sectioned structure that is sheer geometry. In his latest collection, historical connotations emerge from modern innovations focusing on the sphere, which he regards as an infinite phenomenon, and the cube, viewed as a finite entity.

"This work attempts to pick up threads and put them together. In my desire to understand pure form, I have analyzed structure and how things come together. Bringing the sphere and the cube together has been one of my chief aesthetic strivings for almost twelve years and here I think I have finally done it."

In Amin's work text is read through space in his open, linear forms, sculpture excitingly textured and objectively dynamic. A mass of leaves in copper continued the garden/nature imagery and added a soft, organic element to his work. An installation, largely created from the tops of ancient, wooden doors from Sindh, was as decorative and mysterious as one imagines the façade of a Zenana to be. It shone bright with polished metal, bells and stained glass.

"Working in different scales is good for my work. I've chosen a discipline that requires much patience and I am by nature very impatient, but it all comes together. Nobody commissions sculpture, and so I

commission myself and this collection has been coming together over the last three years. I use copper, bronze and steel for structure support and detail. I adore copper. It is so civilized. It has longevity, elasticity and a glorious rich nature."

A sculptor who has shown his work in many countries of the world, Amin graduated from Yale University in 1987, taking Honors in Art History and Economics and earning a coveted award for his thesis on Mughul Gardens, focusing on Shalimar.

"There is very little information on the subject, so my professor at Yale advised me to study Mughul miniature paintings for clues, and that's what I did. I discovered there was a real political function to these gardens, emphasizing the might of the emperor linked to the size of the garden and the amount of water used in the design. But it was not all contrived as 'might'. The Cypress and six other species of trees were laid out in levels and gave a sculptural effect to the design of the gardens. It was also about organizing nature, a metaphor for trying to understand the divine power, besides expressing the aesthetic nature of the Moghuls." Amin learnt through miniatures of the `Four Garden' concept brought from Persia through Central Asia and then to the subcontinent by the Mughul emperors. "They were not gardens in the western sense, but actually roofless palaces, enclosures laid out on the emperor's route."

After graduation from Yale, Amin was determined to make his life in art. He began to experiment with metal sculpture, analyzing diverse aesthetic forms and unifying them with his own creative insight. Without inhibition, he combined materials such as tiny mirrors, bells, crystals, found objects, enamel work, and text. He aspired to develop an innovative yet traditional personal idiom, and showed the results of his experiments at his first solo exhibition held in Karachi in 1988. It was an adventurous merging of contemporary methodology and traditional motifs that marked the debut of an artist with originality and wit.

By creating wearable works of art, Amin hoped to bring art into everyday life. He was twenty-three at the time and eager to test his theories in the west. Heading for the USA, he rented a studio loft in

Brooklyn, where he began to work on a new collection of wearable pieces, and in the process decorated the walls of his loft with discarded metal pipes. It was the first of a continuous series of murals he was to create from discarded and found objects.

Exhibitions followed, at Karachi in 1990, where a new, vigorous body of work was described by Amin as a "Voyage across the cultural world, where the contradictions of belief exist in aesthetic harmony." In 1992, he was commissioned to create a sculpture commemorating the inauguration of the IBM Museum and there emerged a six-foot tall form – Man and Computer – in which the imagery of the double helix, the long nucleic acid molecule know as DNA appeared. Amin produced a series of large-scale murals before returning to the States for a series of exhibitions. It was a memorable period in the young artist's life. His work was acquired for important permanent collections; celebrated fashion designers included his wearable sculpture in their fashion ensembles and his work was reviewed in the Washington Post, the Washington Times, the New York Daily News and various art publications and magazines.

In Pakistan's northern regions, Amin had planned to read, walk and rest after the excitement of New York, but a trip to the bazaar with its mirrors, clay pots, glazed tiles and bottles set him off again. Buying a big load of goods, he headed for home, where he started work on a mural on the facade of the family house in his efforts to celebrate the simple utility of domestic objects.

"Sculpture is a solitary procedure, so I love the idea of collaboration in other art forms such as performance arts, where you work as a team. Everything affects everything else, and I love to jump; I have no wish to be static. I look forward to doing a mosaic on the roof of my apartment, that's really good for me and for my work. I collect stuff and keep things stacked away and then bring them together. I really enjoy the non-functional object perspective and this year I've had a lot of interaction with architects and that was great."

We talked of the overt spiritual connotations of the work, and Amin explained:

"I never grew up being ritualistic, it was mind-blowing, and I found my own path towards it. As an artist, you cannot separate life and work. The work process, at least for me, is a fragile, exasperating, exhilarating experience. If I ever lose that feeling, then I'd rather open a lassi hut in Sri Lanka and sit and watch the sea all day. My work is taking off in so many different directions at once. I live in Karachi by choice, it's great for my work process, one questions constantly. Cities make you think and cities in turmoil make you think even more. The diversity is what makes human beings wonderful and one day, we will all work together and the combination will not create a gray sludge but a rainbow."

Dawn Gallery: May 24, 2003

Abdul Jabbar Gul
Wood Carvings

Ordinary Souls – Abdul Jabbar Gull

The style is monumental created from a minimal palette, the inspiration a self portrait – introspective, rugged with troubled expression. The recent work of Abdul Jabber Gull consists of a collection of paintings, ink and wash works and three dimensional pieces. The artists is adamant that he remains a sculptor and the work on canvas executed in oils a diversion, a deeply delving exploration of his own inner thoughts and feelings. "Inquiry is life, and while it exists, questioning is the essence of it if one is to keep moving and evolving. If I work to express my self then I must know what is this `self', and what motivates me to work." Is it for expression, appreciation or to display talent, he muses and concludes the motive is accumulative of all these factors. Gull describes the subject of his work as `Ordinary Souls.' "I am one of them", he explains.

It began when he sketched a series of forms intended as ideas to be conceived in the third dimension. Enjoying the exercise Gull translated the concept on to a sequence of large canvases. The self-portrait crystallized Gull's conviction that he was a prototype for everyman, the ordinary soul moulded by environment, tradition, and circumstances. At first glance the imagery appears to deal with family, male/female representatives, it is actually mirroring the twin aspects that constitute each human being. "The two sides that make us whole", he says. In Gull's portraits, shaven heads are a symbol of innocence linked to salvation and the rituals of birth and pilgrimage. He depicts groups of people representing generations past, present and future, describing the circumstances by which custom is passed through succeeding generations. In the shattered environment that defies norm, the traditions are broken, customs questioned and only grief and suffering a common factor among the `ordinary souls' of the world.

Gull's is a thought provoking body of work musing on spirituality, diversity and the war of propaganda that he describes as, "misleading us". Subjects with arms raised take a protective stance, shielding their young perhaps or their ideology or culture. A smaller figure barely glimpsed holds a hostage attitude, hands on head. Each generation, he tells us, is held hostage to circumstances. Among the simplified, heavy limbed forms one finds a single figure identified by his clothes, a jacket and tie, the painting is titled 'The Scholar.' He stands with bare feet, fingers pointing towards the earth. Here the artist communicates a belief in the need for humility in the world; success must be worn with grace. Rendered in shadows and tones, paintings are varied with diverse textures. Some are executed with smooth, even strokes, others patterned with thick areas of paint from the tube. In a few smaller compositions in which a single colour has been incorporated, the forms stand out in russet, green and blue but the colour holds no meaning. Rather it is a spontaneous experimentation or mood and the theme of vulnerable innocence continues to link them. The theme seems also to encompass the unquestioning guileless quality that takes things and people at face value, accepts the package with naïve deference before examining the contents.

'Ordinary Souls' initiates a dialogue with viewers that raises many issues. The seemingly clean simplicity of the format harbours a subtext that is complex in the extreme.

The ink and wash works continue to exploit the subject in a style that clearly reveals the artist's sophisticated understanding of overall design elements. Here the loss of innocence is portrayed in the seamed impression of facial features. These are elegant works in which tones of gray and blue create a contemporary background to the areas incorporating a simulated script that evoke Gull's interest in eastern calligraphy. The ethos of the sculptor is ever present in the use of form and light in the paintings and in wood carvings that support the theme of an anonymous majority whose destiny is linked to suffering. A wall based sculpture consists of small, wood panels. Grouped together, they compose a sequence of fresco style portraits. Thirty altogether, these are the: 'Most

Unwanted.' The artist contends that while huge sums are offered to capture the `most wanted criminals' of the world, there are untold numbers of ordinary people who become the victims of the crossfire, innocent passers-by.

A continuation of the work is a series of wood panels grouped around one single `face'. Here the visuals are maps etched into the wood describing troubled areas of the world. Carved and engraved, the wood is smoked to reveal the beauty of the grain, a technique that softens the stark message of Gull's wall based carvings. In contrast, the oblong 'takhti' shaped, two feet tall, floor based wood sculptures are densely worked. Carved, engraved, panelled and with areas of gestural script that details the artist's technical skills.

Abdul Jabber Gull joined the National College of Art, Lahore, in 1990 and for two years he studied design, including ceramics, photography and printmaking, before finding his true vocation in sculpture. As an art student, he demonstrated a commitment that has led him on an individual path. A further four years of study ensued before Gull completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Sculpture. Subsequently, he joined the faculty of the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi, where he teaches sculpture.

In 2003 he was a national award winner at the 8th Exhibition of Visual Arts organized by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

Dawn Gallery: August 28, 2004

Ali Azmat,
Oil on Canvas

Ali Azmat,
Oil on Canvas

Merging life and art – Ali Azmat

"For me, expressing reactions to life through paint is the experience that merges art and life. I paint the human form, the most important phenomenon in the universe and a major source of inspiration. In my work, I intend the figure to dominate and use space to emphasize the solitude of my sitter. I always paint from life and, besides the figure, the most important aspect of my work is the composition, and that must be strong within itself," says Ali Azmat.

Ali Azmat's inherent drawing skills and command of composition lie at the heart of his work. He is a studio painter who dislikes painting outdoors and stores in the studio an extensive body of drawings rendered in graphite and charcoal. Paintings intended for exhibition focus on pensive figures, portrayed deep in thought, oblivious of the observer's gaze and depicted in an interpretation that emphasizes emotions. A series of paintings started in 2003, titled 'Melancholy', express a particular mood conveyed through the single figure of a seemingly vulnerable young woman. Within the confines of four walls, the subject appears absorbed in a very private and personal world to which outsiders have no access.

With little need for background detail, the only decorative aspect is the luxurious texture of materials. A single assertive shadow cast on a wall is transformed into a unique facet of the artist's style. Walls, textured by tonal contrast, offer clues in surprising elements: a trail of insects – an ancient symbol of the inequality of the human condition – is seen climbing the wall to frame a figure whose striped dress appears to orchestrate the movement of the crawlies; a space, starkly bare, is broken by what appear to be empty nails hammered into a wall; a sharply defined silhouette delineates facial features as delicate as a cameo image. Despite the figurative realism of Ali Azmat's style, it is peculiarly

modernist in essence. At times, it seems the cast shadow is the dominant factor, perhaps symbolic of hidden potential and ambitions or the sense of alienation that lives in every artist's soul, the rest a diversion.

Extremely gifted has no tradition of art in his background and no explanation for his intense involvement with art. He was born in Multan in 1972 and grew up in an agricultural milieu. Losing his parents early in life, he was raised by elder siblings, of whom he speaks with great affection but they cannot share his emotions nor appreciate his work.

"When I was awarded a National Prize for painting by PNCA in 2003, I rang my family immediately to tell them my news, but it meant absolutely nothing to them. I had to add that there was a cash prize involved and that drew some interest." Ali Azmat is an appealing young man with a warm sense of humour contrary to the mood that permeates his work. His wife Najia is also a painter and their home obviously belongs to artists. Paintings and drawings decorate the walls and it has a style and flair that one only finds among creative people: they know how to use space and how to leave space free. Proud of his wife's painting skills, Ali Azmat is keen that she should continue with her work. "I told Najia, don't cook for me, and concentrate on your painting."

Fate intervened in Ali Azmat's life when a distant relative with some knowledge of art and friends in Lahore's art circles recognized the boy's potential and suggested trying for admission to an art institute in Lahore. With his brothers' blessings, he made his way to Lahore.

"I set off optimistically for Lahore in 1992, though at that time, I had a very basic knowledge of art and did not even understand the term 'graphic design'. It was a bewildering ordeal but my drawing skills saw me through and I got admission to the Punjab University's Fine Arts Department. I was the only male to get admission among the ten students who had passed; that was a real source of embarrassment to me. Living in the hostel took some getting used to; the rooms were so small and dark and I was used to lots of space, but I enjoyed the company and interaction with other students. I was soon very contentedly immersed in my work and there were senior students, such as Ayub Changhezi, now living in Balochistan, who set a good example. They

were hard-working artists who spent their time in the hostel painting and I followed their lead. We used to discuss art and other issues and it was a very learning experience for me."

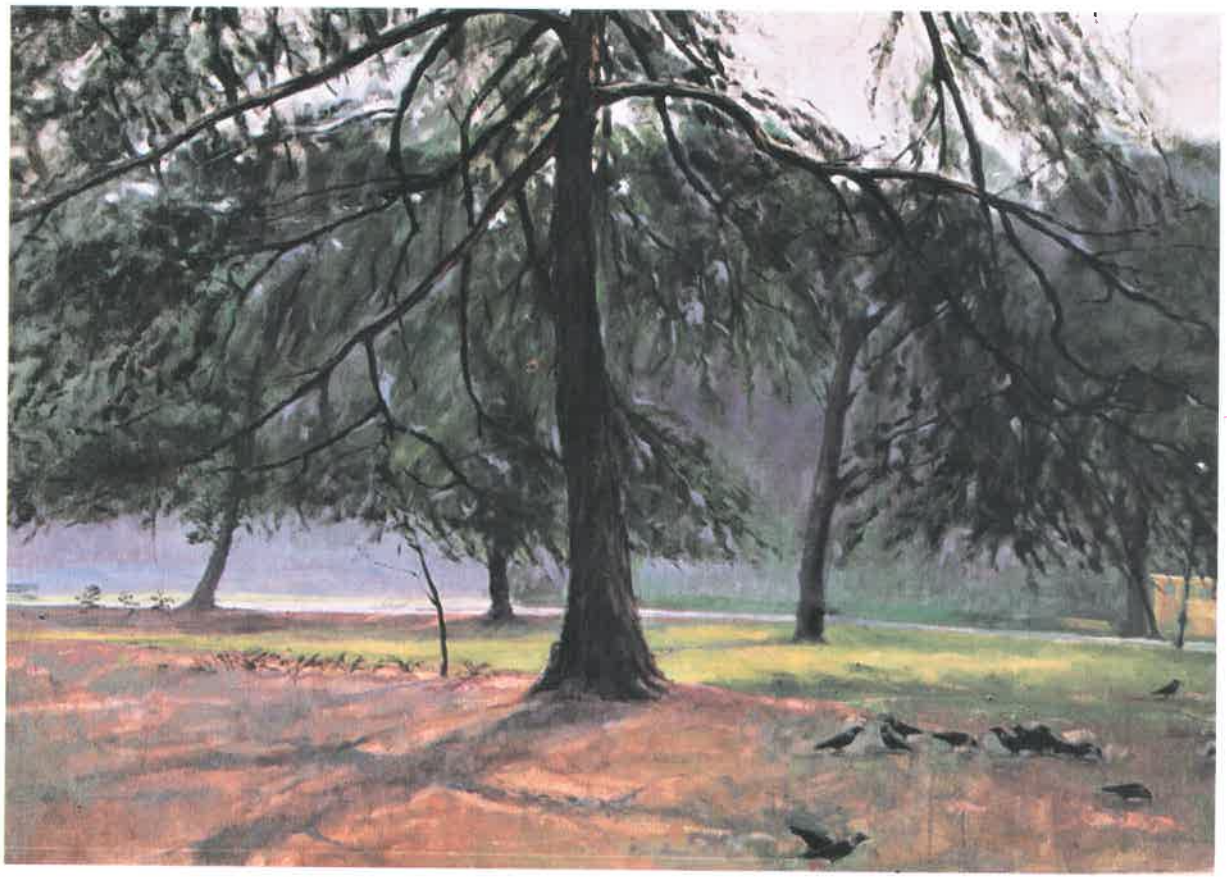
The young art student was very relieved when one of his female class-fellows dropped out and was replaced by Mughees Riaz, who became and remains his closest friend.

While I was working on my Master's, I covered all subjects, including landscape, but always managed to put figures in my landscapes. I generally use women as models for my subject as they offer a greater freedom of texture, colour and design in their clothes."

Ali Azmat's talents were soon recognized by way of awards. In 1997, he won the second prize from the Lahore Art Council annual students' exhibition. In 1998, he earned a Gold Medal during his Master's in Fine Art, and in 1999, received an award at the Punjab Artist's Association Exhibition. That same year, an exhibition of his drawings held at the Alhamra Art Gallery was well received and he joined the faculty of the Institute of Art and Design, Punjab University.

Since 1999, Ali Azmat's work has been seen in a number of group exhibitions and a solo exhibition was held in Karachi in 2002. At the 8th National Visual Arts Exhibition, held in Lahore in 2003, he was presented an award from the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in appreciation for his mastery of media and technique. Assimilating symbolism with explicit realism, he creates a disquieting scenario in which strongly felt personal aspects are at the same time a contemporary observation of social and political issues.

Dawn Gallery: May 22, 2004



Mughees Riaz, Oil on Canvas

A vision of infinite space – Mughees Riaz

In his work, Mughees Riaz attempts to create a visible parallel for his aesthetic response to his subject. In many of his paintings, low horizon lines ensure that pale-tinted, translucent skies cover much of the picture space. The harmony with nature he experiences while painting endows the work with a sense of wonder.

The subject of landscape has been of major interest in the development of art in the Punjab, ever since the revered artist and teacher Khalid Iqbal returned from the Slade School of Art, London, with a prize for landscape painting in the 1950s. The professor's uncluttered, pristine style initiated a modern art development that spread from the Punjab to other regions of the country, where artists sought to express personal interpretations through the medium of oils or watercolours. For a young artist to enter the field today is a daunting challenge in the light of so much excellence, yet Riaz brings his own version by way of a favourite place in timeless settings that articulate the deeply felt sentiments that address his views. The illusion of distance assimilated in the work gives emphasis to the atmospheric impression experienced during twilight, that short spell before sunset.

Deeply rooted in Lahore, where he was born in 1971, art has been the guiding force for Riaz's family for generations. He speaks of his great-grandfather, a man who crafted wood; his grandfather who was an artist; and his father who studied Graphic Design at NCA, Lahore. Both Riaz's younger brothers are involved in art. Strolling through the Shalimar Gardens, close to his home, Riaz pointed out the path he traversed on his way to school as a young boy and regretting the neglected state of the historic gardens. Over the years, he has filled sketchbooks,

inspired by the various aspects of the historic gardens. From early childhood, Riaz had intended to make a life in art and by the time he began his formal art training had absorbed a wide ranging knowledge of art in his own home.

Mughees took an MFA, from the Institute of Art and Design in 1999, and subsequently he joined the institute as a visiting lecturer. During his final student year he began to explore the phenomenon of early evening or 'dusk', the time of day when the sky over the Ravi is a melting canv.s of the palest shades of pink melting into blue and finally lilac. E very evening found Riaz striving to analyze the myriad tonal values h saw in the skies, striving to transmute the experience on to his own c.vas. It was his own private world, with rarely another soul in sight, the only sound that of birds chattering. Often he felt he had stepped into another cosmic dimension.

Mughees related a strange experience that occurred on one of his first expeditions, an incident so bizarre that he had never spoken of it before. It happened when he was absorbed as usual in his aesthetic problems and focused on the canvas; he felt a hand on his shoulder and, turning slightly, saw an old man who nodded his approval. Riaz continued to paint while the old man quietly watched over his shoulder, "Your teacher is Ustad Allah Buksh," he said. Mughees turned around, but there was no one in sight, and he dismissed the incident from his mind. Three years later, he saw a portrait of Ustad Allah Buksh, who died in 1978, at the Alhamra Gallery and recognized in the portrait the same person who had touched his shoulder by the Ravi.

Mughees, who first showed his work in public at the Punjab Artists' Association exhibition, Lahore in 1994, was encouraged to contribute regularly to this annual event. His first solo exhibition was held in 2001 in Lahore, where, to his gratification, all the paintings were sold. That year he was awarded First Prize at an exhibition organized by the Directorate General, Social Welfare and Education, Women's Development. Another award followed in 2003, during the 8th National Visual Arts Exhibition held in Lahore, from the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

Riaz's work for exhibition combines a distinctive viewpoint expressed in a style close to Romanticism. The large limpid landscapes inspired by his response to his environment excite a sense of awe tempered by simple images that add reality to the drama. So delicately do the colours merge and change, you can hardly differentiate one from another. He creates an orange globe that dazzles the eye while birds fly to roost in the trees. Patient buffaloes balance the slightly surrealistic ambience with their solid presence. A single, discarded clay pot, as the focus of a surface painted horizontally, symbolizes the folktale of Sohni, a girl who swam the Ravi, using a clay pot as a float, and drowned before the eyes of her waiting lover. The gentle landscapes are painted with various compositional devices: trees, birds, and water that is as still and reflective as glass and exudes a luminescent light.

The artist's approach to his medium is smoothly sensual, paint seemingly stroked across the surface with a delicate touch. Continuing to explore this sequence of work, one realizes a few objects, such as an empty boat or the reflection of a stick, obviate an experience of total abstraction. Without their reassuring presence, one may find oneself entering a mysterious, pale world that hovers forever between sunshine and moonlight.

Dawn Gallery: July 31, 2004

Jameel Ahmed Baloch, Metalic Fibre Glass Relief

Working in the third dimension – Jamil Ahmed Baloch

At an exhibition in Karachi a couple of years ago my attention gravitated towards a group of eighteen clay, moulded figures standing about ten inches high. Each piece represented a woman wearing a Burqa, and I marvelled at the skill of the sculptor, who was able to depict animated personalities transcending the anonymous 'wrappings' with subtle 'body language'. The sculptor of this audacious composition was Jamil Ahmed Baloch, who was born in Nushki, where he has strong ties.

A memorable event occurred in Jamil's life in 1983, when he was eleven years old, one that was to shape his future. He was taken to visit the National College of Art, where his brother, Akram Dost was exhibiting his thesis work. Jamil found the NCA 'awesome'; he remembers the excitement at that time and how thrilled he was to join the students in some technical work. "I enjoyed the experience so much, but when people asked me if I would join the college when I grew up I answered 'no'. I thought it was very tough and rather overwhelming to me at that time, but from then on I began to work at art more seriously. I painted portraits and landscapes, often travelling miles in barren areas on my own to capture certain scenes. Painting comes very easily to me, I consider it is a relaxation."

Talking about his early life, Jamil described his childhood and the independent quality that manifested itself early and is very apparent in his bearing.

"The two earliest passions in my life were sports and 'image making'; football is very popular in my area and it was my favourite game. I used to play with school friends and, unfortunately, they always chose me as

goalkeeper, so I used to see the players from a distance but seldom had a ball come my way. Looking at the scenery around me led me to make drawings of the mountains and houses, using my feet to scratch the earth. Sometimes I got so involved with this that I would forget about the game, with the result that my side would lose because I missed the ball. The team used to get so angry with me! I began by making pictures with my feet, so it's very easy for me to do things with my hands. I was always 'making' things, creating junk sculpture before I even knew what it was. I used to make cars, planes, all sorts of things without any guidance."

Jamil gained admission to the National College of Art, Lahore, graduating with distinction in 1997. The college is enlivened by examples of Jamil's sculpture around the campus; a couple on a swing, a large statue, even the trendy looking litter-bins made by his students. "I feel the National College is my home," he confided, "and I want it to look beautiful."

It appears that in Jamil's young life, challenge in diverse form has played a major role in directing his viewpoint, but there is no suggestion of aggression in his expression. His work is bold, witty and exuberant, at times audacious, and always vibrant with energy.

"Of course, like all of us, I have been influenced by the environment of the area where I was born and bred. The 'Burqa' series is part of that experience. Whenever I travel around, I am conscious of the 'body language' people unconsciously use, which is very revealing; in fact, it says it all and I tried to show that in my work. The group of figures I made from clay are intended as models, 'sketches' one might say, for the large-scaled pieces I plan to make. Each form will be 10 to 15 feet high, and I plan to make about 40 of them. The question is of space, and where to display them, the galleries are too small.

"I learned so much from my particular environment, Balochistan. Roots are very important, and I feel whatever I have achieved developed naturally and unconsciously due to that a lot of things other artists find a struggle comes easy to me, as I am used to an environment where people make their own paints from scratch, chop down the trees to

make their houses and walk miles to find water, so challenge is part of everyday life. Of course I have great ideas and I love to sculpt on a large scale, but materials are very expensive and one has to find the means to afford the discipline. I have worked with all sorts of different material and am equally
comfortable whether carving in marble, stone or wood, welding in metal, or moulding in malleable materials."

In Jamil Baloch's family, generations ago, one of their female ancestors was very artistic and known for the patterns she wove in carpets. Enraged by the fact of her husband taking a second wife, she wove a nude image of the woman in a carpet, an incident that has become a family legend. Jamil Baloch feels a lot of artistic ability springs from that source. "Creating things, it is part of my temperament. When I was young, I hardly knew the difference between the disciplines, going from one to the other. My ambition is to one day see the work of great sculptors first-hand, to visit Paris, America and England, ideally on a scholarship."

Jamil spoke of his admiration for artists such as Shahid Sajjad and Jamil Naqsh, and the artists in Lahore, those who taught his generation and considers himself fortunate to be doing something he loves in a place that is so important to him. His immediate plans concern starting work on a new project. It will be large-scale and demanding, and I left the artist working out the logistics of the work that already existed in his mind.

Dawn Gallery: February 1, 2003

Usman Saeed
Miniature Paintings,
Mixed Media

Studying the contrasts within a reality – Usman Saeed

Usman, a talented, 'golden rocket' of a person, is witty and engaging, using his skills to the full. While totally committed to a modern ethos, he maintains the elegant skills and sensitive perception of the miniature masters of old. Young though he is, he is no stranger to love and loss, a theme that threads through his work as do the leitmotif butterflies found in many of his miniature pieces.

Musical metaphors, photo images and delicate linear patterns are found in Usman's aesthetic vocabulary. In his third solo exhibition, currently taking place at a Karachi gallery. The artist invites guests to go beyond the illusion of a prepared and perfect stage and enter the 'peace within chaos', as he refers to the backstage scene. Describing his viewpoint is a painting titled 'Unplugged Stones', a narrative focused on a guitar formed of song lyrics with personal meanings. A glowing, golden line that runs through the instrument links the artist's two contrasting worlds. A tracery of exquisite, pencil-drawn lines act as loose wires and switches that are as subtle as fine rain or tears. So much is suggested, as associations and interpretations of dreams and memories are mingled in a fantasy of imaginative invention.

Usman spoke of the experiences that have motivated his diverse involvements.

"I can clearly remember being fascinated by the birds and ships made of gold and silver paper by my nursery art teacher. From my earliest age, I was exposed to the on-goings of art and culture of Lahore of the 1980s. My father, Saeed Akhtar, taught sculpture, drawing and painting at the National College of Art with utmost dedication and energy, and I grew up absorbing the charisma, beauty and purity of all art forms. From the beginning, I was strongly inclined to the most academically basic of all the disciplines, pencil drawing.

"From an early age, I was encouraged to attend children's art workshops and to take part in the annual Pakistan Day art competitions."

Usman is devoted to his family and appreciative of their respective talents.

As is a common experience among many sensitive, potential artists, Usman was very different from the stereotype, sports-crazy schoolboy but came into his own on joining the National College of Art, Lahore as a young adult. There he found the promise of a new, exciting world, and he entered it with all the enthusiasm of his being.

"My first day at the National College of Arts (1995) was a complete dream come true...those four years at NCA have been, without doubt, the happiest years of my life to date. I was fortunate to get the best of teachers, who taught us how to stand out in a crowd, using our work not ourselves. There I made my greatest friends, some of whom are now continents away but still very close to my heart. Majoring in miniature painting confirmed my sense of belonging to my roots, the rich culture and the age-old traditions of our part of the world. But, also, belonging equally to the internet age got me experimenting with machine-oriented arts such as printmaking, and photography. I also had the opportunity to explore the performing arts, mime and music and was fascinated by the merging of the disciplines. Soon after my graduation in 1999, I had the opportunity to join up with fashion designer Maria Butt as a motif designer. This experience gave reign to my flair for fashion, the art of make-up, and most important, photography."

After a year Usman was ready for his first solo exhibition, 'The Eternal', at the Zahoor-ul-Akhlaq Gallery, NCA, which featured body art photography. He used the human skin as the canvas to paint images from nature and soon afterwards was appointed to teach miniature painting and drawing at the NCA.

"Returning to the miniature brought me home, and along with fashion photography, I started working for my second solo exhibition held at Karachi in 2001."

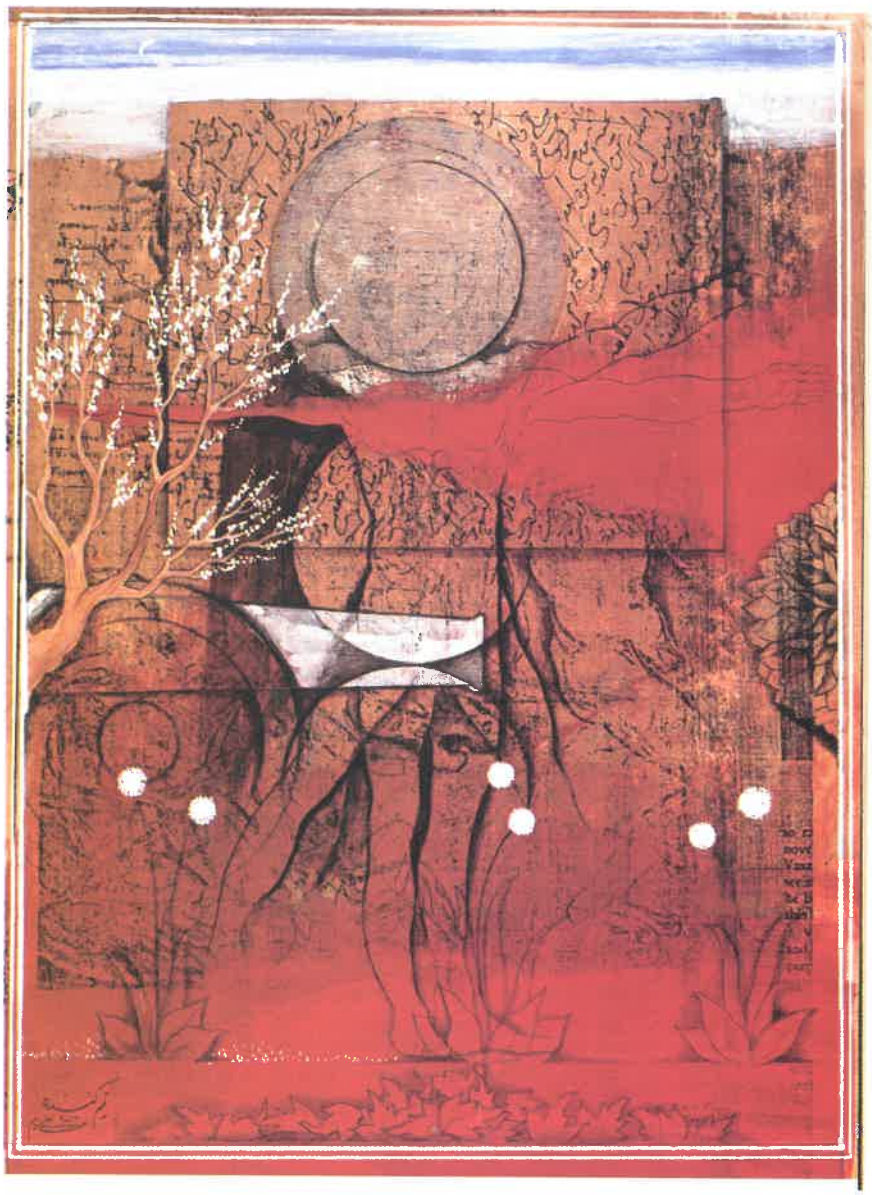
He exhibited a body of work titled: 'Beliefs and Desires', a tribute to his late mother, "The strongest, most loving woman I have ever

known."

With a number of exciting options ahead, Usman looks forward to the future.

"I'm sure of one thing: I won't stop painting ever, but channeled by the fun-loving side of my persona I'm moving ahead with fashion photography. I have always been fascinated by the concepts of contrasts within a reality. The realms of art and fashion at times blend with each other so well, finding such similar intentions, similar vocabularies and a similar essence. The tools, techniques, temperaments, limitations, attitudes and relevance of time, all bear an individual voice, sometimes close, sometimes poles apart in the two disciplines."

Dawn Gallery: August 2, 2003



Khadim Ali, Miniature Painting

A dialogue of the times – Khadim Ali

Khadim Ali told me of a strange story addressing his recent work. He described the customary celebrations in his ancestral homeland when people gather at the Mazar-i-Sherif on the 21st March to celebrate Nauroz, the New Year. An intrinsic element of the tradition was the common enjoyment of the beautiful tulips that abound in the area. The mass of flowers in full bloom and myriad colours appeared to rejoice in a new beginning along with the congregation. Coinciding with the destruction wrought by the Taliban in the area came draught. The rains ceased, there were no more tulips and only the indomitable dandelions were seen on the parched earth. Where previously there had been cause for celebration a massacre took place. 9000 people were slaughtered and their blood spread across and into the barren soil. With the rout of the Taliban came the rains and the dormant tulips blossomed again from the soil; enormous, magical blooms as if the spirits of the dead rejoiced once more.

Throughout art history, artists have been moved to express their deepest feelings on the effects of acts of violence. With roots covering centuries of ancestors in the region of Bamiyan in Afghanistan, from the windows of the family home, Khadim Ali grew up with the view of the historic Buddhist sculpture carved from the rugged mountain rocks. He was born in Quetta in 1978, and began his art education with Fazil Mousavi, a fine watercolorist and teacher. There were frequent visits to Bamiyan where his grandfather taught him the history of their homeland and the family.

"According to my grandfather, our ancestors were believed to be sculptors in those early days and the tradition is that the valley was visited by the Emperor Ashoka, brought Buddhism to the regions and ordered the creation of the sculpture carved in the rocks. The work

continued for three hundred years".

Inside the rocks, there was a village with interconnected houses and numerous windows lit by lamps at night. These are delineated by the artist as threads connecting dark rectangles, no longer shining in the darkness. As children, Khadim Ali and his cousins loved to explore the ancient dwellings and wrote numbers on the windows to trace their paths in the labyrinthine structures.

Khadim Ali studied mural painting in Iran, and in 2000 joined the National College of Art, Lahore, from where he graduated in 2003. There he was taught the techniques of miniature painting by Bashir Ahmed and Imran Qureshi. In his first solo exhibition of paintings: Jashne Gule Surkh, at Chawkandi Art, he displays a collection of delicately executed artworks that, although contemporary in idiom, are executed in a traditional miniature format. The subject of the work focuses on the destruction of the historic icons as a symbol of the mindless forces of aggression.

Articulating his thoughts in a dialogue of the times the artist is contemporary in his approach. Traditional elements are continued in the practice of preparing wasli surfaces, making brushes from squirrel hair and using organic pigments. Colouration includes the green tinged earth tones soaked from walnut skins; gradient colours of paper washed in tea, tints made from vegetable hues. Scarlet and blue predominate referring to innocent bloodshed and the colour of the mosaic tiles of the Mazar-i-Sherif, a colour echoed in the blue Burqas worn by women.

Juxtaposing motifs of peace with symbols of war and destruction sensitively rendered, his is the outcry of a peace loving man touched by war. Three globes that appear in the paintings allude to the Buddha's three stages of purification and portraits of the great Mughals haloed with gold and silver circles. The delicately blossoming almond tree, triumphant tulips and dandelions – considered the messengers of good news – are interspersed with the litter of war. Shell cases, broken stones, fragmented forms, and the text of the artist's letters.

References to the Vitruvian man of Leonardo Da Vinci compare Leonardo's study of anatomy and human proportions to the work of

the sculptors of the Bamiyan Buddhas. In the region where Firdausi's Shahnama is an oral tradition, the artist incorporates Rustam's victory over a black devil with an arrow from a divine source. Transforming the legend to a modern fable, Khadim Ali paints a wounded landscape looked down upon by relics of history where through centuries of change the mountains remain.

Dawn Gallery: August 28, 2004

Bio Data of Artists

Abdur Rahman Chughtai

Born:	Lahore:	1894-1975
Qualifications:	1911	Joined Drawing Masters course in Mayo School of Art, Lahore
	1914	Appointed Drawing Master in Mission School, Gujranwala
	1916	Appointed Teacher of Photo-Lithography in Mayo School. Sent to Calcutta for further training in the subject, he met the artsists of the New Bengal School of Art
	1924	Left Mayo School
	1928	`Muraqqa-e-Chughtai' published
	1932	First visit to Europe – Line drawings acquired by the British Museum
	1934	Awarded title: Khan Bahadar
	1937	Studied at School of Photo-engraving, London.
	1951	'Chugtai's Indian Paintings' published in Delhi
	1968	`Amal-e-Chughtai' published
Exhibitions:	1920	Participated in Exhibitions of British and Indian Arts and Crafts, Lahore
	1924	Exhibited 11 paintings, British Empire Exhibition, Wembley
	1949	Solo exhibition at opening of Pakistan Arts Council, Lahore
	1967	Solo Exhibition at Commonwealth Institue Art Gallery, London

Anna Molka Ahmed

Born:	London:	1917-1994 Lahore
Qualifications:	1939	Qualified from Central School of Arts & Crafts, London
	1939	Married Artist Sheikh Ahmed
	1940	Joined Punjab University to start Fine Art Department
	1940-1972	Served as Head of Art Department. Introduced BFA and MFA programmes
	1972-74	Professor in Art Department
	1979	Made Professor Emeritus by Punjab University

Honours/Awards:	1963	Tamgha -e- Imtiaz
	1969	President's Award for Pride of Performance
	1982-	Quaid-e-Azam Award by Pakistan National Council of Arts. Khudeja-Tul-Khubra Medal
	1968-1969	Solo exhibitions in Karachi
	1992	Solo exhibition Lahore
	1992	Published a book of poems

Abdul Jabbar Gul

Born	Mirpurkhas, Sindh 1969	
Qualifications:	1996	Graduated National College of Arts, Lahore (specialized in sculpture)
Exhibitions:		Held solo exhibitions and participated in group exhibitions
Awards/Honours	1996	NCA, Stage Design
	1996	Punjab Artists Association Award for Sculpture
	2002	Awarded Residency Programme, Johannesburg, South Africa
Present position		Faculty member, Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture, Karachi

Adil Salahuddin

Born:	Lahore: 1944	
Qualifications:	1966	Graduated with Distinction in Fine Art
	1967	Joined Security Printing Press as Designer, worked on art projects with Bashir Mirza
	1986	Accorded Best Stamp Designer among ECO countries (Pakistan, Iran, Turkey)
	1986	Awarded Gold Medal
	1988	Awarded President's Pride of Performance
	1991	Collaborated and designed a book: Overprints on Indian Stamps 1947-49
	1998	Fellow of The National College of Arts, Lahore
	2000	Designed Stamps pertaining to Pakistan's Culture for an exhibition held at the Philately Museum, Singapore
Present Status:	2003	Assigned the project of setting up a Philately Museum in Karachi

Akram Dost Baloch

Born:	Nushki, Baluchistan 1958	
Qualifications:	1983	National Diploma in Fine Arts, N.C.A.,Lahore
Exhibitions:		Held Solo shows & participated in various national & international exhibitions exhibitions in Pakistan & abroad
	2000	Solo exhibition, Paris
Honour/Awards	1984	Founding member, Department of Fine Arts, University of Baluchistan, Quetta
	1988	Bolan Award
	1990	First Prize, Cultural Float Design Pakistan National Day
	1996	National Award for Art, PNCA
	2004	President's Pride of Performance Award
Present status:		Chairman Department of Fine Arts, University of Baluchistan, Quetta

Ali Azmat

Born:	Multan, 1973	
Qualifications:	1998	MFA (painting), Gold Medallist, Institute of Art & Design, Punjab University
Exhibitions:		Held solo exhibitions and participated in several group shows
Awards/Honours	1997	Second Prize, Lahore Art Council Annual Student Painting competition
	1999	Award by Artists Association of Punjab
	2003	National Award: Pakistan National Council of Arts
the		
Present status:		Lecturer, Institute of Art & Design, University of Punjab

Amin Gulgee

Born:	Karachi -1966	
Qualifications:	1987	Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Art History, Yale University, USA

Exhibitions:	1989	First Solo Exhibition Has been exhibiting regularly in Pakistan and abroad
Awards/Honours:	1987	Awarded "Cougar B. Goodyear" for thesis on Moghul Gardens
	2003	National Award, PNCA

Athar Jamal

Born:	Lahore 1952	
Qualifications:	1985	Diploma in Fine Arts (Gold Medalist) Karachi School of Arts
	2001	Designed and illustrated a Text book on Art for Students Aspects of Art (OUP Pakistan project)
Present position:		Faculty member, Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture, Karachi

Colin David

Born:	Karachi 1937	
Qualification:	1960	M.F.A., Punjab University, Lahore
	1961-62	Post Graduate Study at Slade School of Fine Arts, London
Exhibitions:		Held numerous Solo Exhibitions and participated in group exhibitions in Pakistan and abroad
Awards& Honours:	1960	Gold Medal M.A.Dyal Singh College, Lahore
	1960	Gold Medal, Punjab University, Lahore
		1st Prize, Punjab Council, Lahore
	1977	Quaide Azam Award
	1979	President's Award for Quaid's painting
	1982	President's Medal for Pride of Performance
	1995	Fellow, National College of Arts, Lahore

Fyzee Rahamin

Born:	Poona India1880 - 1964 Karachi	
Qualification:		Educated at J.J. School of Art, Bombay and Royal Academy of Art, London

	1904-1908	Studied under John Singer Sargent in London
Honours/Awards:	1912	Married Attiya Begum. Organised Art Gallery Baroda
	1914	Solo Exhibitions in Paris and London
	1926-29	Painted murals inside the 1st dome of Secretariat Painted murals inside the dome of Committee Room, New Delhi
	1947	Migrated to Pakistan at the request of Quaid-e- Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah
	1952	Donated all his art collection to the Nation

Ghulam Mustafa

Born:	Lahore 1952	
Qualifications:	1974	National Diploma in Fine Arts, National College of Arts, Lahore
Exhibitions:		Held solo Exhibitions and participated in major international events of arts in USA, India, UK Jordan, Singapore & Dubai
Awards/Honours:		1982, 1983,1984,1985,1986. Recipient of President's Award for provincial float designing
	1994	Medal for Meritorious Services towards by the Punjab Artists' Association,
	1994	Certificate of Merit in S.S.Hyder Award, NWFP
	1996	National Prize PNCA
	2003	President's Prize of Performance Award
Present Status:		Deputy Director, Visual Arts, Punjab Art Council, Lahore

Gulgee

Born:	Peshawar: 1926	
Qualification:	1947	M.Sc(Hydraulics) Colombia University,
	1948	M.Sc (Soil Mechanics) Harvard,
Exhibitions:		Has been exhibiting regularly within and outside Pakistan and has numerous solo exhibitions to his credit

Awards/Honours	Presidents medal for pride of Performance Sitar-e-Imtiaz, 1982 Quaid-e-Azam Award,1988 Hilal-e-Imtiaz, 1995 Besides recipient of many other National & International Honours. Painted Portraits of Royal families of Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia and Heads of State of numerous countries

Hajra Mansur

Born	Lucknow, India	
Qualifications:	1964	Diploma in Arts and Crafts from Government College of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow
Exhibitions:	Since 1963	Held many exhibitions since & participated in major International Group Exhibitions
Awards/Honours	1964:	One of the Founders of the Karachi School of Art
	1996:	Awarded "Chughtai Award" PNCA
Current Status:		Full time painter and art teacher.

Iqbal Hussain

Born:	Lahore 1950	
Qualifications:	1974	Graduated from NCA, Lahore. For many years a faculty member of NCA, Iqbal Hussain retired in 2004
Awards / Honours		Since 1981 Iqbal Hussain has exhibited his work in numerous exhibitions and is the recipient of many awards and prizes. In 1995 he was accorded a prize by Unesco and his work shown in Paris. He has been featured in several significant foreign art magazines and the subject of a number of foreign documentary films. His work was auctioned at Sotheby's in 1998. His work is displayed in Lahore at the Lahore Art Gallery

Jamil Ahmed Baloch

Born	Nushki, Balochistan 1972	
Qualifications:	1997	Bachelor of Fine Arts (Sculpture major) with distinction. National College of Arts, Lahore
Exhibitions:		Held solo exhibitions and participated in group Shows in Pakistan, Bahrain and Japan
Awards/Honours:	1993	Second Prize : Young Artist's Exhibition, Lahore
	1994	First Prize: Art Exhibition, Lahore
	1997	Firsr Prize: Art Exhibition, Lahore
	2003	National Award PNCA 8th Visual Arts Exhibition
Present Status:		Lecturer (Sculpture) Fine Arts, National College of Arts Lahore

Jamil Naqsh

Born:	Kerana, India 1938	
Qualification:	1951-53	Travelled through South Asia studying art
	1953-54	Mayo School of Art, Lahore.Studied miniature painting
	1954-55	Spent one year in the studio of Mohammad Sheriff
Awards and Honours:	1984	Shakir Ali Award
	1989	President's Pride of Performance Award
	2003	Subject of an extensive retrospective exhibition at the Mohatta Palace, the only artist to have been thus honoured in his lifetime

Jehanzeb Malik

Born	NWFP 1945	
Qualification:	1965	Associate University of Mechanical Engineering
	1963-66	Certificate course in Fine Arts, Abasin Arts Council, Peshawar
	1982-83	Advance Printing Course AAC, Peshawar.
	1988	Diploma Exterior & Interiol Decoration from School of Décor, Karachi

	2002	Fiber Glass Moulding, CSMIT, Islamabad
Exhibitions:		Held eight solo shows & participated in various national and international exhibitions. Won 4 first prizes in various competitions in Peshawar
Present status:		Freelance Painter. Working as engineer CNN Department, NWFP

Jimmy Engineer

Born:	Loralai, Baluchistan 1954	
Qualification:		Studied three years at the National College of Art, Lahore
Exhibitions:		Has been exhibiting in Pakistan & abroad since 1978
Awards/Honours:	1982	Illustrated "Javed Nama" a collection of Allama Iqbal's Poetic works
	1991	Designed stamp IPECC
	1990	Initiated walks for causes including from Karachi to the Khyber Pass. Recipient of numerous awards and honours for painting and social work concerns
Present Status		Practicing Artist and social crusader

Kaleem Khan

Born:	Quetta 1958	
Qualifications:	1983 National Diploma in Fine Arts, NCA, Lahore	
Exhibitions:		Held solo exhibitions and participated in national & International exhibitions
Honours/Awards:	1982	Gold Medal (Performing Arts) NCA, Lahore
	1984	Founding member, Department of Fine Arts, University of Baluchistan, Quetta
	1995	Merit Award, National Art Exhibition, Lahore
	1997	Awarded Scholarship to visit UK, USA, 1997
Present status:		Chairman, Department of Fine Arts, University Baluchistan

Khadim Ali

Born:	Born: Quetta 1978	Childhood divided between Quetta and Family home in Bamiyan
Qualifications:		Studied watercolour with Faizal Mousavi Studied Mural painting in Iran 2000 Joined NCA and graduated in 2003
Exhibitions:	2004	Exhibitions of contemporary miniatures in Lahore Solo exhibition, Karachi Currently involved in further art studies in Iran

Laila Shahzada

Born:	UK 1928 - 1994, Islamabad	
Qualification:	1945-46 1958-60	Studied with Royal Drawing Society, London took lessons from A. S. Nagi
Awards/Honours	1976 1985 1995 1961 onward:	Bicentennial Gold Medal and key of the City of New York Tamgha-e-Imtiaz President's Pride of Performance (posthumous) Mounted numerous solo exhibitions Pakistan and abroad including Barbican Galleries London Took part in many group exhibitions

Mansoor Rahi

Born:	Maldah,West Bengal 1939	
Qualifications:	1962	Graduated Fine Arts, Government College of Arts & Crafts, Dacca
Exhibitions:		Held over 40 solo Exhibitions in Pakistan and abroad. Participated in important Group Displays
Awards/Honours	1965 1969&1981 1988	Instrumental in establishing the Karachi School of Art First prize National Exhibition Shakir Ali Award
		Devised and conducted a series of TV programmes on art and artists

Mansoor Saleem

Born:	Karachi 1958	
Qualification:	1983	Diploma in Fine Arts: Central Institute of Arts and Crafts
	1983:	Devised and carried out a Conceptual Art/Installation project in the interior of Sindh
	1988:	Completed Masters Degree Karachi University
Exhibitions:		Held Solo Exhibitions and participated in Groups Shows
Present status:		Teaching at CIAC Karachi

Mehtab Amar

Born:	Kashmir1960	
Qualification:	1981	Diploma Fine Arts, Karach School of Arts
Exhibitions:		Held solo exhibitions and participated in group shows
Present status:		Teaching/Guiding: Fine Arts
Present status:		Artist and Art Teacher

Mughees Riaz

Born:	Lahore 1971	
Qualification:	1999	M.F.A. (Painting) Institute of Art& Design, University of Punjab
Exhibitions:		Solo and Group Exhibitions
Awards /Honours	2000	First Prize (painting) Directorate General of Social Welfare, Women's Development, Govt. of Pakistan
	2003	National Award for Painting, PNCA Lecturer Inst. Of Arts & Design, University of Punjab

Mussarat Mirza

Born:	Sukkur, Sindh 1946	
Qualification:	1964	Masters in Fine Arts, University of Punjab
Exhibitions:		Held 15 solo exhibitions in Pakistan and participated in a number of National and International exhibitions
Honours/Awards:		Chairperson, Dept. of Fine Arts, Jamshoro University, Sindh
	1988	Awarded Asian Shield in International Watercolour Exhibition Osaka, Japan
	1998	Sindh Art Award
Present position:		Director, Dept. of Arts & Crafts, College of Management Science & Information Technology(COMSIT) Sukkur, Sindh

Naeem R. M.

Born:	Mirpurkhas, Sindh 1968	
Qualifications:	1993	Bachelor Degree with Distinction Fine Arts, National College of Arts, Lahore
Exhibitions:		Several solo exhibitions and participated in many group shows in Pakistan and Abroad.
Awards/Honours:	1991	Award of Honour, Punjab Artist's Association
	1992	Special Prize in Drama, Mime, Skit writing NCA
	1993	Distinction in thesis project
	1994	Merit Award, Punjab Artist's Association
	2000	Residency in Sri Lanka
	2003	National Award for Painting PNCA
Present status:	1994 to date: Lecturer, National College of Arts, Lahore Teaching Drawing and Painting Naeem Studio	

Nagori A.R.

Born:	India	
Qualifications:	1965	MFA Punjab University
	1970	Established Fine Arts Department, Sind University
Awards/Honours:		Distinguished career as Pakistan's first socio-bolitical artist. Several solo exhibitions from 1971 onwards
Present status:		Practicing artist

Naheed Afridi

Born	Karachi	
Qualifications:	1980	Certificates Drawing & Ceramics, USA
	1987	Diploma Fine Art, Karachi School of Arts (Gold Medal)
	1992	Completed Courses Silk Screen & Printmaking, USA
Exhibitions:		Numerous exhibitions to her credit.
Present status:		Faculty member Karachi School of Arts

Nahid Raza

Born:	Delhi, India 1947	
Qualifications:	1970	Diploma in Fi ne Arts, Central Institute of Arts & Crafts
	1985-86	Printmaking, Wayne State University, USA
Exhibitions:		Held over 24 solo exhibitions In Pakistan and abroad. Participated in national and International exhibitions
Honours/Awards	1969	Best Entry prize, Karachi Art Council
	1981	Second Prize, National Art Exhibition, PNCA
		Represented Pakistan in International events
		Works in private & public collections in Pakistan & abroad
	1995	Established "Studio Art" an art institute for young professionals
Present status:		Principal, Central Institute of Arts & Crafts Karachi

Qudsia Azmat Nisar

Born:	Karachi 1948	
Qualifications:	1968	M.A. Fine Arts, Punjab University (Gold Medal) Honorary Diploma in Fine Arts, Italy
Exhibitions:	1979	Numerous Solo Exhibitions and selected Group Exhibitions in Pakistan and abroad
Awards/Honours	1981	Prize for watercolour painting, National Exhibition of Visual Arts PNCA
	1995	Award of Merit Lahore
	1998	Significant Contribution by Women award, Karachi
	1992-2000	Principal, Central Institue of Arts & Crafts, Karachi
Present status:		Free-lance Painter

Rabia Zuberi

Born:	Lucknow, India	
Qualifications:	1964	Graduate,Govt. College of Art, Lucknow (Major Sculpture)
Exhibitions:		Held selected exhibitions within Pakistan and abroad.
Awards/Honours:	1964	Established Karachi School of Arts
	1960, 1961 &1963	Top Honours in Sculpture All India Youth Festival, New Delhi
	1962	First Prize All India Women's Exhibition Calcutta
	1986, 87 & 88,	Awards for Sculpture, National Exhibitions PNCA
	1996	National Award Sculpture PNCA
	2003	Lifetime Achievement Award PNCA
Present Status:	Principal, Karachi School of Arts	

Riffat Alvi

Born:	Poona, India 1948	
Qualifications:	1973	Graduate in Fine Art, Karachi School of Arts
	1973	Studied pottery with local potters & conducted classes for children PACC Karachi
	1982	Handicraft Designer Sind Small Industries Researched Pakistan Handicrafts
	1986	Scholarship Design Orientation USA
	1987	Set up VM Gallery
Exhibitions:	1985	First Solo exhibition
	1990	Solo exhibition National Art Museum, Harare, Zimbabwe where she discovered the earth pigment technique
	1995	Solo Exhibition Commonwealth Institute U.K. Numerous exhibitions & international art events
Awards/Honours	1973	First Prize: All Pakistan Poster competition 2nd prize, USSR Consulate, Karachi Shield for best water colour, Osaka, Japan
	2000	Ambassador for Asian Continent 2000-UNO Common Ground World Project
Present sratus:		Director, V. M. Gallery Karachi

Sadequain

Born	Amroha (India) 1930-1987	
Qualifications:		Graduated from Agra University. Migrated to Pakistan
Exhibitions:	1954	First solo exhibition in Quetta. Many other important Exhibitions thereafter
Awards/Honours:	1960	Tamgha-e-Imtiz (medal) First prize in National Exhibition
	1961	Adjudged "Laureate Biennale de Paris"
	1962	President's Medal for Pride of Performance
	1963-67	Visited many countries & Exhibited abroad
	1964	Illustrated `L`Etranger' by Camus
	1967	Executed Mural at Mangla Dam

	1987-89	Visiting Professor NCA Lahore
	1990-92	Visiting Professor Bilkent University, Turkey
	1996	Visiting Professor IVSAA, Karachi
	1999-2001	Principal, Pakistan Gem and Jewellery Institute
	1999-2002	Visiting Professor IVSAA
Exhibitions:		Ten solo exhibititions and participated in selected group exhibitions in Pakistan and abroad
Awards/Honours		Graduated with distinction CUM LAUDE, University of Michigan, USA Appointed judge to various Jewelry art competitions. Curated exhibitions Visiting Professor taught Art NCA & IVSAA
Present status :		Free-lance artist and Jewelry designer

Tasaduq Sohail

Born:	Lahore 1947	
Qualifications:	1964	An Urdu short story writer, Sohail left Pakistan for England and joined St Martin's Art School evening classes to practice art. From a painter showing his work on the railings of Hyde Park, Sohail was discovered by London galleries featured in TV programmes and showed his work in solo exhibitions in several countries. He has shown his work in Pakistan since the`80s.
	2002	Sohail returned to live in Pakistan and settled in Karachi

Tayyaba Aziz Ahmed

Born:	Peshawar 1951	
Qualifications:	1986	MFA Peshawar University
Exhibitions:		Held 3 solo exhibitions and participated in various Group exhibitions in Pakistan and abroad
Awards/Honours:	1970 & 71	Top Honours Engineering College, Peshawar University

	1972-1996	Won several S.S Hyder Awards
	1996	Awarded Salma Tasudduq Hussain Memorial Award PUNA, Lahore
	1998	Star Woman Award, Star Girl & Woman Foundation, Karachi
	1989	Abasin Award, Peshawar
	1991	The Bank of Khyber Award Peshawar
Pesent status:		Chairperson, Fine Arts Department, Peshawar University, Peshawar

Usman Saeed

Born:	Lahore 1977	
Qualifications:	1999	BFA Honours (major: miniature painting) NCA, Lahore
Awards/ Honours	1999	Excellence Award NCA, Mime, Fashion & Eastern Music
	2000	Sir Percy Brown Award NCA Art History
	2000	Haji Sharif Award for Miniature Painting NCA
	2003	National Award PNCA
	2004	Lux Award for Fashion Photography
Exhibitions:		Solo Exhibitions in Karachi and in London Participated in Group exhibitions in Pakistan and abroad
		Planning to join a Master's Programme in London

Wahab Jaffer

Born	1941 Poona, India	
Qualifications:	1971	Worked with S.Ali Imam, apprenticed in Ali Imam's Studio
	1972	Worked with and learned from late Ahmed Parvez
Awards/Honours:	1981	First solo exhibition Indus Gallery, Karachi. Numerous exhibitions followed in Pakistan, Canada, Europe And India

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FAZLEE

Zoay Ahmed

Born:	Lahore 1950	
Qualifications:	1972	Left National College of Art. In Kalash did wood carving
	1974	First solo exhibition in sculpture & paintings in Lahore
		Travelled abroad, returning after many years
		There have been many solo exhibitions of his work in Pakistan and abroad

Zubeida Agha

Born:	Faisalabad 1922-1997	
Qualifications:		Graduated Kinniard College, Lahore; worked in the studio of B. C. Sayal
	1946	Studied Art with Mario Perlingieri
	1950	Joined St Martin's School of Art, London
	1951	Joined Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris
Exhibitions:	1949	First Exhibition of Abstract Art, Karachi
	1951	Solo Exhibition London
	1952	Solo Exhibition Paris
		Several exhibitions in Karachi
Awards/Honours:	1961	Appointed Executive Director of Contempory Art Galleries, Rawalpindi
	1965	Awarded President's Medal for Pride of Performance
	1996	National Award for Iife Time Achievement in Art