Ijaz ul Hassan

Five Decades of Paintings

Musarrat Hasan

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For Sara
With love and great expectation
from her abilities and enthusiasm
Musarrat Hasan
7. 2. 2022

Published by Lahore Art Gallery
42-Lawrence Road, Lahore.

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a. The artist painting in his studio, 2005. Photograph by Quddus Mirza.

ISBN 978-969-9251-27-6

First Published in Pakistan, 2012
by
Lahore Art Gallery,
42-Lawrence Road, Lahore.

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Dr Musarrat Hasan
Ijaz ul Hassan – Five Decades of Painting

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Printing, typesetting, design and binding
in Pakistan by Topical Printers,
Lahore, Pakistan.

For all my children

Ahmed, Mina, Imran, Tariq, Fatima,
Mohammad, Daniyal, Tania, Mustafa, Zahur and Haider

An effort to Provide a perspective and insight into the life of a man, Whose constant and primary bone of contention with his world and the world at large has been and still is, his never ending quest for improvement and change and the insatiable urge to put all things right

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Preface

Books on art are the second best alternative to living works of art. It is another splendid way of exhibiting, displaying paintings and other works of art to the viewers. It has an additional advantage of providing a historical perspective of the artists' life, within the context of the events and ideas of the period in which art works were produced. A well printed book if stocked in various libraries can at least provide a glimpse of the art work that is being produced around the world. In this way a comprehensive record and database of contemporary art activity is preserved for successive generations to come. In the absence of permanent art galleries in various district towns and cities of Pakistan, the role of well illustrated art books particularly of painting acquire pivotal importance.

For many years I have devoted a significant proportion of my time trying to convince individuals in position of authority particularly those in various cultural institutions to create a database for Pakistani artists. In the last several years a few art books on paintings have been published in Pakistan. But even though this is a good beginning it is not enough.

When I was asked to write a book on Ijaz ul Hassan, I thought about it for a while. In the end the consideration that my companionship with him since 1961, has enabled me to witness events in his life as no one else could, carried a lot of weight. But primarily I consider this book as another link in the chain of information about art works that has at last begun to be slowly welded together. Any book that can display in one place a large body of work by the artist, as well as his thoughts, (whether expressed in prose or verse or through other peoples' writing on him) and numerous photographs of his related activities, is a very useful record. Also of considerable importance is the need to compile and write about paintings of a person who has over the last five decades presented us with so many remarkable facets of his talents, but also a large section of whose artistic endeavours were either censored or due to prohibitive political circumstances have never been exhibited. It would be appropriate to mention here that in many cases the dates and sizes of paintings are approximate and may not be precisely accurate.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped in my effort. My thanks are due to all collectors and patrons for making the paintings in their collection available for photography. I would also like to thank Mr. Basit Khursheed for sparing the time to streamline some of the designing aspects. I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Louis Herlands for scrutinising the script in limited time with such care and effort. Special mention must be made of all members of my family Mina Hassan Zaidi, who edited the first draft, Ahmed, Tariq and Fatima for their technical advice at all times and Ijaz ul Hassan for his cooperation.

When I reviewed the finished draft of the book I felt that it would not be complete without a few words from some of our eminent writers, who have had a rich and wonderful association with art and culture for a long time. I would like to thank, F S Aijaz ud din, Syed Akmal Hussain and Irfan Husain for their generosity in sparing the time to write a few lines that can be part of this book

My special thanks are due to Mr. Imran Khan of the Topical printers for his photography. I also used photographs by Quddus Mirza, Mohammed Ali Wasti, Ghulam Mustapha and Dr. Saddaqat. Thanks are due to Mr. Aamir Ali for the design of the book and for his patience in making frequent changes. Appreciation is due to Mr. Naseer Baloch and Ms. Farhana for their great perseverance and success in producing quality books that are always a joy to behold.

Musarrat Hasan
November 2012

1. Detail of painting on page 119 *Cages* by Ijaz ul Hassan. 1999

Foreword

Mussarat Hasan, the author of this study of the Pakistani painter Ijaz ul Hassan, and myself had had many discussions on the importance for Pakistani artists to document their work -- to take a picture when the piece is finished, record the date it was completed and to whom it was sold or given.While a camera setup is often seen in the corner of a New York artist's studio, too many paintings by the remarkable post-Partition artists of Pakistan leave home with no documentation, never to be seen again. The work of art historians like Dr. Hasan is made murky and complicated by this neglect.Putting her scholarship towards correcting these errors she has previously produced one comprehensive research document and three monographs on Pakistani artists. The first book based on her research document is titled *Painting in the Punjab Plains (1998)*, which spans an almost unexplored and undocumented period in the Pakistan side of the Punjab between 1800 -1947, introducing scores of painters, documenting more than two hundred painters. Her three monographs areon Khalid Iqbal (2004), Zubaida Agha (2004), and the popular Thar desert limner Moazam Ali (2007).Her fifth study, longer and much more detailed than the previous three, is drawn from some 256 documented photographs of the art and events of her husband's career, from the 1950s to the current year.

Why is it important to present an artist's work in a cultural and historical framework? Can't a person just enjoy what they see before them and forget about the context in which it was produced?For many this is enough.But the curious will ask -- are there more like this? What were the events going on in the artist's life that made him paint or draw in this manner? How did societal pressures impinge on the artist's creation?None of these themes can be explored reliably if a large chunk of a painter's oeuvre is missing. The phases of the artistic career of Ijaz ul Hassan, as clearly presented in this book, demonstrate the great extra gained by an orderly contextual analysis of the artist life and work.

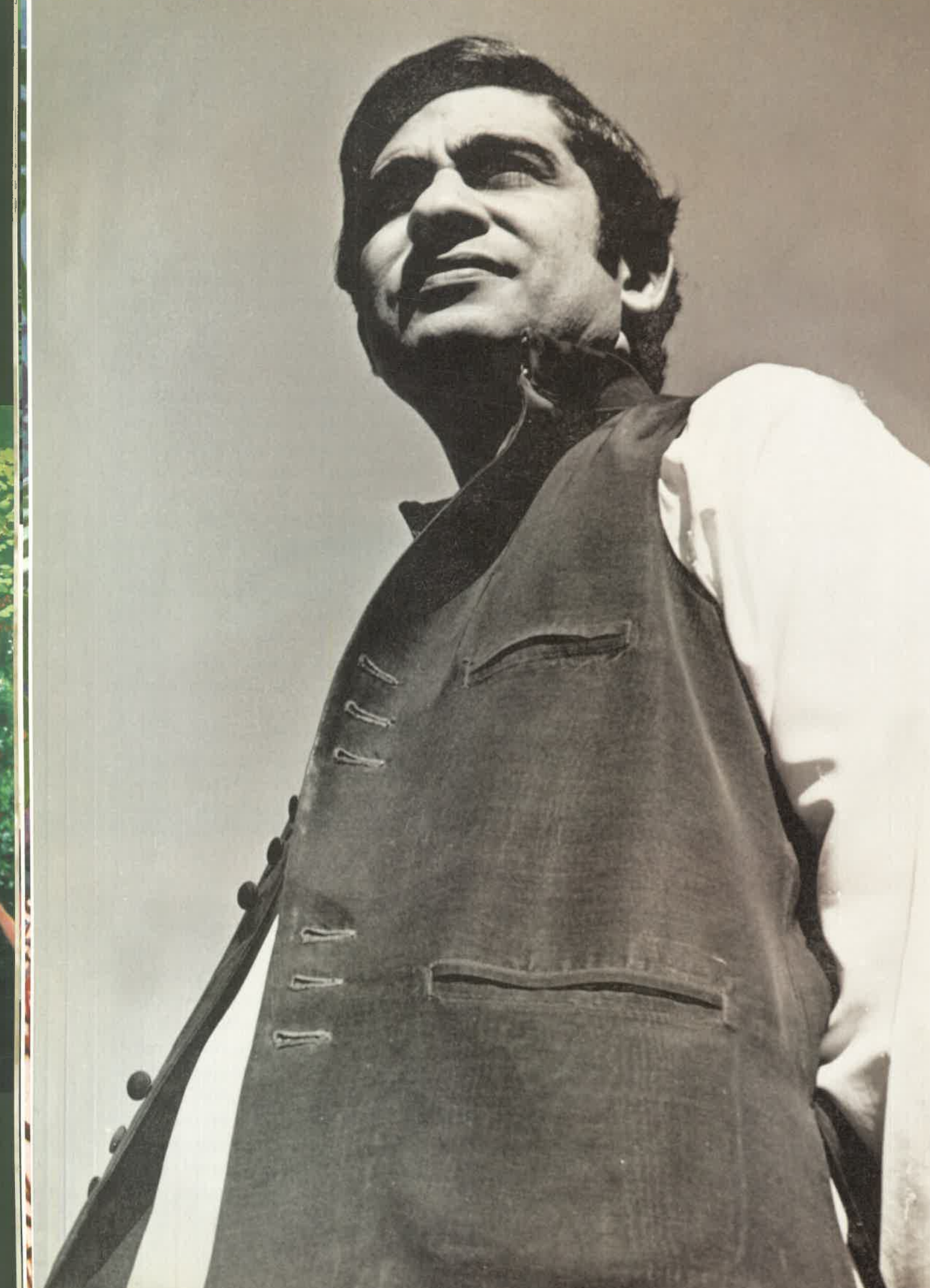
Looking at the artistic production of Izaj ul Hassan as a whole, one will realize that after an apprenticeship period, in which Ijaz experimented with several styles popular with Lahore artists in the 1950s, and possibly beginning during his years at Cambridge in the early 1960s, and later continuing during his incarceration in the Naukhar jail in 1974, Ijaz found a theme that was to remain with him throughout the rest of his career -- the fight against repression or containment of the human spirit.This theme he presents in what may be called overt and passive modes.Both types of paintings appear throughout his years as an artist, a fact not clearly

recognized by critics and students until the publication of this monograph; now one clearly sees that the "political paintings" do not end in the 1970s but were simmering in the artist's tool box all the while, reappearing as a loud cry with the execution of Zulfiqr AliBhutto, for example.

Some of Ijaz ul Hassan's paintings of nature, one discovers, have a secret code behind their imagery.The artist sees himself cut off from nature, only able to observe it as a "prisoner" in his house looking out the windows. Sometimes there are "bars" on the windows in these paintings, sometimes not.One wonders if some of his more recent landscapes, often seen behind a baffle of tree limbs, don't carry a similar message.Ijaz uses the metaphor of the forked tree trunk as a symbol of mankind; although covered with jungly vines, as in several paintings in the series "Girdling Vines", the tree trunk endures while the short-lived vine leaves yellow and drop away. Nature, for Ijaz, represents the renewing of human life and its endurance against forces that seek to confine it or kill it.

On the other hand, most of Ijaz ul Hassan's nature paintings have no overt metaphoric meaning (other than perhaps their titles). They are simply bright clear paintings extolling the artist's love of nature. They are most aptly represented in the several version of the majestic laburnum tree, covered with cones of yellow blooms in early summer along streets of Lahore. Other works show clumps of day lilies or white lilies, or larger scenes of gardens. As a major compositional device Ijaz crowds his main subject into the extreme foreground of his canvases; there is generally little attention given to the middle ground, and the background may be empty or an area of floral interest, a wall or a building. No atmospheric regression of space is indicated: all is painted with the same saturated colors without subtle shading.In this manner Ijaz's work is most noticeably separated from the painting of Khalid Iqbal, Zulqarnain Haider and other Lahore landscape artists. The technique allies Ijaz ul Hassan's nature paintings with his ones on political subjects, as both rely on an illustrative technique found in the mass media, such as the paintings and silkscreens of Andy Warhol and modern commercial art. However, the best of Ijaz's paintings -- those that most clearly illustrate his activist themes -- occupy an important place in the modern art of Pakistan.

Dr. Barbara Schmitz
Bonnots Mill, MO USA
July 4, 2012



Introduction

Ijaz ul Hassan is a painter with multiple concerns. In the pursuit of which he has generated intense vigour and enthusiasm that has left those around him a trifle bewildered and surprised. He has led a vibrant life and in his endeavours he has not spared himself or others around him in his numerous tangible or abstract goals.

If we are to understand the impulse and the drive behind many of his accomplishments, it is important to trace the reasons that have motivated him to forge a distinctive identity for himself and his work. Closely integrated with the will to preserve his individual vision has been his awareness and adherence to a larger human identity that spans areas beyond himself and his immediate neighbourhood. The continuous struggle of man to uphold his dignity and espouse human aspirations has been the artist's eternal theme and concern. His training and love for literature enabled him to locate symbols and metaphors in the complex patterns of life around him and to express his concerns through them. In fact throughout his painting career, Ijaz has used metaphors that in the simplest forms bring home to the viewer the meaning that he wanted to convey. These easily understandable symbols are an asset that Ijaz has frequently relied upon and used in his work.

These interests have freely mingled with imminent and nostalgic perceptions of life, nature, common sights and events to produce paintings reflecting his changing moods and circumstances – the imagery and innuendo, the intimacy and delicacy, the grandeur and spectacle, the bright rays of optimism and the sombre tones of despondency – in fact the whole range of his personal feelings that have governed his creative impulse and imagination during more than fifty years of his life as a painter.

In his exhibition brochure published on the eve of his retrospective exhibition at the Canvas gallery in Karachi in 2005 he says:[1]

> "Painting should come like leaves to a tree. I paint with the same instinctive urge. It comes naturally but not without unavoidable pain. In art I am taken by common things. A plant dangling from a crevice can be breathtaking; a bud more solemn than a marble dome; a common gesture more monumental than pious truths.
>
> I cannot say I am not infatuated by nature. She unveils to the seduced only. There cannot be a better companion in an estranged world.
>
> Common People bear suffering with courage and dignity. The bourgeois romantics make aesthetic capital of poverty and human

b. The artist in 1970.

misery. Should a woman who has been raped have her image known in print? Delineating ill effects often separate them from the cause.

I love to be by myself but soon get weary and need to commune with others. Solitary confinement is like being in hell. When I communicate I like to have myself plainly understood, which is easier with words than in paint.

Life and nature are immensely absorbing. I am moved by events of our time. What is the purpose of life, I do not know. But one must try to remain sane and human. Painting partly helps me to achieve that. I pursue it because I have known it longer and best."

Ijaz is a prolific 'communicator' and likes to express himself at length. During a private conversation with his daughter he said:[2]

"I spent a large part of my childhood visiting my maternal village *Sanda Kalaan,* situated on the banks of the river Ravi just outside Lahore, which brought me in close reach of nature in its wild state.

I evolved as a painter in constant movement, experimenting with expression – exploring how to express ideas and emotions through various techniques and modes of expression. I must be among the few painters who went from figurative to non-figurative and then back to figuration. As my involvement with my political activism increased I wanted to share my aesthetic fulfilment, ideas and concerns with the viewer – and as many as possible. Not just questions of sharing a mood or an aesthetic experience but also a question of addressing live issues that were affecting the lives of people and nations — the Vietnam war, the Palestine struggle, the struggle of the working class against the establishment. I could not look away from all this. How could any artist not address these questions?

In my painting you can see influences of the European landscape painters as well as Chinese landscapes. There are also inspirations drawn from Persian and Rajput Miniatures. In contemporary painting the Pop Art Movement that drew attention to trite, everyday things provided me a means of conveying my thoughts to the viewer. In my early years I loved Gauguin and his flora and fauna of Tahiti in stylised form and colours. In my middle years Cezanne helped me to restructure myself. I was very disenchanted at that time when I left St Martins and did not paint for two to three years. When I restarted Cezanne was of great value and I also enjoyed Kline, Rothko and Monet."

Some of his childhood friends have an insight into his thoughts and concerns which is pertinent and interesting and this book would not be complete if I did not include their comments. His close friend Irfan

Husain a writer and author wrote in 1987:[3]

> "Artist, political activist, teacher, farmer: Ijaz ul Hassan is a man of many parts. But more than any thing else, he is passionately committed to changing the status quo. And this commitment is visible in the colours, forms and symbols he uses in his canvases – a gnarled old jacaranda flowering in spring; an *'amaltas'* laden with blindingly yellow blossoms in mid-summer; an opulent leaf almost visibly full of sap. All these images convey regrowth and hope in a hostile environment. Purely technical aesthetic problems divorced from objective reality have never appealed to him; instead, he has sought to find lessons for us in nature. A large number of his paintings were done in his own Lahore garden: often, window-frames remind viewers that beauty lies just a few yards away, if we only had the vision to perceive it."
>
> "...His work can be seen on two levels: on the obvious plane his paintings are at times starkly and achingly beautiful, at others there is a lushness of colours ad textures bordering on the sensual. But at the deeper level, the contrast between spring flowers in the foreground with a backdrop of somber trees contains a subliminal message: spring flowers bloom and die, but the *'peepul'* tree will stand and cast its shade for scores of years. And it is this perception of a society in flux-and his rendering of it, that sets Ijaz apart from most of his contemporaries."
>
> "This restless and conscious search for beauty, meaning and self-expression makes Ijaz a very cerebral and articulate painter. He is always prepared to discuss his work and explain what he is trying to achieve. His education and wide reading have helped to give him a sense of history and an acute awareness of past and current trends in the art world."
>
> "But despite the adverse conditions under which he works, Ijaz has steadily forged ahead, evolving into one of the few genuine artists we have with a clear sense of his role in society. Talking to Ijaz, one gets the feeling of a human being closely attuned to his medium and his milieu; despite (or because) of his strong society commitment, his works reflect serenity born of his integration with his surroundings. Trees, flowers and shrubs are the idioms he has chosen to express himself, and they serve to remind us of the fundamental relationships between man and nature, man and society, and man and man."

Ijaz in the past was criticised for stepping out of line with the conventional tenets of modernism. The art establishment found his work of early 70s hard to digest for their large media based images and social comments, because it was totally opposed to their concept of 'art for arts sake'. Twenty years later the art world woke up to the merit of these paintings and realized in

the eighties and nineties, that nothing of this kind had been done before. But now, when he painted the much admired landscapes and murals based on nature, he was criticised for moving away from his art of ideas and social commentary.

To understand the painter Ijaz and his work one must embark on a logical and chronological journey that spans the different periods of his life. From the tentative but charming small paintings of the fifties to the meticulously worked still lifes of the sixties. From the aesthetic exploration of colour, simplest flat forms and surfaces to an affair with what he regarded as a 'vivaciously disarming street art'. The effort opened up unforeseen possibilities for him. Venturing out beyond the nest of pure colour and form he was engaged by new challenges that face Pakistan and the Third World. His works of the early seventies boldly comments and conveys without hesitation crucial events and significant political ideas of the time.

The eighties, period of the second long martial law, was a period of withdrawal when he refrained from his explicit expression and adopted metaphors, images and other suggestive devices in order to express himself. It is during this period that Ijaz discovered the innate flamboyance and sheer joy of painting expansive canvases focusing on elements of nature, that express hope and survival, and emphasize her regenerative power and unwavering persistence to strive and grow. The fire and resistance of his earlier expressions thus gave way to an oft repeated message of beauty, hope and optimism.

References

1. Ijaz ul Hassan, Personal Statement Exhibition Brochure, Canvas Gallery, Karachi, 2005.
2. Conversation as recorded by his daughter, Mina Hassan Zaidi on 7th June 2003, in the author's presence on their journey back from his farm.
3. Irfan Husain, *Ijaz ul Hassan: Artist and Activist, Star*, weekend *Dawn*, Karachi, 1987.

Chapter 1 | Formative Years

But let us start this story from the beginning. Ijaz was born at Lahore on the 23rd November 1938 and was the only child not only of his parents but a number of doting aunts who had no children of their own. No doubt he must have been a pampered child, but he was also a lonely child and spent most of the day loitering around the garden and closed neighbourhood investigating nature, and the life that abound in it. He would regularly repair to his small room and spent hours dreaming and fantasizing, doodling and painting. Years later he recorded memories of that time in verse.

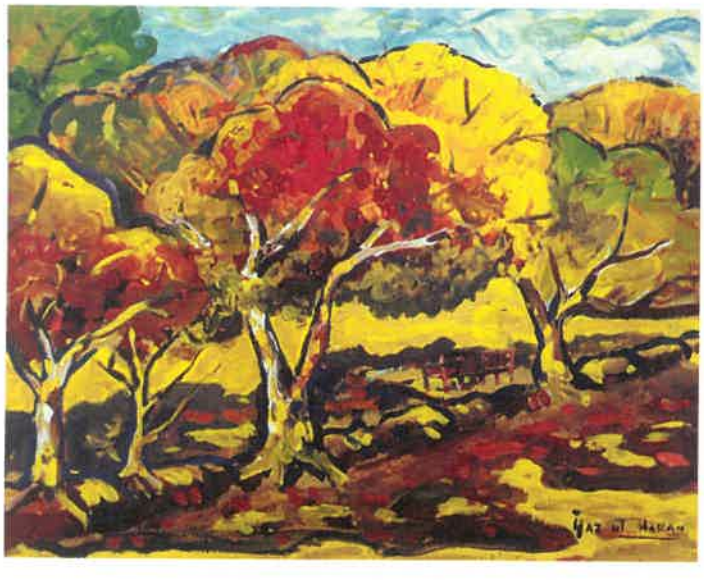
His early years were spent shifting from one primary school to another. In less than two years during 1946 and 1947, he shuttled between Bahawalpur, Kote Kapura in the Faridkote State, Kasur and Raiwind, wherever his father who worked for the Railways was posted. It soon became apparent to his parents that this frequent shifting of schools was counter productive for their child's education and was going to lead nowhere.

His father then quietly started investigating the boarding schools at Lahore where he could send his son. He found the amenities offered by Aitchison College, Lahore the most appropriate for a boarding school. His father being an exceptional sportsman could not resist the temptation of the sports facilities that were available to the students of the college. He enrolled his son at Aitchison on 3rd March. So 3rd March was registered as the official date of birth and appears on every document relating to Ijaz.

There was some opposition from his mother who could not envisage an existence without the presence of her darling child. But she very sensibly ignored her own feelings 'for the sake of his future'. Needless to say that he recovered from the separation much more quickly than she did, even though initially he made two vigorous attempts to run away from school. Each time he was caught and brought back to reconcile to an existence, which he gradually began to appreciate and enjoy.

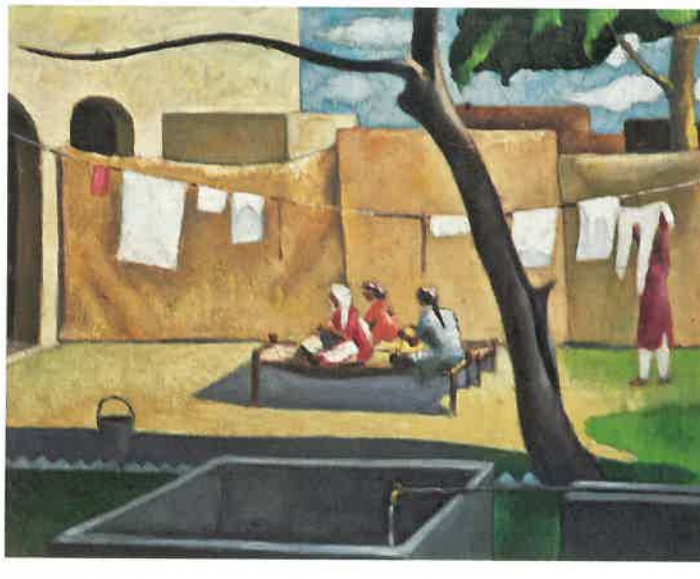
4.

Water Carriers, Opaque water colour on paper, circa 1955. Reproduced from Aithchison College Magazi (Courtesy: F. S. Aijazuddin, former Principal of the College).



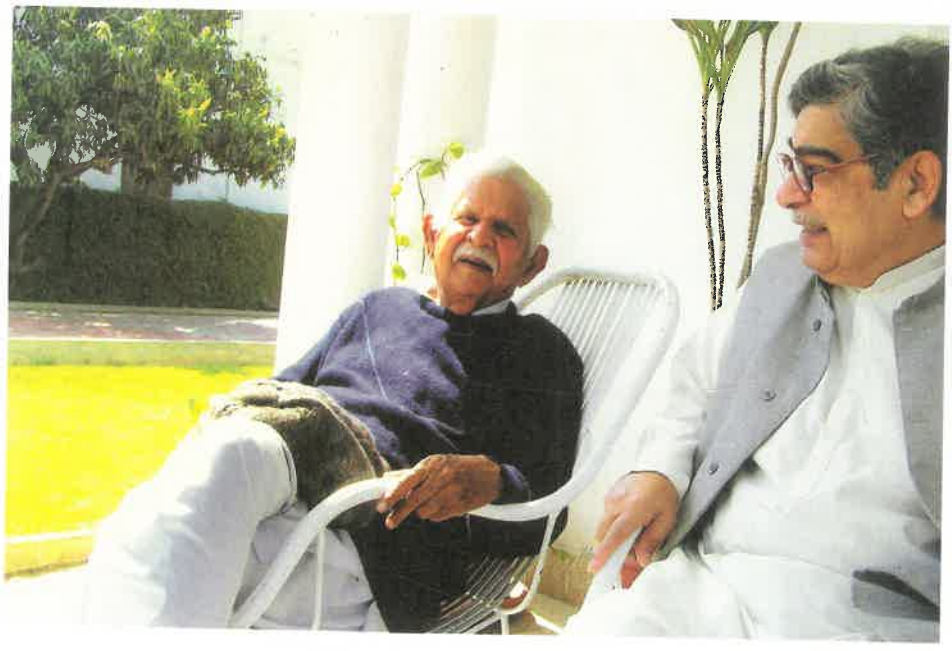
2.

Landscape, circa 1955,
Opaque water colour on board
Collection: Begum Zari Sarfraz



3.

Backyard, 1958,
Oil on board, 18"x 22"
Artist's Collection



c.
Ijaz ul Hassan with his art teacher and colleague Professor Khalid Iqbal in 2011.

Ijaz had an exceptional record at Aitchison as a sportsman and he won the coveted full School Blazer for his sporting abilities. He was member of almost all the college teams - athletics, hockey, football, cricket and tennis. He also won the Aitchison Challenge Cup for being the best athlete.

He was also the recipient of the Rambir Shashir art prize for the best artist for three years for his painting talent.

One significant factor of his schooling at Aitchison was being tutored by well-known art teachers like Moyene Najmi and Khalid Iqbal. These teachers were cordial and friendly, supplied their students with high quality art material and encouraged the students to freely experiment and express themselves.

d.
March 1956, Ijaz ul Hassan standing extreme right with the group of students of Aitchison College on their Educational Trip to Jerusalem in front of Masjid-e-Aqsa with the Dome of the Rock in the background.

About those formative years Ijaz writes in his essay – 'On growing up as an artist':[4]

> "Mr. Gwyn the Principal of Aitchison College Lahore, during one of his vacation back home in England had returned with a handful of prints of European Masters for the school art room. These were suitably framed and hung high up on the walls, beyond the reach of emerging masters who may have felt the urge to improve upon the works. Surveying these paintings gave us immense pleasure. There were two Rembrandts, one portrayed a man with a gilt helmet and the other was a late evening landscape with a windmill on top of a hill. There were three Van Goghs. The first one displayed ripe yellow wheat with dark green cypresses and a low range of blue mountains, while the second one presented a vista of green fields with white fence running across in the foreground, a cart, some huts and a few plums in blossom. The third was the artist's self-portrait with a pipe in his mouth and a bandage going around his head covering the freshly severed left ear. I still vividly recall the landscapes but how can I ever forget the calm steady gaze [of the portrait] expressing the artist's submission to personal suffering, while the smoke curled out of the pipe from his smouldering heart. Then of course there was the portly Mona Lisa, with her bewitching smile following you around the art room with her eyes. There was another one of Leonardo's earlier paintings, a portrait of a woman against the foliage of a tree rendered in Gothic vein, without the dramatic contrasts that were so characteristic of his later work."
>
> "There was a Monet, his 'Regatta at Arganteuil', which was a source of considerable discussion amongst us. Mr Moyene Najmi our art teacher tried to explain but we insisted that

f.

Ijaz ul Hassan winning Inter-collegiate 4x100 metres Relay Race at the annual meet 1957.

g.

Ijaz ul Hassan of Government College left winning the Punjab Inter Collegiate Tennis Championship, 1959.

e.

Ijaz ul Hassan, President, Palette Group addressing a gathering of artist at the Department of Fine Arts (Pb) Lahore. Mussarat Hasan General Secretary is seated on extreme Left. 1959

5.

Courtyard At Quetta, c. 1958,
Oil on board, 16"x 24"
Artist's Collection

it was too sloppy and formless. My appreciation of Monet came later. I fell for the Post-Impressionists much before I began to relish the subtleties of light and tone which permeates the Impressionist landscape. My honeymoon with Van Gogh did not last very long because Gauguin had captivated my heart—in the same way perhaps that he had at one time captured the heart of Van Gogh."

They say that one of the worst tyrannies that obstruct spontaneous expression is the fear of spoiling a good white surface of a blank page. This fear is so great that many a profound thought and many a great-expression is never put down

h.

Inaguration of Solo Show of Murtaza Bashir at the Lahore Arts Council. Visible in Picture from left to right Ijaz ul Hassan, Raheel Akbar Javaid, Murtaza Bashir, Moyene Najmi and Alice Faiz. c.1959

7.

Mosque at Quetta, c. 1958,
Oil on board, 14"x 22"
Collection: Jugnu and Najam Sethi.

in its raw form and is lost forever because it cannot be recalled later. The fear of spoiling the art material is equally intense. While teaching art the best thing that a teacher can do for an aspiring raw young lad is to get rid of these fears. The day a child conquers these fears he is well on the way to expressing himself with a vigour and sincerity unfettered by inhibitions and restraints.

Ijaz's teachers Mr. Khalid Iqbal and Mr. Moyene Najmi equipped their students with good quality colours, sable-hair brushes and the best grade of watercolour paper. Through Moyene Najmi, Ijaz met well-known contemporary painters like Shemza, Ali Imam, and S. Safdar and later Shakir Ali and Murtaza Bashir. Ijaz recalls how at that time he became aware of the role that textures could play in a painting. Seeing Moyene Najmi and Murtaza Bashir build them up in their paintings, he was curious enough to experiment with the technique himself. Ijaz was also impressed by the manner Moyene reduced three-dimensional forms of the Lahore old city structures into flat surfaces and then animated them with subtle textural effects often achieved with the back end of the brush.

Ijaz also loved Ali Imam's works done at Murree and Ghora Gali and later at Bahawalpur. Ali Imam's paintings of Murree are vividly cheerful and spontaneously rendered. His works of Sunny Bank and particularly those done later at Bahawalpur are focused compositions of houses rendered with frowning earth colours. Ali Imam like his close friend Moyeen painted on paper in gouache during that period.

6.

View from Toru House, Murree, 1960,
Oil on board, 36"x 24"
Artist's Collection

Ijaz liked Safdar because he seemed to have no airs about himself or his work. He had a visibly graphic sense of design and instead of painting cityscapes excavated his subjects from the Indus and Gandhara civilizations.

8.

Yellow House, 1959,
Oil on canvas, 24"x 30"
Artist's Collection

9.

Punjab University Nursery Mosque, 1959,
Oil on board, 20"x 30",
Artist's Collection

10.

Vase with Coxcombs on a Chequered Cloth, 1958,
Oil on board, 24"x 18",
Collection: Anna Molka Ahmad

Ijaz especially recalls his *'Jatty'* (Iqbal Saigol collection) that presents a lass proportioned like the women of the *Santhal* tribe that lived in close proximity of Bombay where the artist was based for sometime before the Partition. Another one that seemingly presents an aerial view of the Punjab planes (Taufiq Rafat's collection) is executed in a subtler manner and lighter touch.

Murtaza Bashir's canvases affected Ijaz differently. He liked the tenacity of his lithe line, the muted matt colours, and the deftness with which he applied texture. Above all he liked the way Murtaza artlessly devised his figures and visage of men and women in an archaic manner that endowed them with individuality and dramatic presence reminiscent of Etruscan art. A painting that Murtaza gifted to Ijaz on our marriage is now with our son Ahmed. There was another rather splendid, pen drawing of a nude, presented to Ijaz when he visited Dacca in 1968 that has been unfortunately misplaced by him.

The lack of inhibition and the flamboyance acquired at Aitchison has been the hallmark of Ijaz's approach to painting throughout his career. When he left Aitchison he had already matured as a painter and was exhibiting with

i.

Art Exhibition held in Murree August 1958, Ijaz third from left in suit, Anna Molka Ahmad extreme right, Justice S. A. Rehman in the centre flanked by Mrs. Mazhar Munir and art student Munawar Jaan.

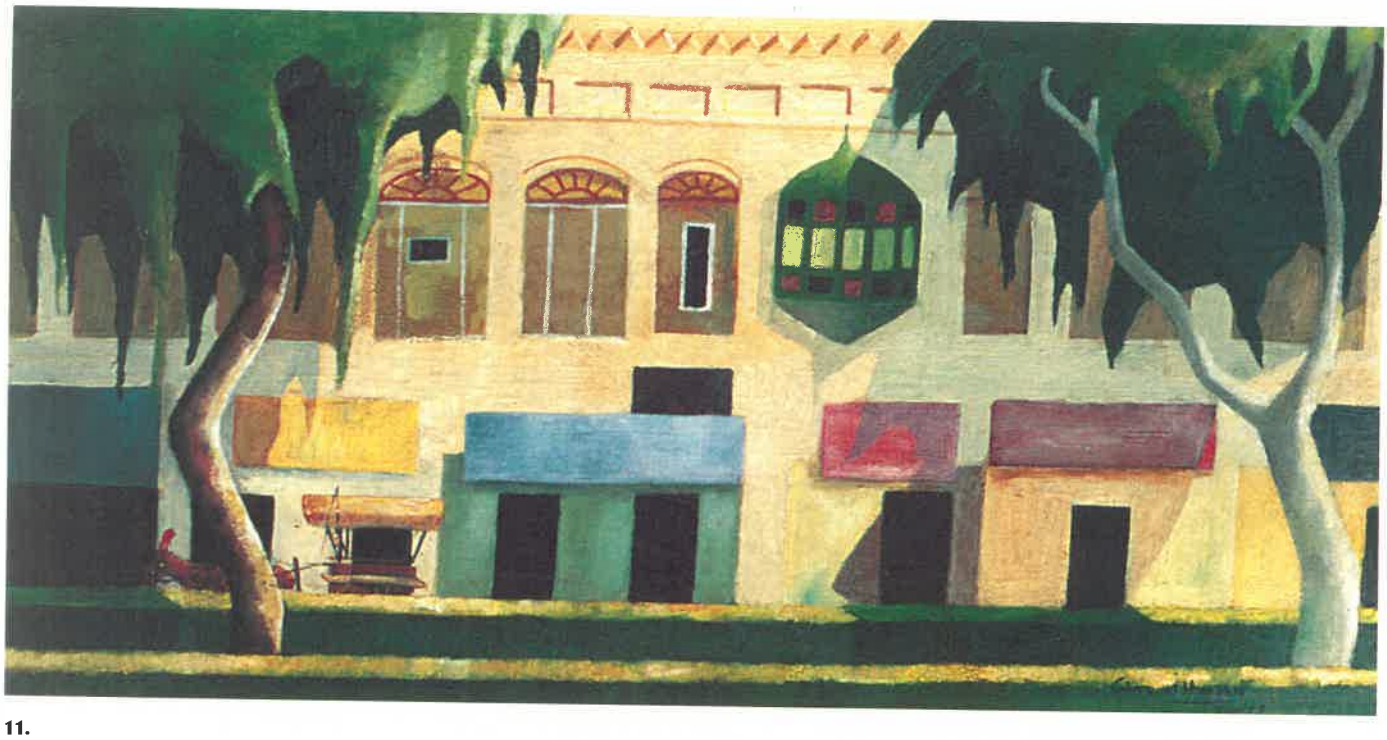
professionals, at Summer Exhibitions in Murree as well as in Lahore and making his presence noticed with a regular display and sale of some of the most conspicuous paintings put up at these exhibitions.

He was a regular visitor to Quetta where his grandparents spent their summers. There are several paintings that he made during his visits to Quetta. The Courtyard and White Mosque are simple and naïve and bear witness to the quality of his colours and sensitivity to design and composition that the artist had acquired as early as the mid fifties.

In 1958 Ijaz was an under graduate student of the Fine Arts Department of the Punjab University. Subsequently while he read English for his Masters Degree he continued to be a part time student for two additional years. At the Fine Arts Department he was fortunate to have Khalid Iqbal for his teacher once again. That has led to a life-long friendship between them. For his bachelor's examination in Fine Arts Ijaz disdainfully omitted to complete the various types of exercises required by the syllabus, yet the few he did were of such high merit that he secured first position in the University, making him eligible for a scholarship if he should chose to pursue Fine Arts for his Master's Degree.

j. Ijaz ul Hassan in 1958.

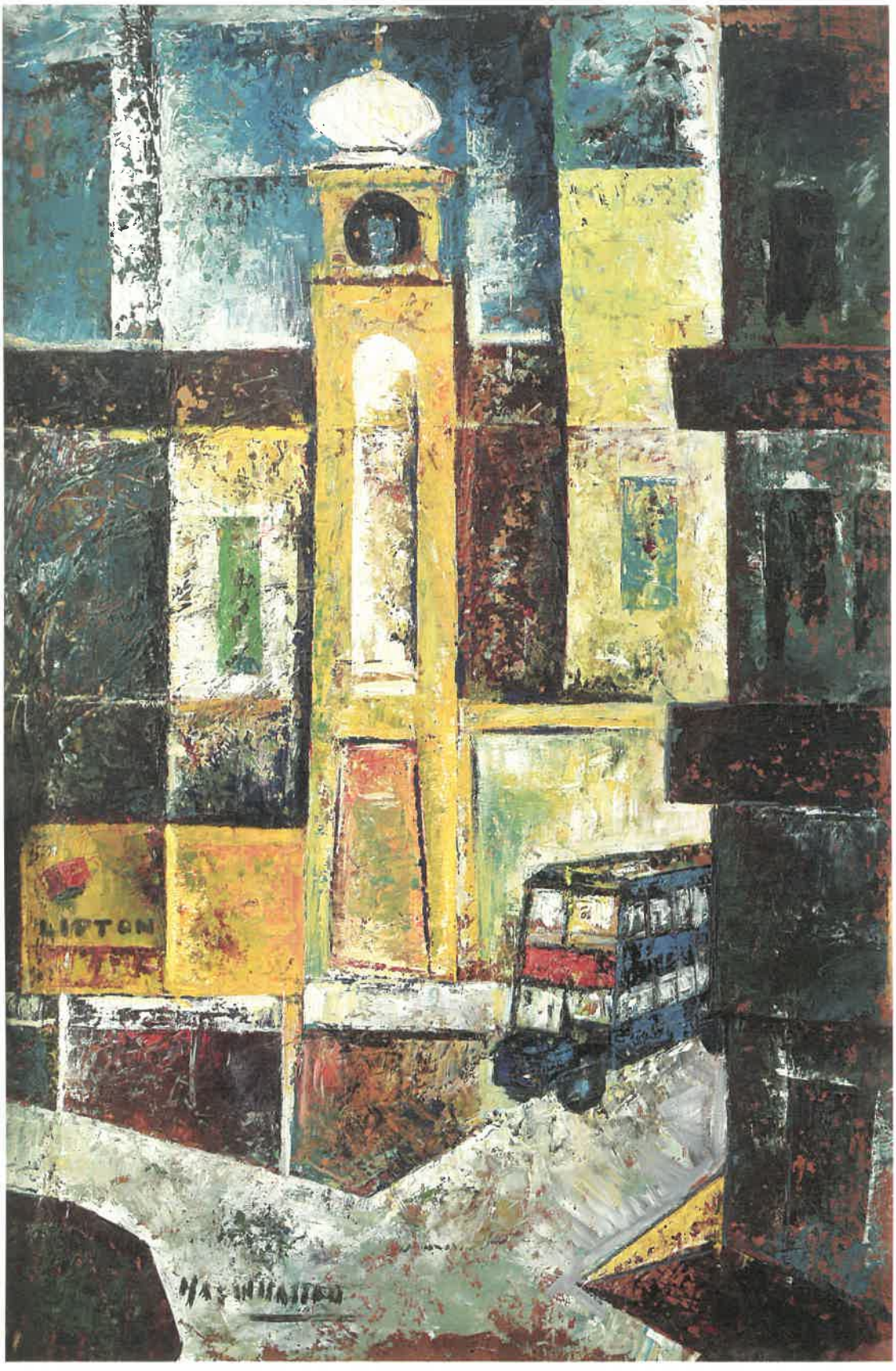
Parental persuasion or perhaps his own contrariness prevented him from taking advantage of the offer and he enrolled for the Masters Degree in English at the Government College Lahore in 1959. This degree offered him an insight into the world of symbols and metaphors. He began to understand the power



11.

Commercial Building, 1958,
Oil on board, 18"x 36"
Collection: Rehana and Taufiq Rafat

12. *Sketch for Commercial Building*, 1958. 7"x 8.5", Pen on paper, Artist's Collection.



13.

Laxmi Chauk, 1960,
Oil on board, 36"x 24"
Auctioned at Southebys, London

14.

Old Lahore City Courtyard, 1960,
Oil on board, 36"x 24"
Collection: Latif Fancy

15.

Mango Leaves In A Blue Vase, 1960,
Oil on board, 36"x 18"
Collection: Ms Muttaqi

16. *Still Life with Oranges and Mulbery Leaves*, 1960, Oil on board, 18"x 48", Collection: Ms Muttaqi.

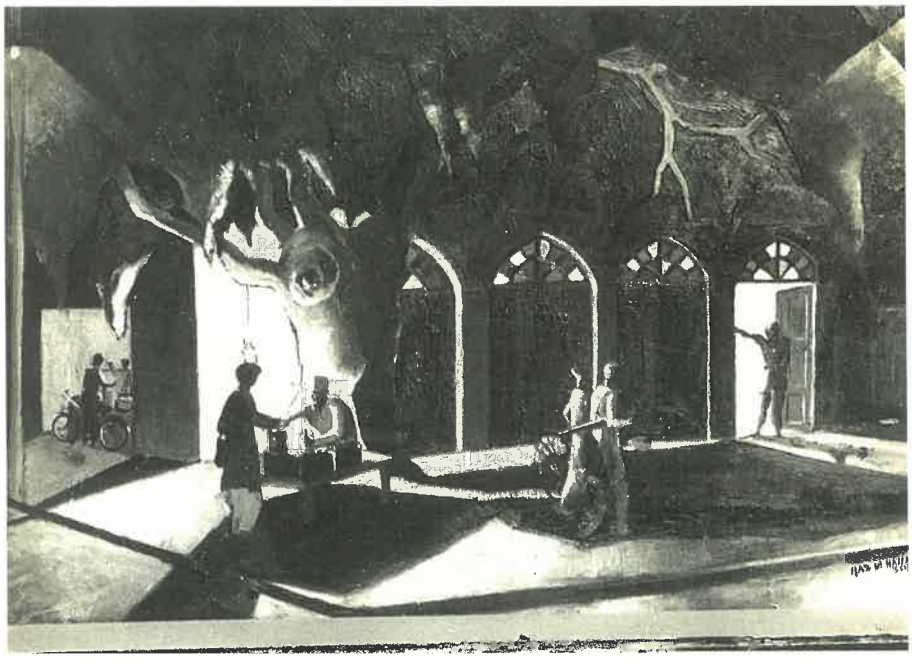
k.

Ijaz ul Hassan studying for his examination outside Quadrangle Hostel where he was a Prefect, in 1959, at the Government College, Lahore.

of these vehicles of expression and later used them unsparingly in his paintings through out his career. He had a very happy stay at the Quadrangle Hostel where he was appointed a Prefect. At Government College Ijaz gave up other sports to concentrate on tennis. He was picked up for the College team and later appointed Captain of the College as well as the Punjab University teams.

During all this time he was painting away merrily and had maintained close links with the Punjab University where he formed a group of young painters calling themselves the 'Palette Group'. This group included Colin David, Dr Khalid Mahmood, Nighat Idrees, (later Nighat Obrien), Aslam Minhas, Bushra Hameed and myself. The Palette Group of painters – the first of its kind, formed by students - held its first and last Exhibition in 1960. Ijaz sold most of his paintings included in this Show.

At that time Ijaz was painting landscapes with simplified objects grouped in a short range of perspective in colours that had a luminous gem like quality. The *Commercial Building (page 31)* and the *Monsoon Landscape (page 37)* are typical examples of work of that period. Even the effect of light was simplified and stylised and quiet patterns were made out of light and shadows. In the *Monsoon Landscape* puffs of smoke lazily emerging out of a factory chimney were audaciously arrested to form a graphic element of the larger design. The *University Nursery with Mosque (page 28) and Scholar's Garden,* (presented by the Principal of Government College to Justice Kiyani Chief Guest at the Convocation in 1959) are other memorable paintings of a slightly later period. The *Laxmi Chauk (page 32), the*



17.

Borh Wala Chauk, 1960,
Oil on board, 18"x 24"
Collection: (Lost)

Old Lahore City Courtyard (page 33) and another one with frontal view of the *Government College* with its clocked tower and a girl with a ponytail on a cycle in the foreground are few of the group of paintings executed between the middle of the nineteen fifties and in the late fifties when Ijaz studiously played with texture using the palette knife to apply paint and to establish sharp edges and forms of objects.

The painting titled *Laxmi Chauk* (page 32) is done in oil on board. Ijaz who hails from Lahore's walled city expresses visible sympathy for its ancient structures and sights. Laxmi Chauk, or intersection, is located on McLeod road and in the fifties used to be the haunt of aspiring artist, radical poets and stray midnight intellectuals. Today Laxmi Chauk is a popular food centre in Lahore. This painting of Laxmi Chauk was established on a Sunday, staring down from the second floor restaurant of a hotel. The painting represents an earlier phase of the artist when he liked to build textural surface effects that were particularly appropriate for interpreting the weathered demeanour of old cemented and brick walls. It is one of the rare paintings of the period, before the city became a popular genre with other artists. During this brief period simplification of forms continued and evolved into geometrical shapes, rendered with thick paint to achieve textural effects.

Ijaz had switched to English Literature for his master's degree but painting occupied the central place in his life. Though for the next few years he oscillated between literature and painting. His teacher Khalid Iqbal later convinced his father that Ijaz had a talent much beyond the ordinary and that he should be allowed to pursue painting as a career. That great gentleman had never denied Ijaz anything that any father could provide. He was quite ready to accede to his son's wishes once again.

Ijaz joined the St Martin's School of Art in London in 1961. Unfortunately he

18.

Monsoon Landscape, 1958,
Oil on board, 24"x 36"
Collection: Jugnu and Najam Sethi

was a most unhappy student there. He could not establish any understanding with teachers who, in their attempt to show an appreciation of South Asian art were not willing to concede that there might be artists who transcend those barriers. Ijaz, who had developed a distinct vision of his own, was continuously being subtly pressurised into negating his vision and continuing with eastern traditions of painting. The only class he liked attending was of life drawing. Instead of encouraging him to pursue his natural aptitude the school insisted that he should restrict himself within his own cultural tradition of miniature painting rather than loitering about in the corridors of European art. This sentiment may seem laudable on the face of it but Ijaz found it terribly patronising and it totally put him off from painting and the School.

> "One reason," he explained, "was I myself. I had advanced beyond the climate of that institution and I had very different aesthetic problems."[5]

He became irregular in attending classes and stayed away from school spending time with his old school friends from Aitchison who were reading at Oxford and Cambridge and few others who were based in London. In London Shahnawaz Khan Niazi read law at Grey's Inn, Colin David was at the Slade, Tariq Habib Mirza who now specialises in weaving traditional and antique carpets studied design, Kamil Khan Mumtaz was a student of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Kamil at that time also painted, in the manner of New York Action painters. He took Ijaz to meet Souza and Ahmed Pervez. Ijaz was delighted to see Pervez's exquisite subjective renderings in

watercolour which were so different from his earlier figurative works of the late fifties that had been done in oils where he had relied on thick contours to delineate the objects

St Martin's school lost patience with Ijaz. One day the principal, distinguished for being son of the painter Gore, one of whose painting hung in the National Gallery, summoned him. I am told that the meeting was brief. Ijaz had been asked to bring his paintings and he lugged these up the lift to the Principal's office on the top floor. Not one of them was even glanced at. Ijaz was informed that his name was removed from the list of students. The decision had already been taken. Ijaz has no hesitation in admitting that most of the works done at the school were rather constipated but he had expected some learned interaction before being told that he had been expelled. 'Thank you and God bless you for that' was Ijaz's reaction. He found carrying the load of his works back to his flat at Hampstead and paying the fat taxi fare far more painful than being told to leave the school.

This was followed by two seasons of distressing silence in Ijaz's life. He felt so lost and angry that he stopped painting. At the behest of his friends Shahnawaz Khan Niazi, he applied for admission at Cambridge to read English Literature. He had relinquished painting and had mentally given up the idea of becoming a painter. When one of his paintings was selected for the Commonwealth Exhibition in London in 1962, he was neither urged to pick up the brush again or even visit the Show.

For him, our years at Cambridge have a dreamlike quality. It was a time and place that was totally distant from the world of art. In the idyllic setting of the University town of Cambridge, he interacted with students and academics. His activities were confined to studies, sports, and cultural events. Quality plays both classical and contemporary were always there to see and Ijaz thrived on this opportunity to attend as many of them as possible. He considers himself lucky to have seen Brechkt, Arthur Miller, Becket, Pinter, Pirandello, Genet, Racine, Satre and Chekov along with Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde and to have witnessed the genius of Sir Lawrence Olivier, Sir Micheal Redgrave, Dame Joan Plowright and Vanessa Redgrave. He made forays into the London drama scene with his friends to enjoy any good play that was being staged. There were also a number of art theatres and cinemas that were showing very good films. It is there that he became aware of the films of people like Satyajit Ray, Renoir, Antonioni, Fellini, Viscomti, and De Sica.

The years that we spent at Cambridge were eventful in terms of mental growth and widening horizons. They were instrumental in adding a dimension to his vision and perception that was analytical and critical. He learnt the wisdom of the subtle as well as the power of the innuendo and the metaphor. But in all this time what is most interesting to note is that throughout his stay in Cambridge he never even scratched a paper with a pencil.

I.

Ijaz ul Hassan after his graduation at the Senate Hall Cambridge, 1964.

In the frenzy of packing and disposing off extra luggage on returning home

m.

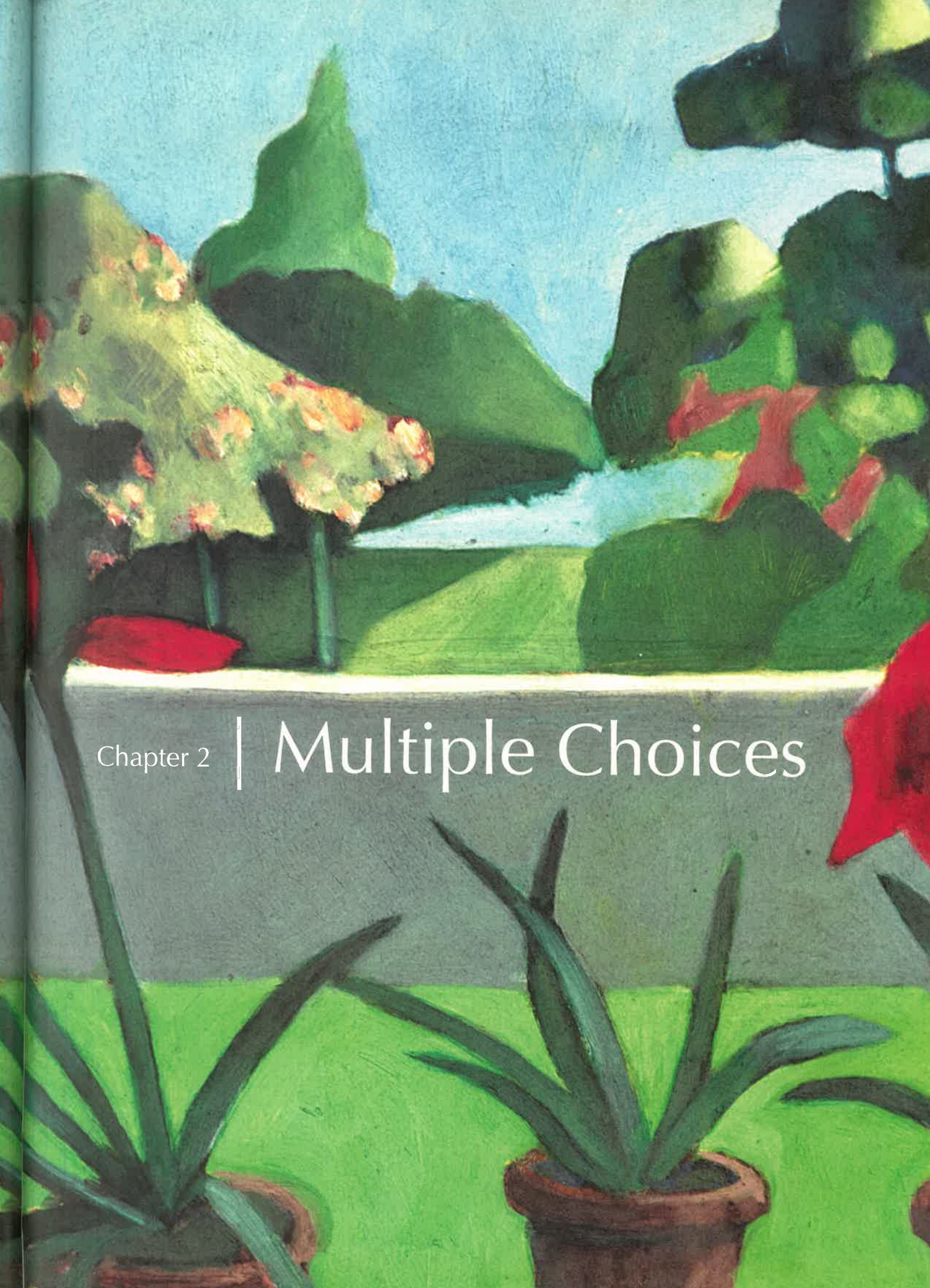
Ijaz ul Hassan with Musarrat Hassan (author) and the artist's mother in Venice, Italy, 1960.

from Cambridge in 1964, he deposited his paintings with a small art gallery at Cambridge as a gesture of disinterest and apathy. A painting with broad leaf caladium plants in pots done at Karachi in 1956 and another little gem of a night scene from the late fifties *'Borh Wala Chauk'* (page 36), along with *'Lahore Railway Station by Night'* (1958) a painting of *'London Rooftops'* (1961) done from a fourth floor hotel room at Queens Gate, Bayswater, a large still-life painting based on copper objects arranged on a table before a window with icicles done at our Hampstead flat in 1962, have thus been lost. Many efforts a decade later to trace the works, when art was restored to its original station in Ijaz's life failed, because the gallery at Cambridge had shifted to some unknown place.

Our journey home stretching from December 1964 to January 1965 was a rich and rewarding experience. Ijaz took forty five days to drive back from London to Lahore and on the way visited areas and places that are still vividly etched in his memory. He took a deliberately circuitous route through Europe to see as many places as possible. He then entered Istanbul in Turkey, after which he embarked on another sight seeing drive throughout the Middle East visiting Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Jerusalem, entering Iraq, Iran and then into Pakistan.

References

4. Ijaz ul Hassan, *'On growing up as an artist,' The Way It Was, The Daily Times*, Lahore, March 2002.
5. Quoted by Macella Nesom Sirhindi, *Contemporary Painting in Pakistan*, Ferozesons, Lahore, 1992, p91.



Chapter 2 | Multiple Choices

On arriving back from England to Pakistan in early 1965 Ijaz ul Hassan joined the faculty of English at the Government College Lahore. We can never be sure if by doing this Ijaz was trying to convince both him and the world that he had distanced himself from painting. Fate had something else in store. Shakir Ali, the most respected modern painter at that time, was appointed Principal of National College of Arts, and he was hunting for new talent that would inject new vitality and a modern vision in the institution. The National College was a dull and lacklustre place in those days. Shakir had already weaned Khalid Iqbal and Colin David away from the Punjab University. He also persuaded Ijaz to join the National College of Arts and established the Academic Department. This offer excited Ijaz's academic and nascent artistic interests and he joined and thus started to paint again. Shakir Ali wrote a short article on Ijaz on the eve of his exhibition in Lahore in 1967:[6]

n. *Ijaz ul Hassan in 1966.*

> "...For centuries Lahore has been the centre of knowledge and culture. It has acquired it own significant character in every day living and other human activities. Even in the early days of the creation of

19.

Brothers in Mourning, 1966,
Oil on board, 20"x 30"
Artist's Collection

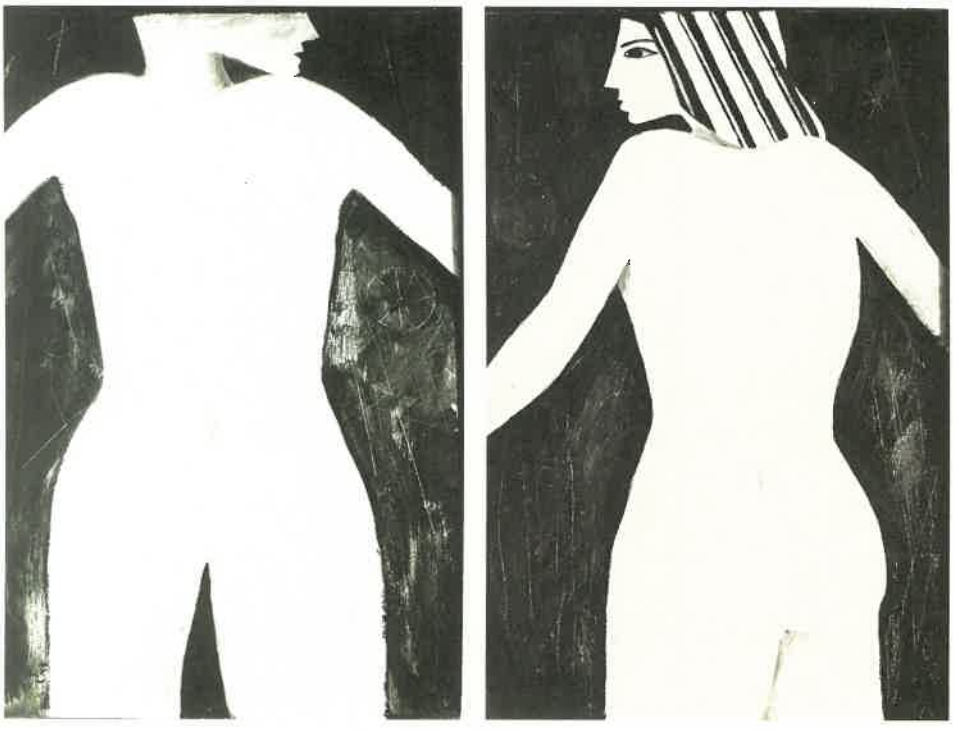
20. *Fossilized*, circa 1966, Oil on board, 20"x 30", Artist's Collection.

Pakistan, Lahorites have never forgotten the deeper meaning of life and its charm and their sense of humour and beauty (even in the face of aggression to which it was subjected in September). It was in Lahore that the formulation of Pakistani painting and literature was stimulated, by a group of painters, poets and writers. Ijaz ul Hassan has grown in that atmosphere. He has developed in his thoughts the ability to grasp his environment as well as the urge to express and to create. Ijaz has a sound background of all human activity in literature and painting, which he employs to the best of his advantage. His painting even in its early stages shows an element of experimentation and an analytical and sensitive mind. His landscapes and still-lifes, though not present before me at the moment are recollected in my mind. They are based, more or less, on cubistic shapes, with mellow colours and have a streak of texture. He has exhibited in Lahore and other parts of Pakistan and Europe and has received complimentary write-ups in number of newspapers and magazines. Later on he went to England to study but ultimately landed himself at Cambridge. On his return he was taken into the National College of Arts as the Head of the Academics Department with the responsibility to teach History of Art and to imbibe it with literature. Every teacher while teaching is also busy creating in his field of expression. Ijaz ul Hassan is likewise devoting himself to painting. Last year he had a one-man show at Rawalpindi. His paintings even now recall his earlier work

and one feels a continuity in his expression. His present paintings are bolder in colour and in their form. They have decorative elements of composition. The content, which may be a piece of melon, tree or a delicate vase are a point of departure to formulate a pattern, a design, which is now heightened by bolder colours, reds, greens, yellows. The work in this exhibition reflected the agitated and reflective mind of the painter; which has sharpened his vision and provides him with the necessary urge to discover and create."

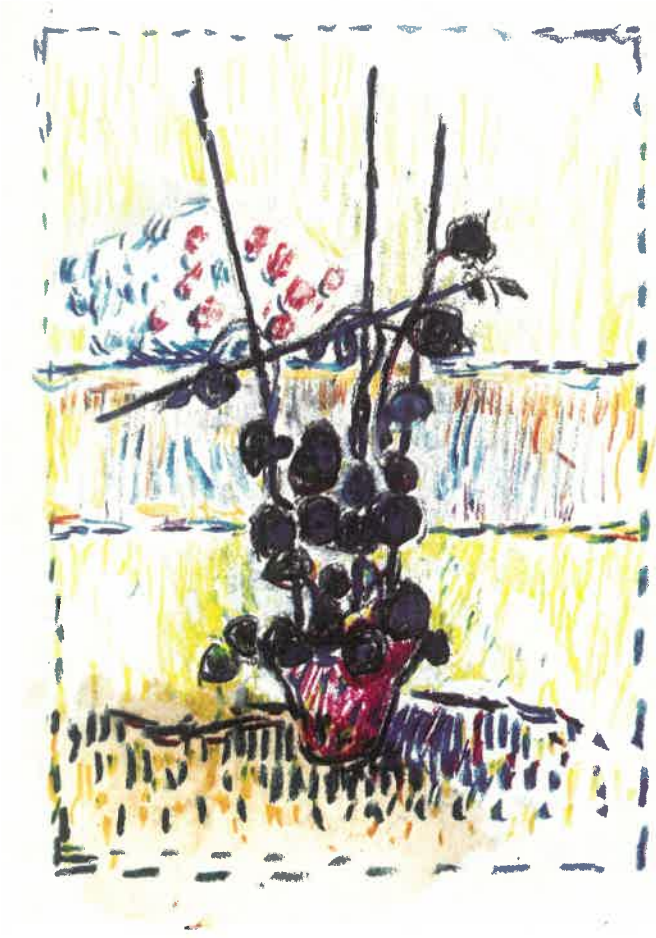
—Shakir Ali

Later at Ijaz's suggestion Shakir Ali also invited Kamil Khan Mumtaz an architect and painter who was working abroad in Ghana at that time, to come and head the architecture department at the National College of Arts. With the presence of so many artists and thinkers of that calibre the National College developed an ethos and a calibre that clings to it even today.



21.

Mates (two panels), circa 1966,
Oil on board, 30"x 20", each panel,
Collection: (Lost)



22.

23.

24.

22.
Money Plant in Pot (1), 1966,
Pastel on paper,9"x7"
Artist's Collection

23.
Money Plant in Pot (2), 1966,
Pastel on paper, 9"x7"
Artist's Collection

24.
Torso, circa 1966,
Coloured felt pen on paper, 9.5"x 7"
Artist's Collection

25.

Tattooed Face, circa 1966,
Coloured felt pen on paper, 7"x 7"
Artist's Collection

26.

Face, 1966,
Coloured felt pen on paper, 9"x 7"
Artist's Collection

The late sixties were remarkable in many ways. It was a time when existing ideas and conventions were challenged all over the world - in the field of music, cinema, art and literature. It was also a period when the 'wretched' Third World was fully fired with revolt. The countries wanted independence, nations freedom and people democracy and social justice. The late sixties were also the formative years of Ijaz ul Hassan as a social and political activist. He had come back from England wearing three-piece suits, tweed jackets and cavalry twill trousers. He consciously gave them up in favour of a more common local apparel, which allowed him to mix more freely with the students and working people and was a symbolic gesture of rejection of the upper class values. He became so immersed in local social issues that he kept away from travel to the west for twenty-two years and he only went to the US many years later in 1987.

He was active in politics with all the time he could spare and worked to establish and strengthen artists associations, students and workers unions and frequently travelled, from Lahore to other small cities and towns, often travelling on public transport at night to reach his destination for a meeting early in the morning. Our son Ahmed was taken out of Aitchison College during those years and put in an institution, which did not have such a pronounced class character. He evolved with the ethos of the sixties that spurned the status quo and revolted against tidy lies and rapacious structures

27.

Stripper, 1966,
Oil on paper, 7"x7"
Artist's Collection

28.

Bathers, 1966,
Oil on paper, 7"x9"
Artist's Collection

of power and ideas claiming universality. Ijaz writes in his article, 'Looking back at the sixties':[7]

> "This also gave courage to artists and intellectuals to respect their own ideas and creative faculties. In art, Pop Art cracked the supercilious elitist demeanour of Modernism by deriding its philosophy and mocking its mannerisms. The great mystique about highbrow art carefully nurtured by the art magazines and the galleries was destroyed. The Art establishment, however, continued to wield power by controlling the media and corporate institutions through which they could make or unmake artists at their will for profit."

On his return to the mainstream art scene when he joined the National College, the painter in him could no longer be repressed. He picked up his brush, created a workspace and passed through a period of introverted hard work to revive his creative faculties.
But he reminds us:[8]

> "Art and writing is not an accomplishment or a profession but a passion. It's a passion, which is a natural endowment of some individuals and cannot be acquired through practice or technique. Van Gogh's drawings look so clumsy but why do they have the ability to move our hearts? There are painters who can render crunchier apples than Cézanne but what makes Cézanne's apples stay in our minds while the taste of others is soon lost on the tongue. In the end art really is not a product but a by product of an artist's personal vision and inner life, which is forged out of his own everyday existence."

29. *Nude in Fish Pond*, 1966, Oil on paper, 8"x10", Artist's Collection.

30.

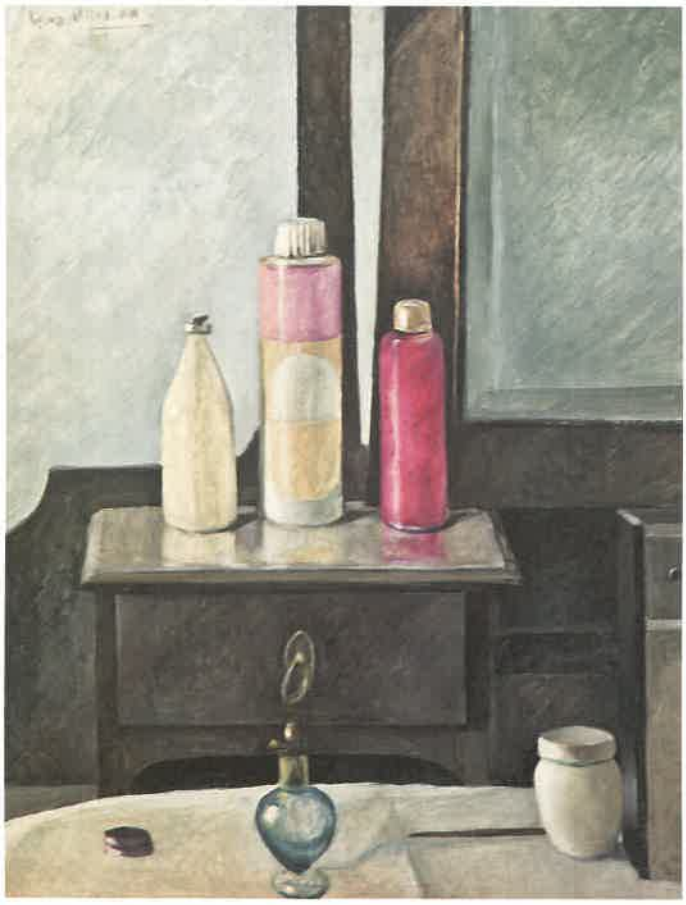
Sherpao Bridge At Night, 1968,
Oil on canvas, 24"x30"
Collection: Mina and Imran Zaidi

31. *Tomatoes,* 1969, Water colour on paper, 7"x9", Artist's Collection.

32. *Still Life With Fruit,* 1969, Oil on canvas, 28"x45", Collection: Jugnu and Najm Sethi.

34.

Still Life With Bottles, 1969,
Oil on board, 24″x20″
Artist's Collection



35.

Still Life With Dressing Table, 1969 ,
Oil on board, 24″x18″
Artist's Collection

33.

Still Life With Green Vase, 1969,
Oil on board, 24″x18″
Artist's Collection

36.

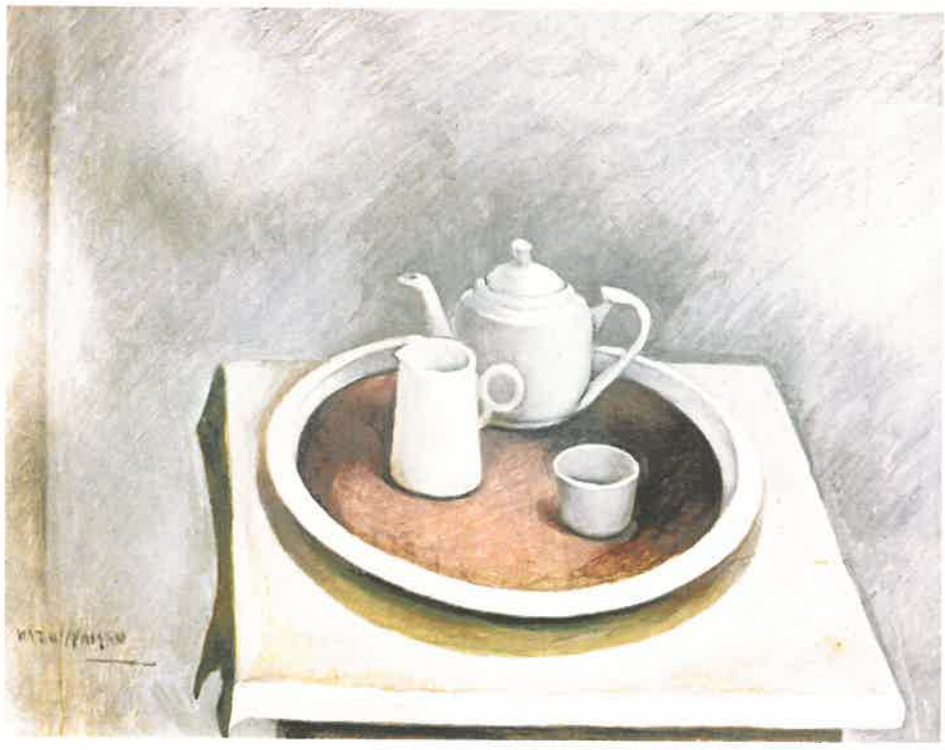
Frying Pan with Lemon, 1969,
Oil on board, 18"x30"
Artist's Collection

One after the other he set himself a challenge. He produced a series of still-life paintings in which he rendered objects in terms of shape and form, tone and surface. *Frying Pan with Lemon*, *Half Set, Still Life with Green Vase*, *Still Life with Bottles* and *Dressing Table* are reminders from that time.

During all the discipline and labour of this learning process, Ijaz developed the ability to observe and record the smallest detail. Sometimes he would retain the subtlest shade of colour in his memory and reproduce it from his imagination. It is quite unusual how objects and tonal values stay with him even when he is away from the subject. His capability to recapture with his imagination, fleeting moments, moods and demeanours is a rare ability. These paintings, mostly still life, remind us of Chardin, Cézanne and the more recent Giorgio Morandi.

The sight of a rag (page 56) lying on the studio floor triggered off a series of paintings. The rag was elevated and endowed with a stylised form. This simple act cleared the way for the artist to more aesthetically conceptualised paintings of folds.

This was followed by experiments with colour and line where meandering strips and folds are consciously juxtaposed to create a florescent glow. The *Slit* and *Folds*, in fact a whole series of painting based on ribbons and folds with



37.

Half Set, 1969,
Oil on board, 24"x30"
Collection: Jugnu and Najam Sethi

different colour combinations and compositions were created at that time. The folds led to ribbons, and ribbons to stripes (pages 57-60). The painting titled *Slit* (page 61) is done in oil on board. It is one of the series in which the artist explores the interactive response of colour and the sensuality of simple forms in movement and repose. The *Slit* (page 61) is an exceptional work. It is sensual, unusually brief and pleasantly provocative.

During this period Ijaz painted several compositions with nude figures. These are among the few nudes that he painted during his career.

References

6. Shakir Ali, article written on Ijaz ul Hassan's one man show in 1967.
7. Ijaz ul Hassan, *Looking Back At The Sixties, The Way It Was, The Daily Times*, Lahore, 2002.
8. Ijaz ul Hassan, *The Way It Was, The Daily Times*, Lahore, May 2002.

38.

The Rag, 1969,
Oil on canvas, 24"x36"
Collection: Rehana and Chand Saigol

39.

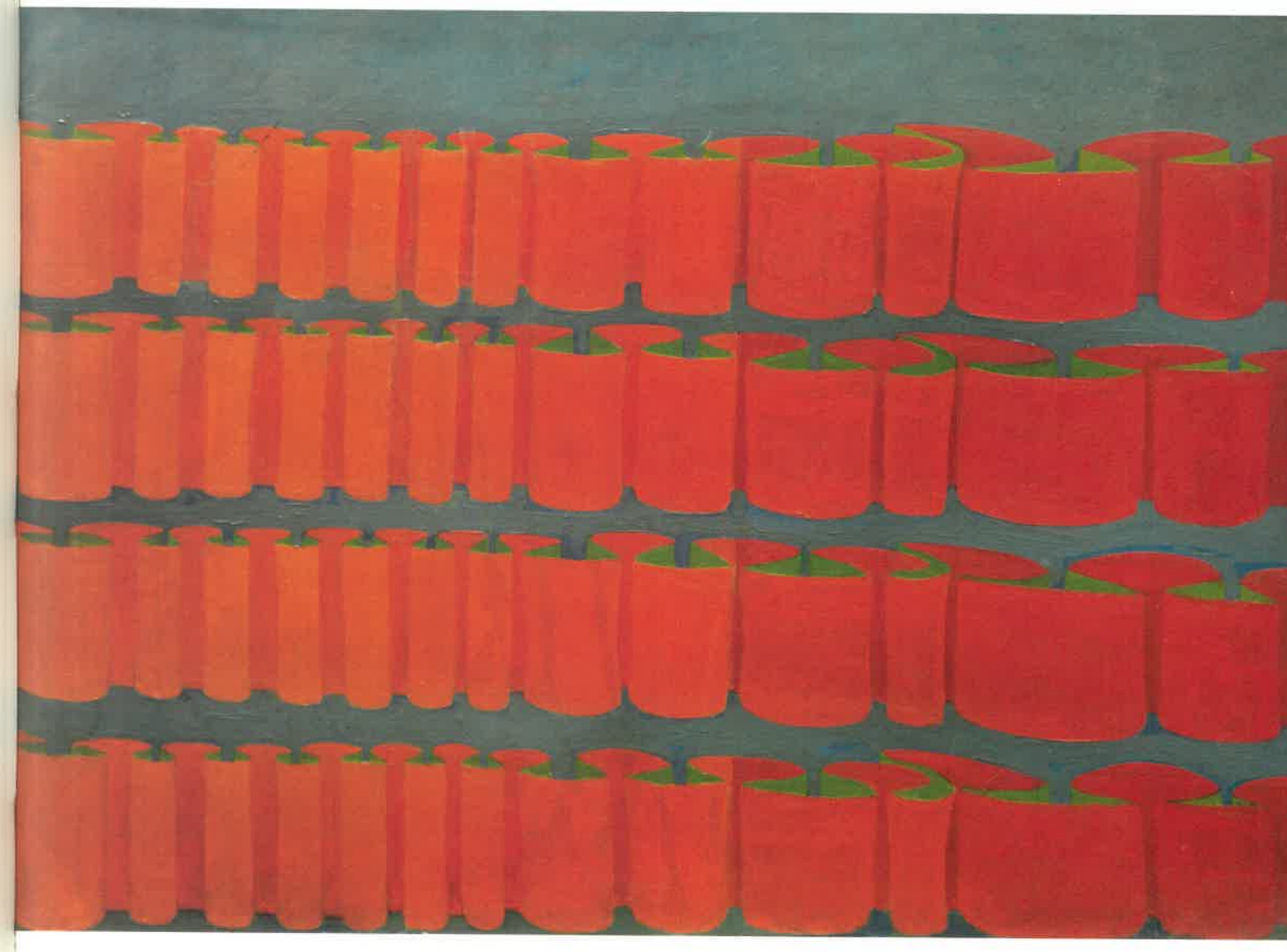
Folds, 1970,
Oil on board, 30"x24"
Artist's Collection

40.

Striped Ribbon, 1970,
Oil on paper, 30"x20"
Collection: Shehla and Tariq Saigol

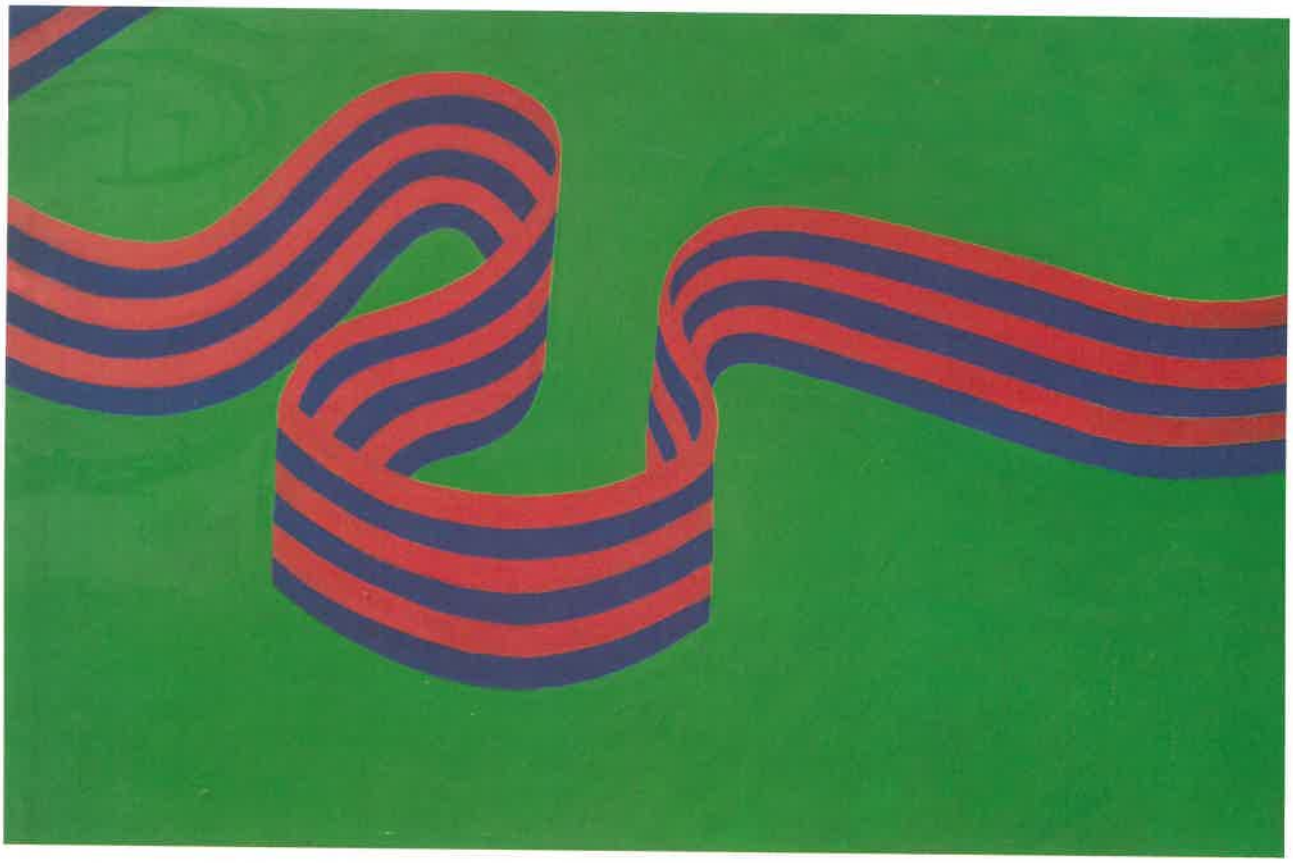
41.

Ribbon, 1970,
Oil on board, 24"x24"
Collection: Gisele Butt



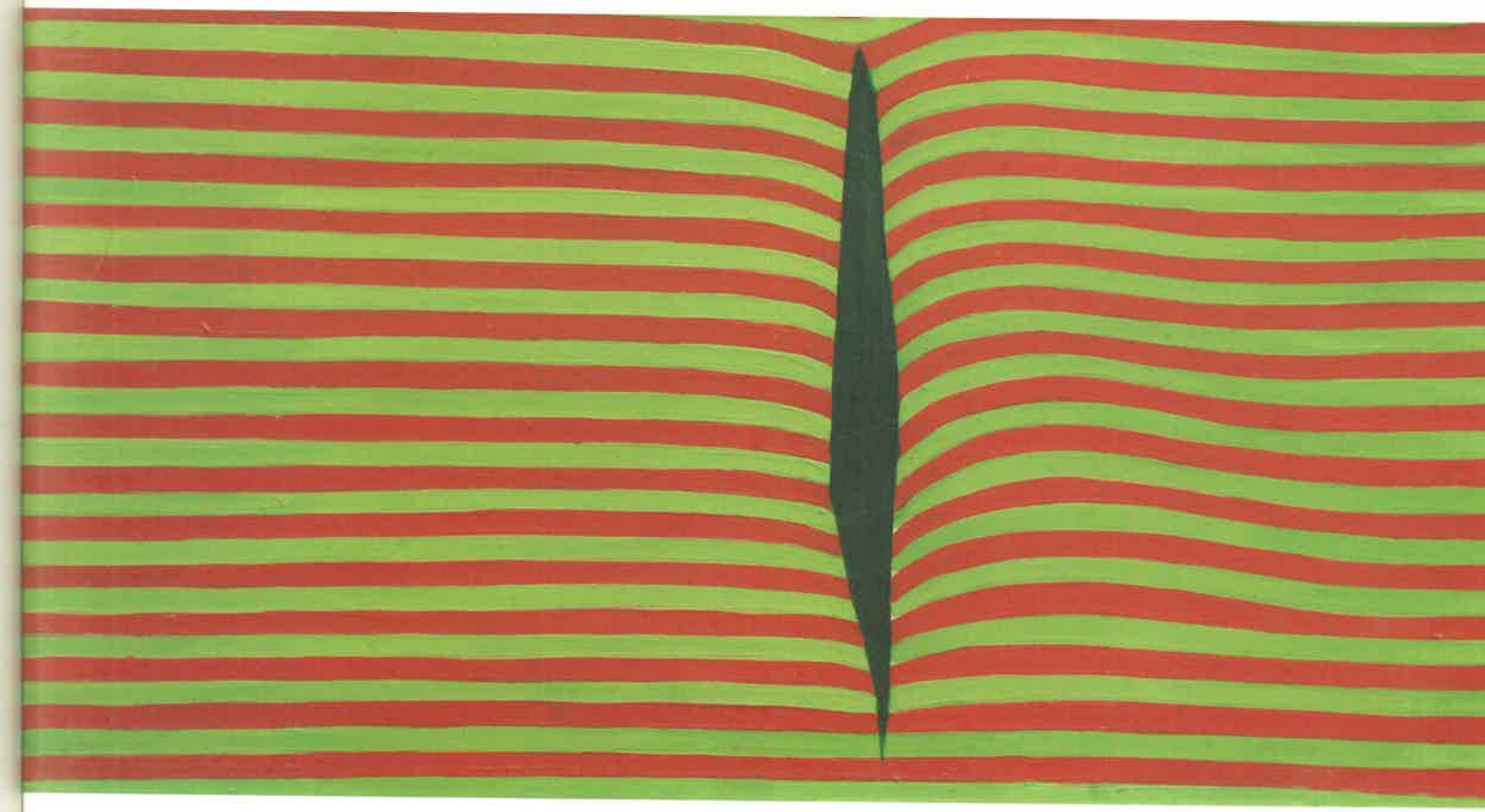
42.

Ribbons, 1970,
Oil on canvas, 24"x36"
Collection: Gisele Butt



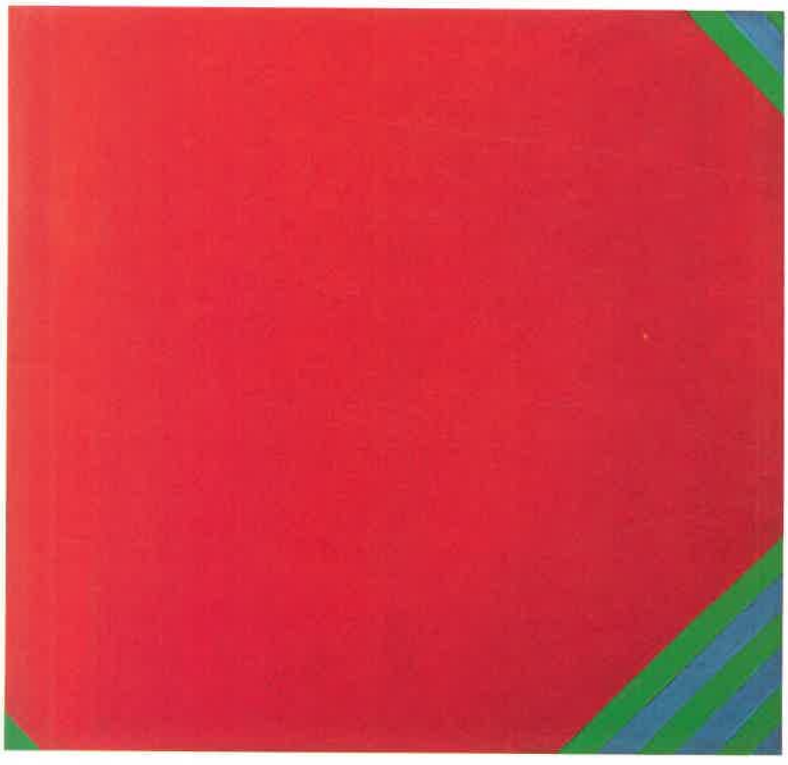
43.

Ribbon in a Loop, 1971,
Oil on canvas, 24"x36"
Artist's Collection



44.

The Slit, 1971,
Oil on canvas, 12"x24"
Artist's Collection

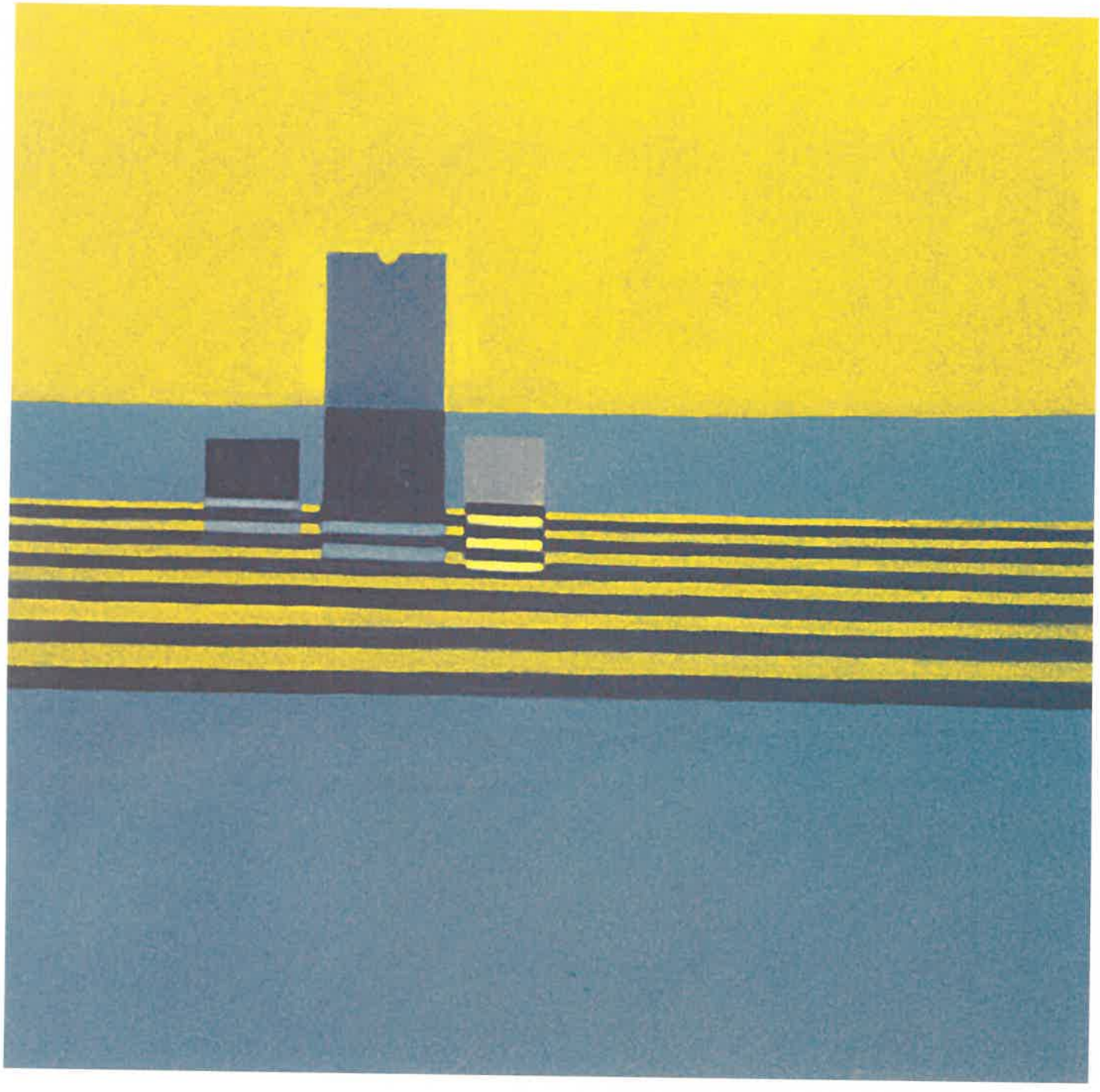


45.

Three Squares (Triptych), 1971,
Oil on board, 24"x24"(each square)
Artist's Collection

46.

Still Life With Vase And Pear, 1971,
Oil on board, 30"x30"
Collection: The National Art Gallery, Islamabad



47.

Still Life, 1971,
Oil on board, 30"x30"
Collection: Rukhsana David

48.

Striped Vase With Mangoes, 1971,
Oil on board, 24"x30"
Artist's Collection

49.

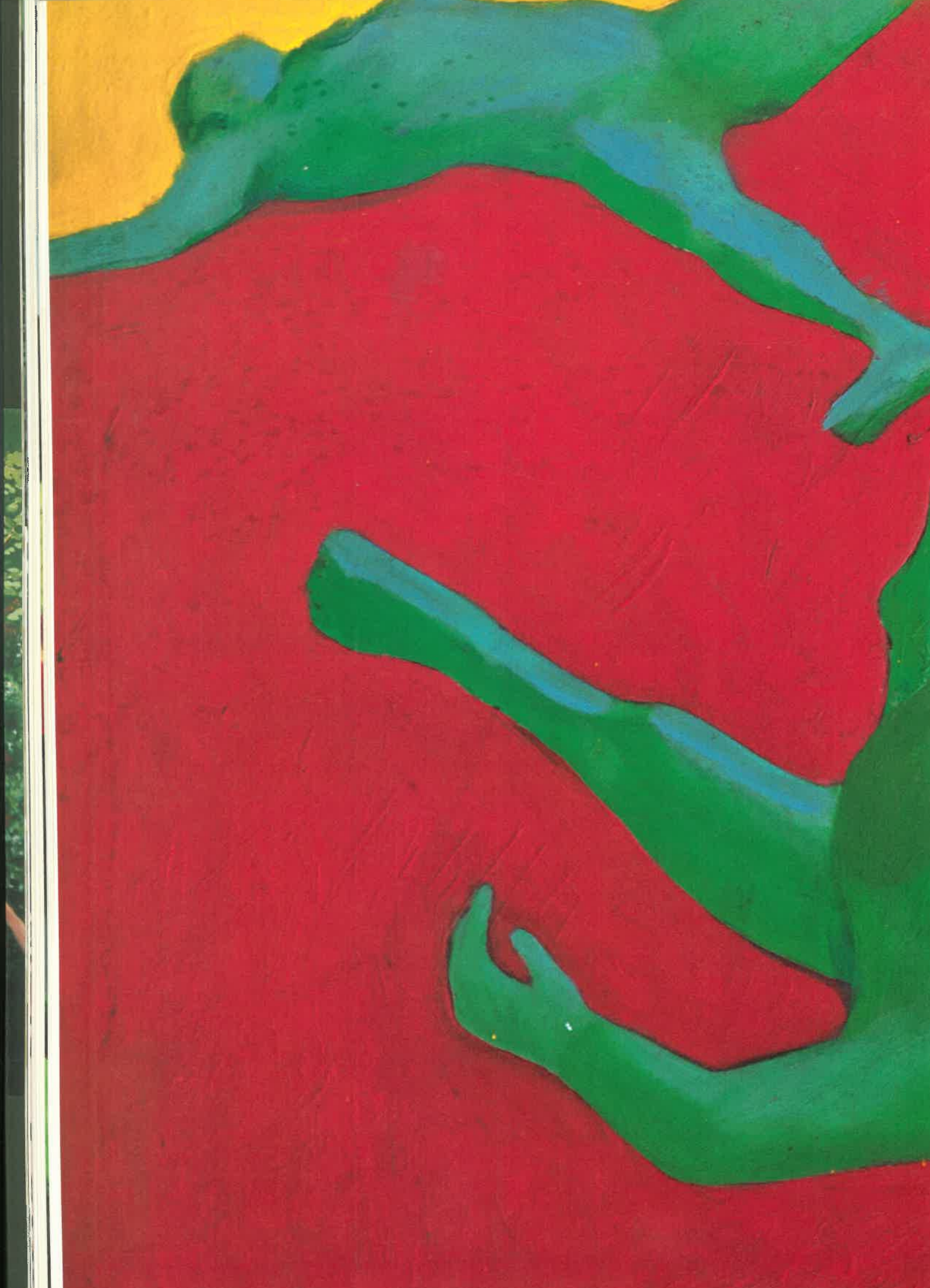
Still Life With Mangoes, 1971,
Oil on board, 30"x30"
Collection: Mina and Imran Zaidi

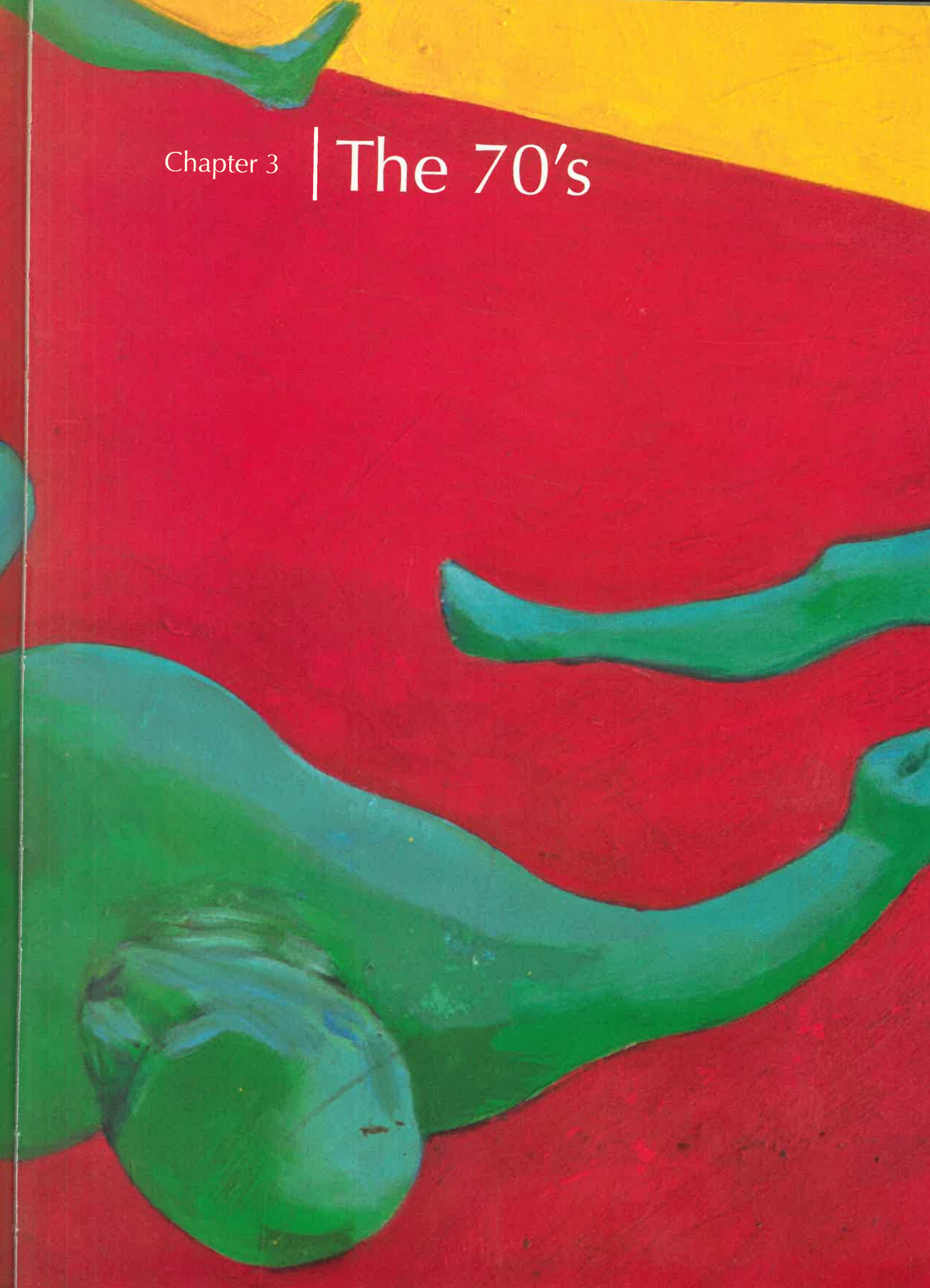
50.

View from Veranda, 1966
Oil on canvas, 24″x30″
Collection: Shehla and Tariq Saigol

51.

Bathers with Pears in Foreground, 1971,
Oil on board, 24″x36″
Collection: Ms Maryam Taseer





Chapter 3 | The 70's

Ijaz's pleasurable pursuit of pure aesthetics was brief. The media images employed for aesthetic fulfilment were now used by the artist to comment on issues and express profound ideas and opinions about the time. He became more and more aware of the people of his country and realised that the only relevant form of art for the times was the one that could address and transmit his comment on social and political issues. It was not a question of upholding an ideology but a creative human concern to respond to the challenges of the period. Suddenly his long disciplined experimentation with images and colour blossomed forth in the form of massive paintings and murals that spoke out loud and clear to the viewer. At that time he often quoted Sequeiros, one of the three great Mexican muralists who says:[9]

> "The tremendous question as to how anti figurative art has been able to go to such extremes, merits international investigation as soon as possible. It is extremely acceptable that beautiful things can be produced by accident, involuntarily and unpremeditatedly, just as incredibly beautiful mountains, valleys, deserts and rivers were produced by cosmogenic accidents. But how is it possible to make a doctrine of this..."

> "It is obvious that imperialism prefers an art, which is deaf and dumb, an art that says nothing, hears nothing and even sees nothing. But this does not mean that we deny the right of any painter to experiment in any way he likes. He has the right to do this and the right to defend his principles and his point of view in public; but he does not have the right to help the forces of reaction to drown out the voices of those of us, who do want to say something with our painting or to join those forces in shutting our mouths by taking away our liberties. What are we fighting for at the present time? Are the abstract artists, the non-figurative artists fighting for the freedom of expression? It is we, the figurative artists who have ideological links with our people, who are fighting for this."

Ijaz as a rebel artist has left a tradition at NCA that has continued to inspire several generations of students and artists. Even if today most of them do not realise where this trend came from, it was really Ijaz in the late sixties and early seventies who initiated the process for students and painters to open their eyes to the realities around them and commit themselves to living issues and rough truths that surround them. At that time he was the sole challenger of the whole direction of painting of that time and received much criticism from those who supported theories of pure art and 'art for arts sake'. These at that time were the only parameters within which artists expressed themselves. Ijaz's new agenda took time to take root, but it encouraged the artist to move out of the studio to look around and share the issues faced by society. It inspired a whole generation of students and painters who were influenced by the vital events and essential social and political issues of that time.

o.

Ijaz ul Hassan talking to Sadequain at his exhibition. Monnoo Bhai on extreme left, visible in centre Sajjad Haider and Amjad Islam Amjad.

Ijaz ul Hassan not merely gave a twist to the ideals of Modernism in Pakistan but added to it a vital dimension that was absent in western figurative painting that fed on popular industrial culture. Pop artists based their works on familiar machine objects, media images to portray urban landscape littered with signs, numbers advertising hoardings, comic scripts, images of popular film stars and many other banal, trivial and trite objects manufactured and cultivated for the market needs.

A Pop artist seldom adopted a highbrow posture. If at all he adored the banal. He perhaps restored the human image. He was endeared to the objects and images that were connected to human life. He spurned non-figuration. He found a can of beans more relevant to human life than a white square or a black squiggle on a white canvas. But that was all. One could ask 'was that not enough'?

Ijaz was captured by the aesthetics of this new idiom. One could say that he was ready to absorb it and then bend it to serve a more serious purpose. Whereas pop artists like Warhol painted to depict the crass nature of market economy that impelled by profit motivation could transform a common commodity into something dear and valuable. Warhol demonstrated this by painting a dollar bill through silkscreen process, thus transforming it into a work of art of immense value. A dollar note becomes a million. Warhol makes a valuable point, but in the process negates what he seems to profess or illustrate.

Ijaz takes a big step further. He labours for a while, observing and absorbing the popular imagery of the time in posters pasted on city walls, cinema hoardings, media images like newspaper clippings. He then employs familiar popular images and simulates techniques of mass production to address ideas and events that he regards were of definitive significance.

His paintings were followed by a series of work, aesthetically inspired by the contiguity and juxtaposition of different colours and their effect on each other. He was also fascinated by the dramatic power of advertisement hoardings and cinema posters. He wanted to experiment with all these elements on his own. He selected familiar subjects from newspapers, magazines and street posters for this purpose. He was the first artist to not only aesthetically absorb mass produced images but also to use them to describe the consumer society where humans themselves are vibrantly depicted as commodities. *Receding Figures (page 74), Paper Tigers (page 73) and Dancers* (page 71) are a few better-known paintings of that time.

It is relevant in passing to observe that his work preceding this period – studies like rags, folds and stripes, prepared Ijaz to undertake this important turn in his career.

52.

The Dancers, 1971,
Oil on board, 30"x24"
Artist's Collection

53.

Paper Tigers, 1971
Oil on board, 29"x24"
Artist's Collection

54.

Still Life in Studio, 1971,
Oil on board, 30"x30"
Collection: Mehwish and Sarmad Amin

55.

Khooni Chauk, 1972/73,
Oil on board, 36"x24"
Artist's Collection

56.

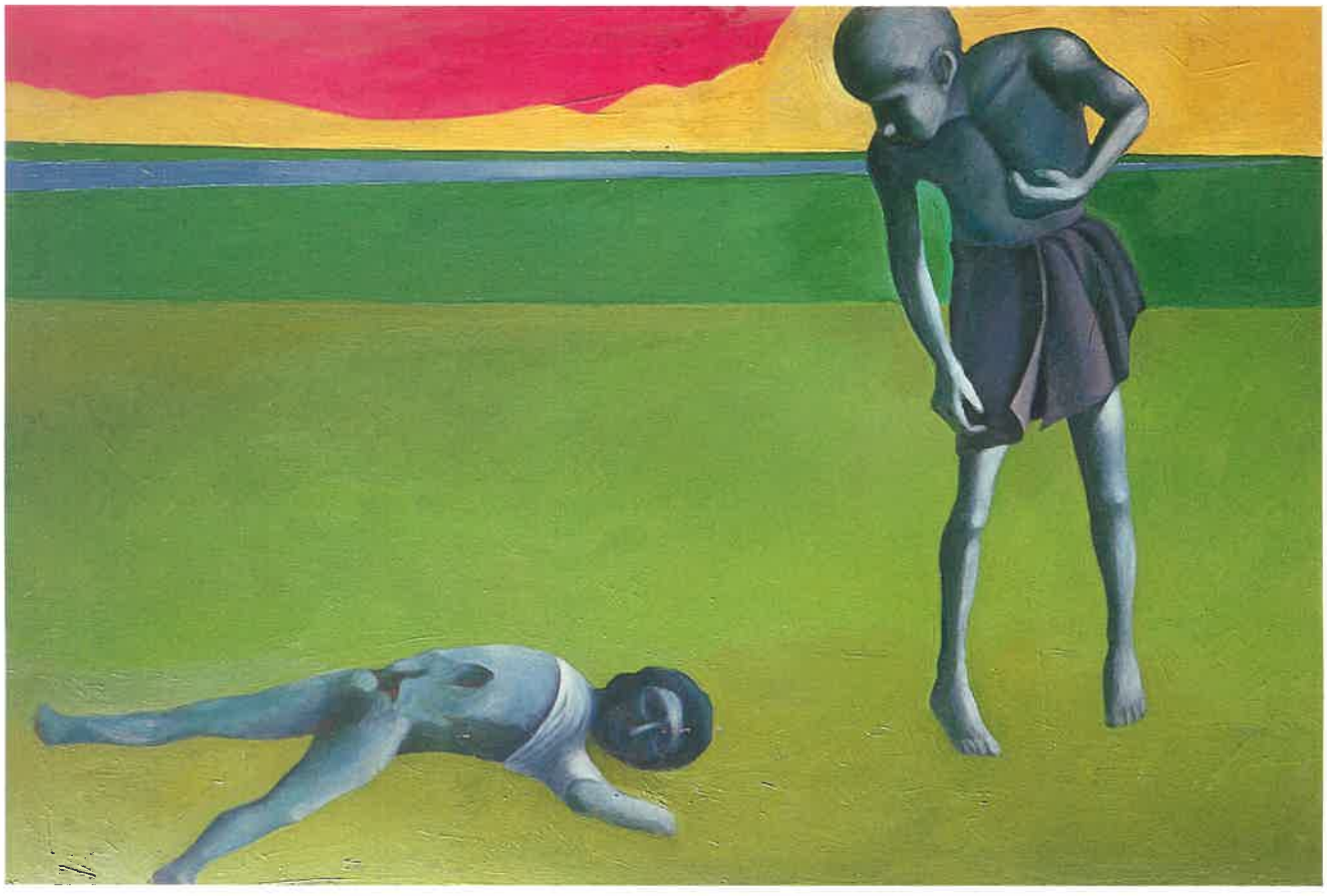
Receding Figures, circa1971,
Oil on board, 24"x30"
Private Collection

A Political Twist to Pop Art

In 1971 Ijaz was troubled by the events that led to the secession of the East Wing of Pakistan and painted a series of pictures. The triptych *Bangladesh Saga* (pages 80-81) is comprised of three sections – each one depicting a specific mood and temper ranging from anger, a sense of loss and hope of a new dawn. *Face to Face (page 76)* presents a bewildered person on an empty beach with his eyes transfixed on a mutilated corpse before him. *Face to Face* symbolically presents our inability to comprehend the obvious inevitable separation of East and West Pakistan. It seems to be an effort by the artist to make us realise the gory ugliness of it all by confronting us face to face with reality.

A key earlier painting to the Bangladesh Saga is the painting titled The *Khooni Chauk (page 78)*. This was inspired by one of Pablo Neruda's famous poem (The Bloody Square) and was executed in memory of the industrial workers shot down during a strike, by the police at Landhi and Korangi in Karachi.

In 1969 and 1970, Ijaz produced two biting interpretations of the prevailing

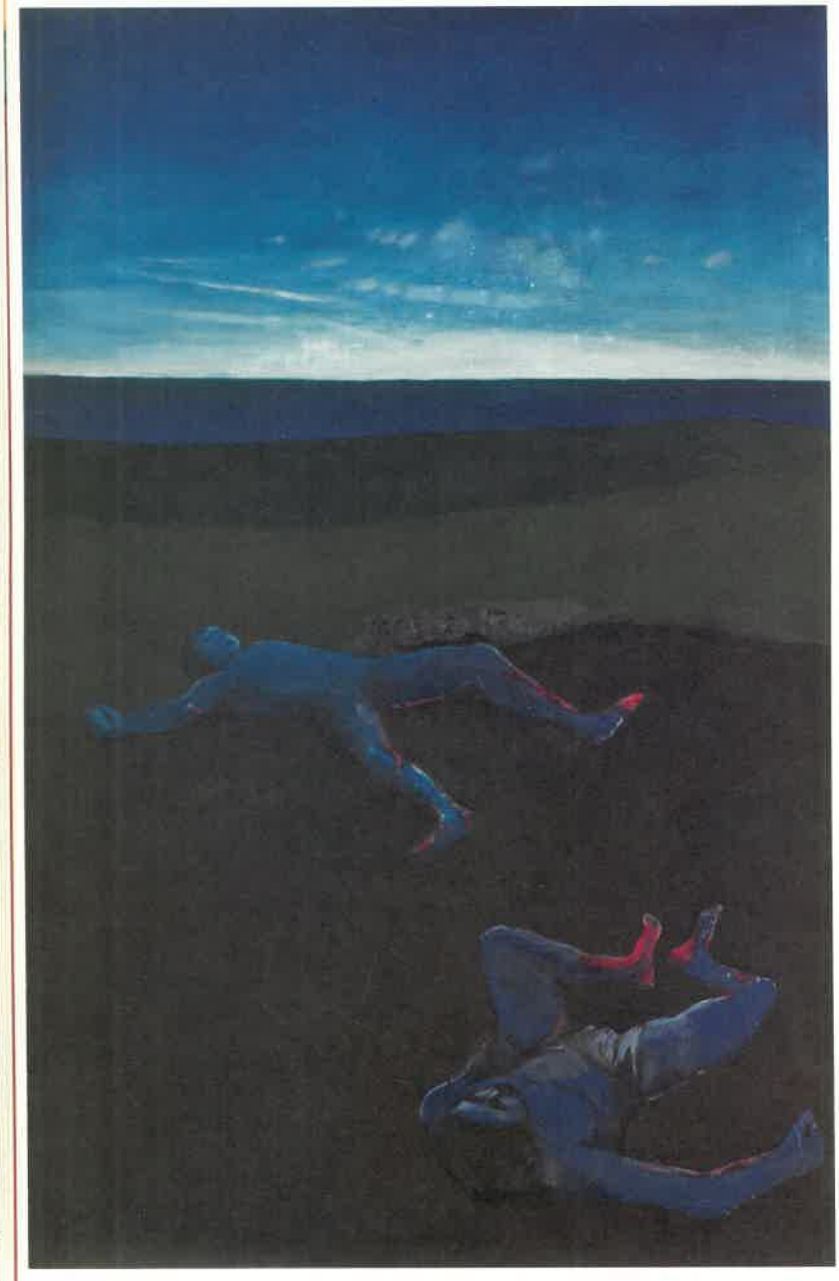


57.

Face to Face, 1972,
Oil on board, 24"x36"
Collection: Salma and Rao Mahmood Elahi

58.

The Leader, 1972,
Oil on board, 24"x36"
Artist's Collection



59.

Bangladesh Saga(Triptich), 1973,
Oil on board, 24"x36"
Artist's Collection

60.

The Green Revolution, 1974,
Oil on canvas, 72"x 48"
Collection: Rehana and Chand Saigol

61.

Peace/Freedom, 1974,
Oil on canvas, 72"x48"
Artist's Collection

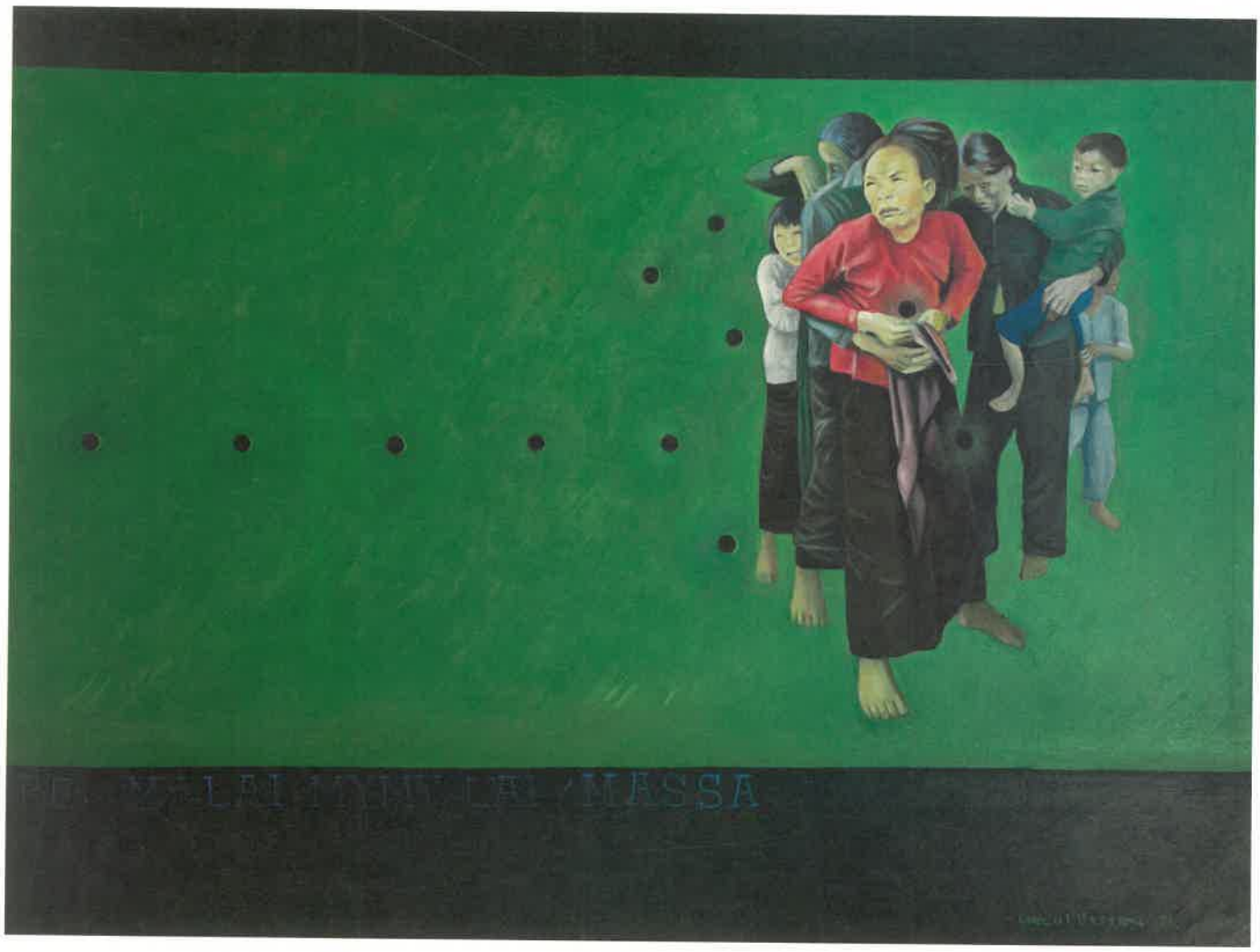
social conditions. This was the time of Yahya's martial law when many of Ijaz's works were barred from exhibitions. One of his paintings is called *The Green Revolution* (page 82) and is based on the image of a hungry child crying for food. Three identical black and white images of this child are unfolded before us against a lush green backdrop representing affluence in a land of plenty. The empty promises of the much-propagated Green Revolution to be ushered in by new seed varieties of wheat are summarily exposed by the bold contrast it presents with the harsh reality that continued to exist among the poor citizens. There is yet hope though, in the fact that a few leaves are beginning to change their colour to red, symbolising emerging enhanced awareness.

A companion to the *Green Revolution* called *Peace (page 83)* was censored for exhibition. *Peace* has the demeanour of the same hungry child as in the *Green Revolution* looming large in the background, while in the foreground a semi nude figure of a liberated lady flaunts her freedom by removing her undergarment. In the other hand she dangles the emblem of peace, which she has also removed from around her neck. This painting mocks skin-deep fake individual freedoms by contrasting them with the need for people's real freedom from poverty and hunger. This picture identifies how the super powers equate the desire for peace with the continuation of the status quo that in effect is a mockery of the real spirit of peace and produces poverty by undermining the economies of the poor developing countries of the world.

Marcella Nesom Sirhindi writes:[10]

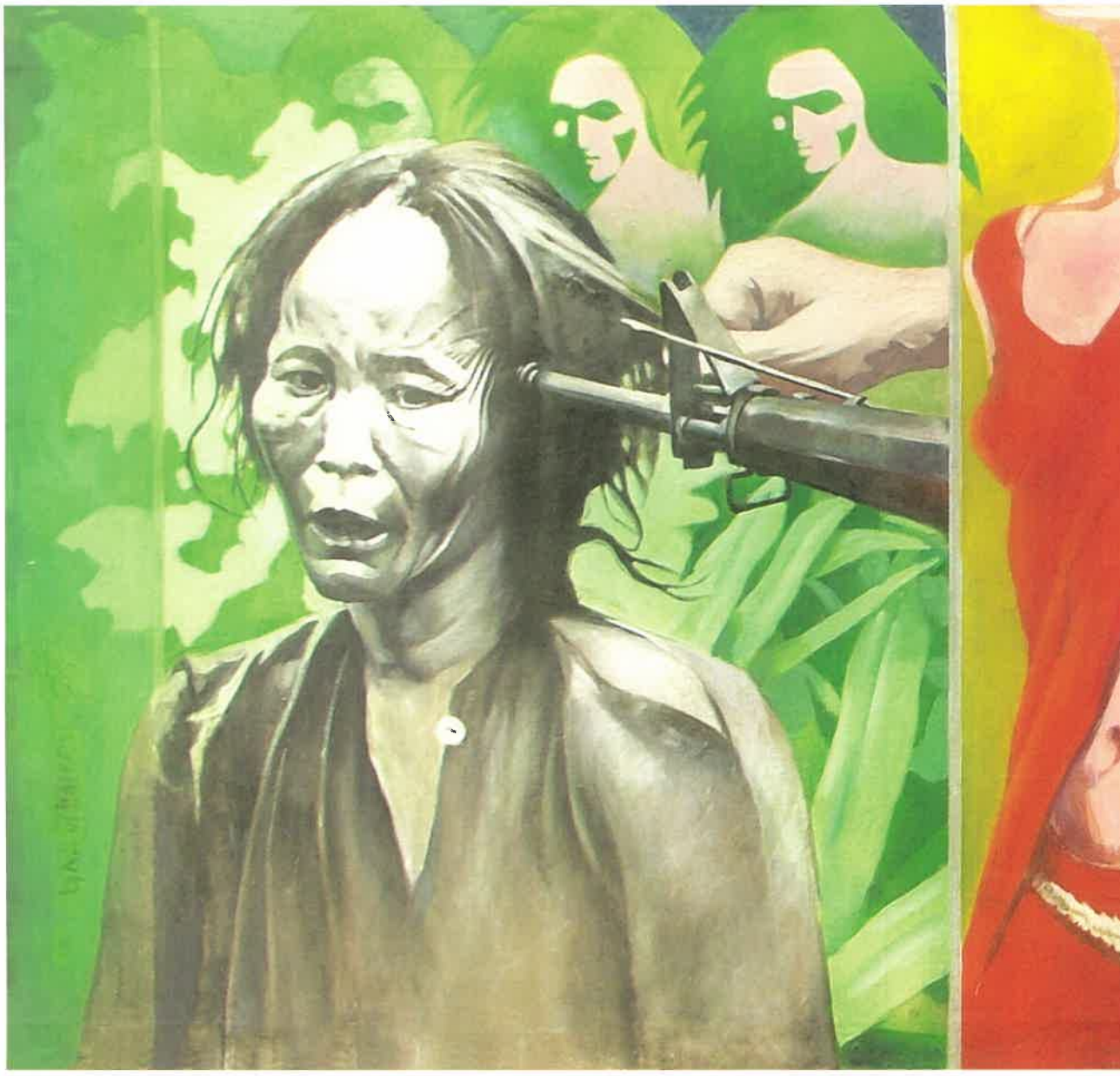
> "Ijaz's socialist predilection, in line with the mood and events of the period, evoked in the artist a sense of commitment to the public. His social/political paintings were not specific statements of propaganda to sway the viewer in a particular direction. They were rather opposing images juxtaposed to startle the viewer and encourage him to question and think. .....To communicate to the masses, Ijaz overstated and simplified his paintings. For this reason, the ones from this period are large and easy to recognise. "I look to the film medium in a blown up form. This media has greater mass appeal than any image you can create yourself and I saw the advantage in using the familiar images that the public was accustomed to".

In 1972-1974 there were a series of hard-hitting paintings, like the *Mai Lai Massacre (page 85)*. The artist seems to demonstrate how the media can report an event by distilling it of its real substance. Here women and children are huddled together while the old woman has stepped forward to take the brunt of the fire. In the painting nothing terrible seems to have happened, the fired bullets have rather neatly gone through the picture surface causing no apparent harm. *The Rifle Butt (pages 86-87)* is a comment on the seemingly enchanting and harmless culture symbolised by torso of a faceless young woman that is successively repeated and enlarged till it inadvertently becomes the butt to a gun that is resting on the temple of an old Vietnamese woman, thus in reality brutalising human life. This painting is a long panel that should



62.

The Mai Lai Massacre, 1974,
Oil on board, 36"x50"
Collection: Nasreen and Humayun Naseer Sheikh



63.

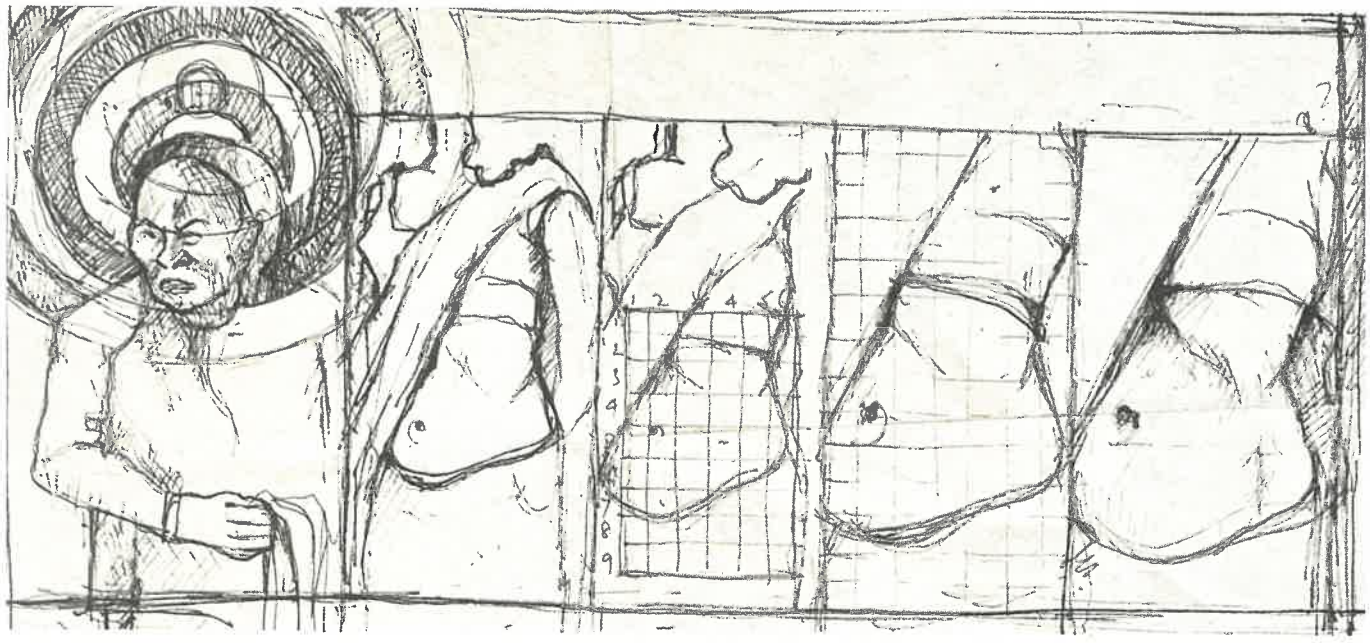
The Rifle Butt, 1974,
Oil on canvas, 60"x156"
Collection: David Roberts, London

be seen from the right to the left. When it was exhibited for the first time in Lahore in the middle of the stormy seventies, the purists had many an adverse comment about it. They sneeringly called it Cinema poster. At best they thought it was definitely not a painting and paintings should not have anything to do with politics.

Thirty years later this painting was part of an exhibition of Pakistani paintings that were taken to India. Quddus Mirza was the curator of that exhibition. He writes in his article - 'Notes Towards A Painting'[11]

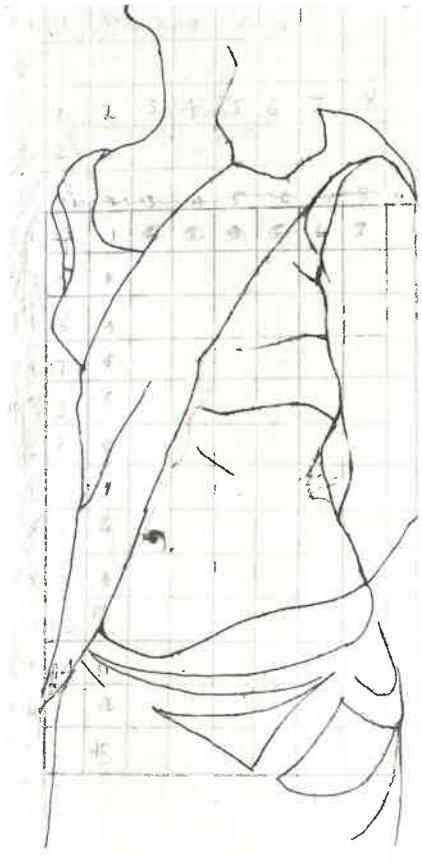
> "It was a great evening, both for me and for Pakistani art, on the occasion of my curated exhibition 'Beyond Borders' at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Mumbai, in 2005. Five floors of Indian Museum were filled with works of Pakistani artists, from various periods, and people were pouring in, not to miss the opening of this unique event.
>
> On this occasion there were multiple responses, including typical good remarks and the usual statements about the friendship between India and Pakistan. But amid all this, there was a comment which truly surprised me, since it was coming from a well known and much respected art critic. She was looking at the works on display, gallery after gallery, without uttering a single sound, yet could not contain herself, when saw a large painting on the top floor. In an amazed expression and complimentary tone she said: Oh, I didn't know that painters in Pakistan were doing such kind of work in seventies, which is now being produced here in India.
>
> The work, which made her to proclaim the progress, thus praise of Pakistani art, was 'The Rifle Butt' by Mian Ijaz ul Hasan from 1974. This canvas consists of women, portrayed in different states and stages of attires, along with a woman facing the execution by invading army: All indicating to diverse – and contradictory representation of woman in a society that subjugates her by using her as a commodity as well as targeting her in Imperialistic wars. In its construction, the work employs the vocabulary of mass media, thus presents the formal and conceptual resolution that was new and unexpected in the time of its creation.
>
> However that surprise was not limited to the year in which it was painted, because it drew the same reaction in later periods too, as was testified by the Indian art critic. The work demonstrates how a creative mind can think ahead and envisage the aesthetics of future by being connected to his epoch. Both the formal language and the content suggest a socially conscious individual, who is committed to his people as well as to Art. Thus the work is an example of how ideas and images can be made immortal by extending their reach through political and pictorial concerns: A quality that keeps the work alive and astonishing for many, including the critic from India, along with the generations coming after."

Yet another painting, the *Thaa (Page 90)* meaning bang was yet another comment about comparative cultural values. The painting relies on two contrasting images to express itself. There is an image of a sensuous dancing woman in a seductive pose staring at the viewer, inviting him to come and embrace her with a bang or as a popular film tune goes, *To meray naal lag ja thah kar kay*. This dominant flamboyant glamorous image is set in contrast to the image of a woman from a Vietnamese woodcut where a young mother holding a baby in her



64.

A Preliminary Sketch for The Rifle Butt, 1974,
Pen and ink
Artist's Collection



65.

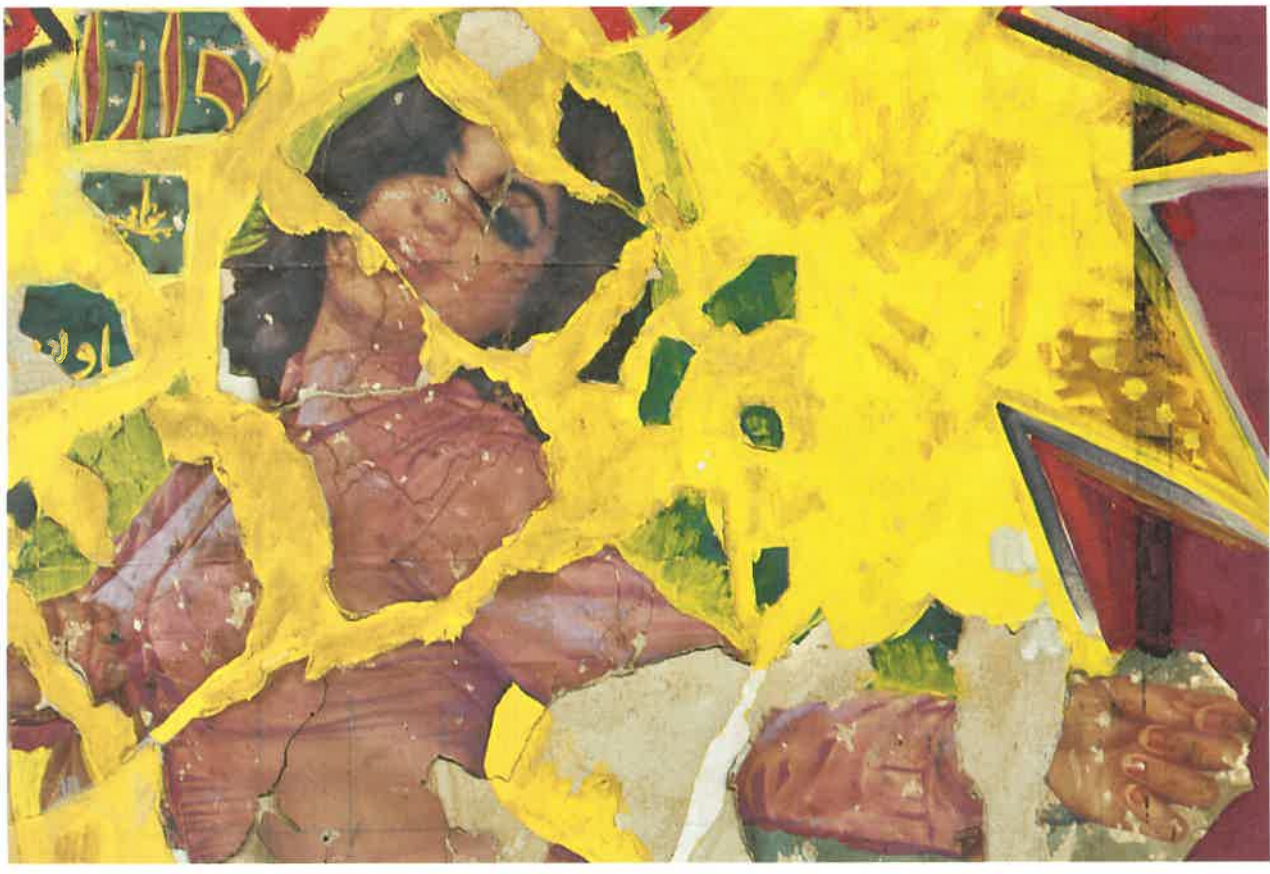
A Sketch for Rifle Butt, 1974,
Artist's Collection

lap is vigilantly staring at the far horizon. In her one hand she holds a book and in the other a gun. Symbolically she bears and rears generations, upholds values and defends them both.

In its first viewing at Moyene Najmi's Gallery at Lahore in 1974 many viewers were taken aback at the novelty of the subject and method adopted to express it. Some artists instantly branded it as not a painting but a poster. There were others who opined that art should have nothing to do with politics. One lady expressed her annoyance that Ijaz had demeaned Pakistani women by presenting them in such a lurid manner. Ijaz did not respond to things being said behind his back but to the lady who had felt insulted, Ijaz explained that it was not the Pakistani women he had portrayed but the society that perceives women in that manner, as a consumer product. It is also a painting that makes the Pakistani viewer aware of some of our false values and presents an alternative that can be emulated. The learned scholar Akbar Naqvi however questions Ijaz's ideals and his affiliation with any cause. He derides Ijaz's socialistic thinking, almost accusing him for daring to think as he did after being born and bred in the wrong class. But even he grudgingly concedes that:[12]

> "One may have questions about Ijaz ul Hassan's commitment to the messages, but the punch of his style, matching the valorised rustic vigour of the Punjabi culture, could not be mistaken."

66. *Thah,* 1974, Oil on canvas, 48"x72", Collection: Fokuka Art Gallery, Japan.



67. *Artist for Auction (top portion),* 1976, Collage on board, 30"x24", Artist's Collection.

68.

Artist for Auction, 1976,
Collage on board, 60"x24"
Artist's Collection

In the early 70s, Ijaz was elected for a term as the Secretary General and then successively as President of the 'Pakistan Artists Equity'. It was a national organisation of federating artists, musicians, actors and writers. It also protected the professional interests of artists working for Pakistan television and radio. Marcella Nesom describes it thus:[13]

> "This autonomous group was composed of writers, artists, film people and dramatists with Ijaz at the head as Secretary General, the members organised exhibitions in the rural areas, using everything conceivable – posters, paintings, postcards and magazine illustrations. At melas (celebrations) and festivals, they staged dramas and cultural programs and studied the reaction of the audience, learning from them how they perceive."

THE NAUKHAR EPISODE

It was around this time that Ijaz went to jail in his effort to bring art and literature closer to the ordinary people who had no access to painting and theatre. Thereby he had also hoped that by enabling artists to venture out of the cities it would enhance their awareness and widen their vision. Ijaz, on the invitation of a peasant organisation, had arranged for a theatre group from Faisalabad that was competing in the Punjab Drama Festival in Lahore to stage their play at a conference for the small farmers, poor rural labourers, tenants and sharecroppers at *Naukhar*. *Naukhar* was a small town situated some miles away from Gujranwala. It was to be an enriching experience and many artists and participants took their wives and families to see the exhibition and the play. Even the judges for the competition had been persuaded to judge the play at *Naukhar* where it was going to be staged. We went with our two children to give them a flavour and participation in the activities of their parents.

q.

Ijaz ul Hassan, President of Pakistan Artists Equity addressing a function, 1973.

The Equity also sponsored an outdoor art exhibition for the village conference, held at *Naukhar*. Some talented young artist jointly painted a few large murals based on peasant issues and their struggle. These were boldly executed in brilliant colours with commercial plastic based paints on bolts of raw linen. The local district authority considered the peasant conference highly suspicious and attributed elaborate imaginary subversive intentions to these events. Why should, recognised artists, university professors and 'respectable' citizens visit the *mufussal* unless they were there to brew some mischief?

The district administration ordered the entire district police force to take close notice of the matter. The police obliged by doing what it was best at. It attacked

p.

Ijaz ul Hassan ® in conversation with Begum Nusrat Bhutto (centre), the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of Pakistan Artists' Equity. Begum Shaheen Haneef Ramay is seated on left, 1974.

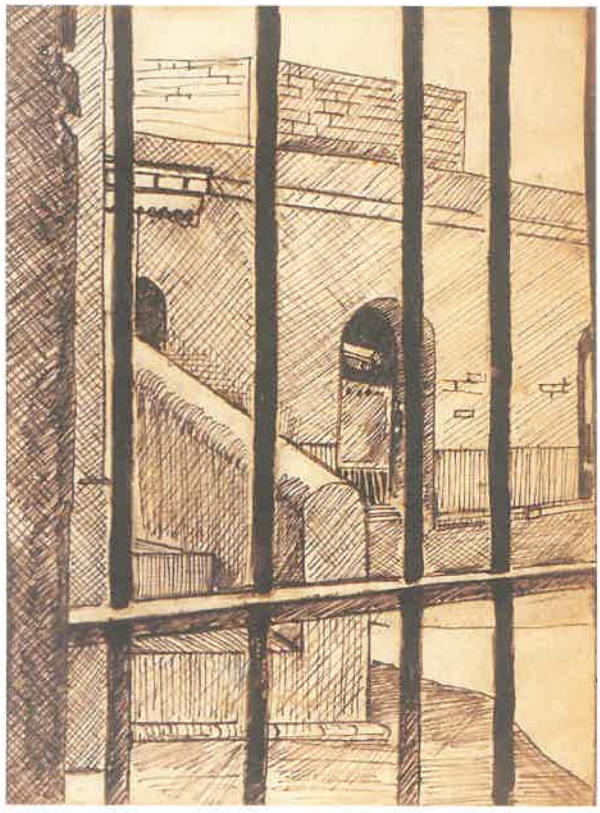
69.

A View Through Window (Naukhar Hawalat), 1976,
Pen and ink on paper, 8"x6"
Collection: Khawar and Kamil Khan Mumtaz

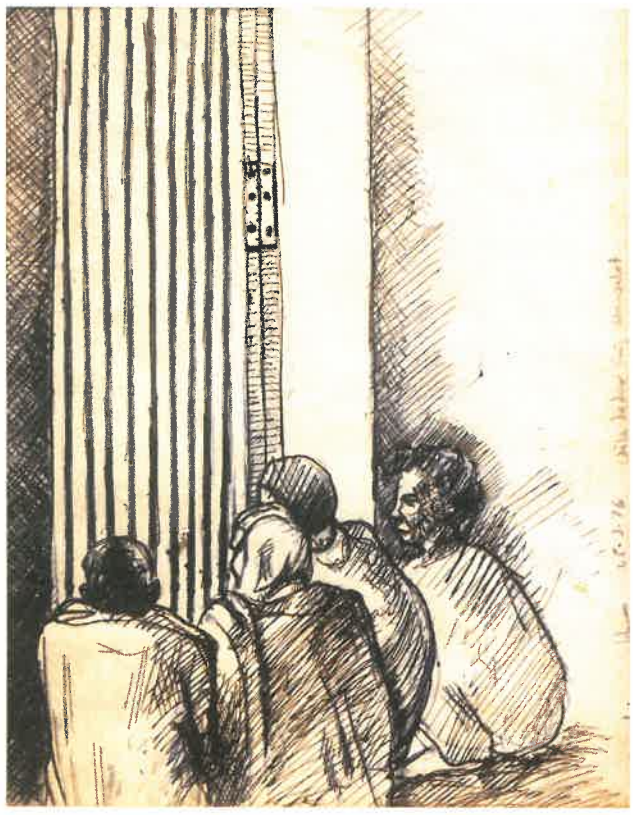
r. Students of National College of Arts painting a mural on a coarse cotton cloth.

the venue with full force. Fortunately, it was during the lunch break when women and children were away in the nearby village to refresh themselves. The exhibition was vandalised, the stage broken down, the lights shattered, and some professors and 'respectable' citizens hunted down with bamboo sticks and rifle butts. There were around forty-two people who were arrested along with most of the cast of the play that was to be staged after sunset. Since Ijaz at that time was accompanied by his ten years old son Ahmad – a police official asked him to swiftly depart but instead, he voluntarily surrendered himself and refused to leave without the group of artists that he had brought with him. He felt personally accountable, for what had happened and felt there should be someone with those who were arrested, to keep their morale up.

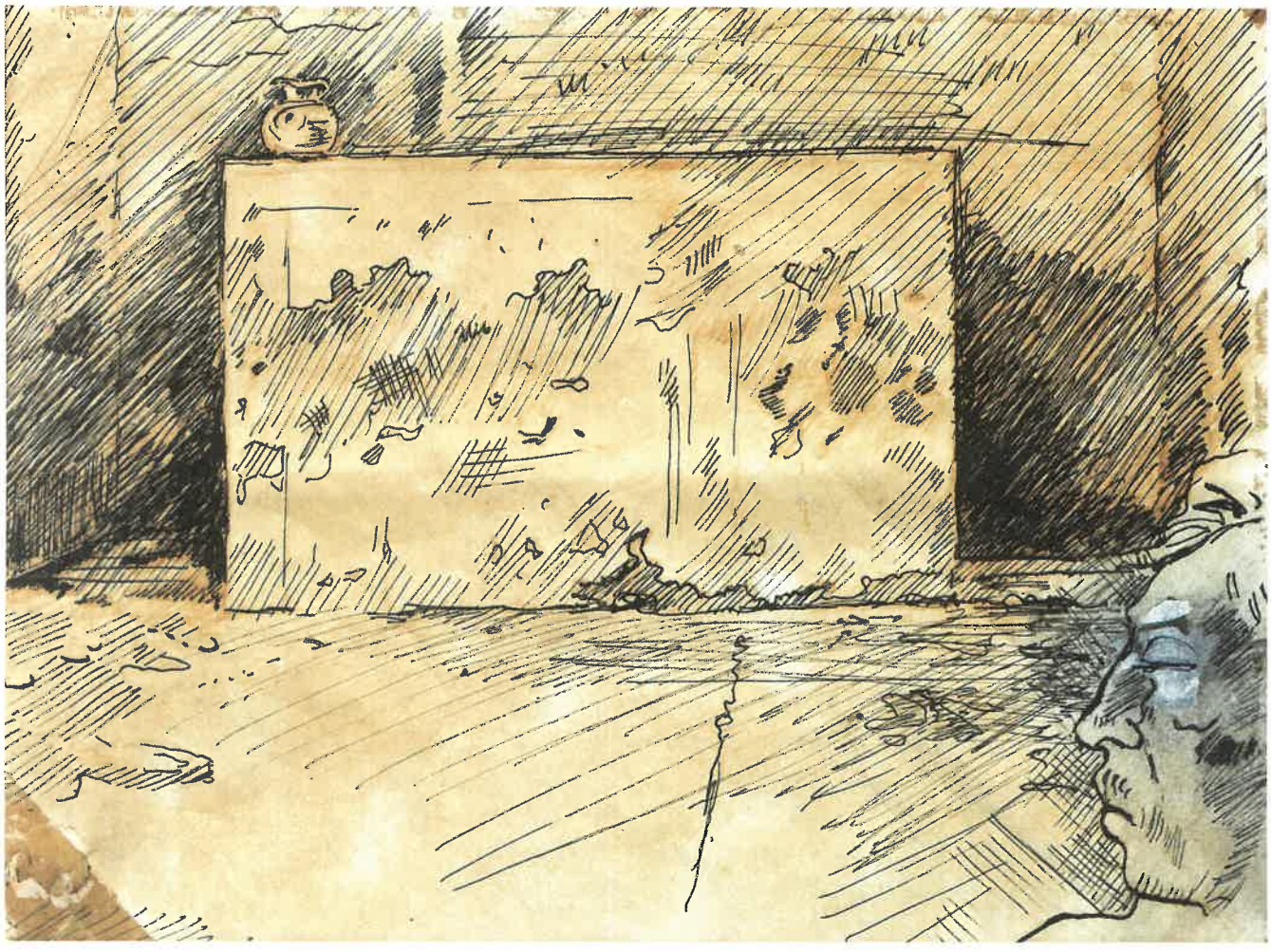
Mohammad Ali Wasti, a student, who was among those arrested, remembers the occasion with some amusements. "The police were there in full force and tried to intimidate and brow beat us. However they told Ijaz *sahib* to



70. *View through Window(Naukhar),* 1976, Pen and ink, 8"x6", Collection: Mian Ahmed Hassan



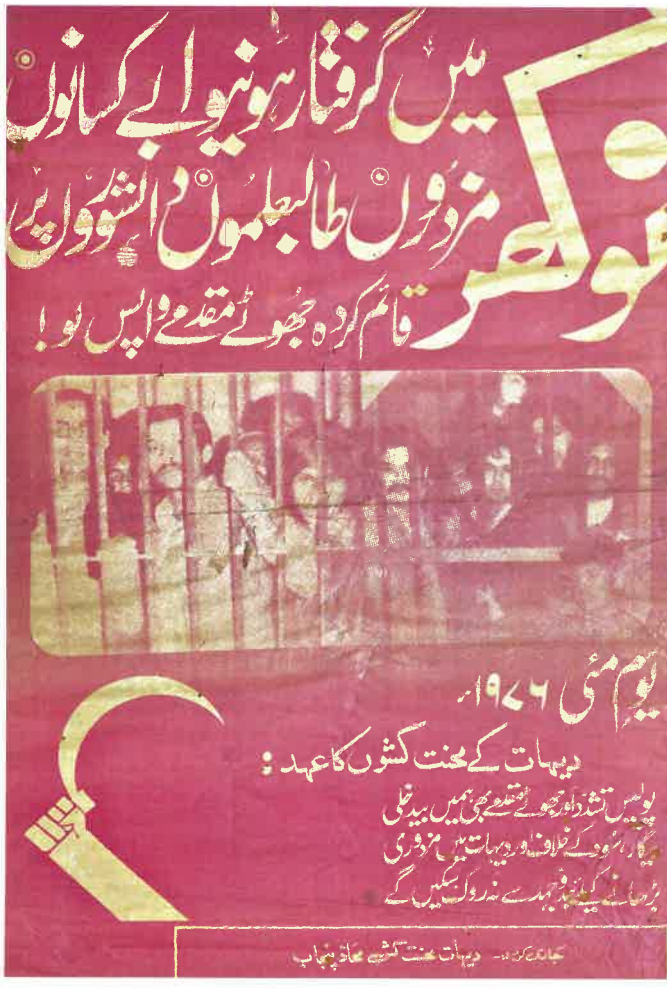
71. *Huddled Together (Naukhar),* 1976, Pen and ink, 8"x6", Collection: Mian Ahmed Hassan



72. *Interior of Naukhar Hawalat,* 1976, Pen and ink, 6"x8", Artist's Collection.

s.

Ijaz ul Hassan inside the cell with M A Wasti, Bhatti.Fakhr and Mustafa, when they were arrested after the Naukhar Mela. Outside the bars are the artist's children, Mina Hassan and Ahmed Hassan, 1976.



t.

A poster published by Dehati Mehnat kash Mahaz (rural workers' front) the poster published on May Day 1976, demands release of workers, peasants, students and intellectuals and withdrawal of false cases registered against them.

take his children home, but Ijaz *sahib* reminded him that all his students were his children. Upon which the police officer in a huff asked how his own children would return home and Ijaz *sahib* made his classic remark, '*Aap e koi chacha lab lain gay*' (They can always find an uncle).

They were all moved to the *Naukhar* Police Station and all forty-two were crammed into the *hawalat*, or prison cell, that was meant for ten. By the time they had been individually identified, counted and locked in, it was evening. Soon it was dark but the spirits of the inmates of the *hawalat* were high because each felt like a hero and no common criminal. They had come to give a performance in a variety show that was rudely interrupted, so they unanimously decided that the musical programme that was to have preceded the Play that evening should now be held in the Police Station.

The variety show went on for at least an hour. It was made up of patriotic songs and skits and was such a roaring success, that even the police personnel who had out of curiosity pulled up their chairs to peer at the

imprisoned performers, were enchanted. Ijaz observes it was at that tim difficult to say who was free, we on this side of the iron bars or them on th other side. They were so moved by the performance that at the end of th show they gave a long applause and before returning to their duties explaine that they had no hand in incarcerating them.

It so happened that one of the inmates of the prison cell was a teacher an that the police officer of that prison was his student. Mohammad Ali Wast also remembered fondly how that police officer sat outside the cell all nigh through, because he was powerless to help his teacher and this was the onl way to show respect.

Some family members of the arrested artists, mostly women had marched into th police station and refused to budge unless the captives were released. They wer right outside the prison cell and witnessed the performance. In fact our daughte who was six years old at that time, was so impressed with the performance tha she asked her father, *"abu main ne ander ana hai"* (father I want to come i too). *Abu* of course could not oblige his daughter because they were so tightl packed in the space that they had to stand and there was not even room to s down. Early next day most of the arrested were taken to the Gujranwala jail an deposited there. Ijaz, professor Hamid and an actor from Faisalabad (mistake for an political activist wanted by the police) were transported back to *Naukha* for further interrogation. Ijaz recounts with amusement that on being presente to the senior police official who had travelled all the way from Lahore for th task, the first thing that was asked of him was, " What are you respectable educated people doing in a place like this?"

The next day Ijaz asked one of the visitors who came to enquire after thei welfare, to buy him a pen and a copy with plain pages, in order to draw an record his surroundings. It was at *Naukhar* that Ijaz made some quick sketche and a detailed drawing from the dark cell in which he resided looking ou through the iron bars at the sun-drenched life outside. The view through th bars at *Naukhar* was the genesis of the theme 'A view through window' that ha haunted Ijaz with different implications and moods ever since.

This story would not be complete if I did not express here my appreciation fo the help and support given to me and my family by Barrister Chaudhry Aitza Ahsan and his wife Bushra during these very disturbing times. Chaudhry sahi not only helped the legal aspects of this case, both of them extended full mora and psychological support.

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Chapter 4

Resisting Martial Rule The 70's - 80's

THE METAMORPHOSIS

In 1978 Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, our elected Prime Minister, was hanged by General Zia ul Haq. Ijaz made just a single statement of that event. His *Metamorphosis* (page 101) is an assessment of the situation that has become prophetic over the succeeding decades. He used the silhouette of Bhutto's profile to build up a tower of faces against the background of green and black culminating in red, the colours of the Pakistan Peoples' Party flag. The faces are easily recognisable as Bhutto in the lower section of the painting. But as the tower rises higher, they become larger than life and with the heat of the maroon background they metamorphosize into a bright flame that crowns the picture. *Metamorphoses* has used the picture of an individual – Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, which synthesis into the shape of a flame that fired many an imagination. A leader transforming into a hero and the hero ascending into a myth.

It must have been difficult for Ijaz to evolve his expression from the obvious to the subtle and we see that he sometimes suddenly came out with an obvious statement to give vent to feelings that had been bottled up for too long. *New Year Bouquet '81 (page 102)* came out at the beginning of the new year during the heyday of Zia ul Haq's martial law. It depicts a barbed wire arranged in a common glass container resting on a table covered with cloth smeared with ink, grime and stains of blood, reminiscent of the table across which sat his interrogator when he was arrested and put in solitary confinement at the infamous Lahore Fort. The Bouquet was Zia ul Haq's new year gift to the people of Pakistan.

Many years afterwards he made three paintings depicting Ashiq Bhatti, the ardent PPP *Flag Bearer* (page 103), the *Flagellation*, and the large portrait of a broken *Ashiq Bhatti* (page 103) in later years.

73.

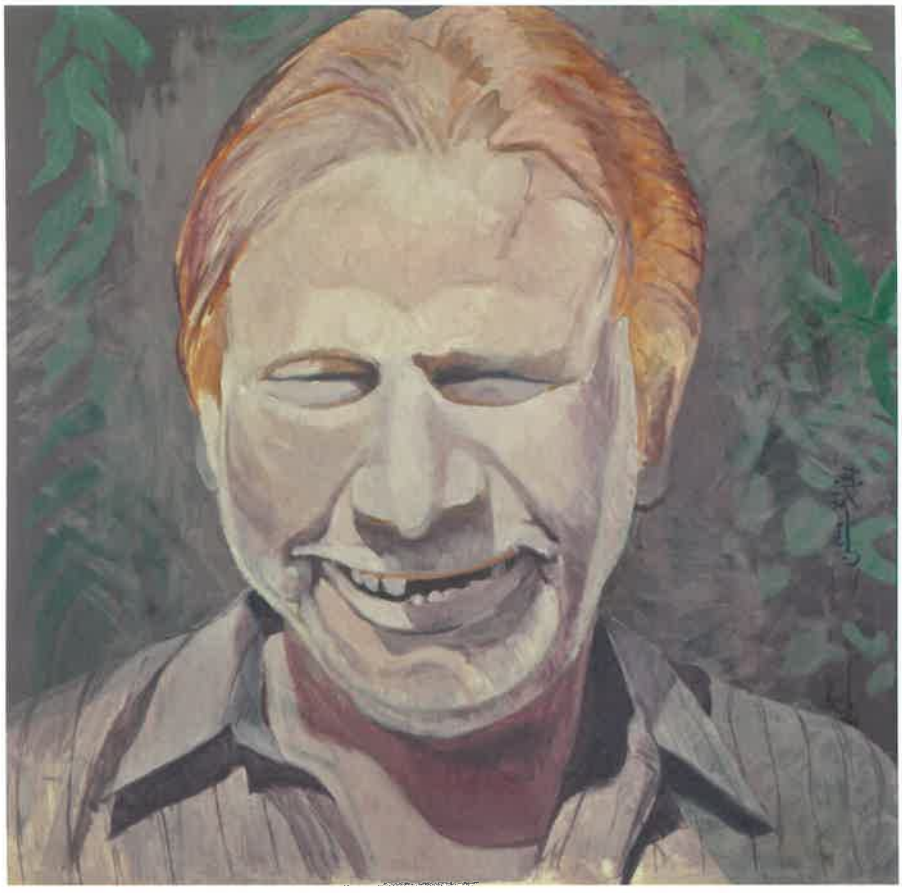
The Metamorphosis, 1984,
Oil on board, 60"x18"
Collection: Bushra and Chaudhry Aitzaz Ahsan

74.

New Year Bouquet, 1981,
Oil on canvas, 30"x24"
Collection: Mrs Samina Rehman

75.

The Flag Bearer (Ashiq Bhatti), 2003,
Oil on canvas, 30"x24"
Artist's Collection



76.

After the Flogging (Ashiq Bhatti), 2003,
Oil on canvas, 60"x60"
Artist's Collection

Messages of Hope

The Martial Law of 1977 was a suffocating debilitating era, when very little expression was allowed. Ijaz at that time was in the flow of a productive period and he did not allow the clamp down on expression to curtail his output. He evolved a new imagery that was subtle and symbolic. A number of series paintings were made on several themes – *A view from window, the Girding Vine, Laburnum,* Gnarled Acacia and Cedars trees, representing their irrepressible urge and effort to struggle and survive. He also painted the changing seasons, Spring, Autumn, Winter and Twilight. There are some other metaphors like the Sea and the Mountains that are tentatively evolved. All these themes keep recurring in his work and they develop and diversify in accord with his concerns and changing moods. Asim Butt in his article 'Robust Roots' writes:[14]

> "So what happened between the 1970's, when Hassan was making work puissant in its politics and prophetic in its timeliness, and the 1990's when his paintings came to be dominated by flora? The dark cloud of Zia's martial law descended on not just the vibrancy of Hassan's oeuvre but on Pakistan art too. Hassan was incarcerated in the Lahore Fort as an intellectual with strong connections to the Pakistan People's Party. *Interior at Naukhar* shows the inside of his cell (when arrested earlier). Hereafter his political imagery is muzzled and perforce routed through the mute symbols that he finds in nature.'
>
> The genesis of *View Through Window* series of paintings germinated during his confinement at Naukhar, but was intensified during his solitary confinement at the Lahore Fort on the imposition of Martial Law by Zia ul Haq. On this occasion Ijaz could not draw or sketch anything because no paper and pencil was allowed to prisoners. The view outside this cell recalls Ijaz "comprised of a young *peepal* tree having a calloused trunk" with which he soon began to empathise. This was adjacent to a green wooden cabin for the policeman who watched over him and a tall wall at the back with fragments of glass imbedded at the top."

It is therefore not strange to find in his canvases, vertical and horizontal bars, which divided them in parts. The paintings were separated into two, three or more panels time and again, while maintaining the compositional unity of design. His theme, the *View Through Window* is a constant memento to all thinking and feeling people of the dangerous habit they seem to have developed – of viewing the world through the window ensconced in the comfort of their interiors – this 'comfort' often creates estrangement with the real world and is a barrier to engagement.

Marcella Nesom writes about his work:[15]

> "In the early eighties, Ijaz painted numerous views of his yard as seen through a window. These vignettes were centred around window fixtures, a rolled up bamboo shutter and other interior devices

77.

View Through Door, 1980,
Oil on board 60"x 20"
Collection: Baber Khan Mumtaz

78.

Glass Cage, 1979,
Oil on canvas, 60"x72"
Collection: Gisele Butt

> reminiscent of Richard Este's renowned Photo Realism window views. Ijaz's perspective however was the opposite of Este's: Ijaz was inside looking out while Este's was outside looking in."

View From a Glass Cage (page 104) a large canvas was his first major effort on this theme. This is the view of a large beautiful tree that symbolises life in the beautiful country that is Pakistan. Large hairy caterpillars threaten to devour the broad green leaves of a young vine girdling the tree. One's immediate reaction is to get rid of them. But then there is the realisation that the viewer is locked inside a cage and what is happening outside is beyond reach. One will have to come out of the confinement and face reality in order to get rid of parasites that threaten the peaceful world outside. Glass windows are easy to break but living in the subjective comfort and security of confined space, psychological inhibitions restrain one to step across even a glass barrier. Meanwhile red leaves have begun to sprout on the creeper, symbolising that all is not lost. For a painting that carries the weight of such heavy symbolism and meaning this is an extremely attractive picture.

The View from Window is the general title of the paintings that are also identified as *paiwasta reh shajr se, umid e bahar rakh* (cling on to the tree and hope for spring.) (pages 114-123)

These are the various titles with which Ijaz has identified the same theme. This is the main inspiration and idea that recurs throughout these paintings. The verse of the great poet Iqbal who urges the reader to remain focussed and entwined to the main purpose in life and to hope for spring, is the underlying thought behind these pictures.

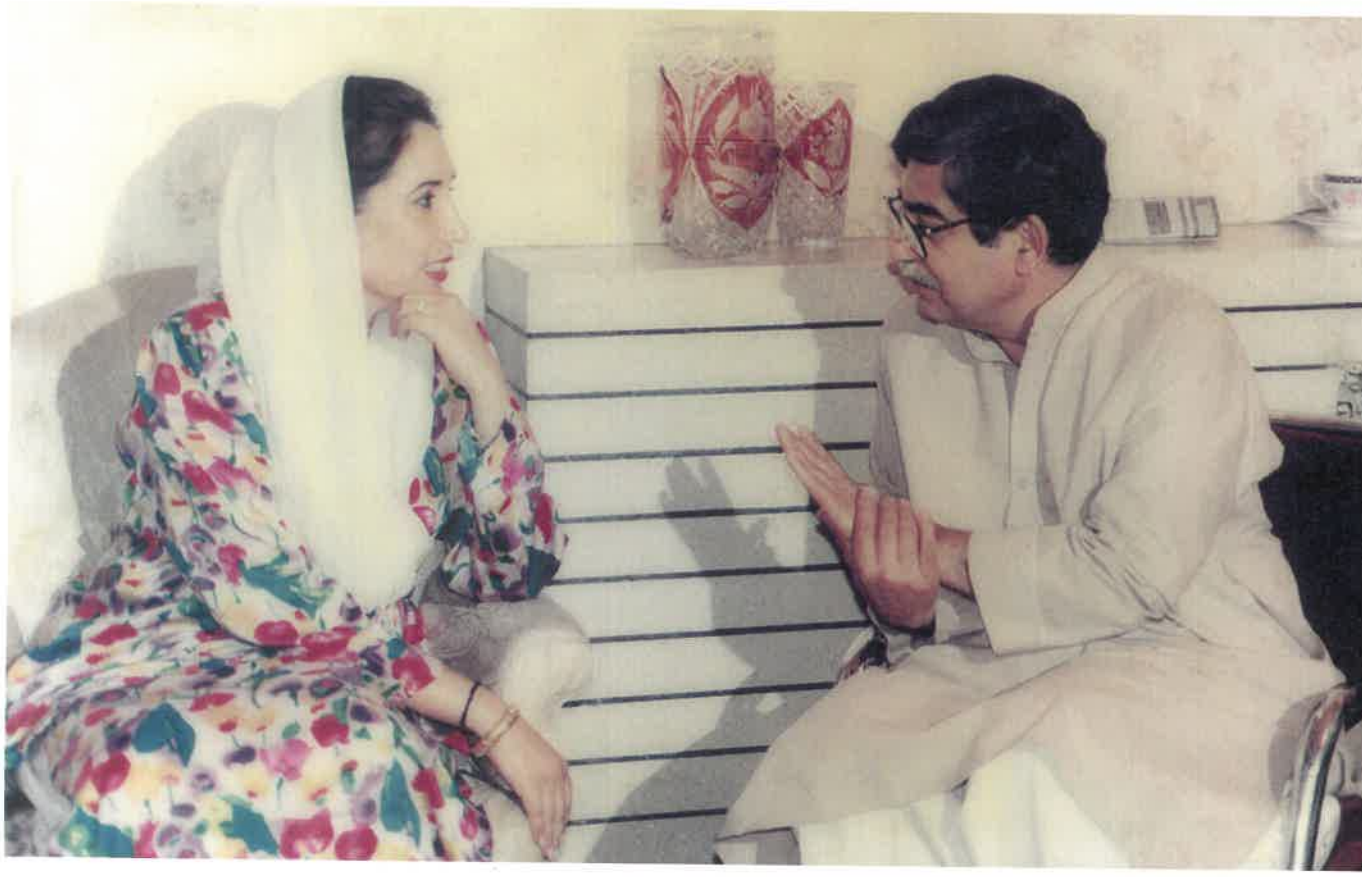
The recurring theme of View from Window, especially the window in his bedroom veranda, depicts many reflections and moods of the *Jamini* tree outside. The tree trunk and the girding vine can be interpreted in various ways. It is symbolic of the aspiring unity of the people and a young country. In the tradition of *Pahari* miniature paintings, the vine entwining a tree trunk represents the unity of lovers and is symbolic of commitment and fulfilment. These and many more are the 'Views' each with a new composition, varied colours and contrasts and different dimensions - bright sunlight, slanted rays of the afternoon sun lighting up a few leaves, showers of rain, sombre shades of twilight, evening and night, painted with an intuitive grasp of the palate and shades of meaning.

All through the eighties he held several very successful shows. Many newspapers and journals covered the exhibitions and there were a number of appreciative reviews.

Intizar Hussain the eminent short story writer in his piece titled 'From people to Trees' writes:[16]

> "…. So this was a time Ijaz ul Hassan gained prominence as a painter and benefited from his experiments with the mass media – namely the posters and their mass appeal. In response to criticism Ijaz ul Hassan explained, "I am trying to understand and express within the pictorial grammar of the common man. A poster merely conveys information, whereas my pictures

u. The Artist receiving Democracy Award from Mohtarma Nusrat Bhutto.



v. Ijaz ul Hassan with Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, 1998.

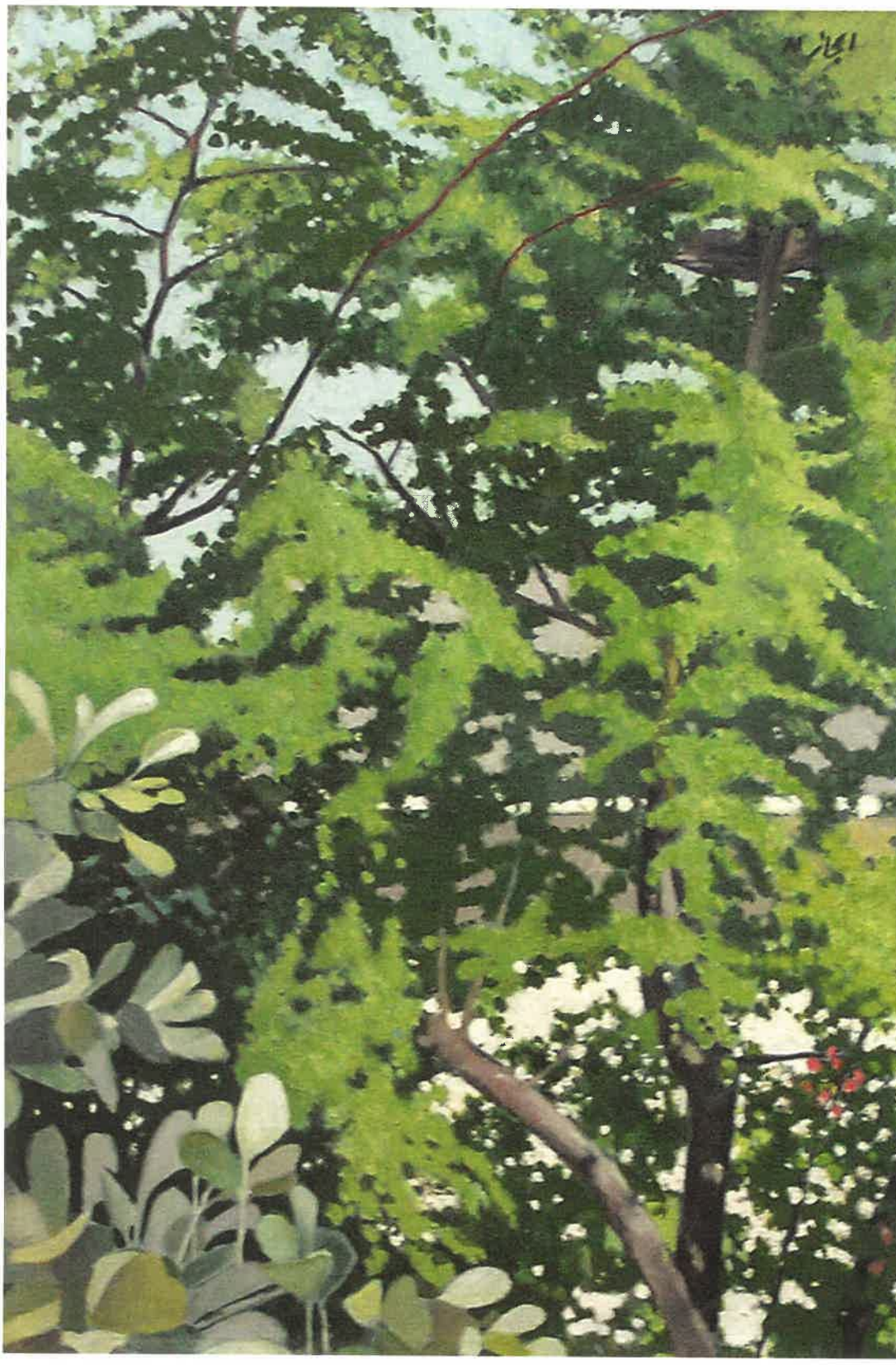
79.

Wild Beri, 1981,
Oil on canvas, 30"x36"
Collection: Shehla and Tariq Saigol

have a deeper meaning."
"The period around 1970 was a time of turbulence and protest and new ideas needed to be expressed in pictures. But even though he needed to go back to nature for vitality, paintings by Ijaz ul Hassan continued to be made for interaction with the people so that they could see and experience the aroma of their land in his pictures."

Khalid Ahmed, a renowned journalist and intellectual writing for the Pakistan Times at that time said:[17]

"Ijaz ul Hassan has traced a tortuous pattern of growth as a person and a painter. An athlete and a sportsman gifted with a talent for art, he shuttled between careers, now studying painting and literature but distinguishing himself in whatever he did. When in 1966 he joined the National College



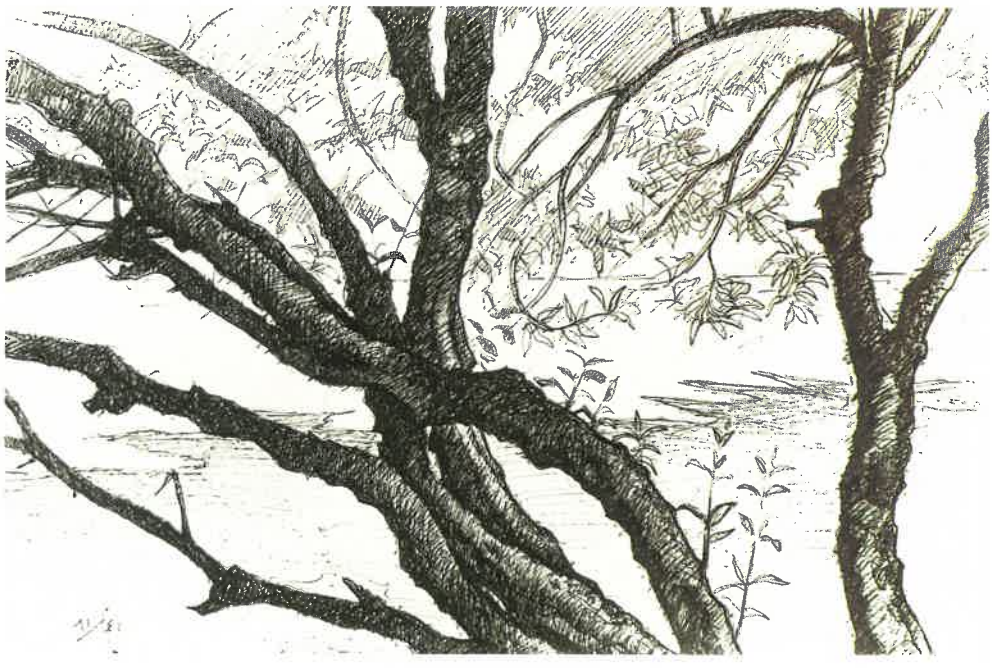
80.

Wild Beri in Spring, 1981,
Oil on canvas, 30"x24"
Collection: Pakistan House, New Delhi, India

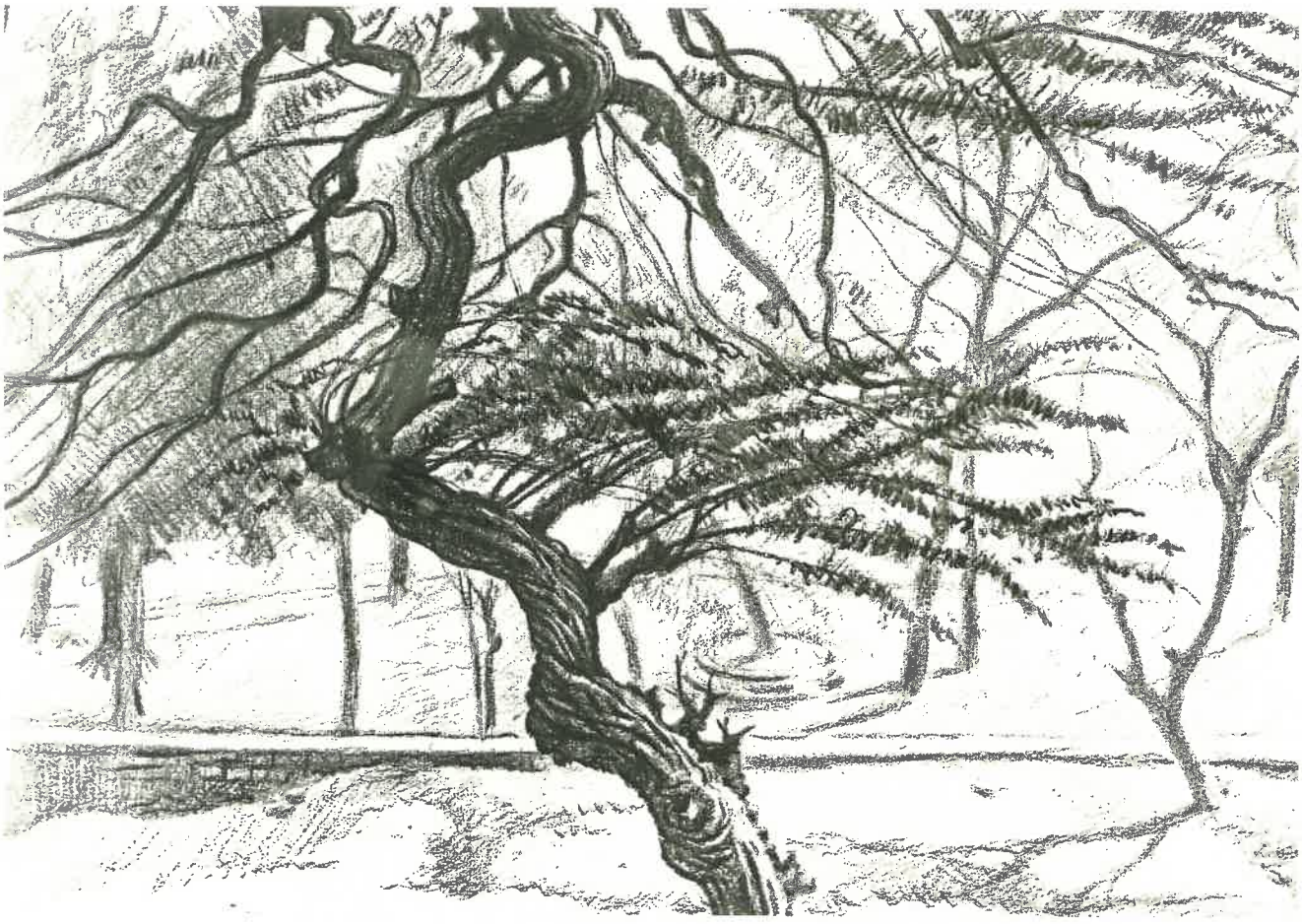
81. *Sketch.*

82. *Sketch.*

83. *An Old Anaar*, 1981, Oil on canvas, 48"x72", Collection: Nasreen and Anis Haider Shah.



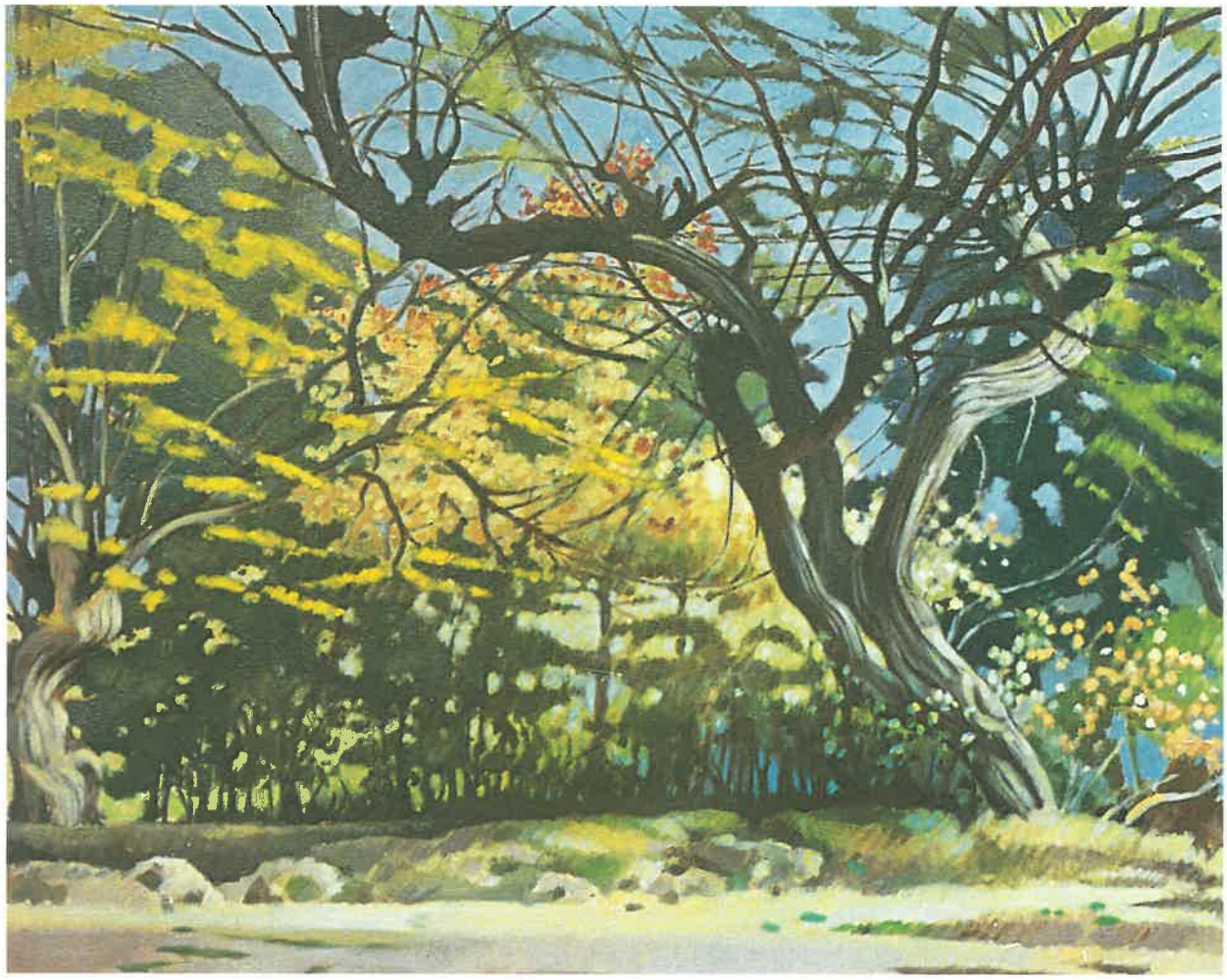
84. *Old Anaar (sketch)*, 1981, Pen and ink, 8"x10", Collection: Samina Rahman.



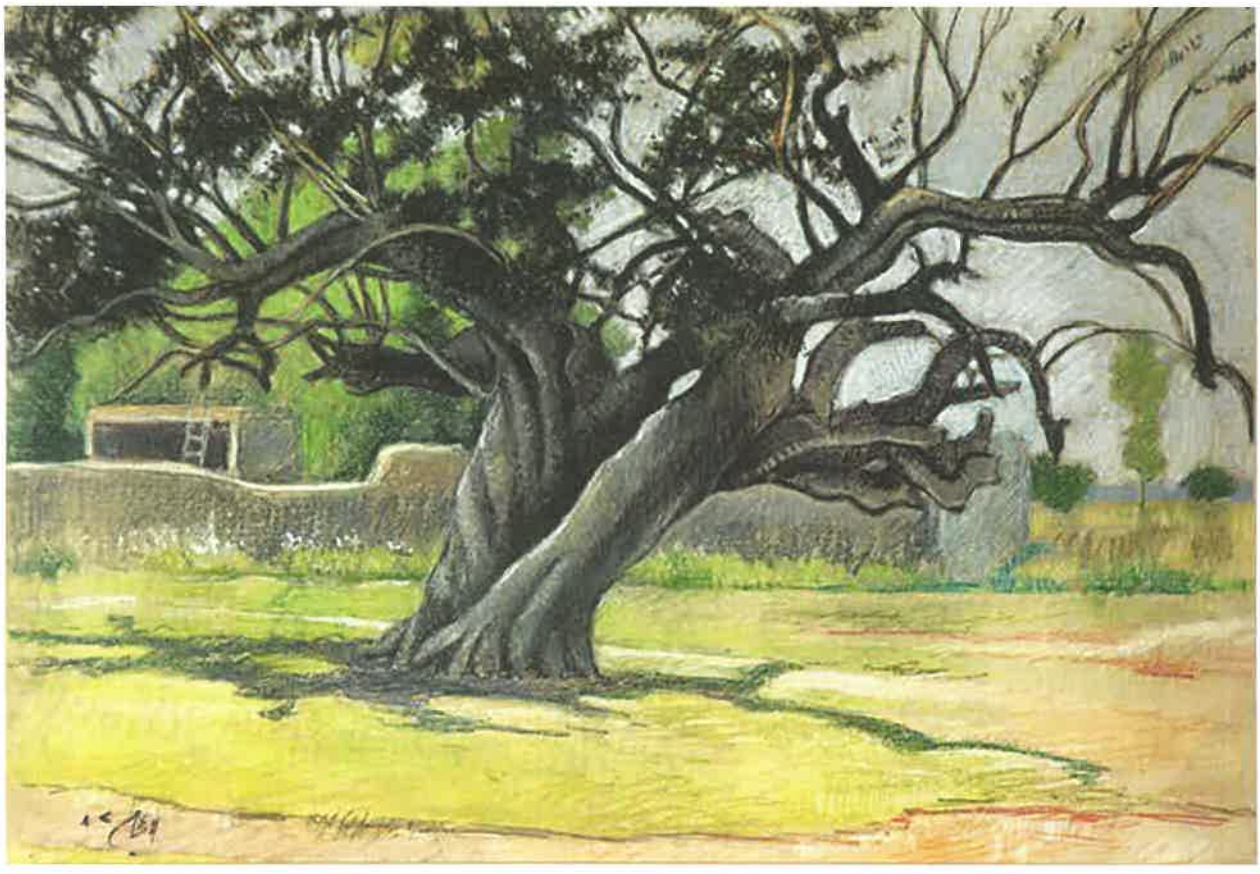
85. *Kikar,* (sketch), 1981, Charcoal on paper, 8"x10", Collection: Mina and Imran Zaidi.

86. *Sketch,* 1992, Charcoal on paper, 14"x10",
Collection: Nicolas Barrington Cambridge

87. *Sketch,* 1992, Conte on paper, 14"x10",
Private Collection



88. *Kikar,* 1985, Oil on canvas, 24″x30″, Collection: Rakshi Samee.



89. *Tree,* 1987, Pastel on paper, 10″x14″, Collection: Saltanat and Javed Bukhari.

90.

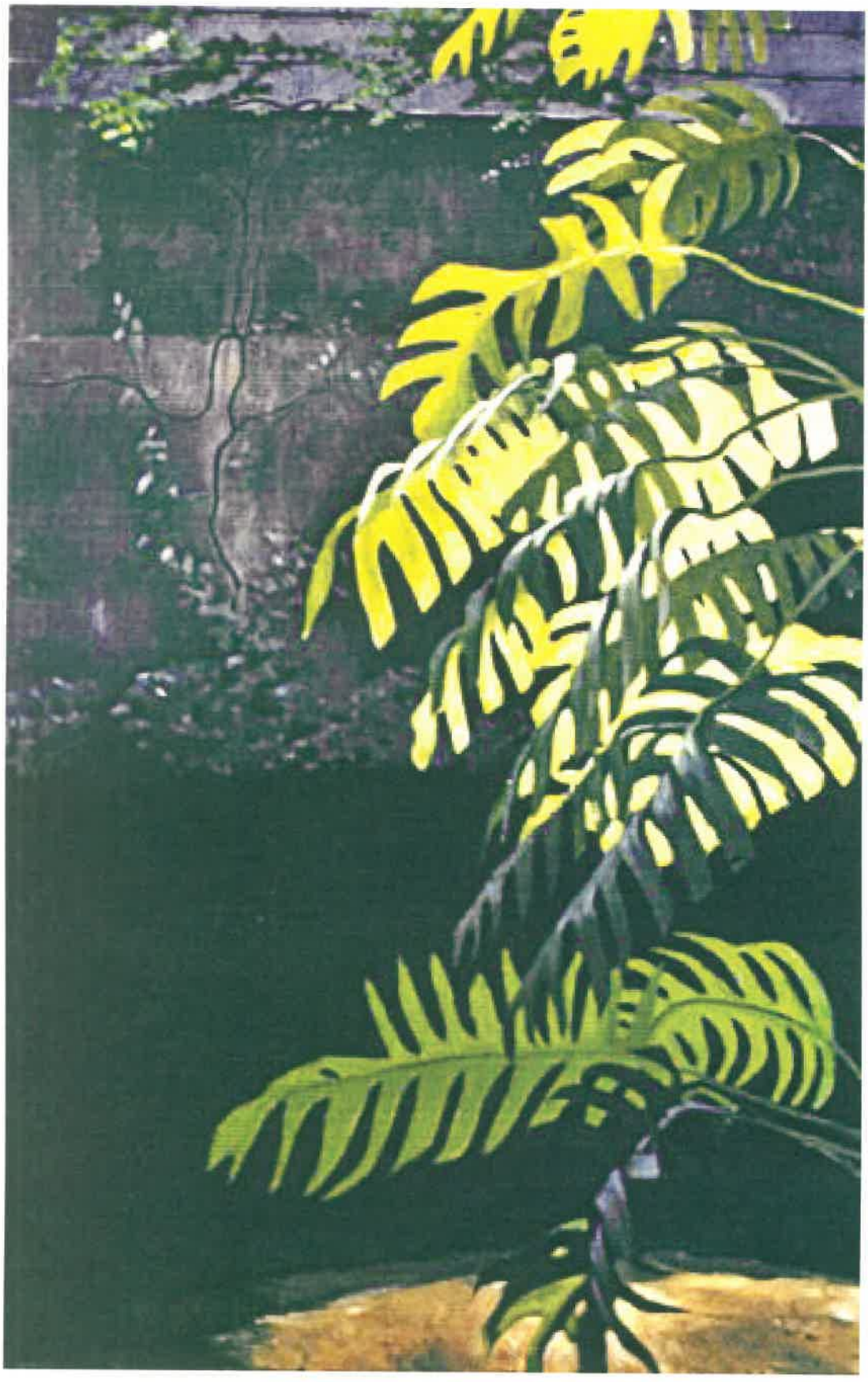
Girding Vine, 1980,
Oil on canvas, 48"x60"
Collection: Angie and Ahmed Rashid

91.

Aseff , 1966,
Oil on canvas, 12"x18"
Collection: Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali

92.

Autumn, 1982,
Oil on canvas, 36″x30″
Collection: Ghulam Fareed ud din Riaz

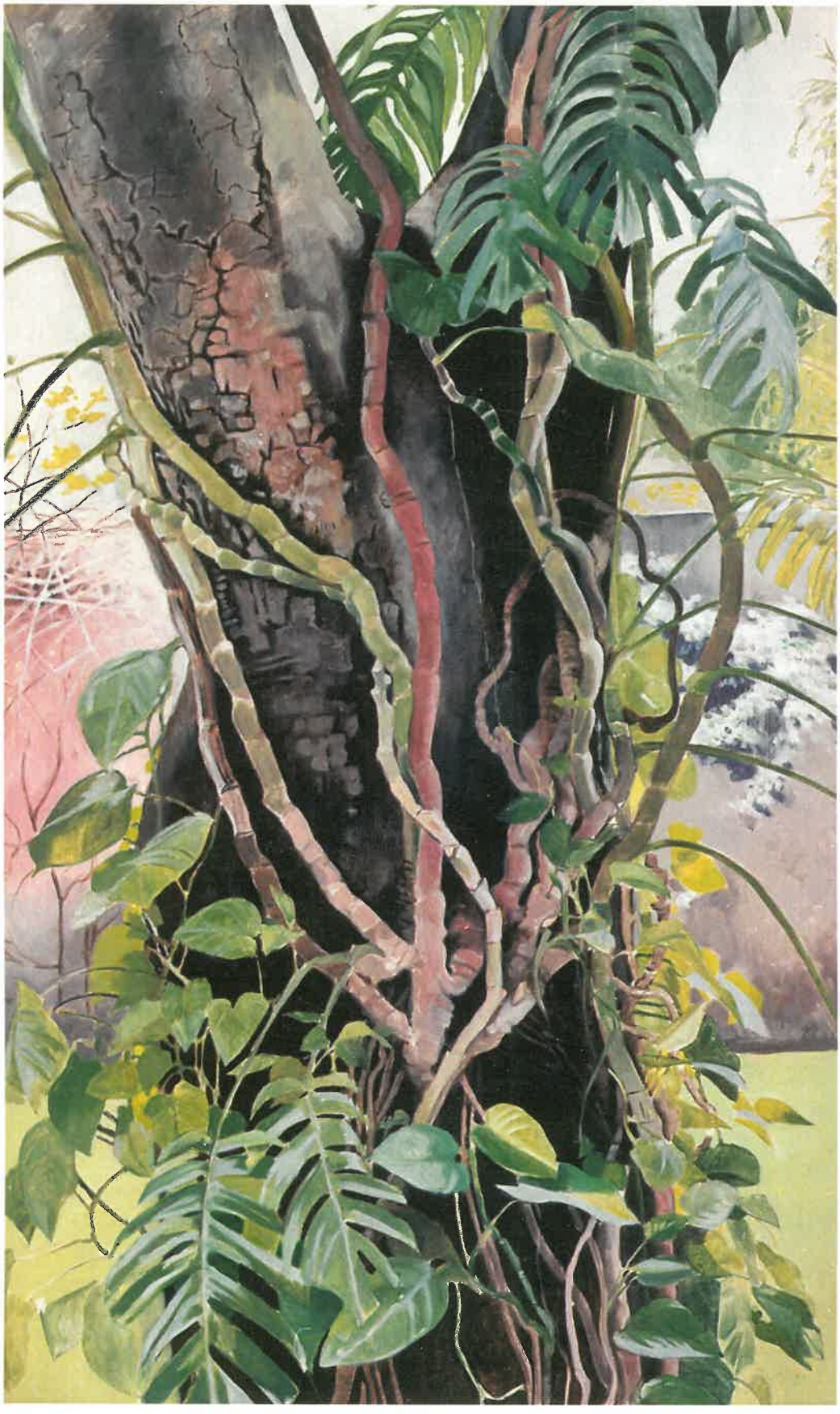


93.

Sunlit Leaves, 1986,
Oil on canvas, 36"x24"
Collection: Ghulam Fareed ud din Riaz

94.

Girding Vine, 1986,
Oil on canvas, 72"x48"
Collection: Faryal Khan



95.

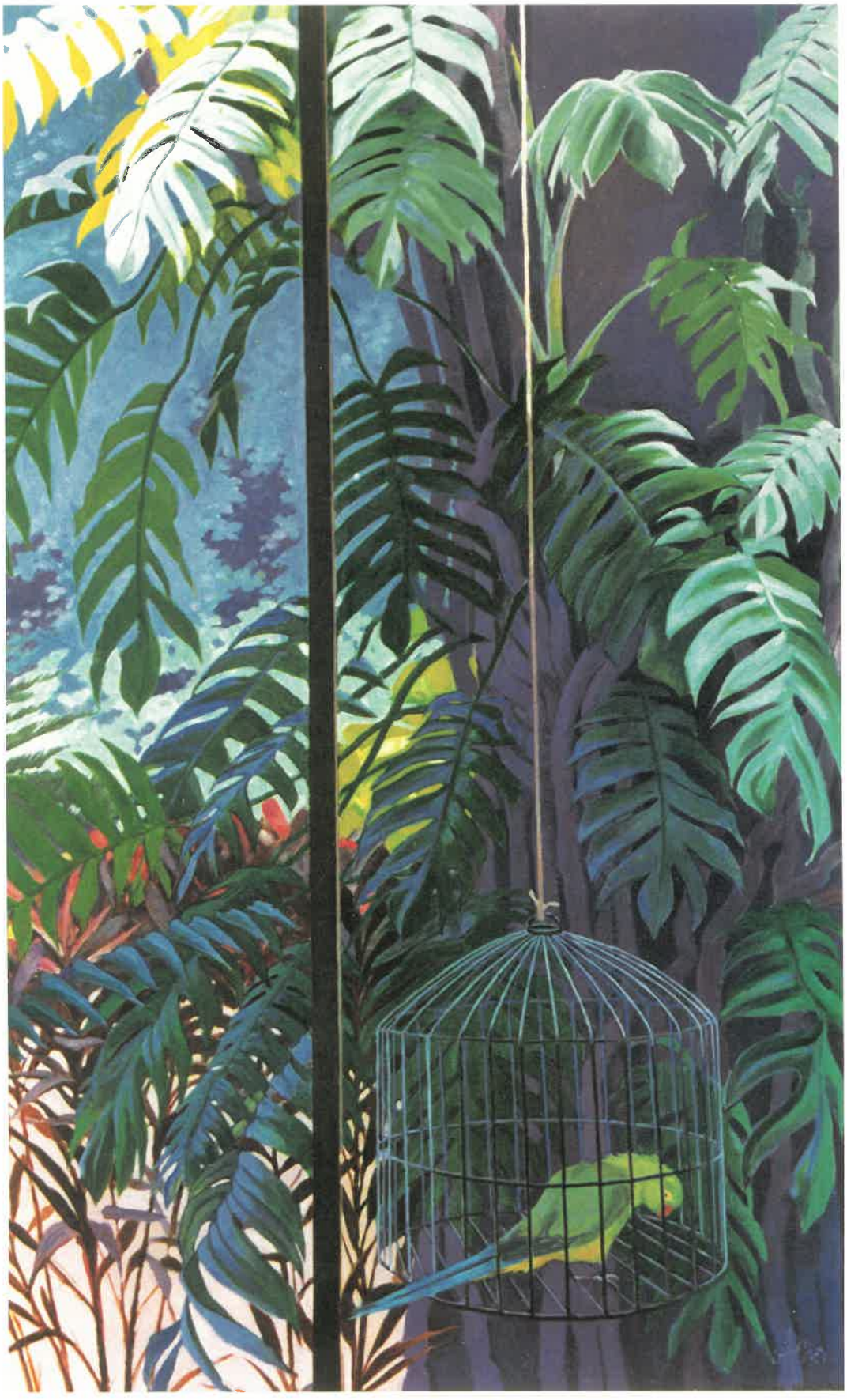
Girding Vine, 1986,
Oil on canvas,72"x36"
Collection: Air Force Mess Chaklala

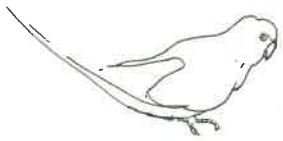
96.

Cirding Vine, 1989,
Oil on canvas, 60"x36"
Collection: Tehsin Khan, New York USA

97.

Girding Vine, 1985,
Oil on canvas, 60"x36"
Collection: (Unknown)





98.

Cages, 1999,
Oil on canvas, 60"x40"
Collection: Mian Taufique Saigol

99.

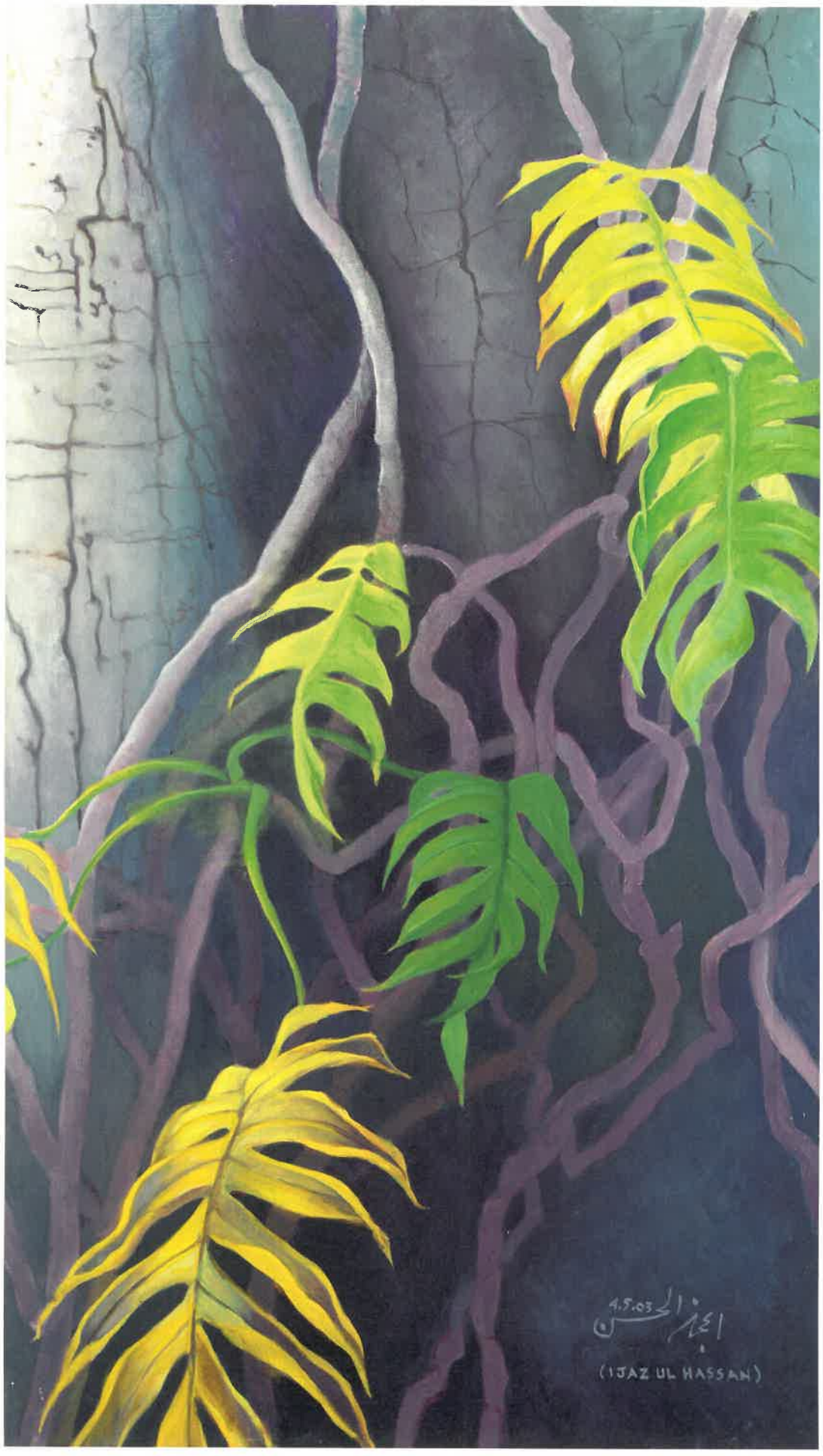
Clasp Firmly and Hope for Spring, (pavasta reh shajar say umeed-e-bahar rakh), 1999,
Oil on canvas, 30"x24", Private Collection

100.

Clasp Firmly and Hope for Spring (paivasta reh shajar say umeed-e-bahar rakh), 1998,
Oil on canvas, 24"x18", Collection: Linda and Jack Gill Heart Institute, Lexington, USA.

101. *Lilies at Night,* 2006, Oil on canvas, 36"x60", Collection: Faryal Khan.

اعجاز الحسن
IJAZ UL HASSAN - 85



102.

Approaching Autumn, 2003,
Oil on canvas, 60"x34"
Private Collection

103.

Autumn Leaves, 2004,
Oil on canvas, 30"x24", Collection: Syeda Abida Hussain and Syed Fakhr Imam

104. *Clasp Firmly and Hope for Spring, (pavasta reh shajar say umeed-e-bahar rakh),* 2006,
Oil on canvas, 60"x36", Artist's Collection

of Arts, Lahore, as a teacher, he quickly came under the tutelage of Shakir Ali and Khalid Iqbal, becoming identified as one among their *avant garde* group. He has exhibited countless times jointly and as a one man show, throughout Pakistan. He has held exhibitions in places as far apart as London and Jakarta. Most of his work has been sold to art lovers and is now in private collections in Europe, while some of his canvases are kept in permanent collections of art galleries."

About another exhibition the same year Hassan Aftab an art critic writing for the Pakistan Times says:[18]

"The centre piece of the exhibition is *The Old Anar (page 111)*. There is a blinding sun which sets on fire the background and the sparse foliage on the margin. The stark contrast, the gnarled branches are dark, the leaves and the flowers remain seductive in their beauty, the denuded branches represent the sacrifice the tree must make to achieve beauty."

Gisele Ali Butt Mourlon, in the same exhibition brochure of 1987 said:[19]

"Communication and dialogue are in effect the 'raison d'etre' of Ijaz's painting. He establishes them from start with the individual and with the beings who unfailingly respond to his image of beauty, peace and depth. For him, painting outside the human and social context does not make sense. The object is to share: he establishes a spontaneous relationship with the viewers and maintains this relationship and banishes esotericism."

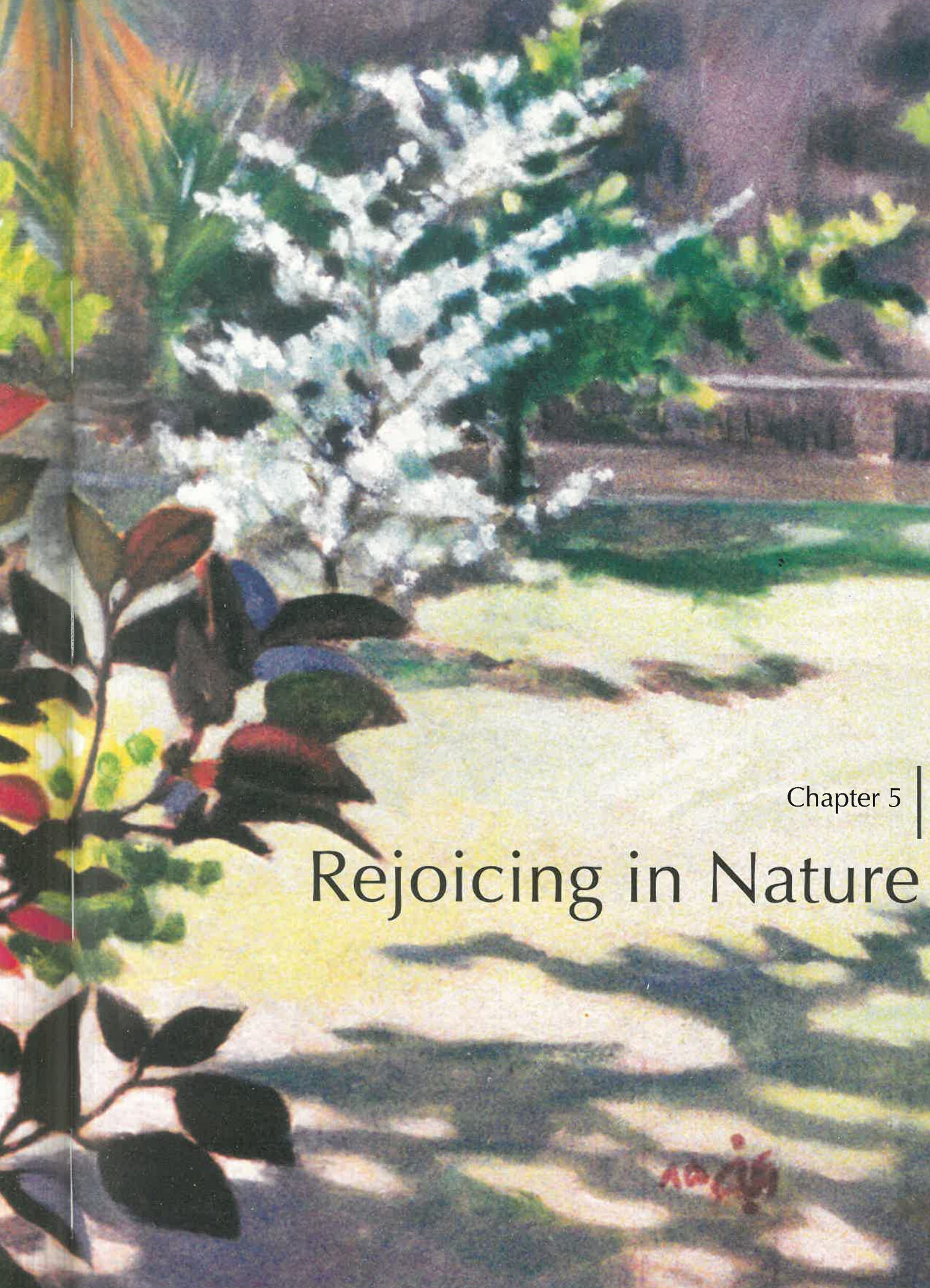
105.

Sketch, 1999,
Pen and ink, 10"x8"
Private Collection

w. Ijaz addressing the girding vine in his garden.

References

14. Asim Butt, *Robust Roots, Herald*, April 2005, p132.
15. Macella Nesom Sirhindi, *Contemporary Painting in Pakistan*, Ferozesons, Lahore, 1992, p105.
16. Intizar Hussain, *From People to Trees*, Daily *Mashriq*, Lahore, 10th March, 1981.
17. Khalid Ahmed, *Ijaz ul Hassan: A Perception Of Trees, The Pakistan Times*, Lahore, March 6, 1981.
18. Hassan Aftab, *Ijaz ul Hassan: Trees Continued, The Pakistan Times*, (Daily), 20th September 1981.
19. Gisele Ali Butt Mourlon, President of the Alliance France, writing for the exhibition brochure,1987.



Chapter 5

Rejoicing in Nature

In 1978 Ijaz went to jail for a second time on a trumped up charge of having stolen a type of duplicating machine called a cyclostyling machine from the National College of Arts. The Principal of the time obliged the authorities by registering a fake FIR against Ijaz in her own name. Everyone knew that he had been picked up for his outspoken views. He was taken away and was kept in solitary confinement at the Lahore Fort.

The 80's were very difficult times for Ijaz. In 1983 his father died and left a vacuum in his life. He developed diabetes around that time. He was financially in dire straits. He had resigned from his government job, because he had been posted out of the National College to an administrative position in Islamabad.

Twice very briefly he tried his hand at setting up a business. Each time he realised that he was out of his element. He then with full support of his family made a decision that he should have made much earlier. He decided to do only what he could do well and for the first time he devoted all his time to painting. He has never had occasion to regret this decision.

The sheer joy of this resolution became evident in his work quite soon and the year 1980 and '81 were years of productivity and enjoyment and much appreciation for his work. He savoured each colour, each tone and texture as he set out to discover and depict each tree and each plant that he came across. As he said himself:[20]

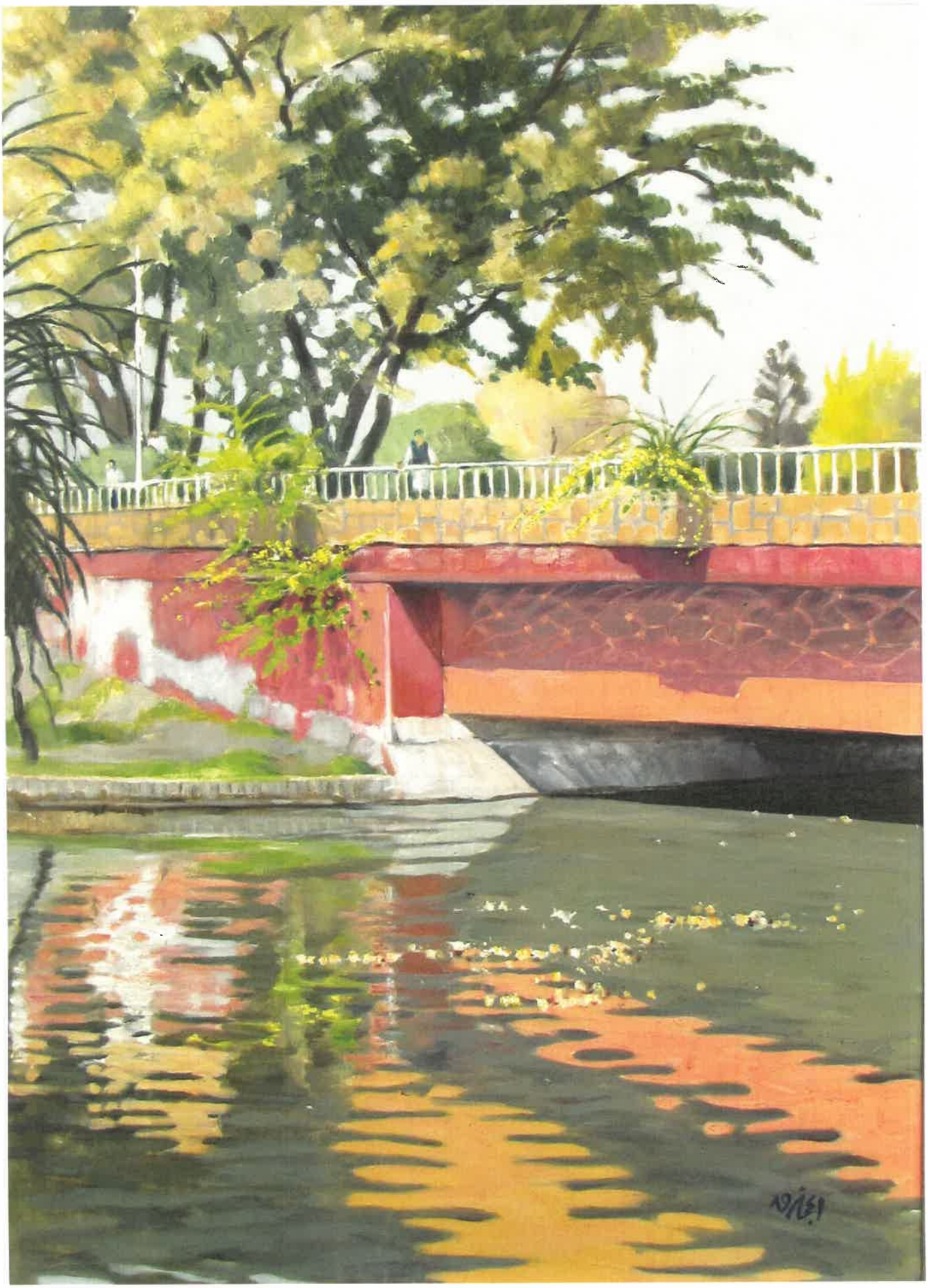
> "I am painting nature so that you can smell each plant and every landscape and recognise the species of each tree - feel the roughness of the bark and the smoothness of the leaves - share the experience which each tree has gone through - the agony of its gnarled branches or the ecstasy of its majestic growth."

x.

Ijaz ul Hassan's enjoyment of nature included planting, nurturing and then painting the various specimens of flora and fauna in his garden.

106.

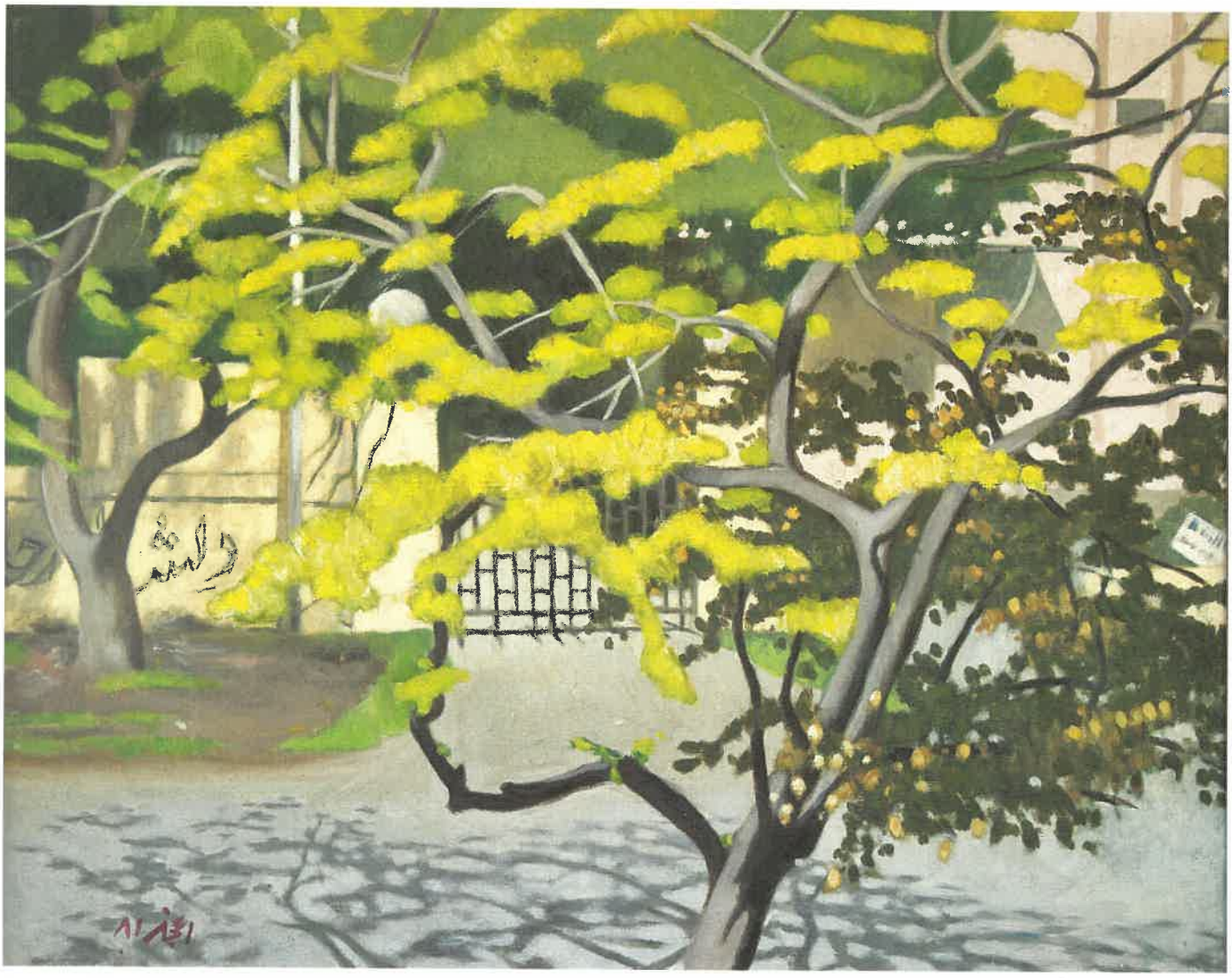
View Through Door, 1980,
Oil on canvas, 60"x36"
Private Collection



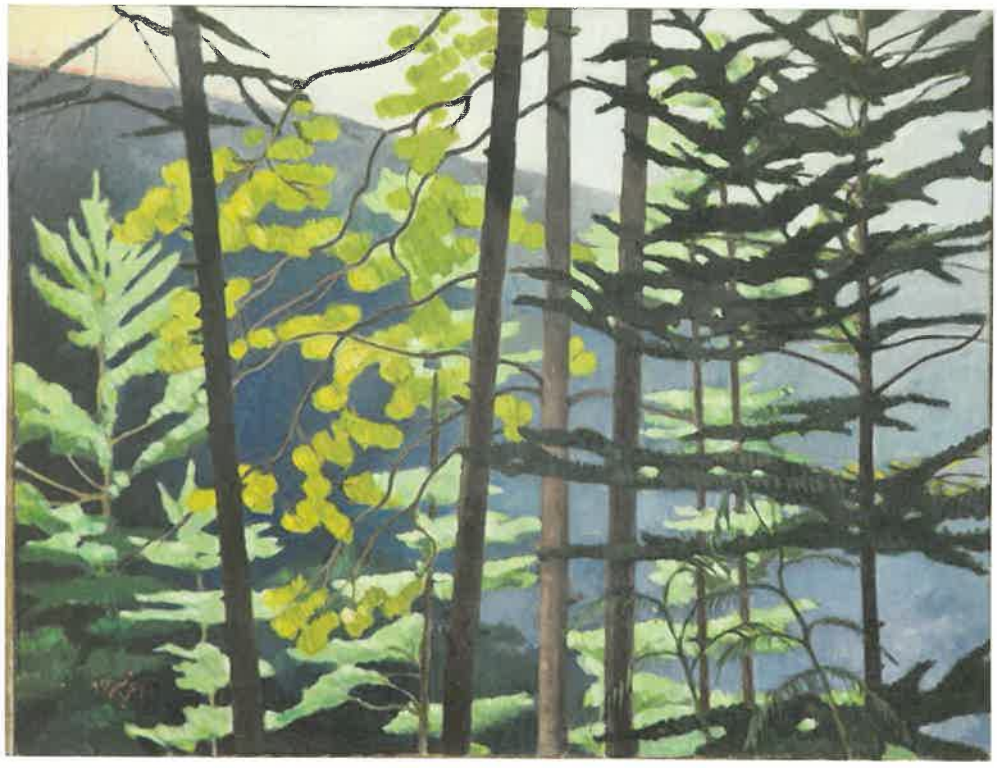
107. *Reflections,* 1989, Oil on canvas, 48"x36", Collection: Shahnaz and F. S. Aijazuddin.

108.

The Jaman in the Backyard, 1980, (Three panels),
Oil on canvas, 60"x108",
Collection: Ghulam Fareed ud Din Riaz



109. *Sukh Chain*, 1981, Oil on canvas, 24"x30", Collection: Sami ur Rehman.



110.

Pines, 1986, Oil on canvas, 30"x36", Collection: Nighat and Moin Afzal.

To him trees are people with a character, a thought process and a will of their own. They are symbols of his motherland, the land he loves so well. The artist in him responded to their struggle for survival and for him they are perfect symbols of the endeavour of man. He writes in ' A Dazzling Spectacle'[21]

> "I find the sad agonised appearance of the Kikar at one level symbolic of our trials and at another level expressive of our common nascent strength. Not being a member of any horticulture society I may not have proper knowledge of the prevailing social hierarchy in the botanical world. But I have no hesitation in confessing that I find our common trees rather precious, as precious as our common rivers, our common mountains and plains, our common flowers and our common people. Whenever I paint a tree, a plant, a shrub they enable me to identify my self with them thereby helping me, in how so ever a small way, to endorse and justify my own existence. Above all, it enables me to pay homage to my land and nature of which, as a poet said, I am a mere weed aspiring to blossom one day."

1981 was the year during which he held two successful solo shows in Lahore - in the beginning and at the end of the year. He also held an exhibition in Islamabad. These shows were not only financially successful, they also set him up as a much sought after painter. It is remarkable that after these shows he did not have a solo exhibition until the nineties, for the simple reason that he was unable to keep enough paintings with him for such a show.

The exhibition of 1981 included several paintings of *View From Window*, the oft repeated and persistent reminder of the bars that blocked the window of his prison cell at the Lahore fort. But that was not the only theme he tackled. He celebrated the splendour of the landscape around him and wanted to present his viewers with something to cheer and rejoice. He wanted to share with them and help them see the beauty that surrounded them rather than dwelling only on the sad and sombre aspects of life. *Red Lilies (page 174)*, *The Old Anar Tree (page 111)*, *View From Terrace*, *View through Jaman Tree*, *Golf Course* (page 172) and three panels of *Jaman Tree (page 135) in the backyard* from veranda were a few of the beautiful paintings that formed a part of this stunning exhibition.

People who saw that exhibition still recall the sense of joy and exhilaration that the pictures brought for them. Grouped together in one place, they made an impact that cannot be easily forgotten. Even today people stop to share their enjoyment of a beautiful scene and ask him to paint it for them. This complement does not please him as much as it should, because he keeps insisting that he is not just a landscape painter and that the adjective landscape painter limits the scope of his work.

Ijaz might have been experiencing the joy of painting for the sake of colour and form and texture, but in many of his pictures there is an inner meaning

which was much more subtle than his earlier direct work. All his Views Through Window create the sense of someone watching from behind over your shoulder, which may be preventing him from full participation and enjoyment of the spectacle or event. His beautiful trees are messages of hope really for they are specially chosen because of their tenacious fight against cruel and mitigating circumstances, the yellow laburnum tree blossoms, in spite of the suffocating heat of the summer, the *Kikar (acacia)* with its gnarled branches, are ruthlessly cut and burnt whenever anybody needs them, has struggled successfully to survive without the pampering that seems to be reserved for garden plants.

Ijaz wrote about his work of that time:[22]

> "I have been doing landscapes or rather pictures of trees. All of them about the un pampered common species on the roadside or in some neglected backyard. Sometimes a simple object evolves into an image, which is vividly expressive of a larger meaning and social significance. A visibly dead laburnum bursting into life with a riot of yellow showers, a grand old juniper dying next to a lake, an invincible wild 'beri' tree with fresh shoots sprouting from limbs that were ruthlessly chopped the previous season, are a few examples where common sights and objects reveal a meaning and social significance not apparent at first."

The message of hope in his paintings of trees and his intimate peeks at nature are perennial theme to which he has come back again and again. His involvement in politics is another permanent feature in his life and activities. (Photographs on page

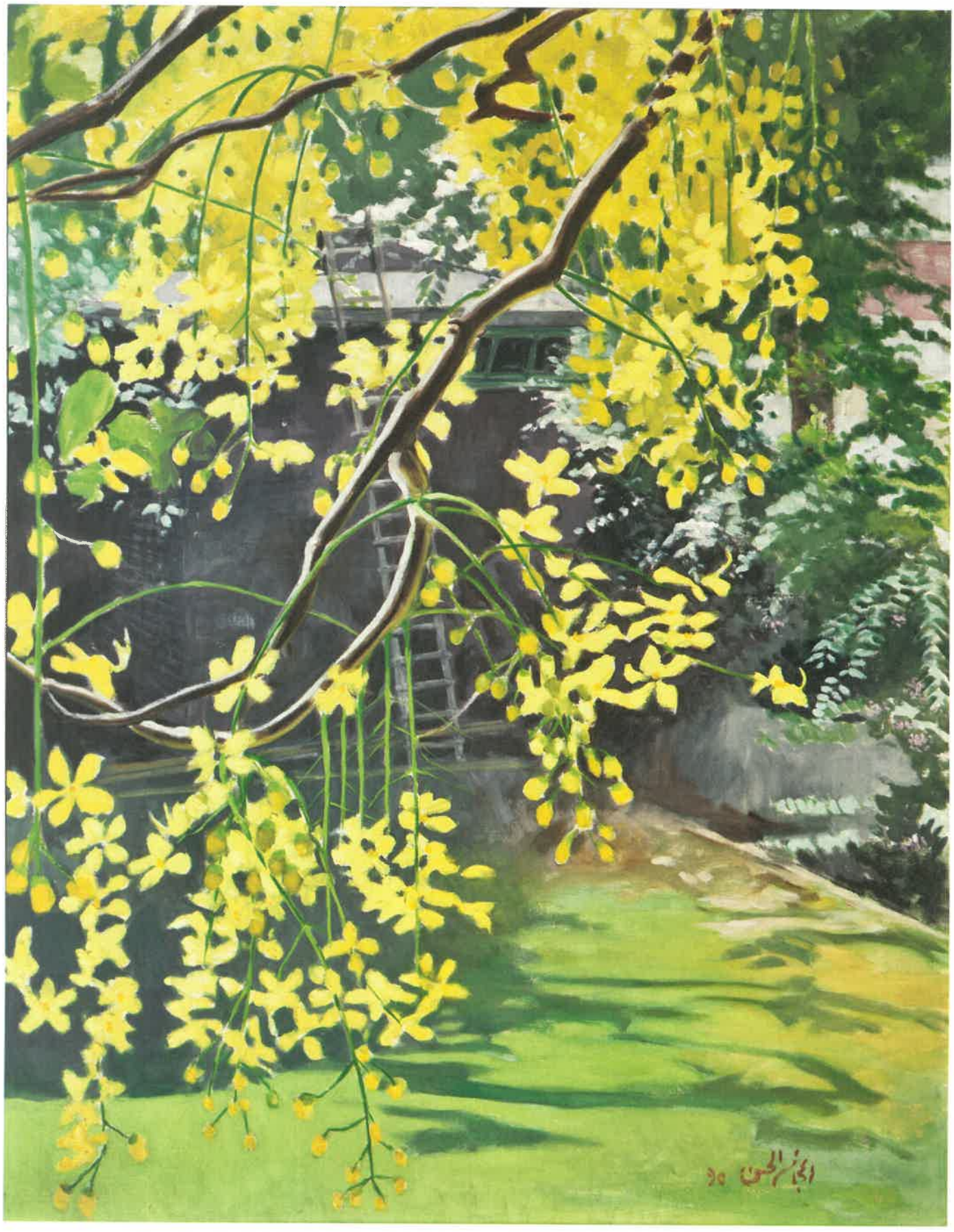
References

20. Ijaz ul Hassan, *The Way It Was, The Daily Times,* Lahore.
21. Ijaz ul Hassan, *Dazzling Spectacle, The Way It Was, The Daily Times,* Lahore, March 2002.
22. Ijaz ul Hassan, *The Way It Was, The Daily Times,* Lahore.

111. *Shisham in Winter,* (1997), Pastel on paper, 18"x24", Collection: Popti and Javed Bukhari.

112.

Himalayan Oak A Misty Day, 2008,
Oil on canvas, 30"x36"
Artist's Collection



113.

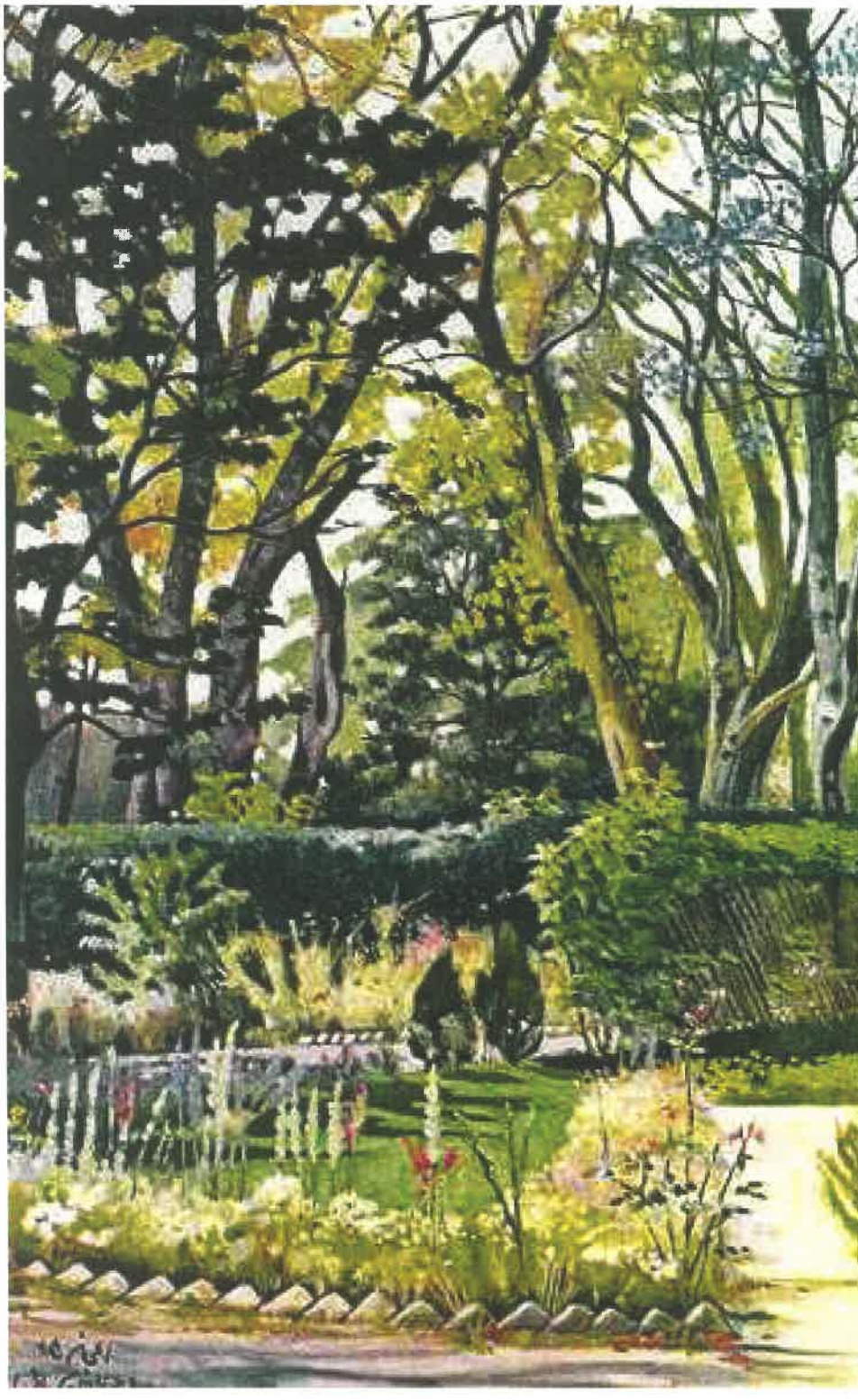
Laburnum Showers, 1996,
Oil on canvas, 36"x30"
Collection: Mr and Mrs Nayed Hamid

114.

Jamini From Roof Top, 1989,
Oil on canvas, 36"x36"
Collection: Moni and Mian Khurshid Kasuri

115. *Wet Autumn Day,* 1986, Water colour on paper, 14"x18" Collection: Mr and Mrs Rizwan Ali.

116. *Bukain in the Morning,* (1986), Oil on canvas, 24"x28", Collection: Mrs Jamila Masood.



117.

Fading Spring, 1986,
Oil on canvas, 36″x30″
Collection: Irfan Husain

118.

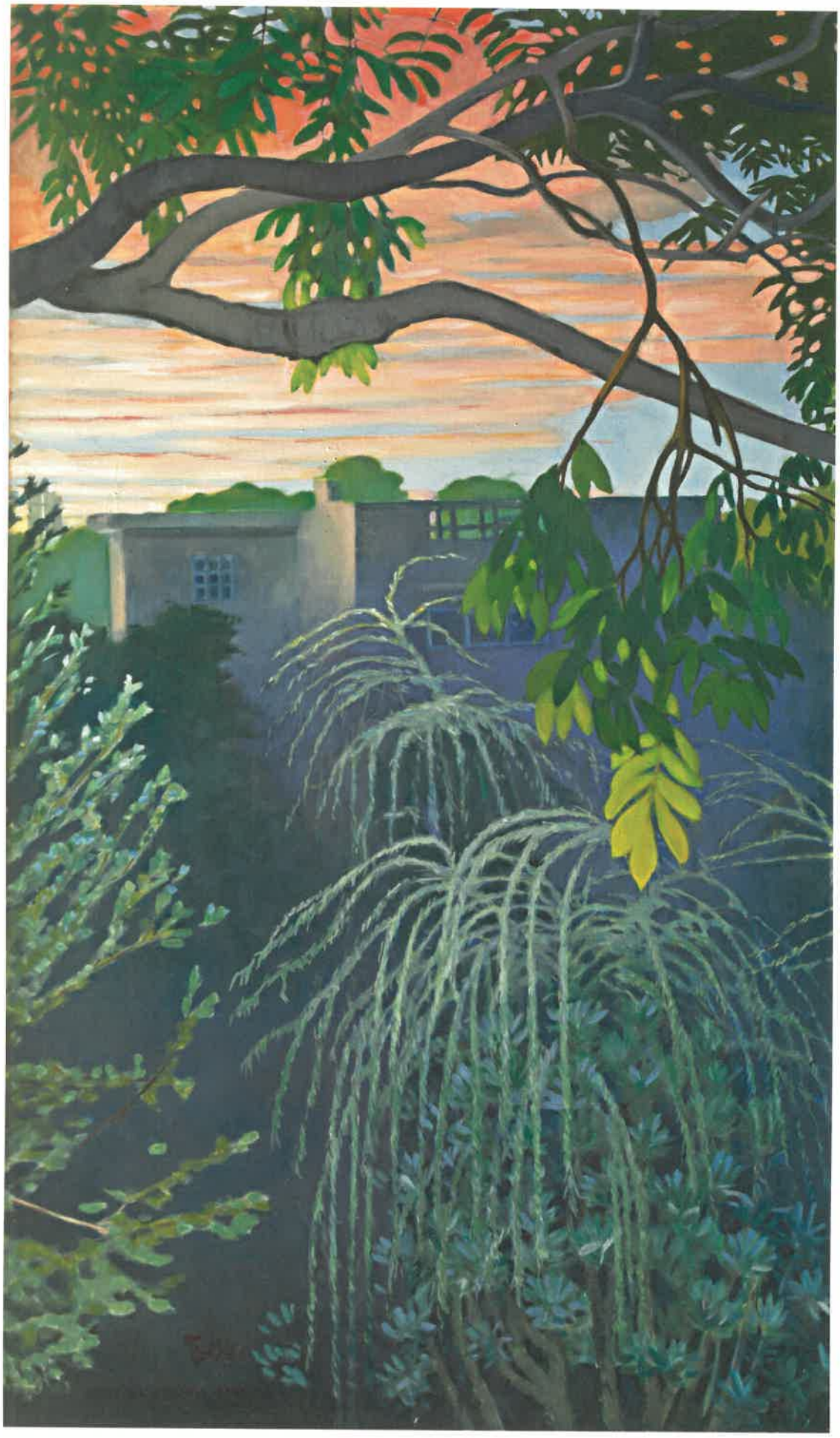
Willows in Autumn, 1986,
Oil on canvas, 30"x40"
Collection: Dr Shehla and Dr Javed Akram

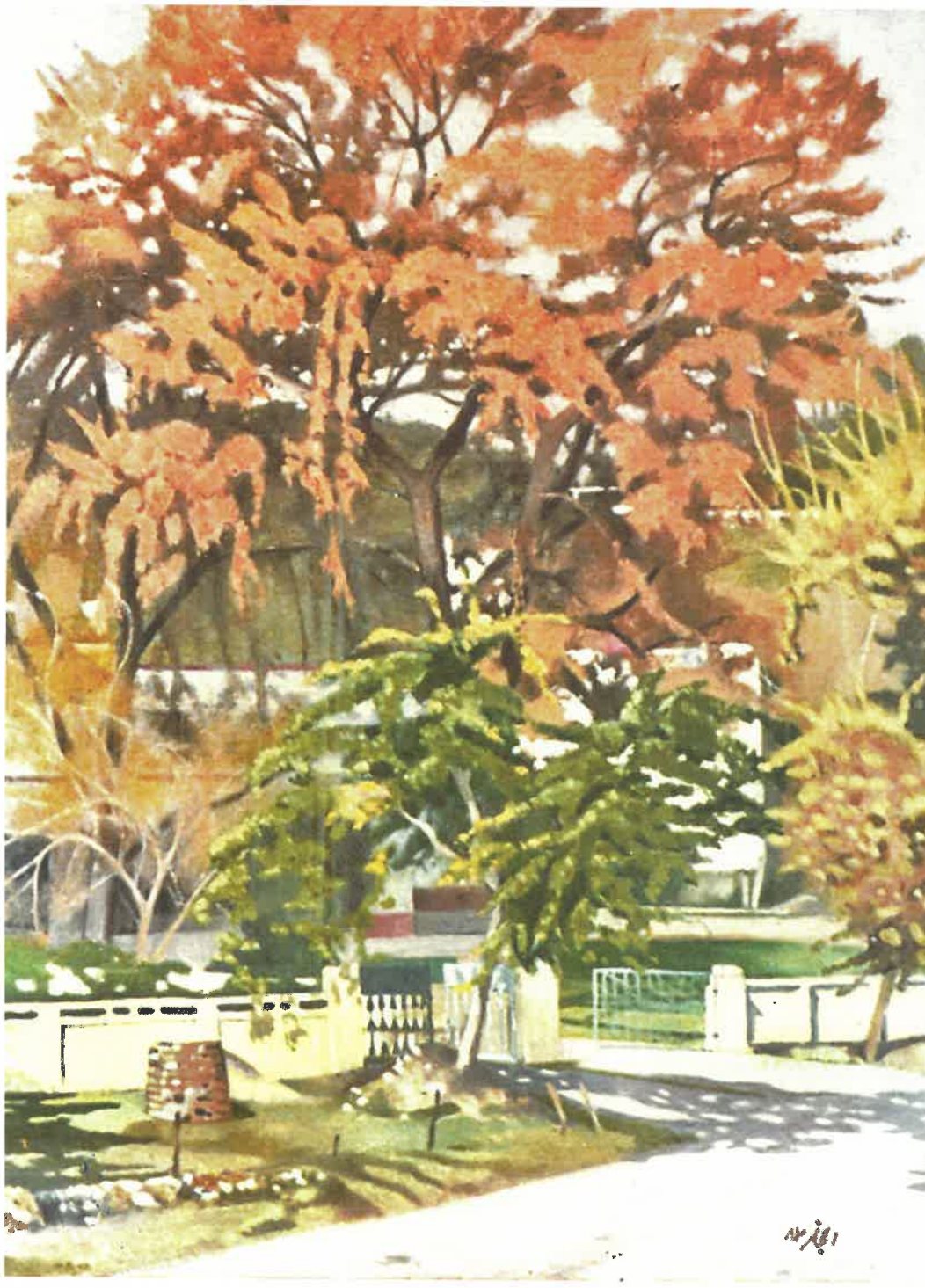
119.

Willow, 1986,
Pen and ink on paper, 10"x14"
Artist's Collection

120.

Laburnum, 1996,
Oil on canvas, 60"x36"
Collection: Dr Shehla and Dr Javed Akram

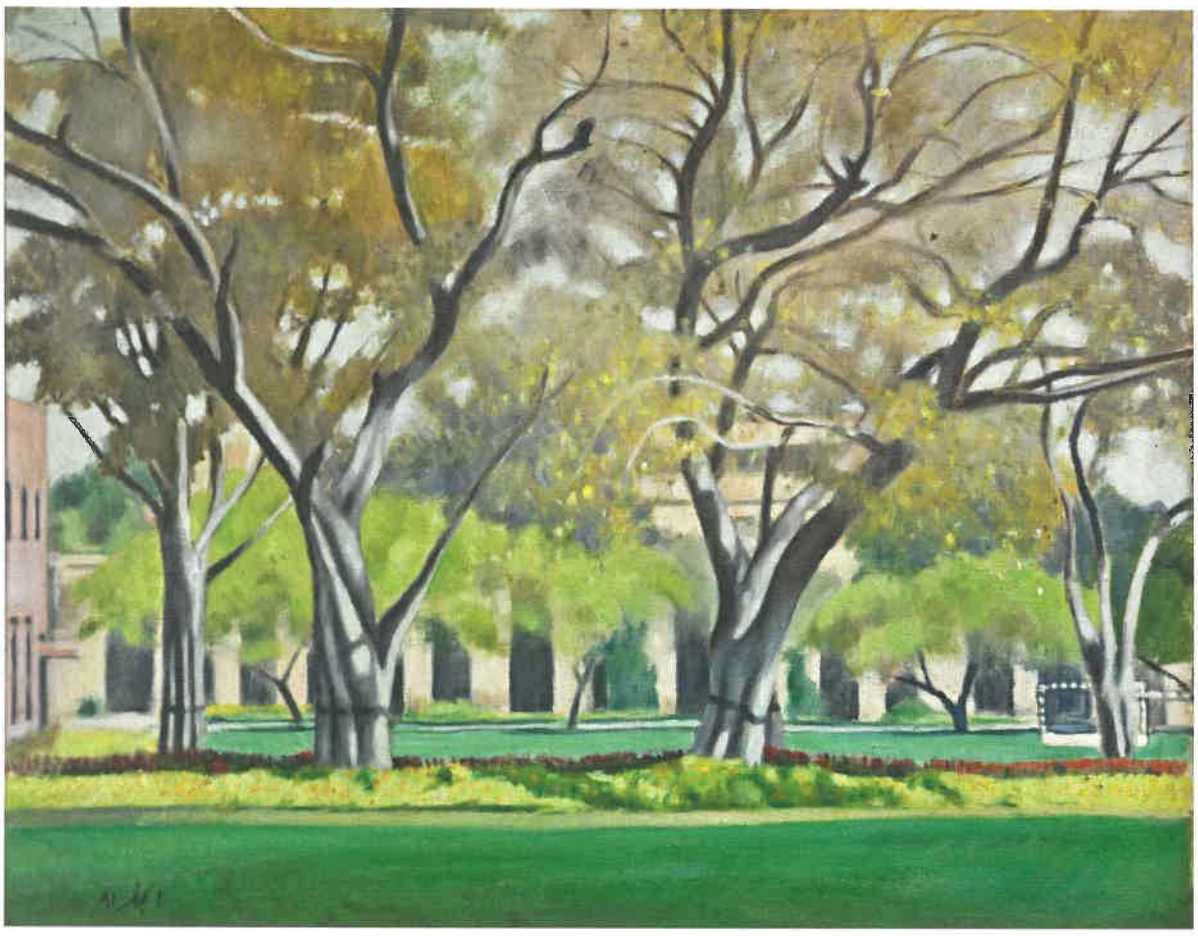




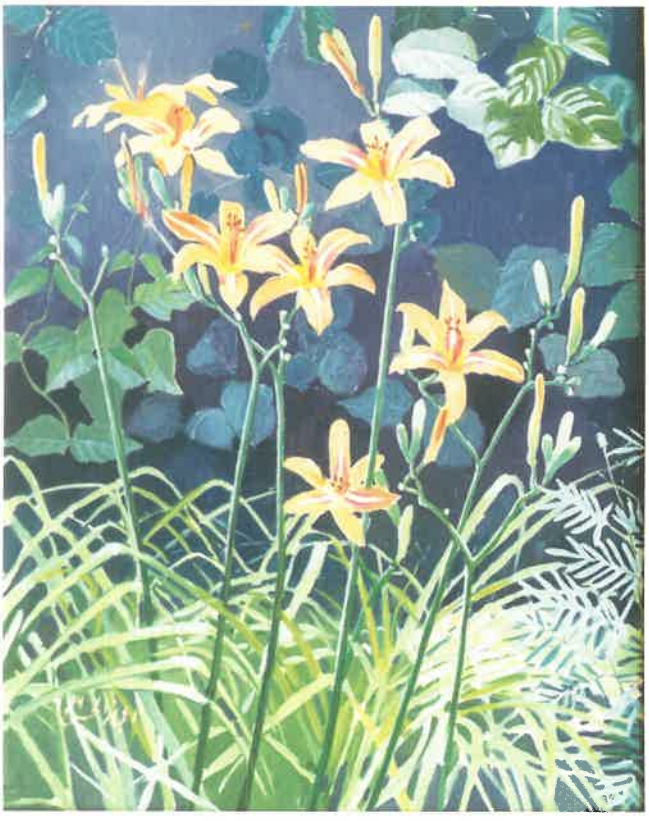
122. *Shisham in Autumn,* 1989, Oil on canvas, 36"x30", Collection: The National Gallery, Islamabad.

121.

Approaching Shadows, 1996,
Oil on canvas, 60"x36"
Collection: Rafia and Syed Akmal Hussain

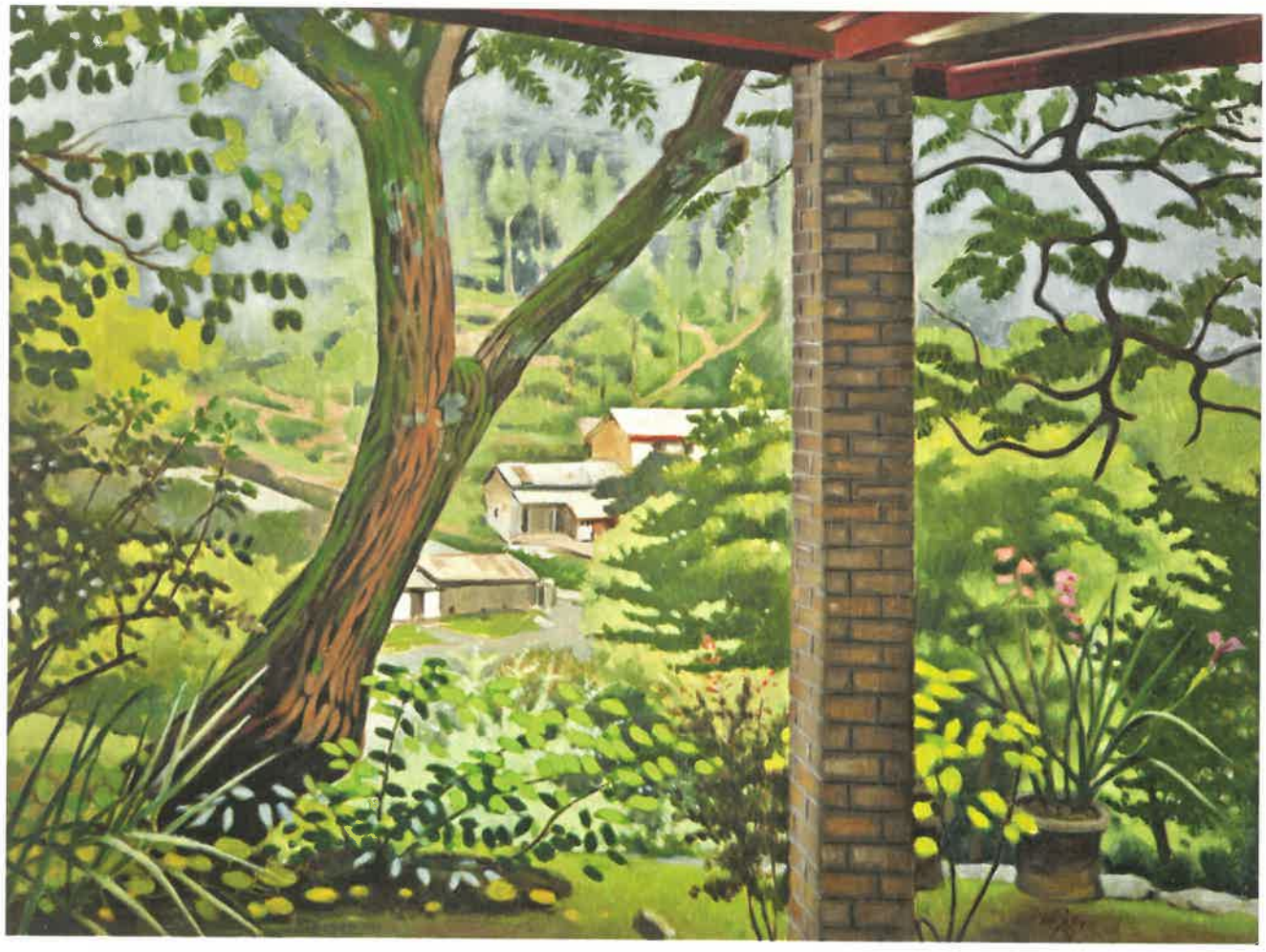


123. *View from the Cricket Pavilion,* 1986, Oil on canvas, 24"x30", Collection: Zakia and Shahnawaz Khan Niazi.

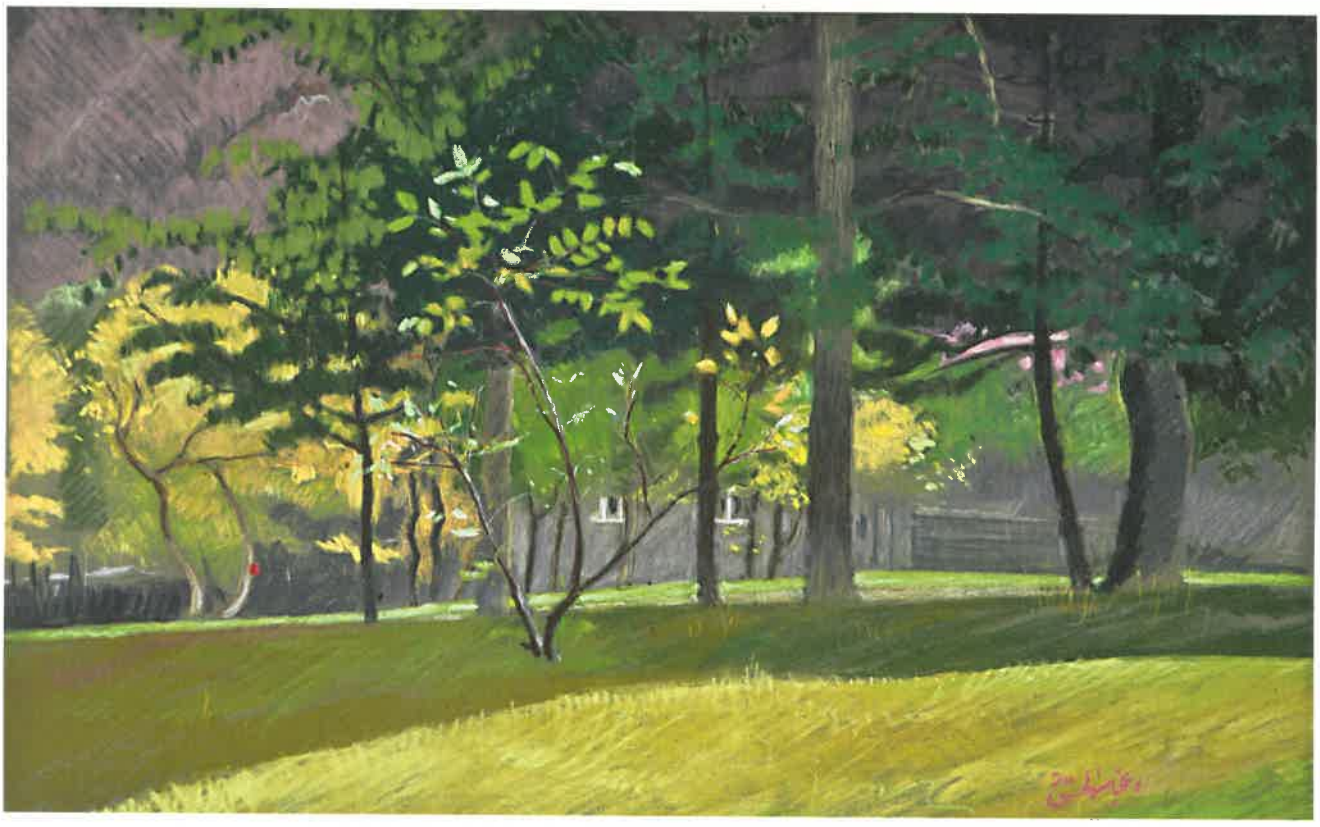


124. *Tiger Lilies*, 1996, Oil on canvas, 36"x24", Private Collection.

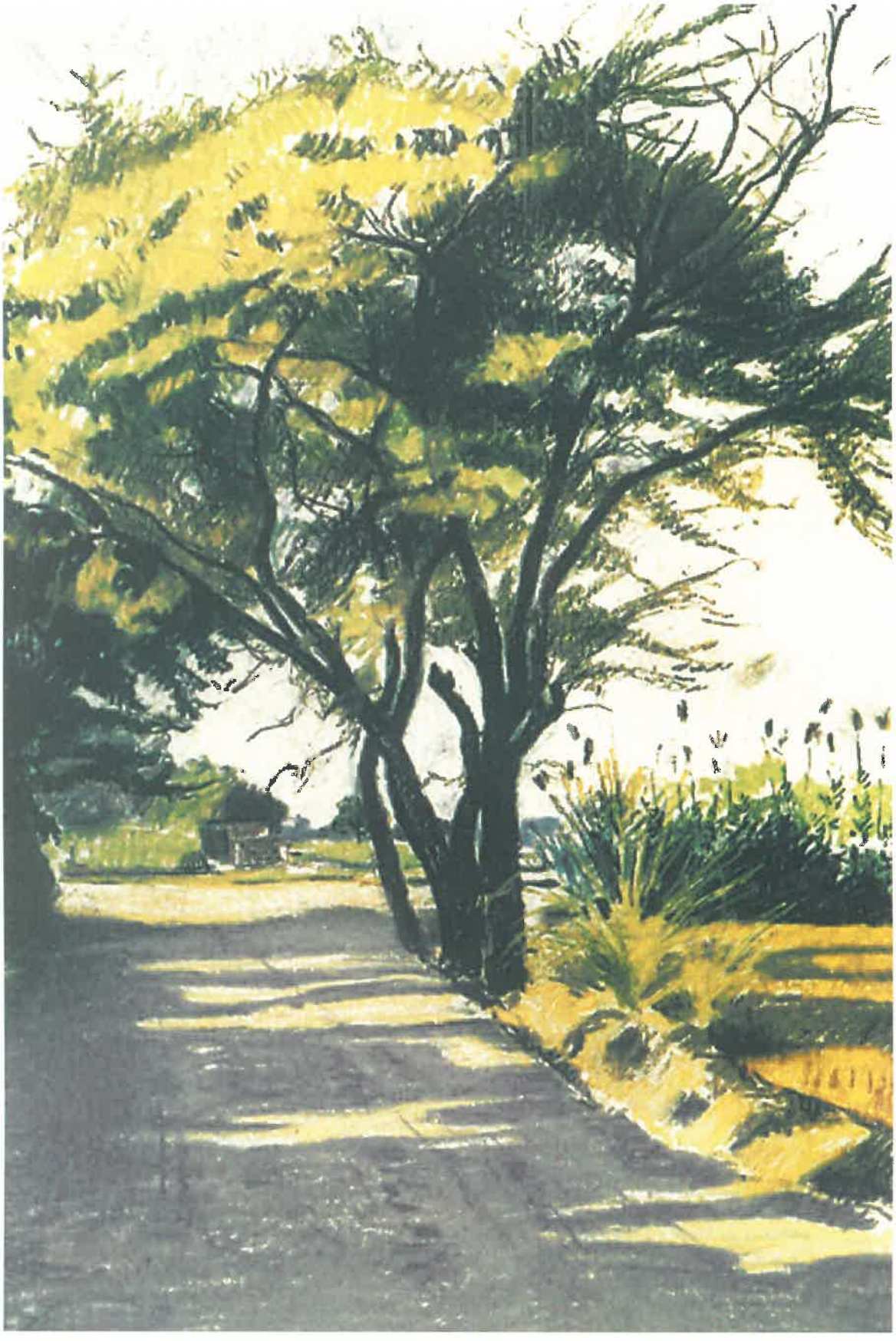
125. *Still Life*, 1990, watercolor on paper, 14"x10", Private Collection.



126. *View from Clifton Farms,* 1996, Oil on canvas, 30"x36", Collection: Syeda Abida Hussain and Syed Fakhr Imam.



127. *Naran,* 1991, Pastel on paper, 18"x24", Collection: Moni and Mian Khurshid Kasuri.



128.

Kikar Avenue, 1986,
Pastel on paper, 24"x18"
Private Collection

129.

Shisham in the Morning, 1989,
Oil on canvas, 36"x36"
Collection: Moni and Mian Khurshid Kasuri

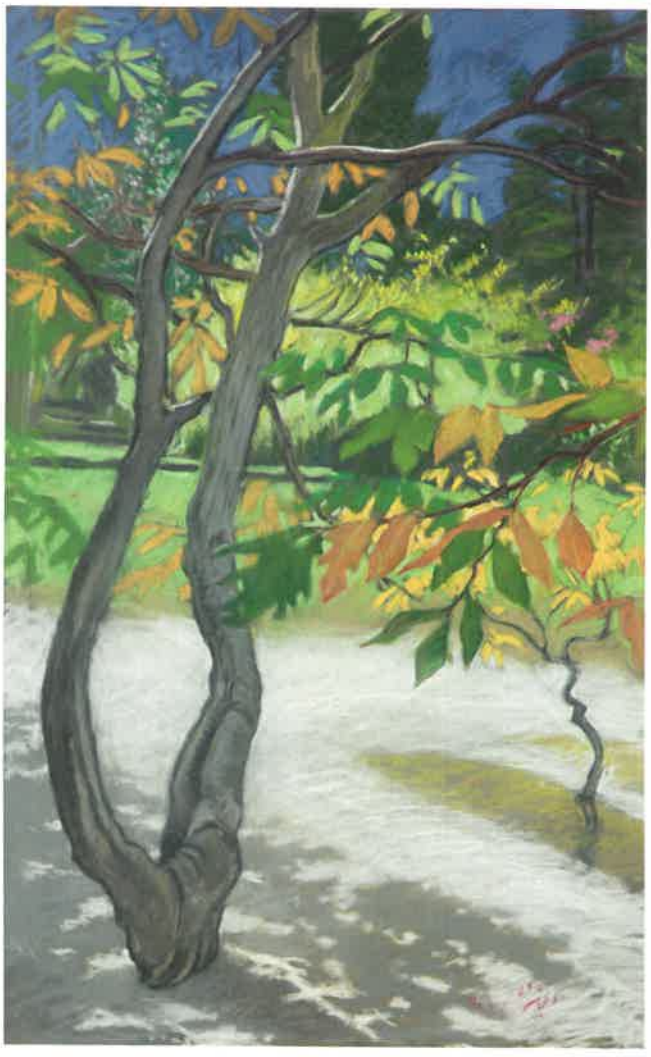
130. *View Through Window,* 1989, Oil on canvas, 30"x24", Collection: Air Chief Marshal Jamal Khan.

131.

Murree From Lady Robert's Home, 1995,
Oil on canvas, 24"x36"
Collection: Fatima and Agha Imran Hameed

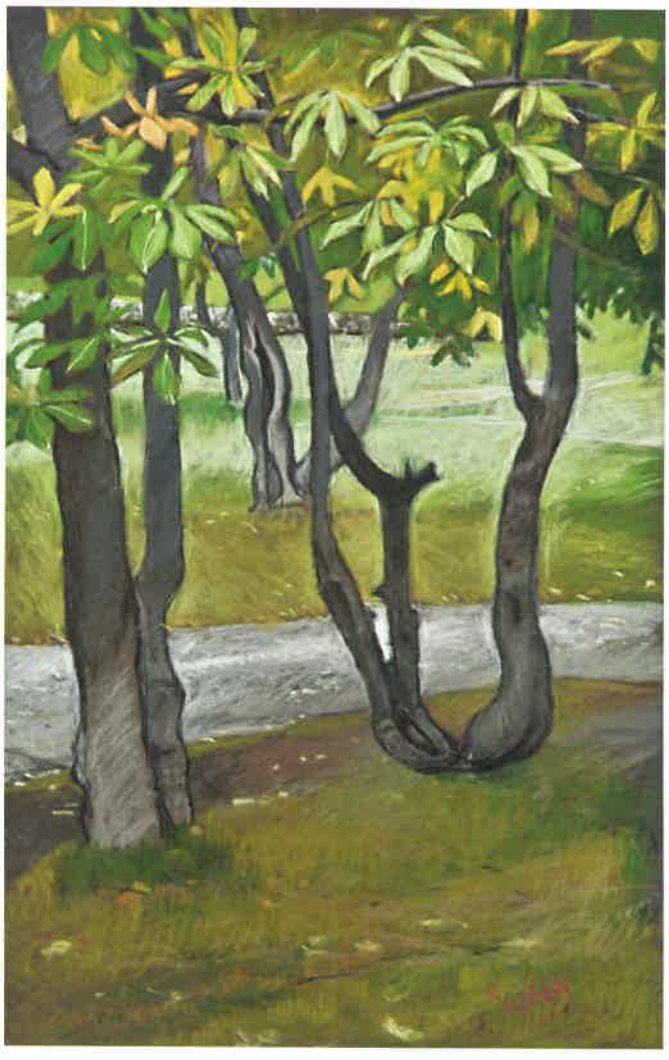
132.

Ziarat, 1992,
Water colour on paper, 18"x24"
Collection: Mina and Imran Zaidi



133.

Walnut at Naran, 1991,
Pastel on paper,24"x18"
Collection: Moni and Mian Khurshid Kasuri



134.

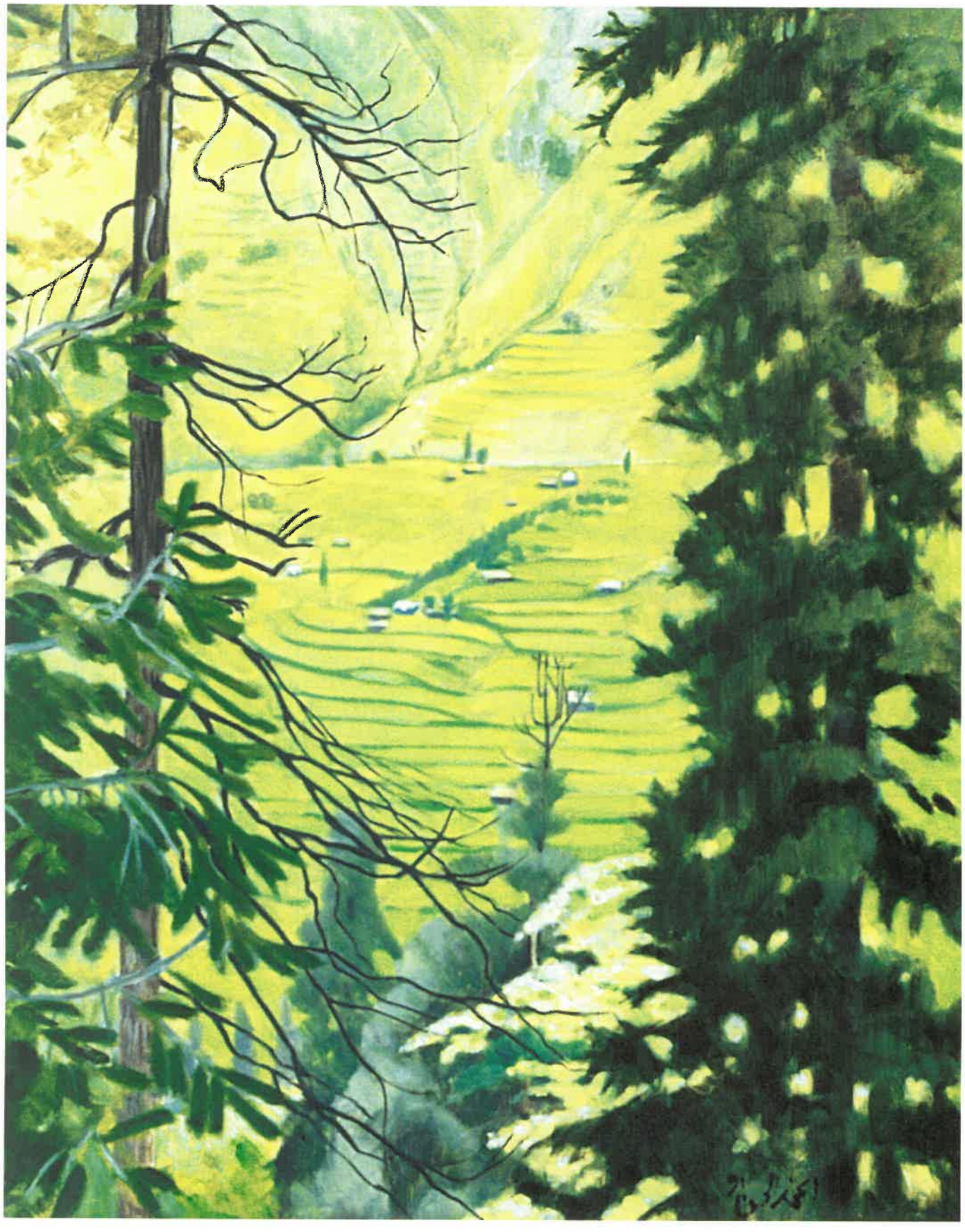
Walnuts at Naran, 1991,
Pastel on paper, 24"x18"
Collection: Moni and Mian Khurshid Kasuri

135.

Autumn Leaves, Naran, 1991,
Pastel on paper, 24"x18",
Collection: Moni and Mian Khurshid Kasuri

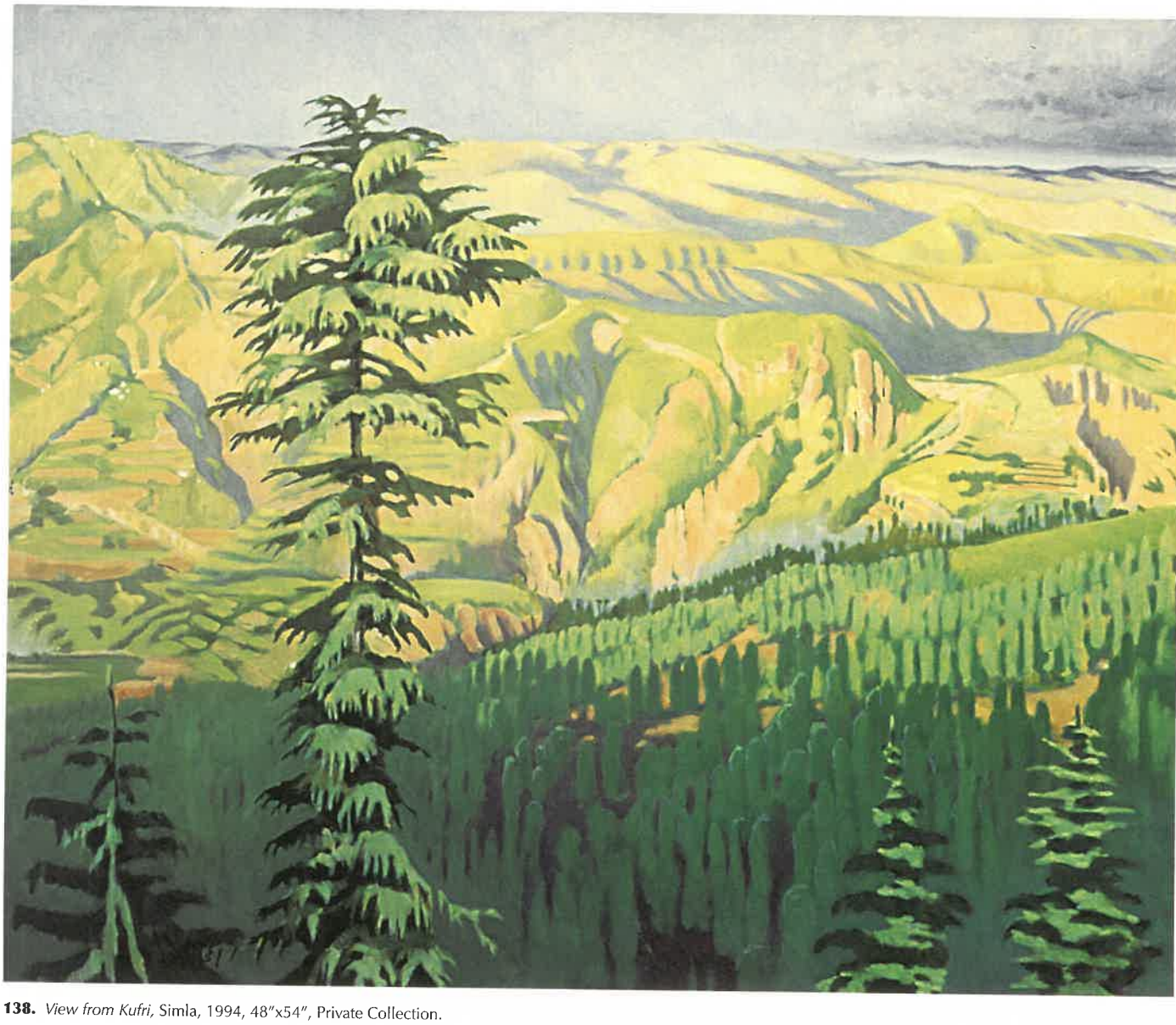
136.

Naran River On A Murky Evening, 1991,
Pastel on paper, 18"x24"
Collection: Moni and Mian Khurshid Kasuri



137.

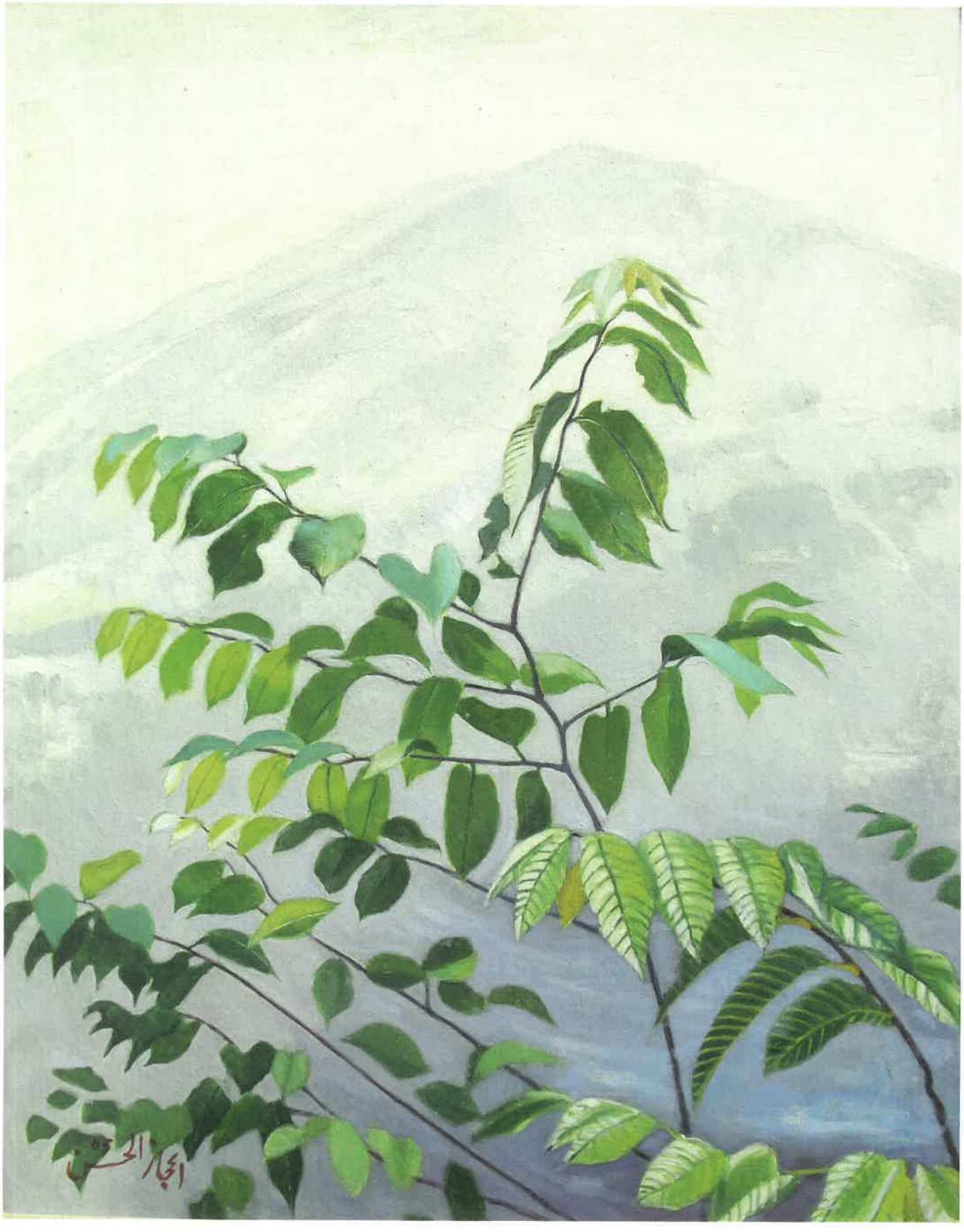
Distant Hills Through Pines, 1991
Oil on canvas, 36"x24"
Collection: Dr Mian Ahmed Hasan



138. *View from Kufri,* Simla, 1994, 48"x54", Private Collection.

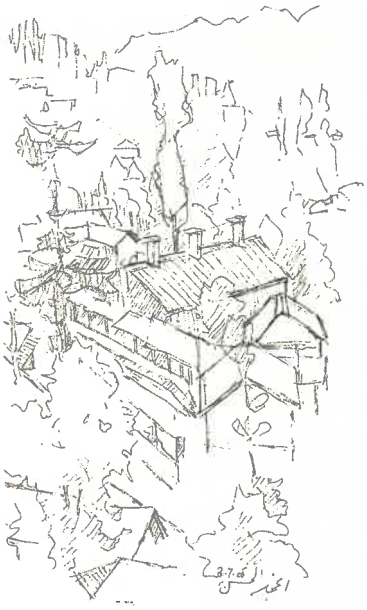
y.

Group of painters at SAARC Painter's Camp held at Kufri near Simla, India, 1994. Ijaz ul Hassan 7th from right with Ghulam Mustafa on left and Mohammed Ali Bhatti (4th right) with Iqbal Hussain standing behind him.



139.

Far Far into the Distance, 2005,
Oil on canvas, 36"x30"
Artist's Collection



140.

Far Into The Distance, 2005,
Oil on canvas, 24"x18"
Collection: Rafia and Akmal Hussain

141.

Hollyhocks, 1998,
Oil on canvas, 60"x48"
Collection: Gulshan and Dr Zafar Aziz Khan

142.

Spring Awakening, 1998,
Oil on canvas, 60″x36″
Collection: Begum and Syed Haider Baber Ali

143. *Still Life from South Seas,* 2001, Oil on canvas, 60"x48" Collection: Dr Mian Ahmad Hassan.

Day Lilies, 1
Oil on canvas, 60"
Collection: Leena and Moazzam

145. *Champa,* 2006, Oil on canvas, 30"x36", Private Collection.

146. *Ferns In The Morning,* 1999, Oil on canvas, 24"x36", Collection: Mr & Mrs Javaid Bukhari.

147. *A View From Window,* 2000, Oil on canvas, 30"x36", Private Collection.

148.

Narayan Lilies and Ferns, 2003,
Oil on canvas, 30"x36"
Private Collection

149.

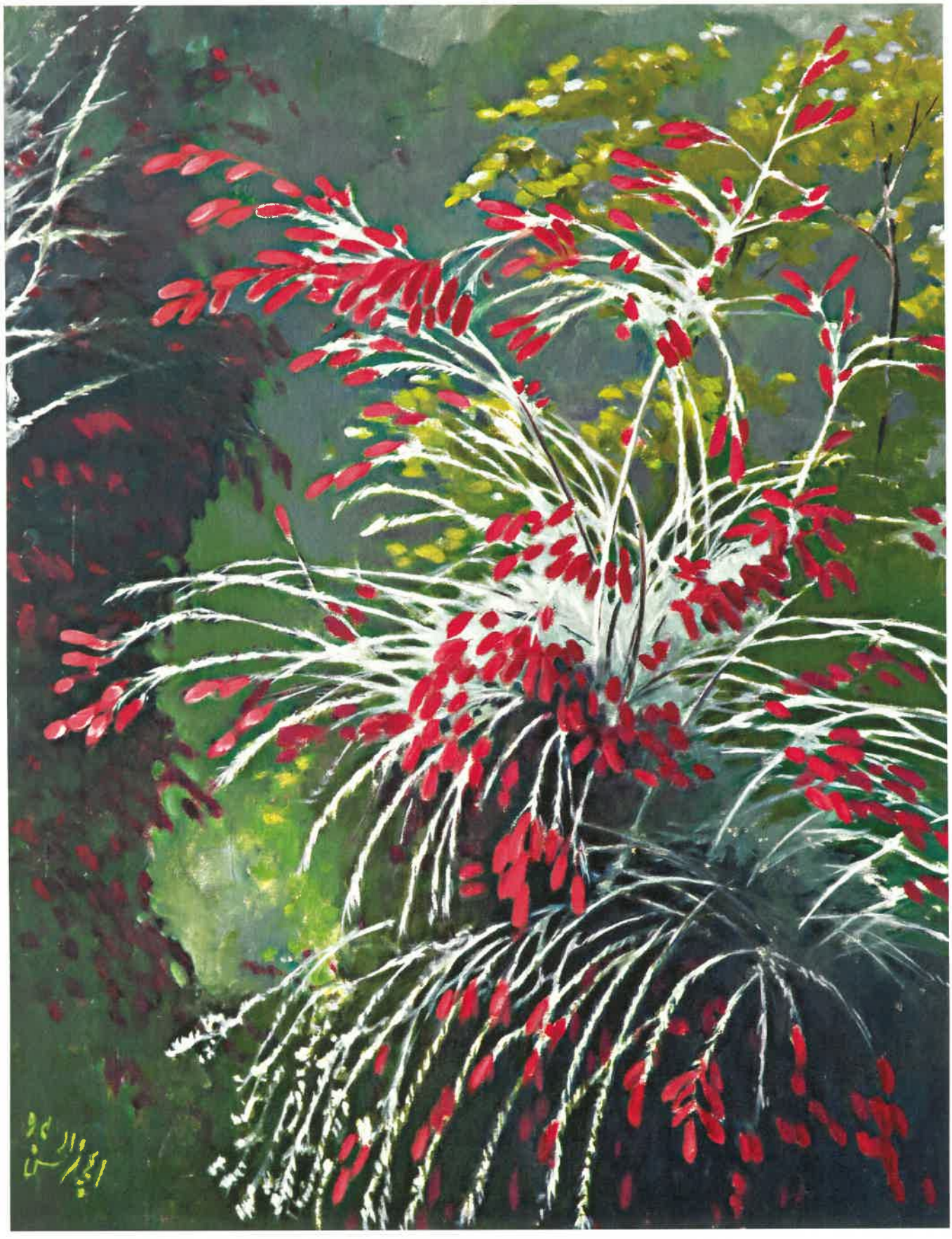
Spray of Bougainvillaea, 2004,
Oil on canvas, 60"x36"
Collection: Rafia and Syed Akmal Hussain

150

View of Drycenias Through Window, 1990
Oil on canvas, 36″x24
Collection: Snooky and Syed Yawar A

151.

A Birthday Card, 2006,
Oil on canvas, 48"x36"
Collection: Mr and Mrs Mian Tariq Hassan



152.

Bottle Brush, 2006
Oil on canvas, 36″x30″
Collection: Fareeha and Nazir Piracha

153. *Summer at Baloki,* 2000, Oil on canvas, 48"x36", Collection: Rafia and Syed Akmal Hussain.

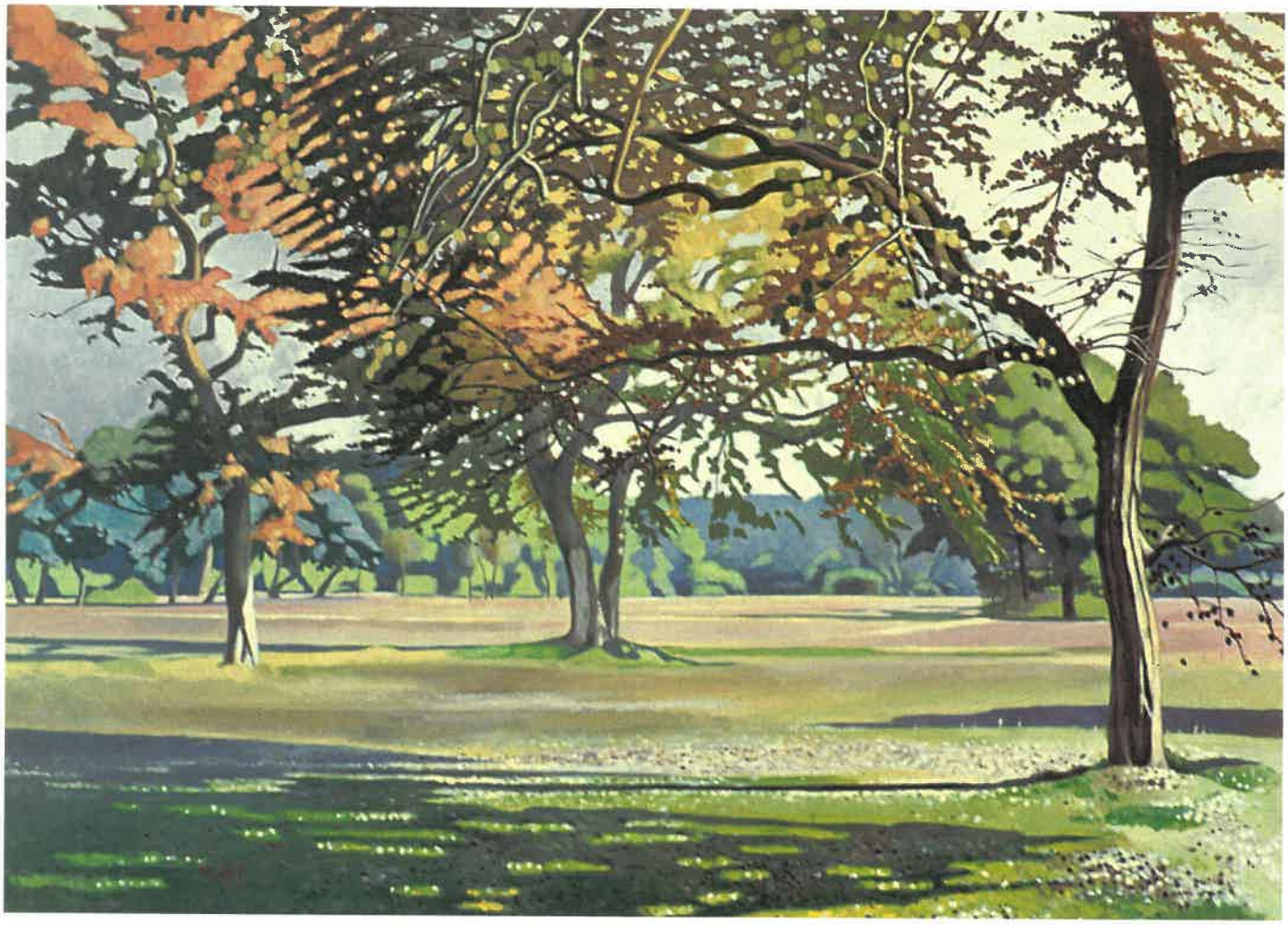
154.

Freezias, 1997
Oil on canvas, 30"x36"
Collection:
Prime Minister's House, Islamabad

155. *Roadside Bohri,* 1999, Oil on canvas, 60"x72"(2 panels), Collection: Begum and Syed Haider Baber Ali.

156.

Sketch, 1980,
Pen and ink on paper, 8"x10"
Collection: Mrs Samina Rehman



157. *Golf Course, Lahore Gymkhana,* Oil on canvas, 48"x60, Collection: Shehla and Tariq Saigol.

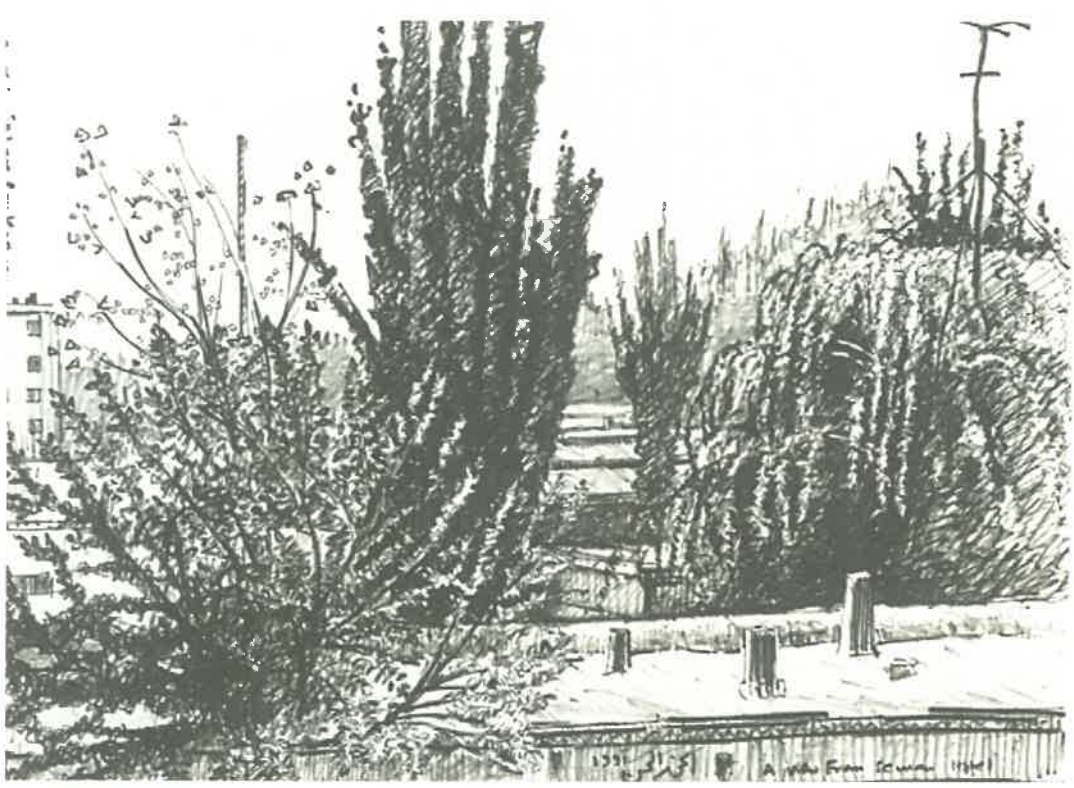
158.

Through a Verandah, 1981
Oil on canvas, 30"x36
Collection: Ghulam Fareed ud Din Riaz

159.

Oak at Kufri, 1994,
Oil on canvas, 60"x36
Private Collection

160. *Lilies*, 1980, Oil on canvas, 48"x72", Collection: Syeda Abida Hussain and Syed Fakhr Imam.



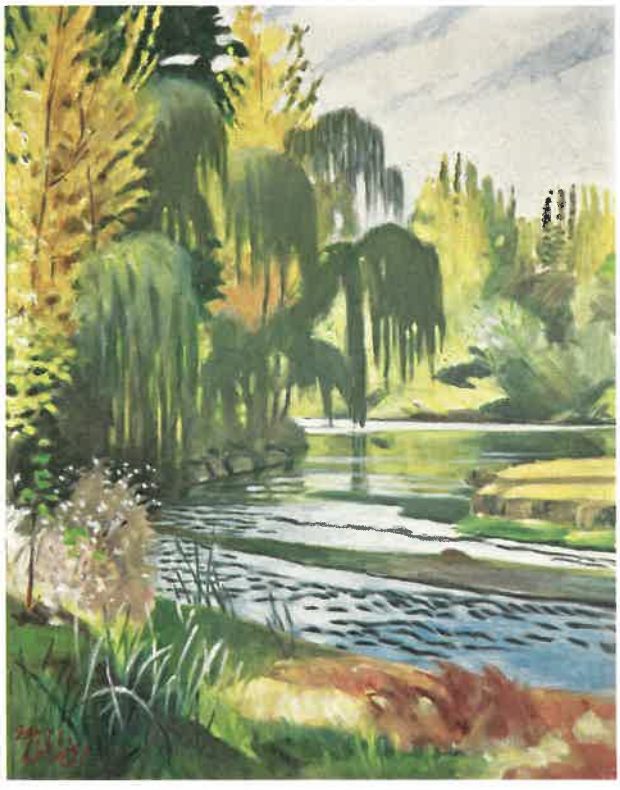
161.

A view from the Sieman Hotel, Kashgar, China, 1991, Pen & ink on paper
Collection: Mina and Imran Zaidi.

162. *Laburnum,* 1999, Pastel on paper, 8"x10", Private Collection.

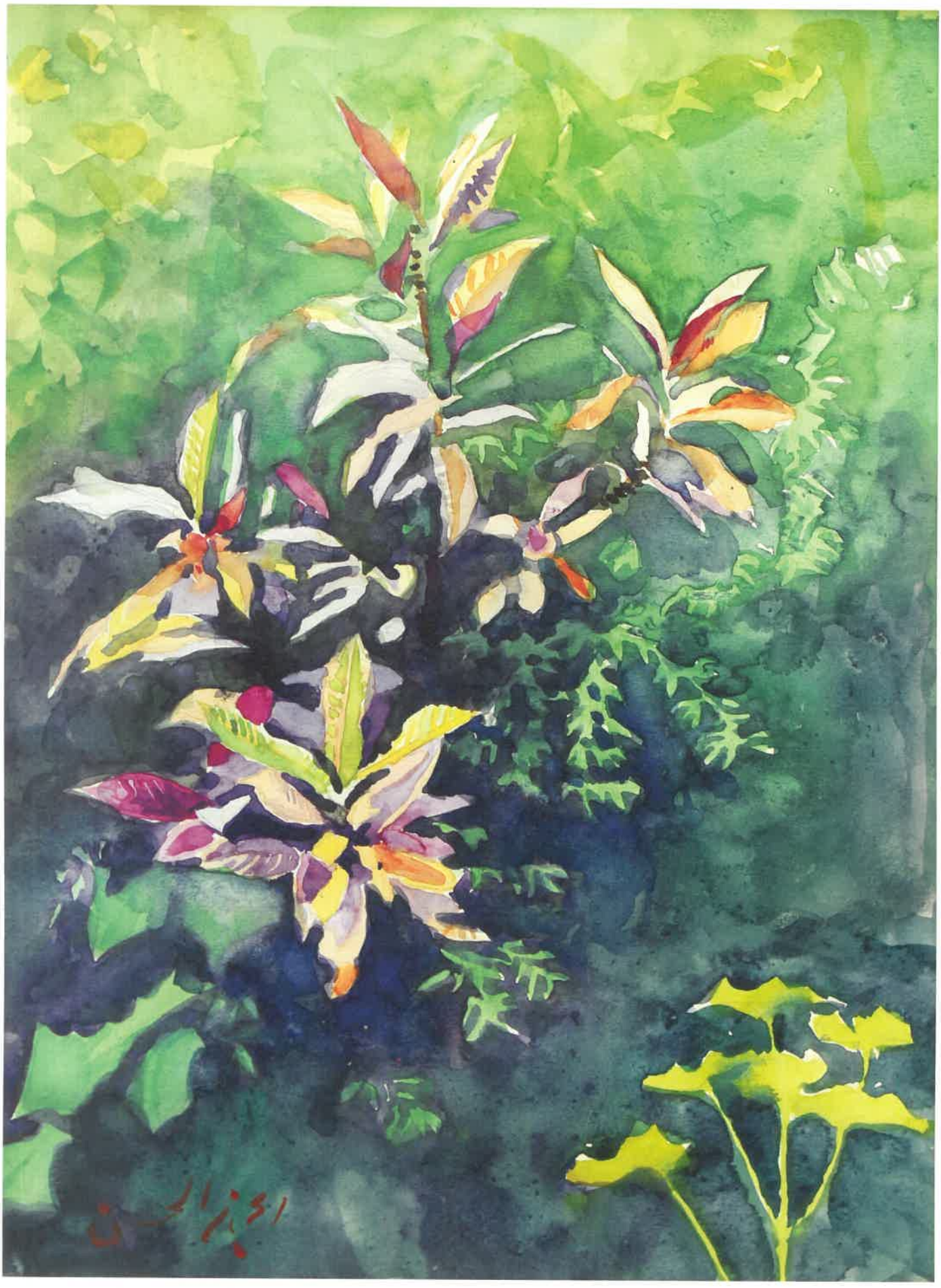
163. *Apple Tree at Bhurban,* 1990, Oil on canvas, 24"x30", Private Collection.

164. *Eucalyptus After Rainstorm,* 1993, Oil on canvas, 18"x12",
Collection: Jugnu and Najam Sethi.



165. *Wheeping Willows By The Riverside at Wah,* 1993,
Oil on canvas, 24"x18", Collection: Shehla & Mian Tariq Saigol.

166. *Tree,* 1996, Coloured Felt Pens on Photostat Paper, 8"x10", Collection: Gisele Butt.



167. *Tropical Plants,* 2006, Water colour, 14"x10", Collection: Mina and Syed Imran Zaidi.

168. *Lilies,* 1994, Oil on canvas, 36"x42", Collection: Mina and Syed Imran Zaidi.

169. *Narayan Lilies,* 2008, Water colour on paper, Collection: Mian Tariq Hassan.

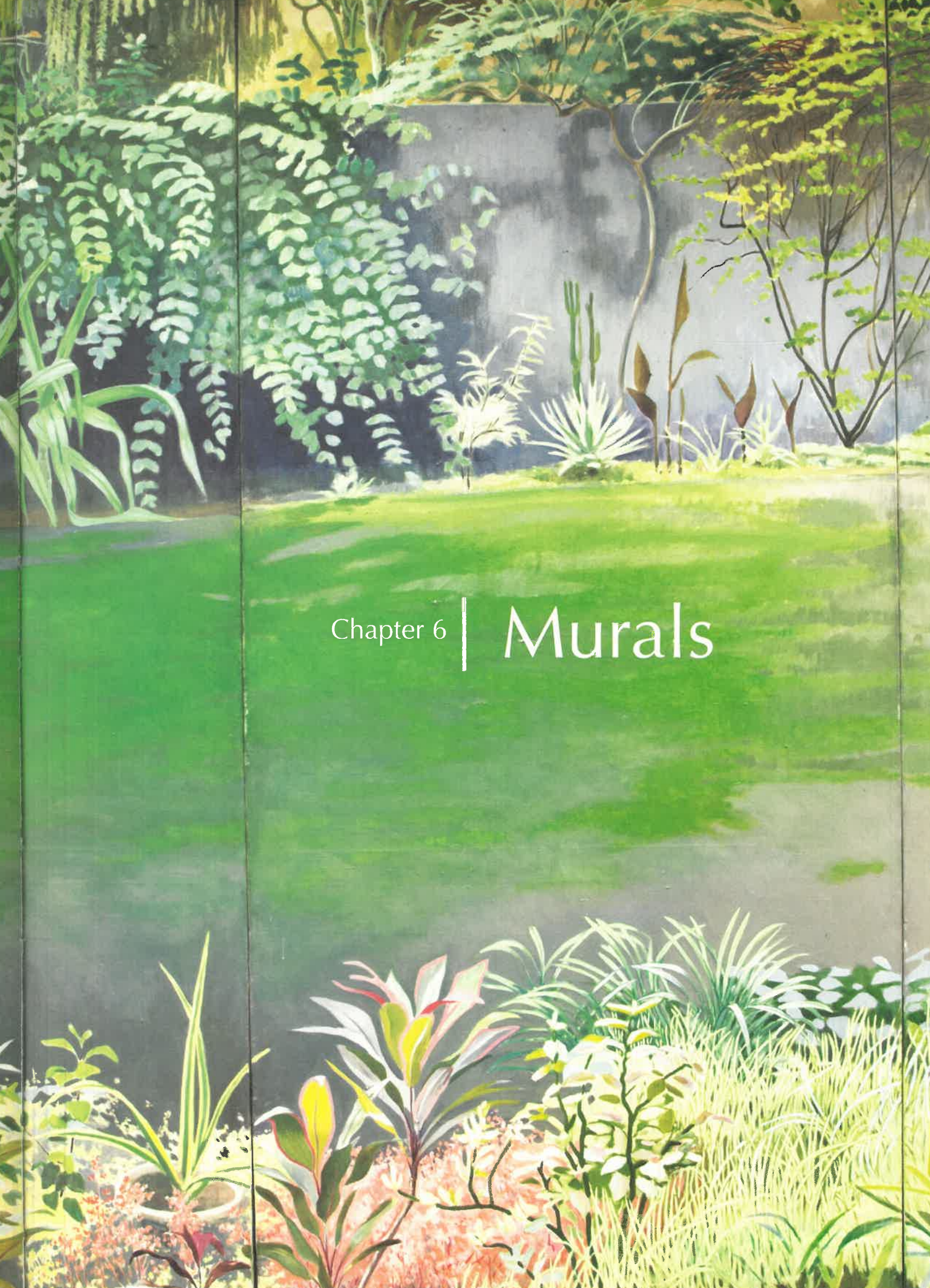
170. *Narayan Lilies,* 2008, Sketch pen on paper, Artist's Collection.

171.

Jamini, 1980,
Oil on canvas, 30"x36"
Collection: Mina and Syed Imran Zaidi

2. Ijaz ul Hassan painting at Astore.

172. *Ibex at Astore,* 1991, Oil on board,30"x24", Collection: Nasreen and Brig. Khalid Yasin.



Chapter 6 | Murals

Murals

Ijaz is among the few Pakistani painters who have tackled the intricacies of mural painting. Among the foremost was Sadequain, who according to Ijaz has painted `more bolts of canvas than perhaps all Pakistan painters put together'. Ijaz admired the manner in which Sadequain narrowed the wide gap between the artist and the average citizen. This also greatly helped to popularize painting in Pakistan – a country that has a tradition of painting going back many hundred years.

Shakir Ali's manner of painting – the way he planned images on the canvas was very well suited for mural painting and both these artists have exquisite works of mural to their credit. Sadequain, however produced, the larger quantity. Gulgee has also produced a few murals based on calligraphy mostly abstract renderings executed with a twist of the wrist and flow of the arm.

Ijaz has pursued the painting of murals with great commitment in his endeavor to not only bring art closer to the people – from museums and galleries to the streets. He sought subjects and images and pictorial material familiar and in wider circulation and recognition of the common man. He persistently worked hard to simplify the aesthetic experience and link it with events in every day life of the people and cultural and International events that are not esoteric.

The State and Governments have not taken opportunities to build public art that engages artists to adorn hospitals and public squares, city walls, universities and public places. In a country where the literacy rate is so low, the visual experience of a mural would enhance social awareness in them and help strengthen aesthetic sensibilities.

Murals have to be sponsored. Apart from state patronage, the role of the private sector has been negligible. In modern times, the impetus to mural painting was spearheaded by the Mexican painters and now is being promoted in countries where citizens have greater role in conducting their affairs.

After the mural that Ijaz painted for the NAFDEC cinema, he executed several large paintings. One of them was a huge mural made with ceramic tiles. The most frequent topic for his large paintings was the Laburnum tree. He painted 14 very large paintings on various topics i.e., on the theme of the cinema, four murals of the Laburnum, two murals depicting his garden, one of which is 'Let a hundred plants grow', and another with Spring Blooms which is now at the Foreign Office, Islamabad, the ceramic mural at the Alhamra Arts Council, Lahore, a large collage based on the activities of Lahore, two murals called the Red Signal (pages 212-215) and one sketch for a mural on the ceiling. I have already talked about the large painting called the Rifle Butt (pages 86-87), which can also be included in this category. His two mural paintings that include the Girding Vine represents bonding as a precious and inherently universal human sentiment of people as expressed in folklore, poetry and traditional literature. The *Spring Blooms* (pages 200-201) depicts a vision of spring in the artist's own common garden.

NAFDEC Mural

In the 1980s Ijaz planned and painted a mural for National Film Development Corporation (NAFDEC), which took him more than a year to plan and execute. The mural is divided into several vertical panels resembling filmstrips. Each of the panels is subdivided into images that are successively repeated to stress their own specific concerns, as well as a visual still depiction, that if repeated will lend it movement and an assimilation of the moving film. These strips were moulded by the worldview upheld by the individual scriptwriter and producer. The subject matter ranges from platonic classicism and utopian romanticism, realism, to exalted ideals of resistance and revolution, to crass commercialism.

When these panels extend to the extreme right they transform into a real brick wall plastered with posters, the recent ones pasted on top of the torn and withered remains of the old. In front of the fanciful and exalted images on the

173. *Pencil sketch on paper,* for the NAFDEC Mural, 1977, 14"x24", Artists Collection.

panels the artist has cleverly added citizens commuting on the road that runs in front of the wall. There are three poor dusty children playing in one corner, a man in a white bush shirt and his wife wearing black *burqa* carrying a child in the centre and a person tugging along a bicycle with a bald headed lad sitting at the back on the carrier holding on to the seat with one hand and a bottle of medicine in the other. On the extreme right end is a young man in blue jeans and a jacket, with a movie camera held by hand balanced on his shoulder, shooting life on the street. By adding a street scene, Ijaz enhanced the sense of illusion associated with cinematography. He at the same time dramatically confronts the viewer by raising the question of art and reality. By showing the camera focused on people in a street, Ijaz seems to be saying that regardless of individual faith, social and intellectual bias cinema must not be based on abstract notions but on observed and experienced realities of life. The mural has multifaceted dimensions to it. The wall at the back has people in the street walking in front of it. All these are being photographed by a cameraman in blue jeans which forms a third dimension. And we, the viewers, are looking at all this from a fourth dimension.

This mural has a fascinating story behind it. When on completion it was handed over to NAFDEC, it was discovered that the architect who had indicated the site for the mural and the space where it was to be hung, was actually reserved for a staircase. The best they could do when they received the mural was to hang it on two adjoining walls. Even then they could not hang it at the ground level. Ijaz had proposed to fix the mural at the floor level at the twin cinema complex for which it was visualised. By fixing it at that position, the perspective of the street in the mural would deceptively merge with the level of the floor. Anticipating that some cinemagoers would be standing, other shuffling and moving in front of the mural he incorporated them in the design by proportionately reducing the size of the figures painted by him on the street. He thereby, intended to (enhance) the sense of illusion manifold and thus he believes that he would enrich the meaning and content of the mural because illusion is a theme integral to the cinema. While the mural stayed at that cinema, it lost a lot of impact because the sense of illusion was lost due to faulty installation.

The story does not end there. After years of inactivity, the authorities decided that NAFDEC was not sustainable. They sold the cinema lock stock and barrel. Ijaz received frantic calls from well-wishers who informed him that his mural had also been sold off with the furniture and other articles belonging to the cinema.

174.

Imaging – The NAFDEC Mural, (6 panels) 1977, Oil on canvas, 96"x288",
Collection: The National Gallery of Art, Islamabad.

2

175-176. Details of the NAFDEC mural.

Ijaz had put his soul in the mural so he could not remain unconcerned. Retrieving the mural was yet another long learning process of how the system works. The redeeming feature was that friendships and accommodation can still manage a hazardous path forward in the meandering labyrinth of complicated procedures that don't seem to stop any wrong, but are always an impediment to any progress for any just demand.

The battered and bruised mural was finally salvaged by the PNCA. Ijaz volunteered to spend almost a month to repair it. It now hangs in the National Art Gallery in Islamabad, on one wall even though it is not installed as it was designed to be at ground level, in order to enhance as mentioned above the sense of illusion by actual movement of visitors moving before it on the floor.

But some art historians like S. Amjad Ali dismiss these works with the words:[23]

> "His work did not attract much attention until he gave up his social preoccupations around 1980 and started painting close up pictures of trees and plants, especially large fern leaves. He focuses so closely on subjects that every leaf stands out clearly and separately. However, he is able to organise the crowded scenes by showing the near leaves in strong light and the ones behind in shadow, so the former stand out prominently."

Many writers held such views without having seen even a fraction of the work of this period. Due to the imposition of Martial Law some of the works were thrown out of exhibitions others were censored and never exhibited by the state officials who controlled or presided over most public galleries. It is only recently with the opening of many new galleries and the resultant removal of strict state censorship, that a vigorous appraisal and vindication of Ijaz's paintings of that period began. His painting *Thah* was purchased by the *Fukuoka Art Museum*, Japan from the Sotheby's auction in London. At a more recent exhibition in Bombay his work was highlighted and in the perspective of South Asia it came as a great surprise to many art critics in India that this painting was produced twenty years before this approach became *avant garde* in the modern world. He had tackled topics and controversies in a style that is being termed by the moderns as the Cutting Edge art of today. In this context about Ijaz's work of that time, Asim Butt in his article 'Robust Roots' published in 2005 says:[24]

> 'This use of popular imagery has no precedence in Pakistani art and its progeny only emerge in Iftikhar Dadi, David Aylesworth and Durya Kazi two decades later. According to an artist returning from Bombay, where Hassan's work has been recently shown as part of a large exhibition of Pakistani Art, Indian painters were surprised to see how Hassan was using newspaper and magazine clippings as sources for his paintings as early as the 1970's. Pastiche of this nature is only now being made in India.'

THE LABURNUM

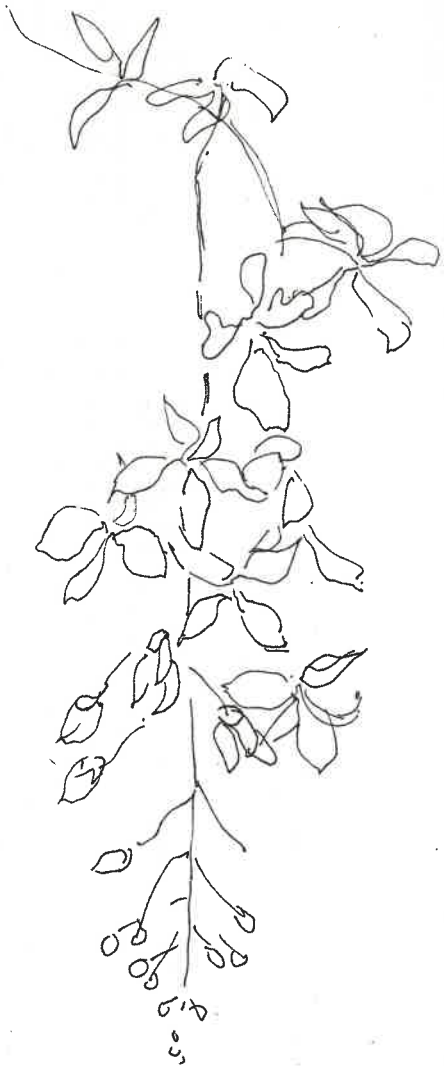
Ijaz became acutely aware of the Laburnum when it sheds its leaves and was a somber image of death that within a space of a few days transformed into a spectacle of life.

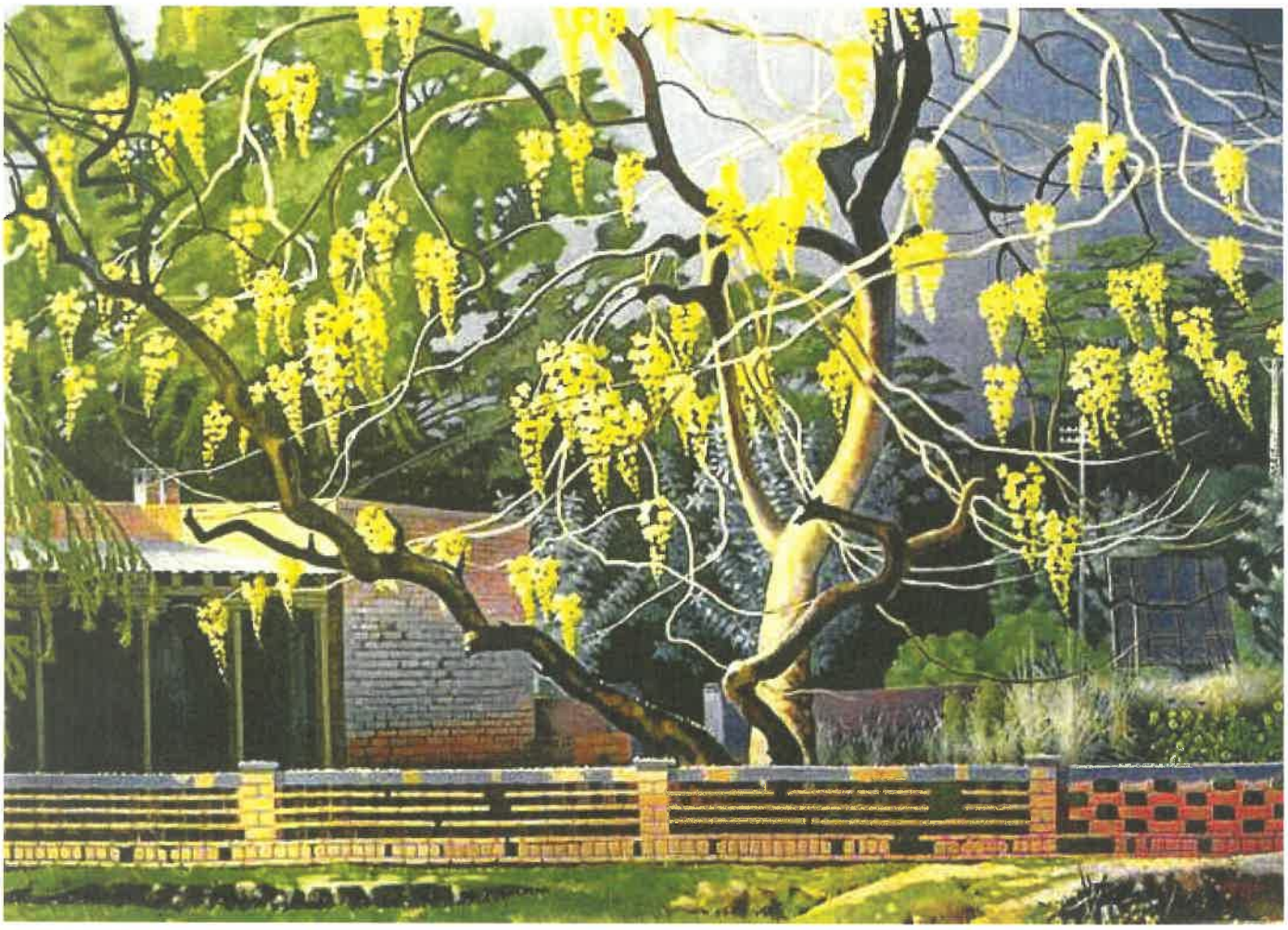
He himself describes the moments when he became aware of the Laburnum's presence. Ijaz writes in his weekly column, 'Dazzling Spectacle':[25]

> "Talking of blossoms I recall an Amaltas growing in the back yard of a hut, at the turning of Zafar Ali Road, which leads to the Mall. It was quite a magnificent specimen. One day late in spring while driving down my usual route, I was startled to observe that it was denuded of all its foliage and wore a grim-expression. It looked charred seemingly without any sap in its limbs. Even the tender branches appeared dead and brittle as though all life fluids had dried up.
>
> Everyday when I would take the usual turn towards the Mall, I would feel deeply touched at the sight expecting that any day it would be cut down and cleared. Days passed but nothing happened. Then one day I noticed that it had awakened and evidence of life had quietly burst out in lemon from innumerable parts of its seemingly dead sapless branches."

His four large paintings of the Laburnum tree, two by the roadside and two by the canal are huge pictures (96" x 144") that show all the serenity and coolness of the yellow blooms on a hot summer day. Ijaz has always been consciously working in a style that is easily understood by a majority of the people. As he advanced in his career, the size of his paintings grew bigger and there was a greater flourish in his style. Even Akbar Naqvi grudgingly admits:[26]

> "Ijaz ul Hassan's *Laburnum Tree* is a work of joyous decoration on a huge scale, fit for a museum or the wall of a mansion."





177.

Laburnum and Impending Storm, 1983, Oil on canvas,
Collection: Pakistan House, New Delhi

aa. The artist in front of mural, *Laburnum and Impending Storm*, painted in 1983.

178.

Laburnum near Dharampura Bridge, 1986,
Oil on canvas, 96"x144"
Collection: Air Chief Marshal Jamal Khan

179. *Laburnum On The Lahore Canal,* (3 panels) 1991, Oil on canvas, 96"x144", Collection: Moni and Mian Khurshid Kasuri.

ab.

The artist before mural titled 'Laburnum in Bloom', painted in 1992.

180.

Laburnum in Bloom near Simla Paharri, (3 panels), 1992,
Oil on canvas, 60"x108"
Collection: First International Investment Bank

181. *Girding Vine,* 72"x108" (3 panels, 60"x36" each), Oil on Canvas, Collection: Mian and Begum Tahir Saleem.

ابجار الحسن

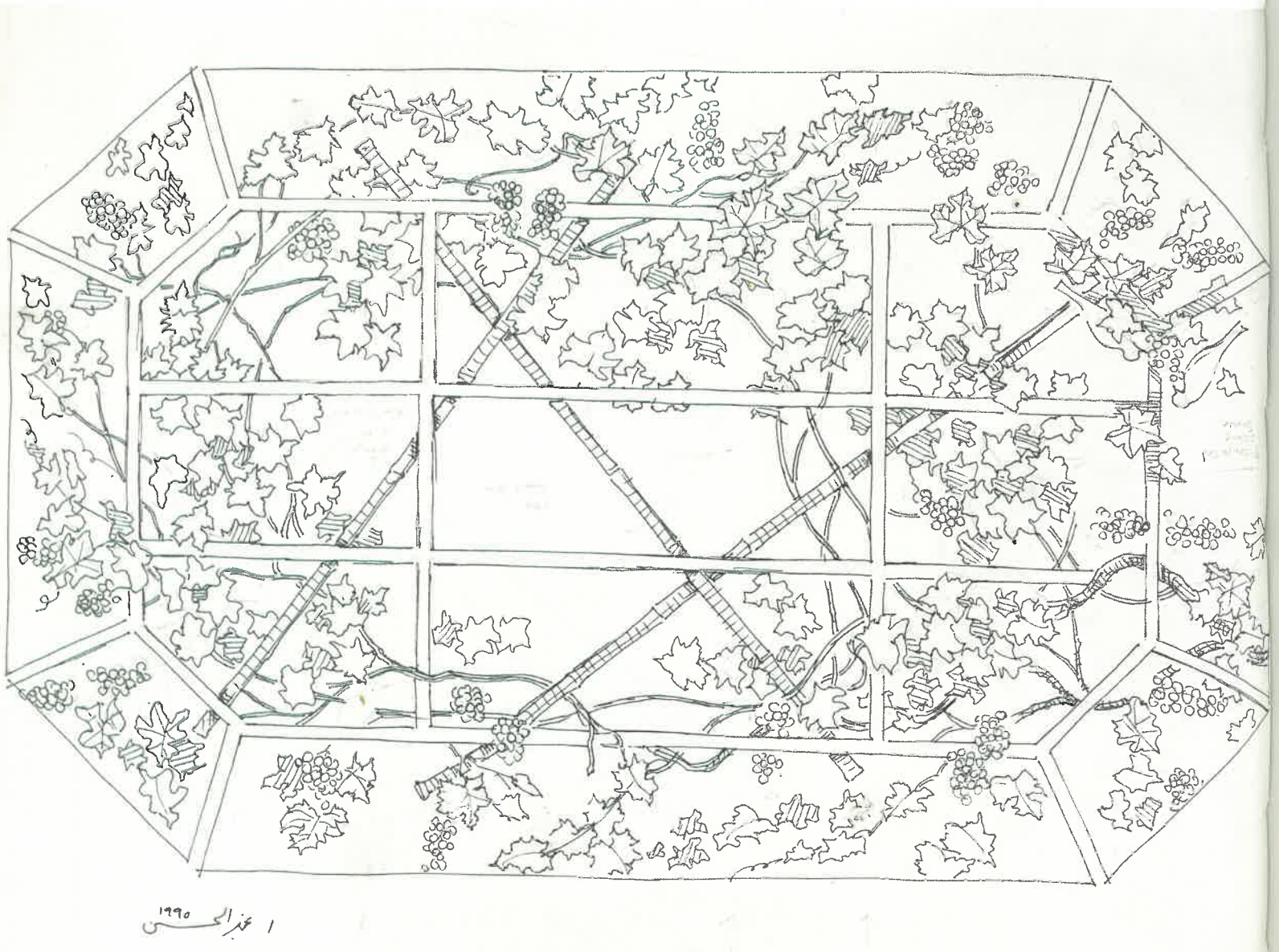
182. *Spring Blooms*, 60"x108" (3 panels, 60"x36" each), Oil on canvas, Collection: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

183. *Let A hundred Plants Grow,* 1988, 96"x 192" (4 panels, 96"x48" each), Oil on canvas, Collection: First International Investment Bank.

LET A HUNDRED PLANTS GROW

Ijaz celebrated the return of democracy in 1988 with a four panel painting of his garden. Metaphorically the garden represents his country with many different species of plants and flowers. The garden is serene and beautiful because of the very diversity of plants flourishing in harmony and peace. Ijaz by naming it *Let a Hundred Plants Grow* seems

to be asking if all these plants of different species, colour and temper can live in harmony, why can't human beings rise above their sectarian, linguistic and clanish identities and embrace others of different faith or culture. It is only because these plants live and grow together in harmony that they make the garden flourish and the atmosphere tranquil and peaceful.



184.

Design for Ceiling Mural, 1990,
Pencil on paper, Artist's Collection

185.

185–187.

Studies of Grape Vine for the Ceiling Mural, 1990,
Artist's Collection

186.

187.

188.

Ceramic Mural at Alhamra, 1989, Mosaic of Ceramic tiles on wall, 192"x312" (16'x28'), Collection: The Alhamra Arts Council, Lahore.

The Ceramic Mural at Alhamra

Making murals and large pictures was a conscious effort towards public art, for that is the one ambition of Ijaz's life – to make huge artworks for public outdoor places so that they are visible and easily accessible to commuting citizens. To this end he made an important beginning in 1989 when he completed an outdoor mosaic mural 17' x 60' assembled together with glazed tiles of different colours, shapes and sizes. Based on the culture, folklore and people of the Punjab it is on permanent exhibition at the premises of the Lahore Arts Council. Ijaz deliberately included scenes of familiar folklore and popular activities of the people since the mural was to be fixed at this permanent location. Students and children who came for their art classes, drama artists, political workers, public servant and civil society, tourists and a whole range of people of various trades who visit the arts council would find something to interest them in a variety of activities to which they can relate. That they relate to the mural is quite charming and even now many of the visitors can be seen posing for a photograph in front of this mural.

The idea of using glazed tiles as raw material by cutting sections from clay before glazing and firing was an attempt at adding something new and continue the Mughal mosaic tradition, which is in evidence at the Lahore Fort, Chauburgi and Wazir Khan's Mosque. The theme is ordinary people and their activities around a tree laden with bloom, with birds meaningfully perched on its branches. The country folk are busy working in fields – village women are picking cotton,

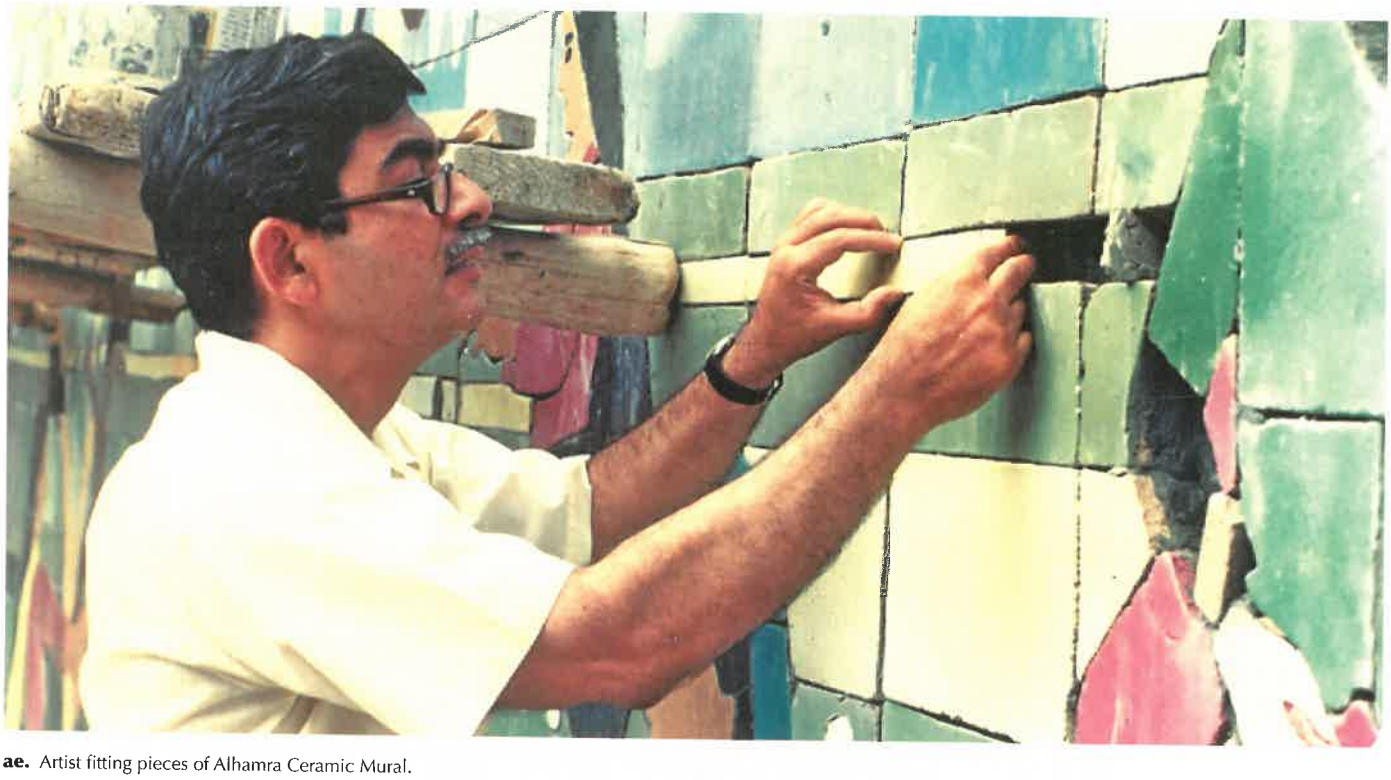
ac.

The Ceramic Mural being assembled on the floor.

Details of the Alhamra Ceramic Mural.

ad.

Ceramic jug designed and glazed by the artist during his stay at Multan.



ae. Artist fitting pieces of Alhamra Ceramic Mural.

churning butter or spinning cotton. There is a puppet show going on as children run about and play hopscotch. To accomplish all this in glazed tile mosaic was a mammoth task that took almost two years and Ijaz literally constructed it like a jigsaw puzzle, grinding edges of each glazed section and fitting the mural, first on the floor and slowly in parts transferring it and fixing it piece by piece on the wall.

He has reservations about this mural. Its execution is not exactly as he wished it to have been because he faced many tedious problems while doing it. First the Shahdara Pottery Centre on the outskirts of Lahore, where initially the glazed pieces of tiles were to be fired, went through a series of mishaps. The final disaster was an unexpected flooding of the facility caused by the river Ravi that flows in close proximity to the Pottery Centre. He was consequently forced to shift the project to the Blue Pottery Centre at Multan. Multan being a considerable distance away made it difficult for him to supervise each detail, a task which could have been easily managed at Shahdara.

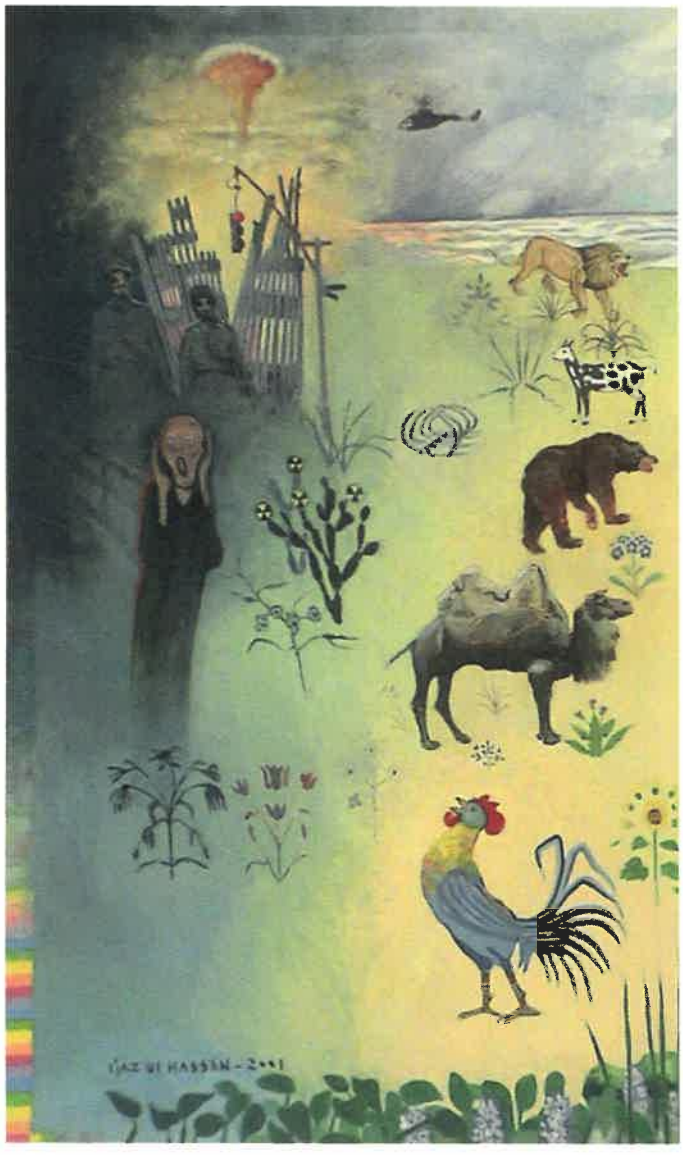
A fringe benefit of the stay and involvement with pottery in Multan was Ijaz's intense enjoyment and experience of working on a few pieces of pottery that he designed and glazed while working there.

He hastened to finish the project against his better judgement and his frustration to some extent is reflected in the comment he wrote years later in one of his articles. About state patronage he writes in his weekly column – 'Looking back at the sixties':[27]

> "Can the contemporary artist and the forces of market economy work together? Then there is the question of artists like us who are living and working in economies and political systems, which escape tidy definitions. In our country there are neither the free market economy forces in existence nor a state, which is sympathetic to the development of the arts. This, in a way has been a blessing. In today's world state patronage can only subvert the arts. On the other hand, for an artist to be on his own is not easy even at the best of times. But it is a journey, which he has to under take by himself. Like some of the names of artists that I have mentioned did in the sixties. I believe that if an individual believes in him self and the cause he pleads sooner or later, others will also start believing in him."

189.

Lahore, 1997,
Oil on canvas, 48"x72"
Collection: National Assembly
of Pakistan, Islamabad



THE TWO RED SIGNALS

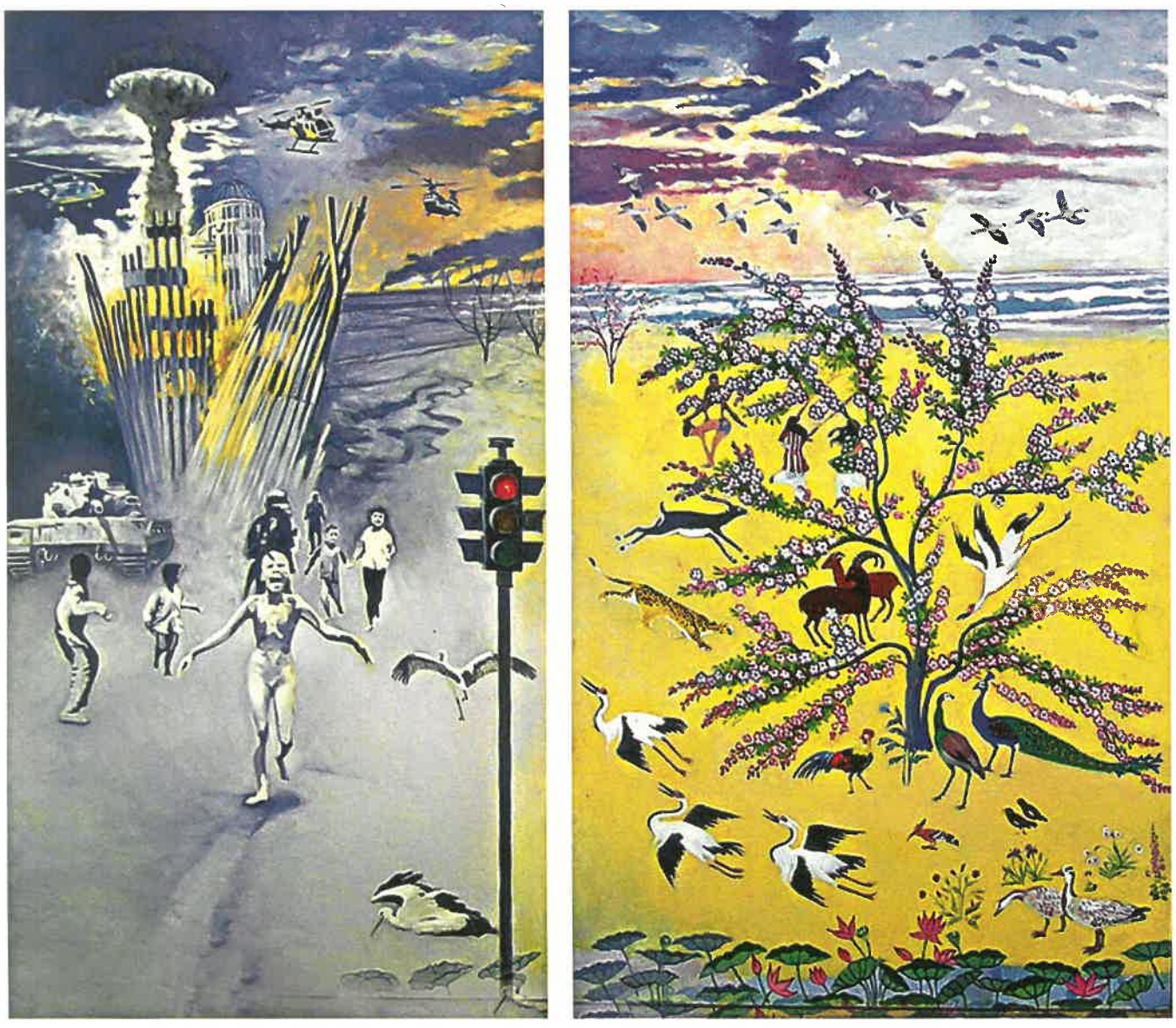
During his visit to the United States in 2001, the terrible disaster, the 9/11 tragedy took place. He expressed his distress and apprehension about the sequel to this event in a large mural, which he called 'The Red Signal-1'. He painted another one on the same theme in 2005 and called it 'The Red Signal -2'. The red signal is the sign to stop and that is the message that both these murals are trying to convey to the world. 'Stop' now, before you destroy yourself and the world.

Both these murals are divided into three panels, which follow a sequence and should be viewed from right to left – rather than from left to right. The first panel in both these murals if seen in this manner portrays a Garden of Eden on earth at the time of Adam and Eve, with its beautiful and lush foliage, populated by exotic birds of all species and colours. Any Garden of Eden would be incomplete without a bubbling fountain of life, the crystal clear waters of which seem to be singing the song of life that is heralding the growth and perpetuation of life on earth. It is a serene world where a man and a woman seem to be awakening to the beauty around them. There is hope and expectation in their attitudes and their eyes are looking beyond the horizon, beyond their immediate surroundings towards the possibilities of growth and evolution that the prospect seems to offer them.

190. *The Red Signal, – I,* 2001, Oil on canvas, 60"x108" (Three Panels), Collection: Dr Mian Ahmad Hassan.

The second panel shows life on earth over centuries, where mankind has made great strides forward and has grown in stature and sensibility. This progress has been depicted through symbols of material and cultural accomplishments. It shows some of the choicest artefacts from civilisations that achieved recognition on this earth. These relics of the past glory are scattered around in a landscape that is still beautiful and vibrant with life and colour, in spite of the human tampering and a growing human presence. The chosen symbols are sometimes depicted through the 'Geese of Medium' that exemplify the delicacy as well as the stature of the Egyptian civilisation. Sometimes as in the second mural this stature and excellence is seen through a blossoming tree taken from a Persian Miniature. There are birds and animals that share the beauty and splendour of the environment with frolicking human beings who are aware of and are clearly enjoying the beauty around them. But as this story nears the edge of the second panel, there seems to be the semblance of a panic in the air. We see animals and birds trying to flee the space of the third panel and try and reach the security of the serene world that was beginning to be jolted.

The third panels in both murals reflect the disaster that human beings have made of this earth. Before the panel begins to unfold its horrors there are signs that say 'stop' in both the murals. The artist has made a traffic signal that is showing a red light in the foreground of the third panel just before the scenes of destruction, that are symbolised by the atomic mushroom and the steel skeleton of the World Trade Centre, the napalm bombs, the helicopters, the

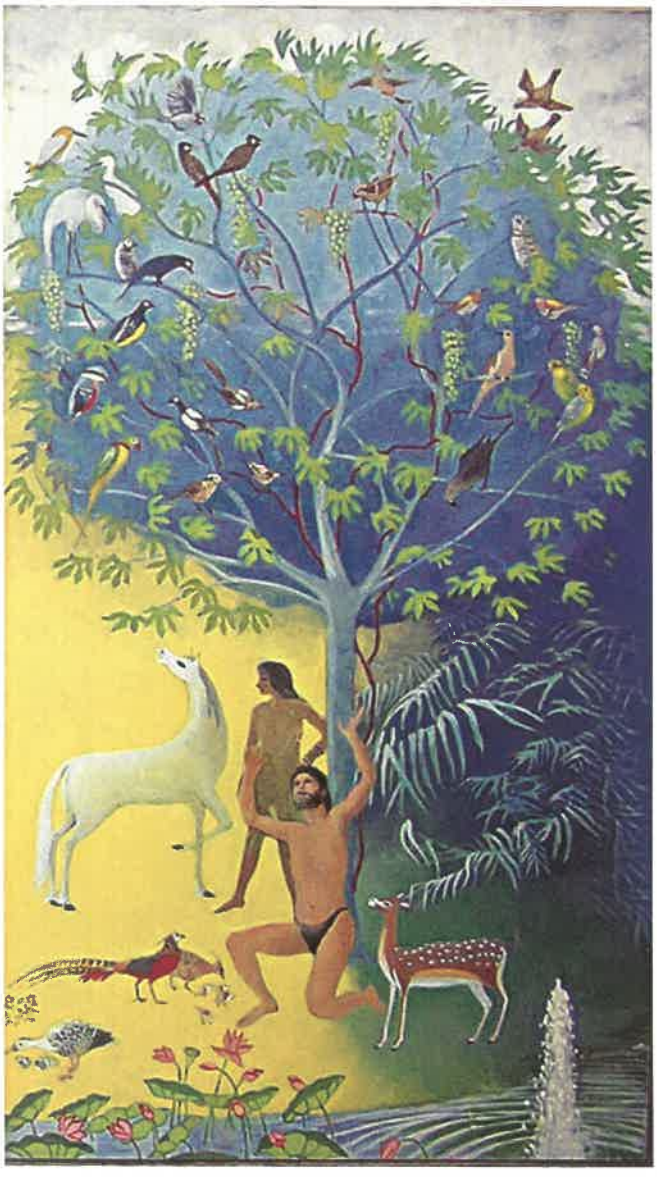


191. *The Red Signal – II*, 2003, Oil on canvas, 60"x108" (three panels), Artist's Collection.

fighter jets and fire. Both the murals are visually different. They are not judgemental and neither are they making any accusations or pointing a finger. They seems to be urging all those concerned to stop and ponder and put an end to this disastrous route, which will eventually mean destruction for us and the beautiful world that we inherited.

Man and woman in the Edenic garden found it generously adorned with almost limitless bounties, not to speak of countless concealed possibilities that challenged to be discovered. The two murals trace the transition of man from his pastoral existence and spiritual oneness with nature and diverse life forms that surrounded him, living in ecological harmony to civilization to his descent when man transforms into a predator. Whereas, once he stood on the threshold of wonder consumed by curiosity he now reeks with greed, is impelled to ravage and destroy the mother earth itself that milked and raised him to build an astonishing new world that today is threatened to be reduced to ashes.

The Red Signal 1 and 2, urge all those who are perpetrators of this destruction to put a stop to all this before it is too late. In Red Signal 1, there is a cock crowing in the third panel to herald the coming of the disastrous era. The message is clear. Retaliation and revenge are useless because if the world is destroyed, nobody will be the winner

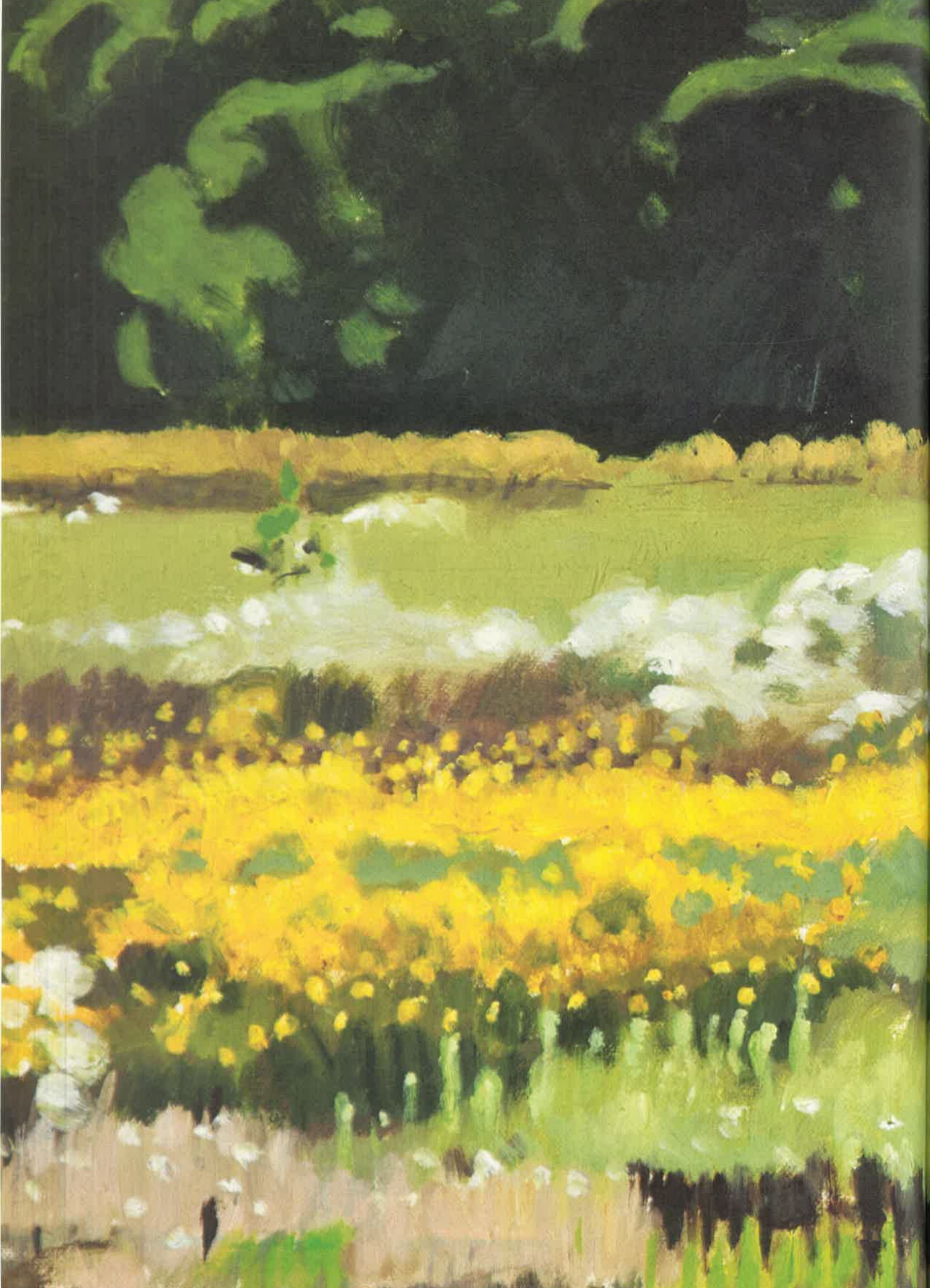


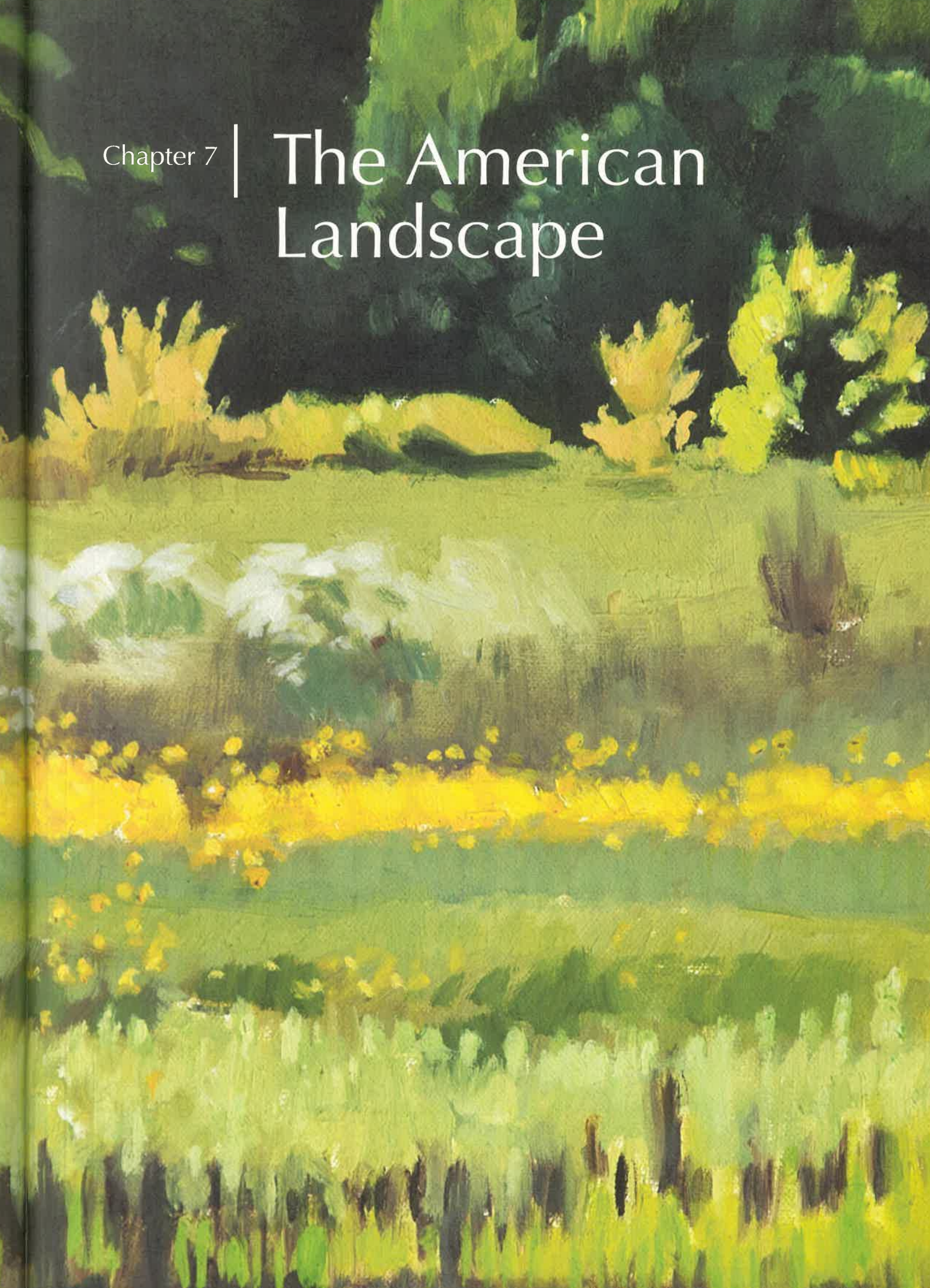
and what is more important there will be no people with hands intact that will be able to point an accusing finger. The message is firm and real in both the murals and the red signal seems to have come nearer in the second one, depicting danger that is bigger and the message to stop more urgent.

Both the Red Signals and their simple message have gone unheeded in the new century and every day now brings new horrors and acts of religious, sectarian and state violence. 2007 was another year of this violence and the end of it brought the murder of Benazir Bhutto, a former Prime Minister and a popular leader of Pakistan. Ijaz was deeply moved by this episode enacted in broad daylight and seen by million on television channels. He expressed his bafflement with several impassioned canvases and a deeply felt poem.

References

23. S. Amjad Ali, *Painters of Pakistan*, National Book Foundation, Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, 2000, p230.
24. Asim Butt, *Robust Roots*, *Herald*, April 2005, p132.
25. Ijaz ul Hassan, *Dazzling Spectacle*, *The Way It Was*, *The Daily Times*, Lahore, March 2002.
26. Akbar Naqvi, *Image and Identity*, *Fifty Years of Painting and Sculpture in Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, 1998, p 574.
27. Ijaz ul Hassan, *Looking Back At The Sixties*, *The Way It Was*, *The Daily Times*, Lahore, March 2002.





Chapter 7 | The American Landscape

Ijaz first visited America in the late eighties. He stayed in Jackson in Tennessee for over a month and produced many landscapes focusing on countryside surrounding the town. His *Spring Grasses* is a particularly attractive painting. His visit to America in the early nineties brought him an insight into a different atmospheric and social milieu of Brooklyn. On two subsequent visits he tackled snow scenes for the first time. While visiting our son Mian Ahmed Hasan, he painted winter with trepidation and then with confidence. He said that he had never realised how many tones of white were present in the apparently white snow scenes and how delicately each needed to be treated. Whenever, he happens to be in the States in winter, he delights in painting the cold shivery vistas of the neat sheets of crispy white snow, trying to observe and pick the wealth of colour and tones that he feels is the source of the particular glow that pervades a snow laden winter landscape. He has rendered snow scenes in Kentucky, Pennsylvania, New York and at Maine.

What fascinated him about snow was not only this aspect, but how it rests on branches and ledges like clotted cream, but the fact that when it falls it smothers and blots out incidental details and simplifies contours of a subject.

His visits to Washington brought him a different experience. The time of the year was autumn when nature bursts forth in an overwhelming riot of colour

af. The artist painting in Jackson, USA, 1987.

192.

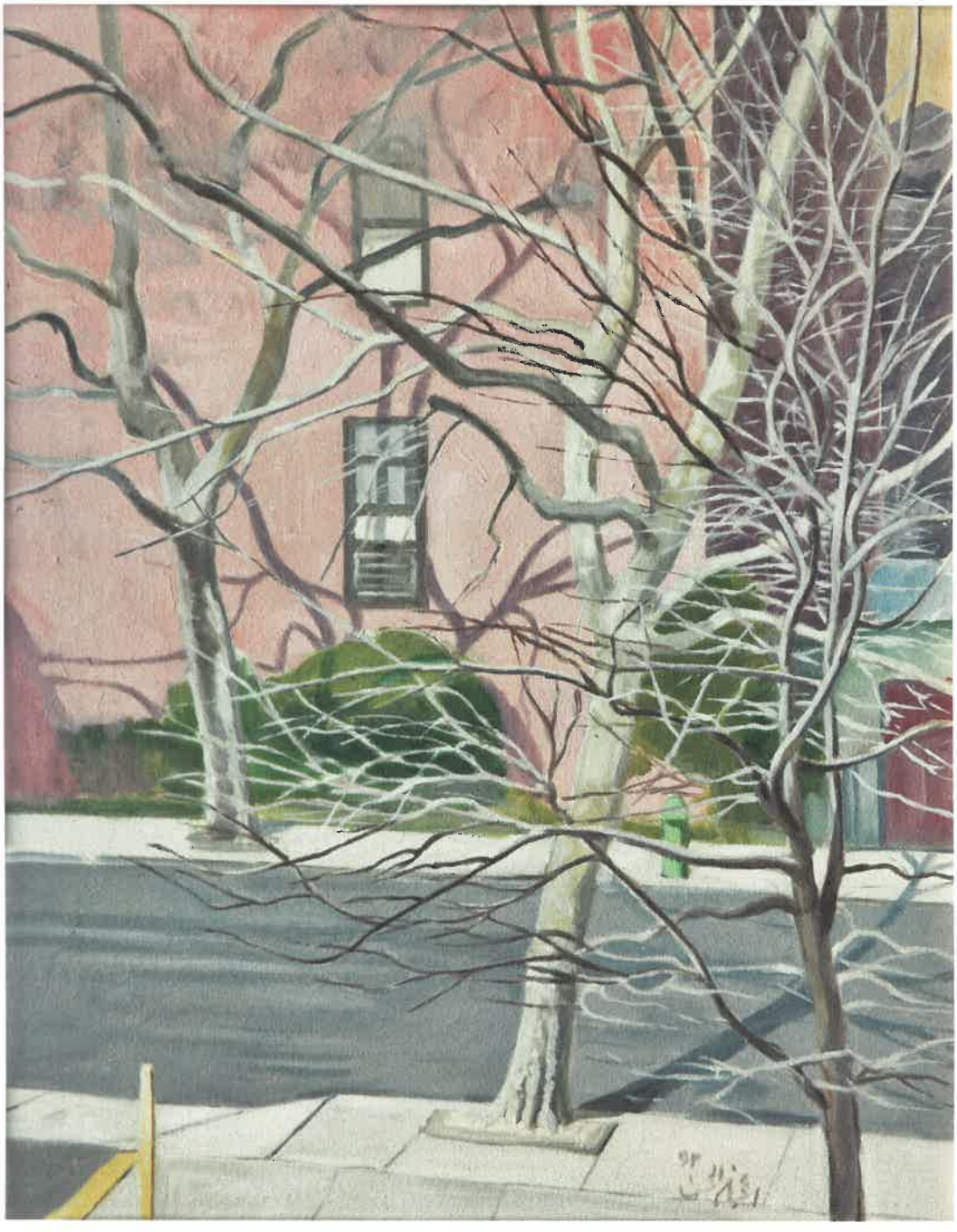
Spring Grasses (Jackson, Tennesse, USA), 1987,
Oil on canvas, 30"x24"
Collection: Bunny and Mian Sarmad Amin

193.

Snow at Harrisburgh, US, 1998
Oil on canvas, 24"x20"
Collection: Mina and Syed Imran Zaidi

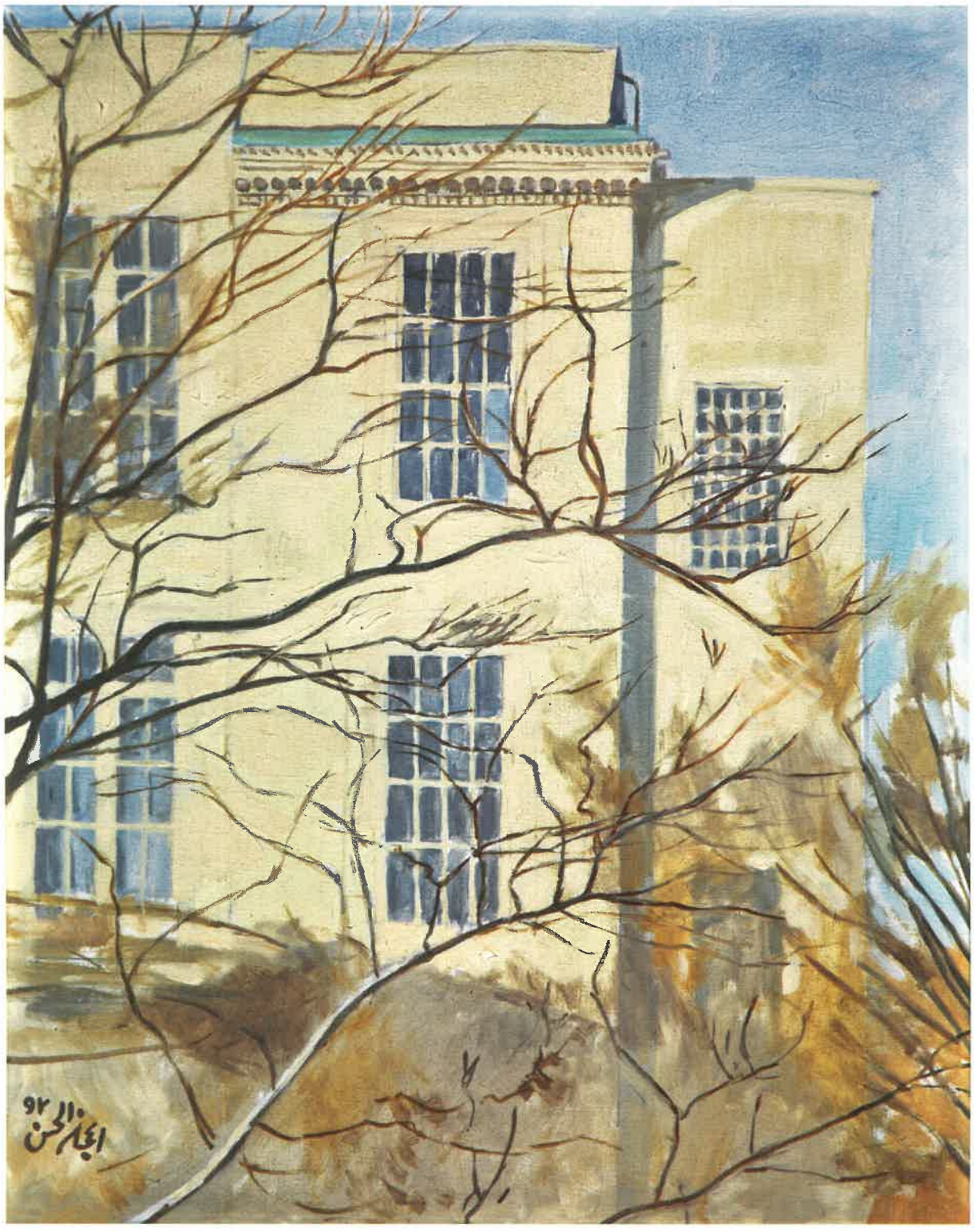
194.

Maine Winter, US, 1998,
Oil on canvas, 36"x30"
Collection: Faryal Khan Niazi



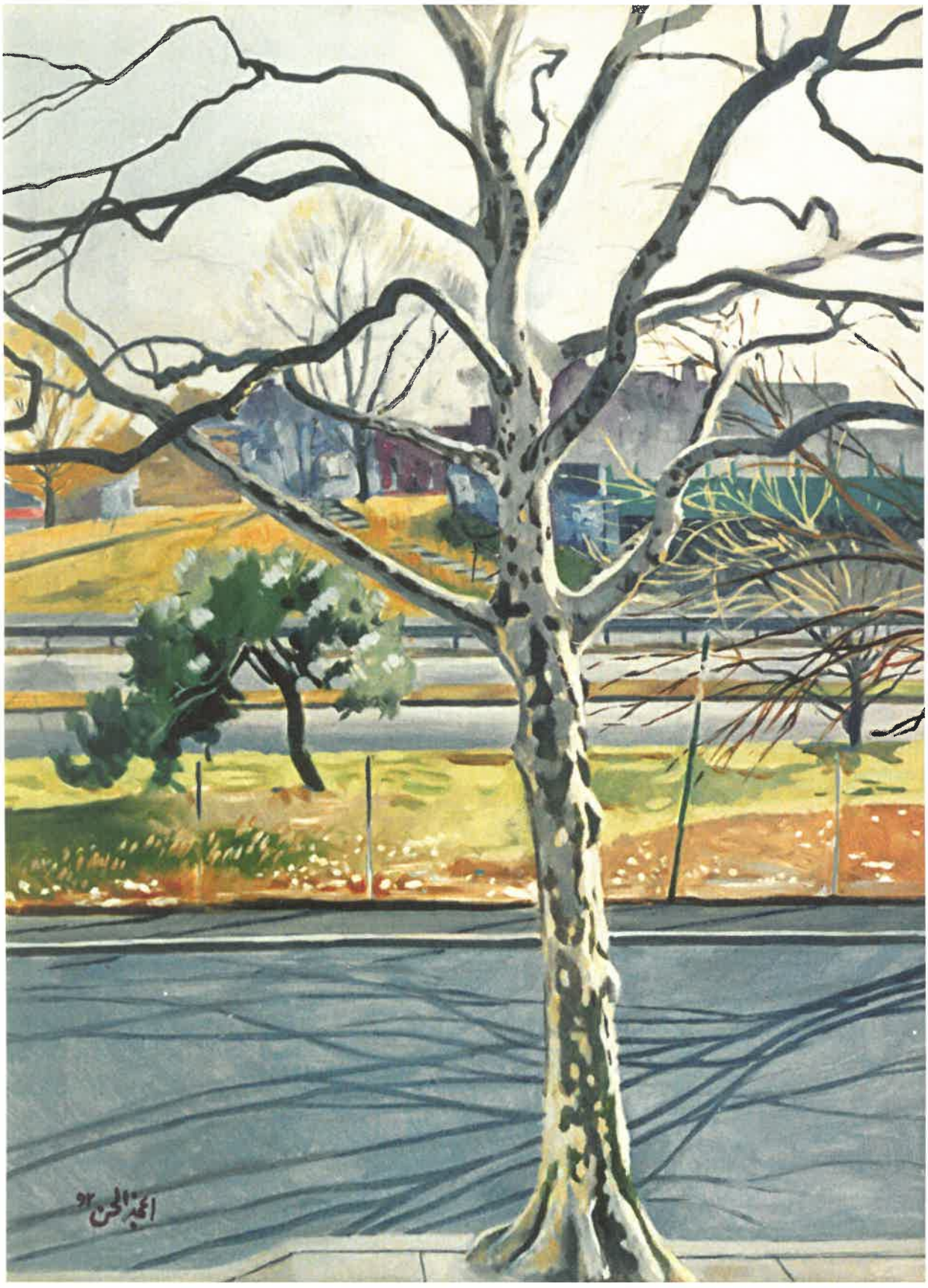
195.

A Morning in Brooklyn-I, 1992,
Oil on canvas, 24"x18"
Private Collection



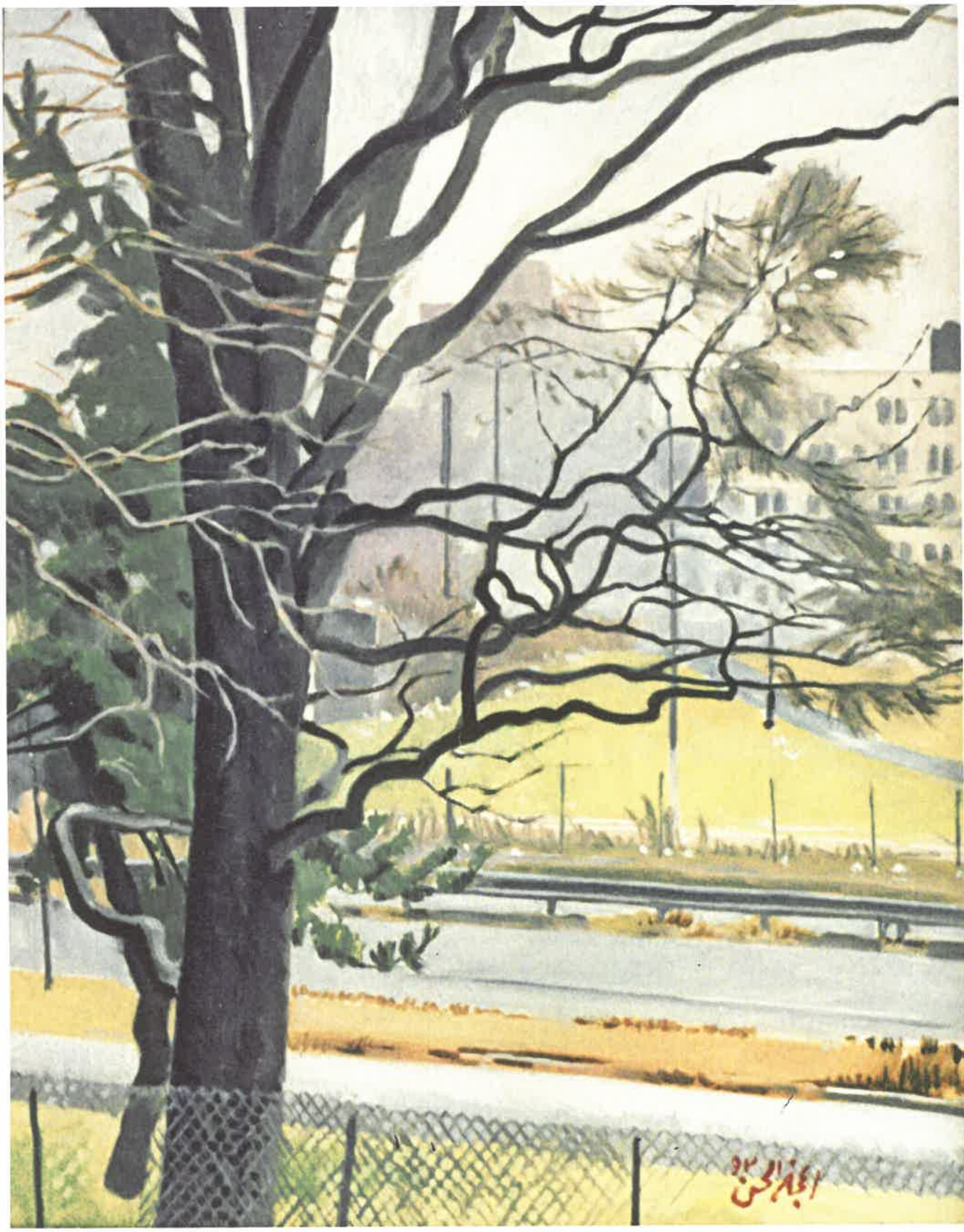
196.

A Morning in Brooklyn – II, 1992,
Oil on canvas, 24"x18"
Collection: Shahla & Mian Tariq Saigol



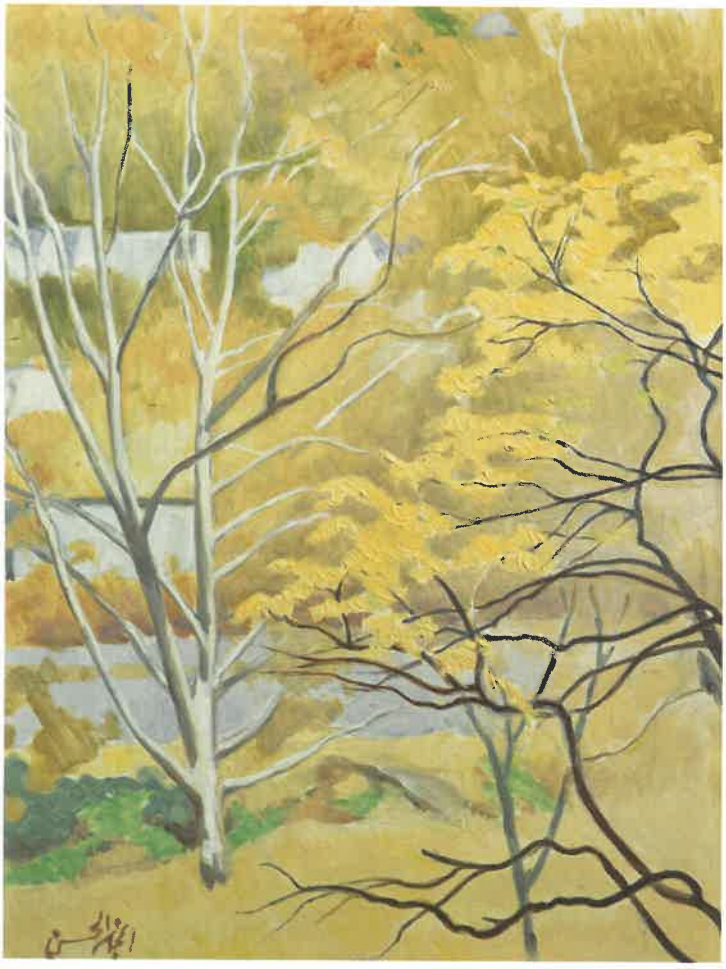
197.

A Maple in Brooklyn, 1992,
Oil on canvas, 36"x24"
Collection: Zehrine and Mian Basit Khurshid



198.

A View Through Branches (Brooklyn), 1992,
Oil on canvas, 24″x18″
Collection: Shehla and Mian Tariq Saigol



199.

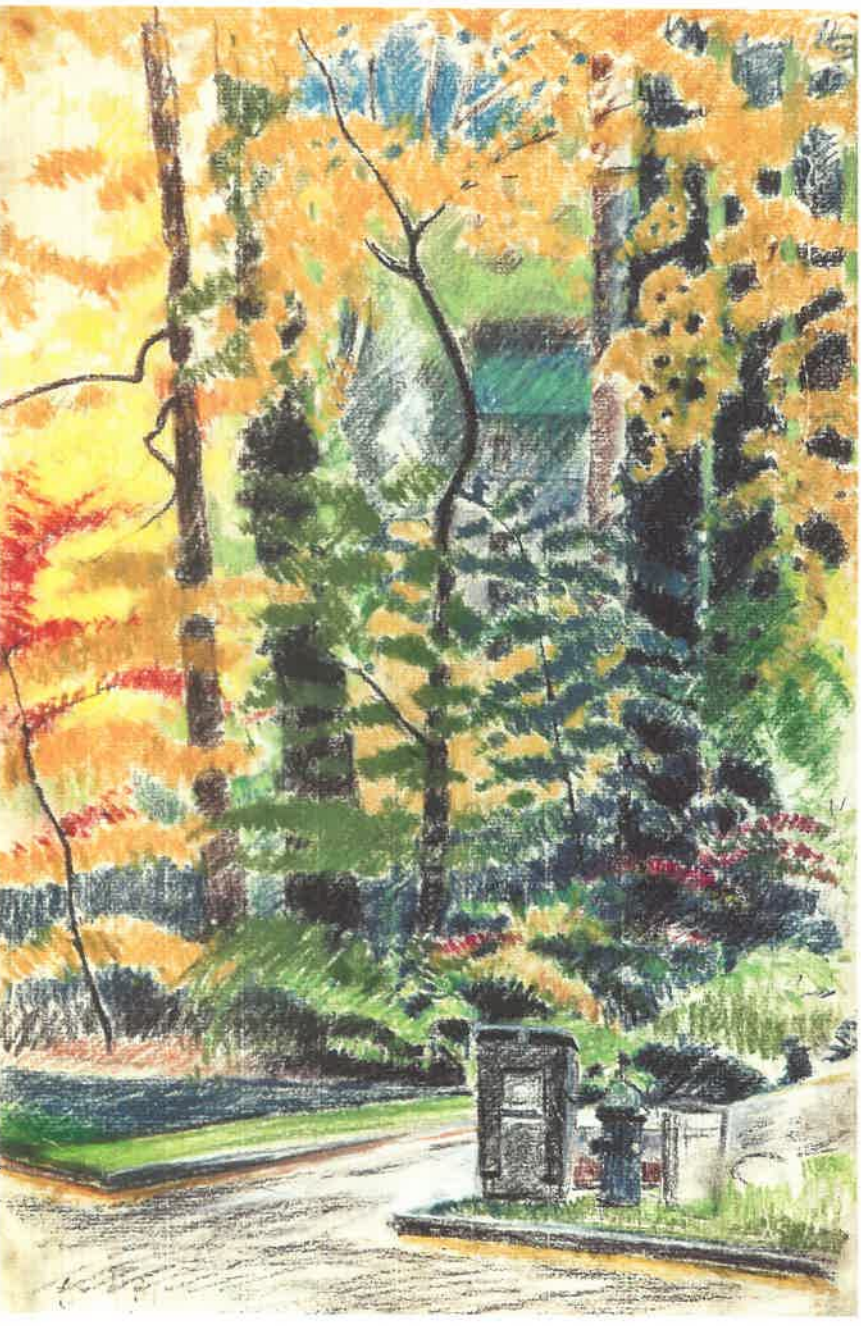
A Wet Autumn Day, 1996,
Oil on canvas, 30"x24"
Artist's Collection

200.

Blizzard at Lexington, 1998,
Oil on canvas, 24"x18"
Artist's Collection

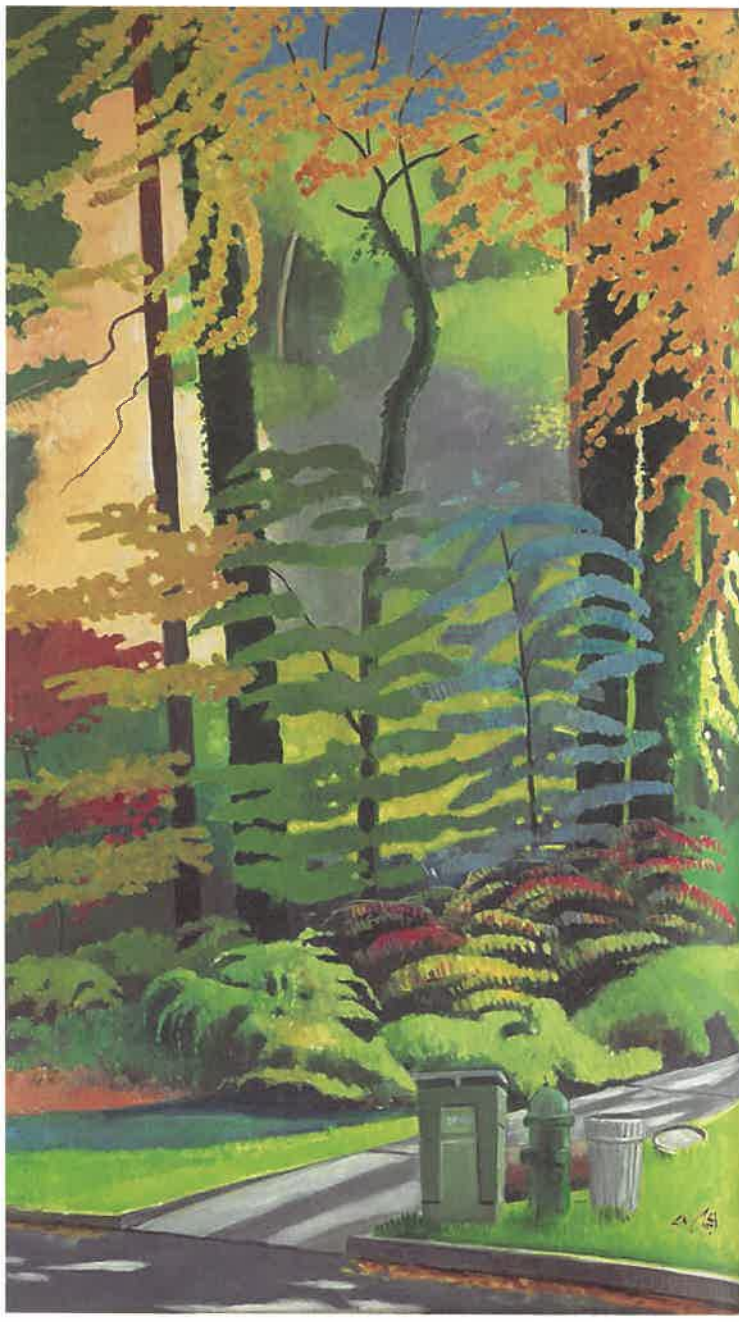
201.

Fading Autumn, 1996,
Oil on canvas, 36"x36"
Collection: Rafia and Syed Akmal Hussain



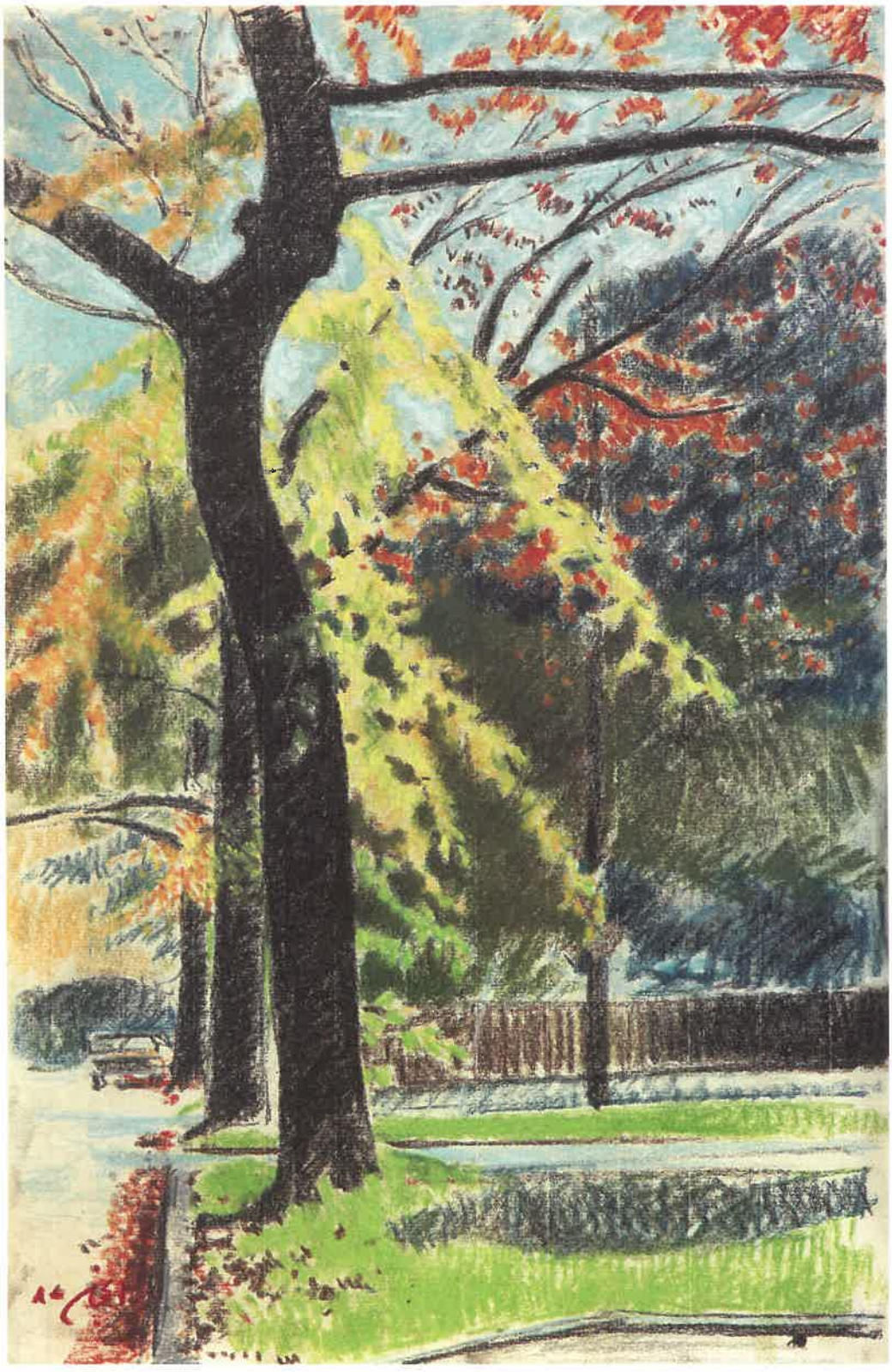
202.

Colours of Autumn (Washington DC), 1987,
Pastel on paper, 14"10"
Collection: Shehla & Mian Tariq Saigol



203.

Colours of Autumn (Washington DC), 1987,
Oil on canvas, 60"x36"
Collection: Nighat and Ch. Moin Afzal



204.

Autumn (Washington DC), 1987,
Pastel on paper, 12"x9"
Collection: Shehla and Mian Tariq Saigol

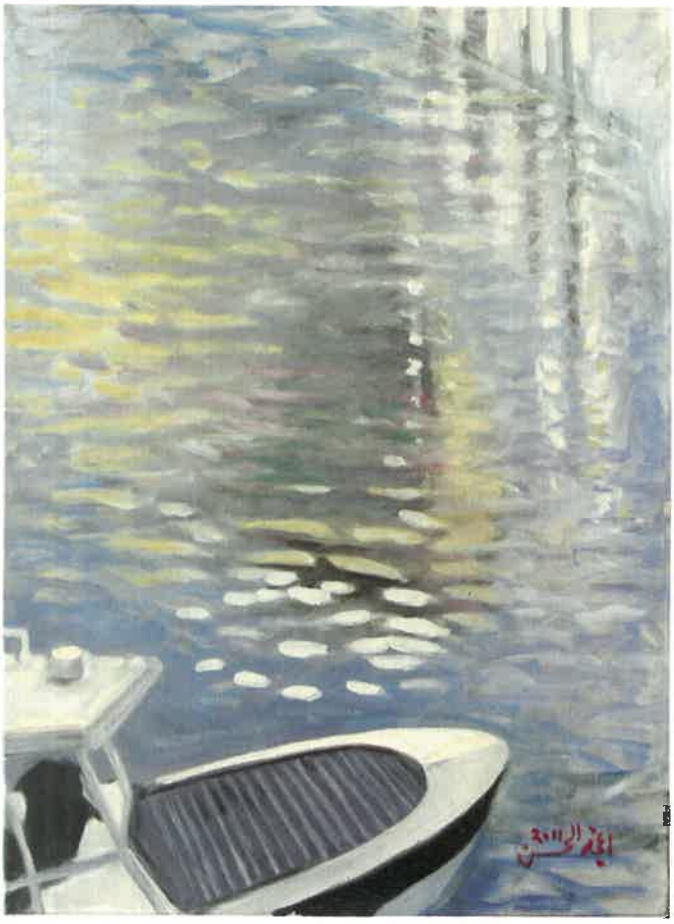
205.

A View Through Rhododondrons (Maine, USA), 1998,
Oil on canvas, 24"x18"
Artist's Collection

206

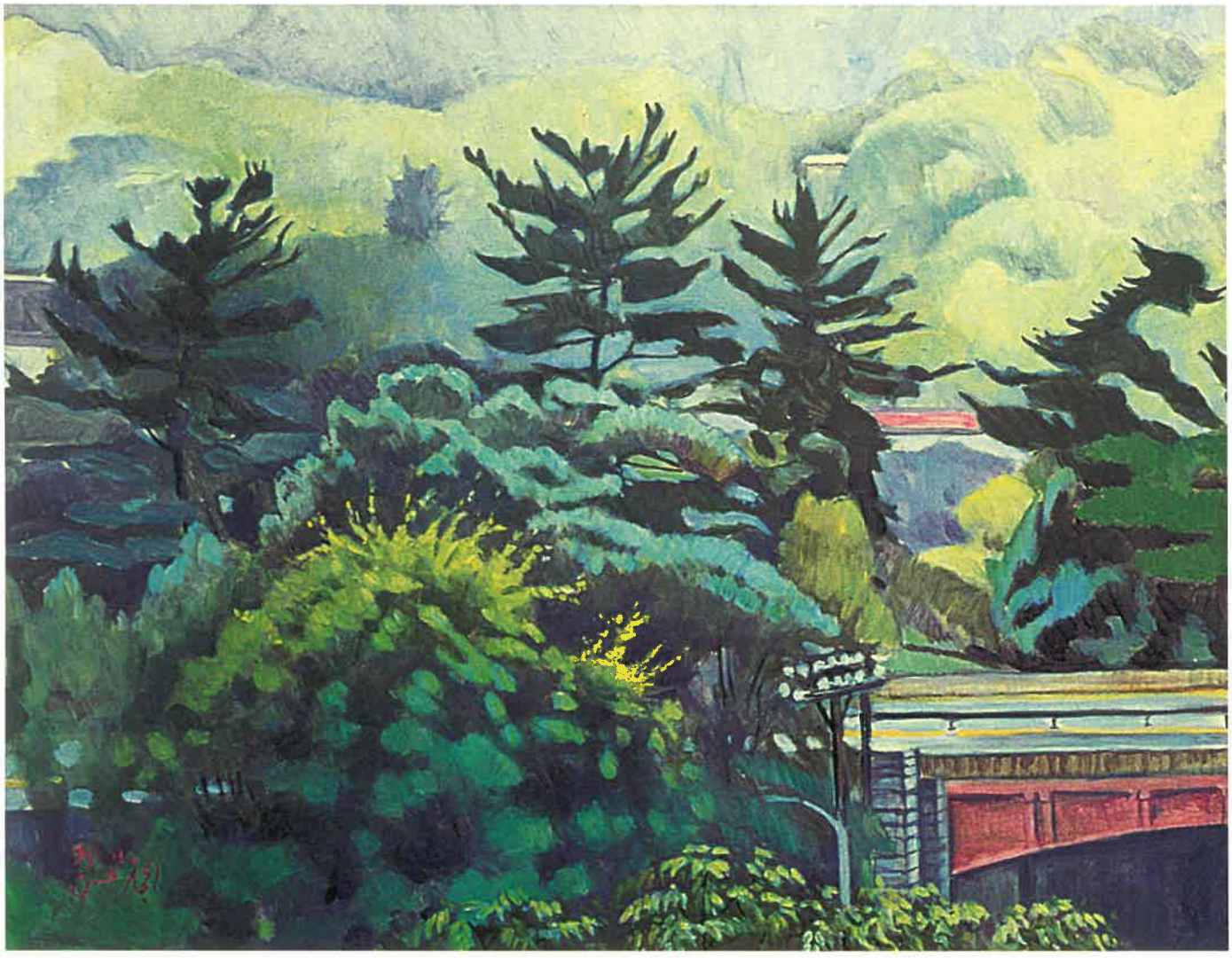
Small Beginnings, 1998,
Oil on canvas, 24″x18″
Collection: Fatima and Mian Tariq Hassan

207. *Old Tree On The Water Front,* 2011, Oil on canvas, 30"x6", Collection: Mian Ahmed Hasan.

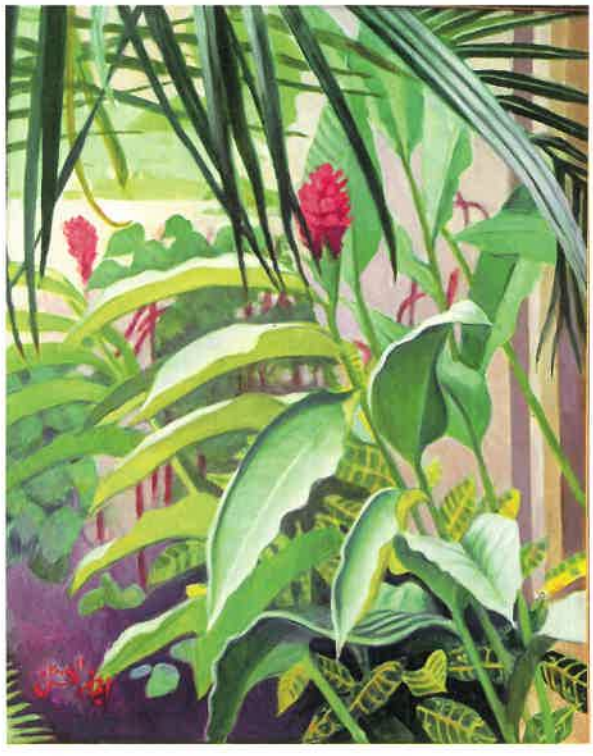


208.

Reflections, 2011,
Oil on canvas, 24"x16"
Artist's Collection



209. *Landscape (West Chester, New York), 2003, Oil on canvas, 30"x36", Collection: Zafar Wali Mohammed, California, USA.*



210.

Foliage of the South Seas, 2009,
Oil on canvas, 30" x 24"
Collection: Mian Ahmed Hasan

211. *Snow Scene in Washington,* 2010, Oil on canvas, 30" x 24", Collection: Mian Ahmed Hasan.

in America before shedding its foliage. Ijaz was reluctant to tackle this anarchy of colour but towards the end of his stay when he had looked and digested the feast he produced several delectable canvases. Colour is the strongest feature of Ijaz's work and he feasted his eyes and used his brush to capture the magic and vibrancy that only an American autumn scene can produce. While addressing the vivacious exuberance of American autumn, he relied more on his own and viewers' imagination rather than the raw pigment in the tube. Reminding himself he often recalls what a classical Chinese master said about colours: "Colour is the matter of the imagination".

Inspired by colour and the aesthetic restraint needed to perceive it he wrote a poem in reference to the colour green. It is important to mention here that Ijaz has been exceptionally lucky in finding appreciation of his work from friends and family. His friends around the US have created a space for him and made art material available wherever, and whenever he has gone to visit them. Our son Mian Ahmed Hasan has not only done that but also displayed exemplary patience and stood around for long periods, while Ijaz made detailed sketches for his paintings, when he drove him around on many occasions.

212.

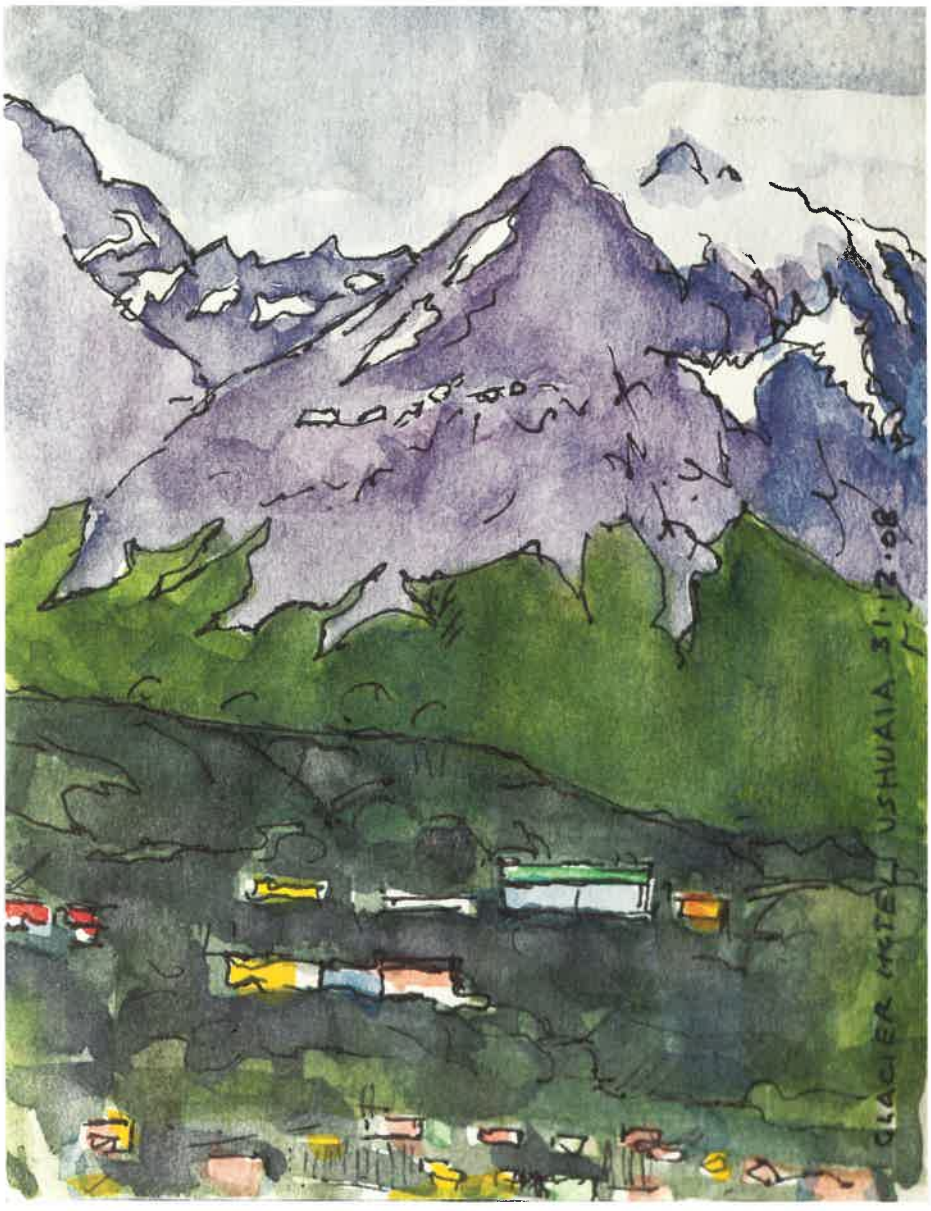
Winter (New York, USA), 1998,
Oil on canvas, 48"x36"
Collection: Faryal Khan Niazi

213.

Wild Grasses (Jackson, Tennesse, USA), 1987,
Oil on canvas, 24"x30"
Collection: Shehla and Mian Tariq Saigol

214.

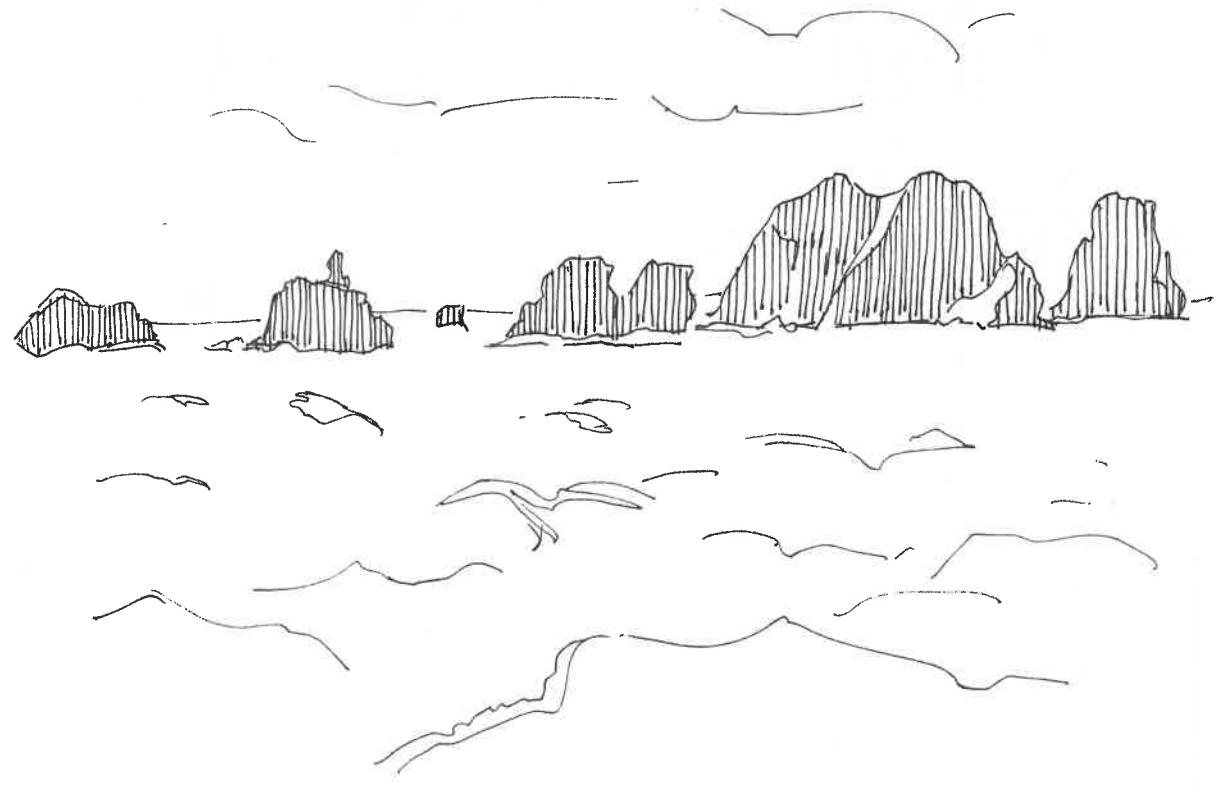
A Sketch (Lexington), 1998,
Felt pen and ink on paper, 5"x7"
Artist's Collection



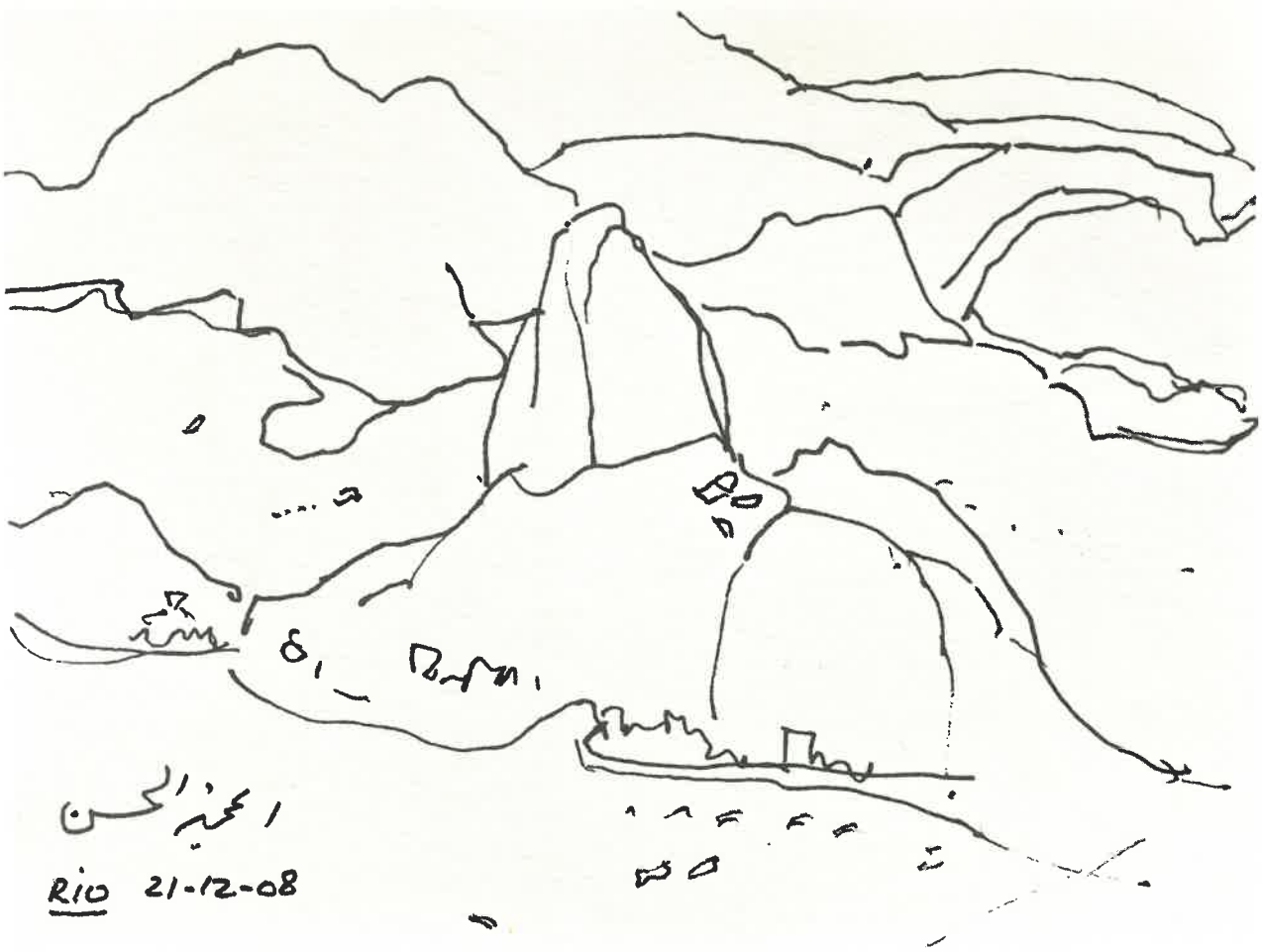
215.

Ushuaia (South America), 2008,
Water colour on paper, 12″x9″
Artist's Collection

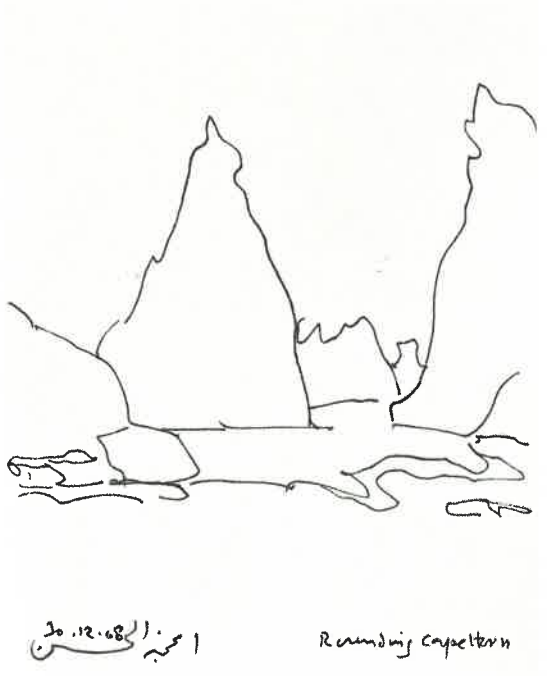
216. *Encircling Cape Horn I,* 2008, Pen and ink on paper, 7.5"x10", Artist's Collection.



217. *Approaching Cape Horn II,* 2008, Pen and ink on paper, 4"x6", Artist's Collection.



218. *Rio*, 2008, Felt pen and ink on paper, 3.5"x5", Artist's Collection.



220.

219.

Rounding Cape Horn, 2008,
Pen and ink on paper, 5"x3.5"
Artist's Collection

221. *Wilderness II*, 1994, Oil on canvas, 30"x36" Collection: Ghazala Saigol.

Ninety Nine Shades of Green

There are ninety-nine colours of green
But without knowledge of one
You cannot touch any

Blues are the first cousins of green
But I feel more akin
at sighting of sooty grays
Curling over parched plains
Aching for the monsoon rains.

On mountains in summer time
Fragrant needles of pine
Prick to life
Dormant memories
Rooted in velvet hues

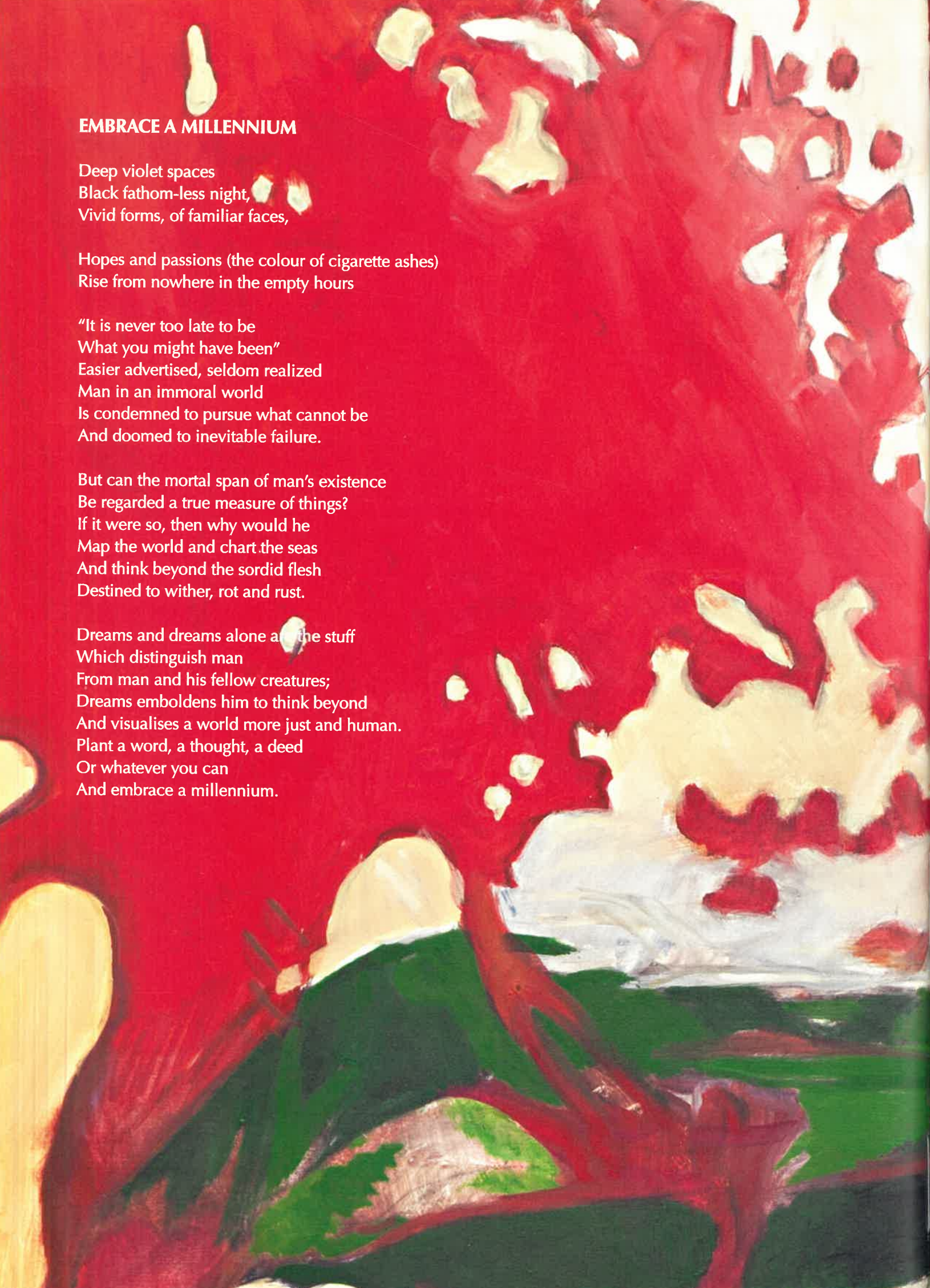
Far and out of reach
Embalmed in blue
Mist of youth
Blended into brown muck of life
Into a sauce

Made edible
With garlic and mint
And green peppers
Lean and hot
Two elephants
Amble towards a Chinese vase
On a wooden ledge.
A Buddha
Forged for the bazaar
Meditates few strides away

A fly circles his sacred head.
Life goes on in its unpredictable ways
Fiery colours of passion
Violet shade of remorse
Sunny yellow
Somber hues
And the inimitable ninety nine
Hues of green

Lexington, USA
August 1998

222. *Wilderness I*, 1994, Oil on canvas, 30"x36", Collection: Ghazala Saigol.



EMBRACE A MILLENNIUM

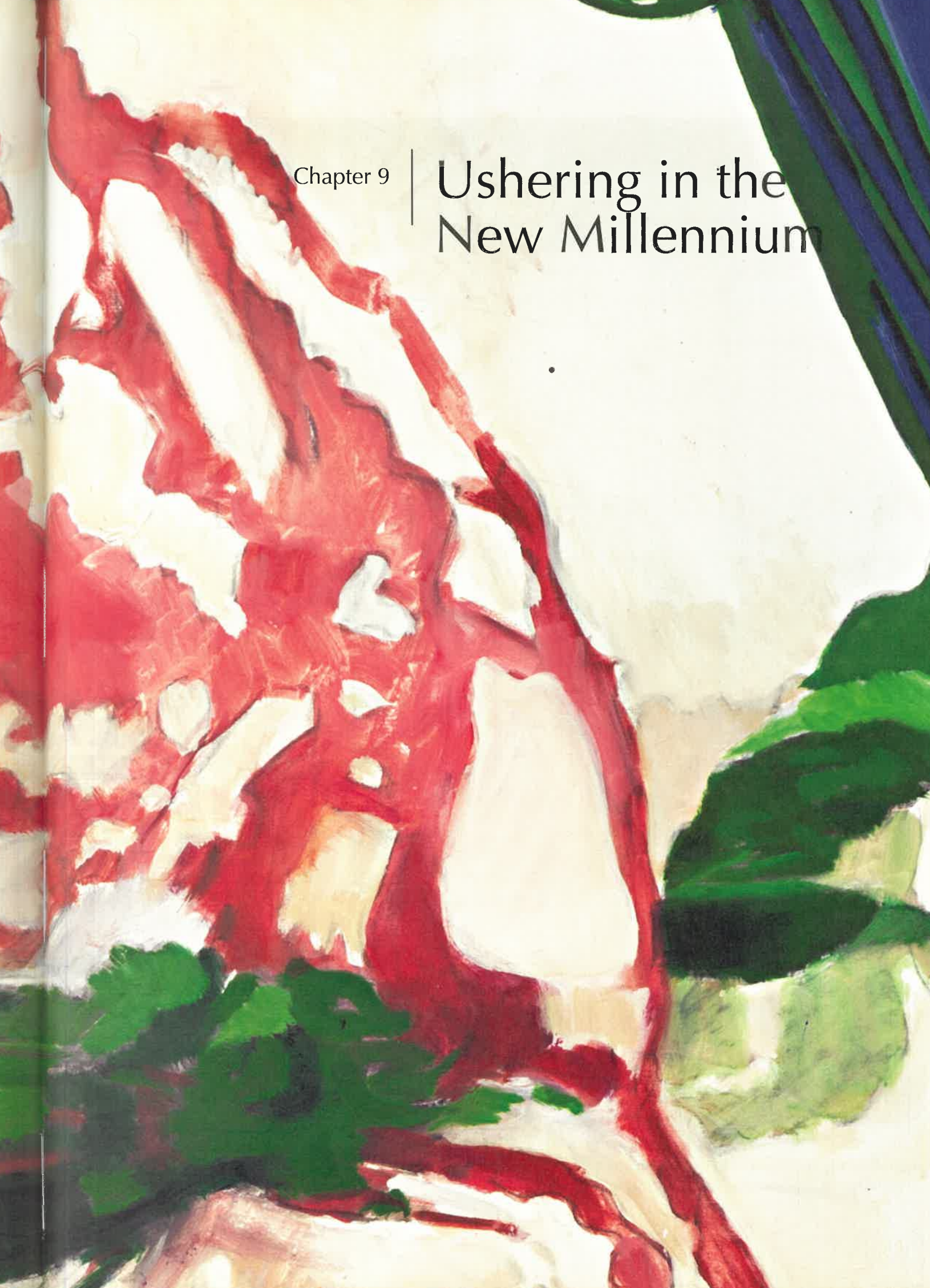
Deep violet spaces
Black fathom-less night,
Vivid forms, of familiar faces,

Hopes and passions (the colour of cigarette ashes)
Rise from nowhere in the empty hours

"It is never too late to be
What you might have been"
Easier advertised, seldom realized
Man in an immoral world
Is condemned to pursue what cannot be
And doomed to inevitable failure.

But can the mortal span of man's existence
Be regarded a true measure of things?
If it were so, then why would he
Map the world and chart the seas
And think beyond the sordid flesh
Destined to wither, rot and rust.

Dreams and dreams alone are the stuff
Which distinguish man
From man and his fellow creatures;
Dreams emboldens him to think beyond
And visualises a world more just and human.
Plant a word, a thought, a deed
Or whatever you can
And embrace a millennium.



Chapter 9

Ushering in the New Millennium

223.

Mothers of the World Unite, 2000,
Oil on canvas, 48"x72"
Artist's Collection

Ijaz began the new decade and the new century with an exhibition that highlighted the depression and frustration, which a violent repressive military regime can bring to citizens. Little did he know that the violence that prevailed was but a light shadow of the stark cruel events that would become the hallmark of this new century.

His exhibition of January 2001 was a collage of his various frames of mind. His political activities and awareness led him to celebrate the unsung heroes of political struggle. Like his ordinary trees he chose to paint and eulogise the ordinary man whose struggle is so important for any cause. Two paintings depicted the various stages of the political struggle – *The Flag Bearer* (page 103) and *The Flagellation* most logically lead up to the largest one of them all. The third picture just shows a smiling large vacant face. It is a Portrait of what is left of an activist, which needs no comment and is a silent record of the price the poor worker had to pay for his commitment. The paintings on the burning Kashmir valley make us ponder and lament. The silent cry of a contemporary *Madonna* asks a question, as she looks straight into your eyes

224.

Executing the Dead, 2000,
Oil on canvas, 72"x48"
Artist's Collection

seems to asks why she had to sacrifice not one but three of her sons. The artist enlarges upon the theme by adding a streamer at the back above that, reads:
`mothers of the world unite u have nothing to loose but win ur sons'.

This exhibition also showed a meaningful painting of the girding vine with a difference. There is a *Caged Parrot* (page 121) in the foreground, which seems to reinforce the general feeling of confinement that the artist perceives looking out of a window.

F. S. Aijazuddin in the exhibition brochure in 2001 writes:[28]

> "If trees can inspire such fealty, so equally can the human beings he encounters. His stylised compositions which include a silhouette outline as a symbol of human estrangement from nature (represented here by a garden in the distance), and likewise his bold canvas of one of his party workers Bhatti are arresting examples of his concern for humanity in both domestic and a political environment."

Any exhibition of Ijaz's work would be incomplete without a social comment through which he gives vent to his frustration and highlights the plight of the downtrodden and the wretched of this earth. His large monumental work *Executing the Dead (page 243)* underlines the paucity of ideas in those who would be our saviours and futility of tasks that have lost their relevance. It seeks to highlight the inadequacy of actions that are staged to create a grand cosmetic effect while the real problems and shortcomings are hardly ever tackled.

This painting was also exhibited in a group show by the Aicon gallery in London in the end of 2007. It was picked up by the *Time Magazine* which ran an article on Pakistan art and the exhibition:[29]

> "A burgeoning interest in South Asian Art, coupled with the topical nature of their work, has given Pakistani artists an increasingly high profile overseas..... .....A surprisingly well timed group show at London's Aicon Gallery features the work of Ijaz ul Hassan, famous as much for his activism as for his art. Imprisoned for his political activities under President Zia ul Haq, Hassan paints scenes of street violence and government sanctioned thuggery as stark and bold as tabloid stills. A View through Window shows a goon with a gun and blood splattered clothes looming over a corpse, watched by respectful policemen. Another Madonna in which a wailing mother huddles over her three dead sons, their faces daubed in the emerald green of the Pakistani flag, marries a classic theme with a scene that might easily have come from today's papers."

This exhibition was also highlighted by *The Independent*, a daily newspaper of London. The article by Arifa Naqvi is reproduced on page (274).

The year 2008-9 were dominated by paintings after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and the turbulence of war, protests and large scale massacres.

His portrait of Benazir is lament as well as a message of hope. Titled with a line from the renowned poet Faiz's couplet – *fasle gul aiee ke ajal aiee*, (Is it death or a harvest

of spring?) Benazir's face dominates the picture and is surrounded with Laburnum flowers. These flowers have always been a symbol of hope and resistance during Ijaz's painting career and have been a recurring theme throughout. Is her death an end or the flowering of new resistance? This is the question Ijaz poses to the party workers and his countrymen.

The two canvases called *The lamentation -1* (page 248) and *The lamentation -2* (page 249) are visually expressive of the anguish felt by the man in the street, on the murder of Benazir Bhutto. This was a cry that resounded through the length and breadth of the country and would not be silenced. Ijaz has connected with the mourners in their expression of grief, through vibrant but simple symbols and stark raw colours.

A Bloody Landscape (page 252) is yet another one of his many paintings of the period. His painting *Descent* (page 253) is the fall of man. A fall from the lofty altitudes of idealism that espoused justice truth and freedom for all, without prejudice of cast colour or creed.

Ijaz's love for the beautiful, the chaste the pure is ever present. He has painted simple compositions with complex colour combinations that defy many rules of painting but are still beautiful landscapes. He has always maintained that amid all the filth and squalor of the world, it is important to not always depict the sad aspects of life. There should also be cheerful paintings to gladden the heart and bring joy in order to lift depression and create hope. His three paintings of 'The Guava Tree' are certainly in this spirit. Additionally, Ijaz also painted mountain landscapes of far away hills and lush undergrowth.

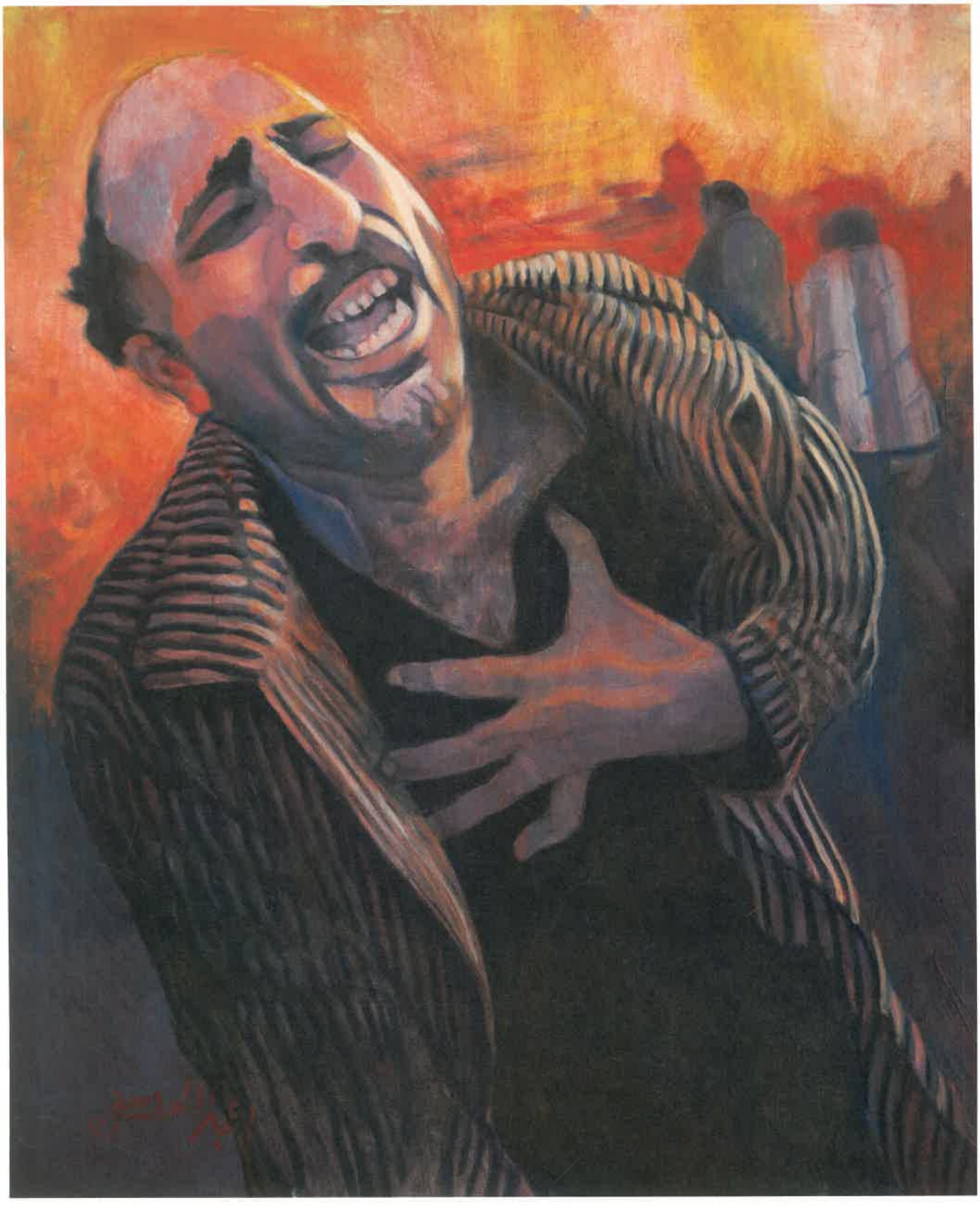
Ijaz's latest themes have shed the turbulence of his early work and are mellowed and sedate. Even though he is still an artist who is full of inner conflict and restlessness when dynamic events move him, his paintings now are restful and pleasing. Perhaps they reflect an awareness of the passing spring of youth. The paintings of the transitory even though brilliant autumn and the cold dead snows of winter reveal to us his awareness of this law of nature where the twilight maybe a brilliant but subdued light at the end of the day. His mood seems to have eased out is evident from his soothing and gentle rain descending on his *Lillies at Night* and his exuberant canvases of *Gul-e-Mohar* celebrating the flowering of this beautiful tree. There is also a vibrant branch of a palm reaching out its sun filled members to dominate the backdrop of darkness and gloom.

References

28. F. S. Aijazuddin, in the Exhibition Brochure of the show held at the Lahore Art Gallery, January, 2001.
29. Carla Power, *Under the Gun, Time Magazine, Asia* (Hong Kong) Limited, VOL. 170, NO 24/2007, p58.

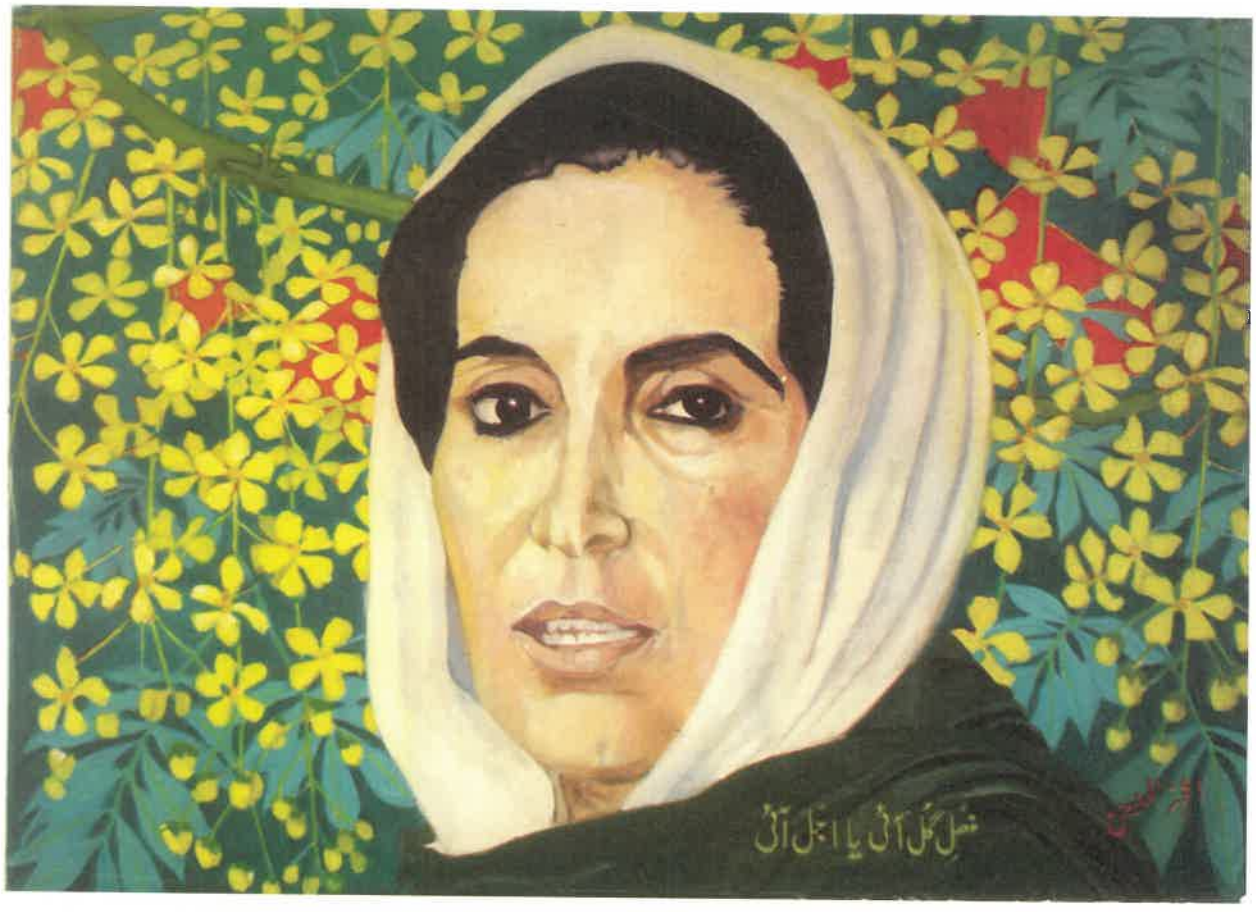
225.

Lamentation – II, 2003,
Oil on canvas, 60"x36"
Artist's Collection



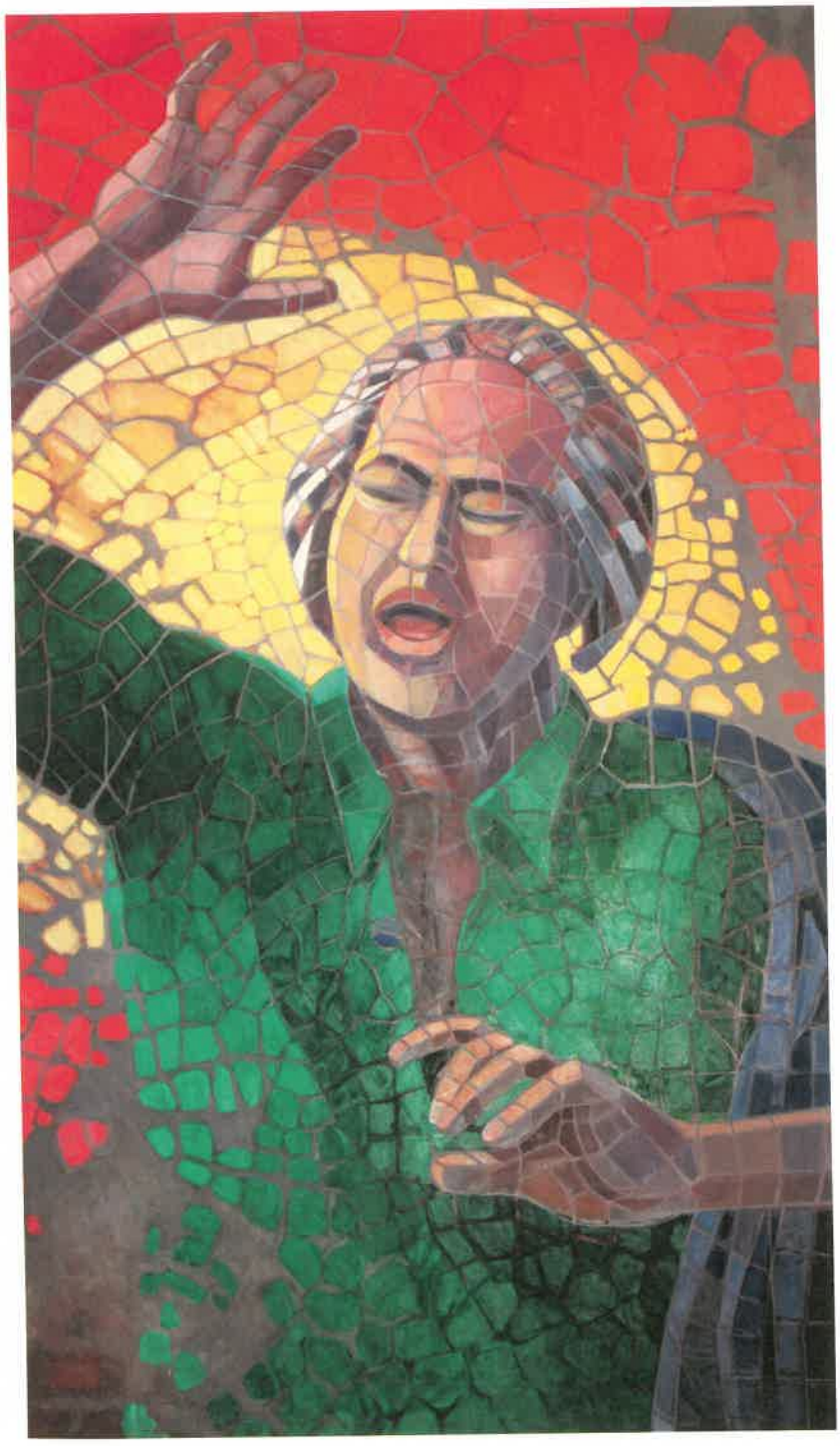
226.

Lamentation – I, 2003,
Oil on canvas, 36"x30"
Artist's Collection



227. *Fasl-e-gul aee ya ajal aee (Is it Death or Hope for Spring)*, 2009, Oil on canvas, 36"x60", Private Collection.

228. *Last Moments*, 2009, Oil on canvas, 30"x36", Collection: Dr Mian Ahmed Hassan.



229. *Peoples' Mosaic Icon, 2012, Oil on canvas, 48" x 30", Collection: Mian Ahmed Hasan.*

THE FINAL GLANCE

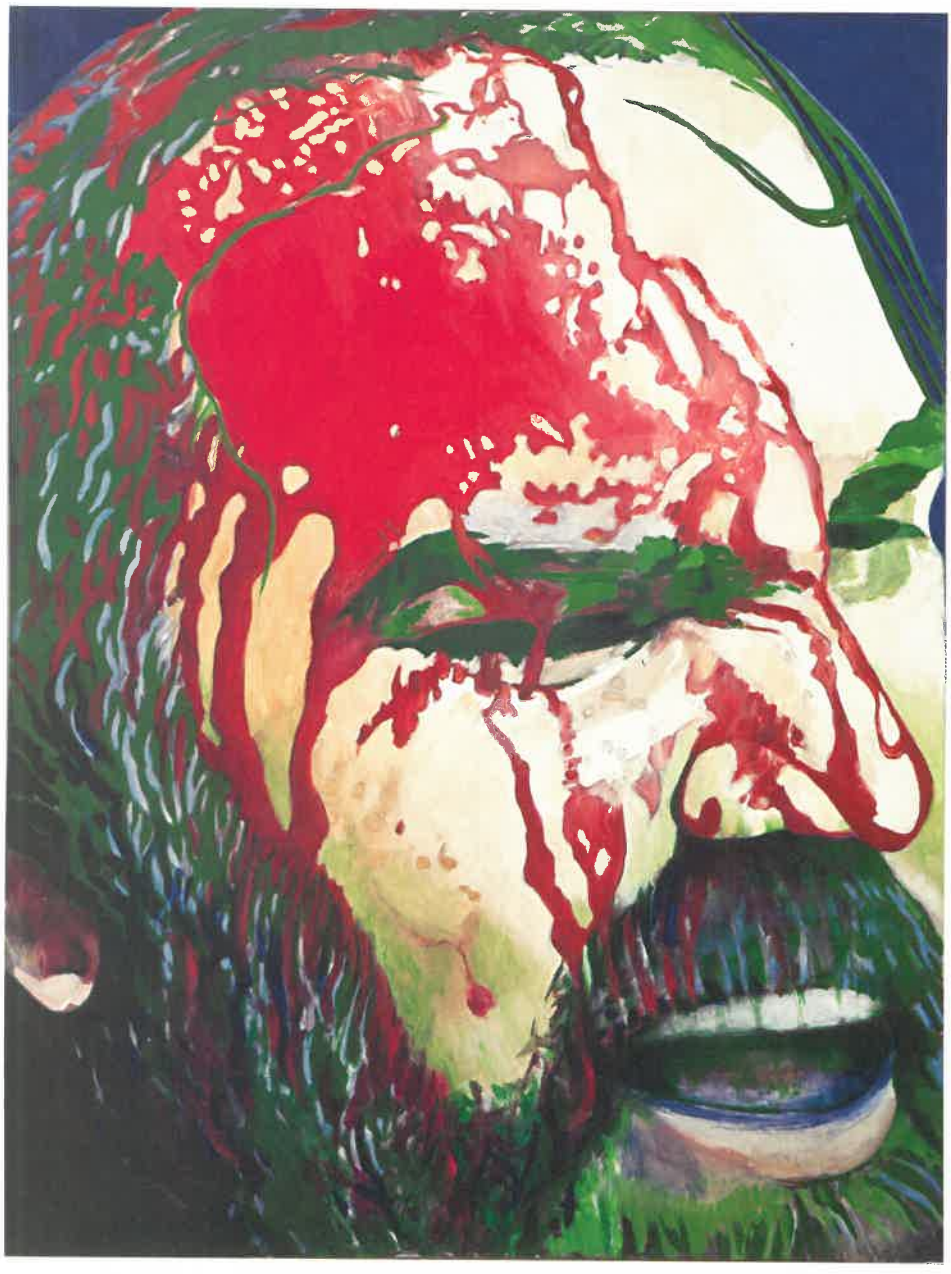
She softly fell
Like an autumn leaf
On her seat
In prime of spring

Hearts stopped
The nation stunned
Is it so easy to go, I ask?
Is there nothing more?
Through an invisible door
Striding to an adjacent floor.

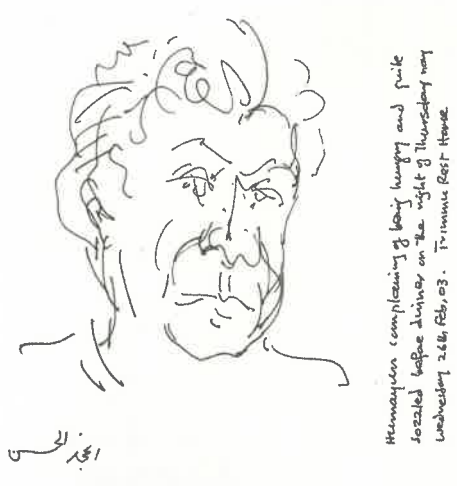
The Nation she had wed
Children she had mothered
They will know her in seasons all
In autumn, winter and spring
When it rains in torrents
Like her last speech.
When peasants toil in burning heat
Winnowing wheat
For few sacks of grain
In the alluvial plains

They will know her
When poor sleep on cold floors
When cramps in their stomach groan,
Women are bartered and
Children worked for a dole.
When citizens are denied justice
People their rights and
The Nation its country,
I don't believe in destiny
But the fruit vendor said it all.
Polishing an orange
With glazed eyes he looked up
And struggling in a broken voice
He said, "For the ones like her
There cannot be
Any other end
But martyrdom."

On the assassination of Benazir Bhutto
Mian Ijaz ul Hassan
January 21st, 2008



230. *A Bloody Landscape,* 2011, Oil on canvas, 48"x36", Artist's Collection.



231. *Fuddled,* 2003,
Pen and ink on paper, 6.5"x5.5"
Artist's Collection

232. *Nusrat Executing a Passage,* 2003,
Pen and ink on paper, 6"x4.5"
Artist's Collection

A WARRIOR'S SONG

Let us rebel
curl our fingers
into a hard fist

let us revolt
raise our bloody standards
reaching heavens

Let us unfurl our wrath
scrawl our ugly thoughts
On common walls

Let us untie our cords
And parade naked
our subversive resolve

Let us cleanse our soul of mercy
gnash our yellow teeth with deadly hate
That gums begin to bleed

Let us roar ourselves hoarse
Smite with our black tongue
The high, mighty and low
Let us rob and riot
Inebriate ourselves into a mad frenzy
Ruthlessly tear asunder
All that is sacred and good

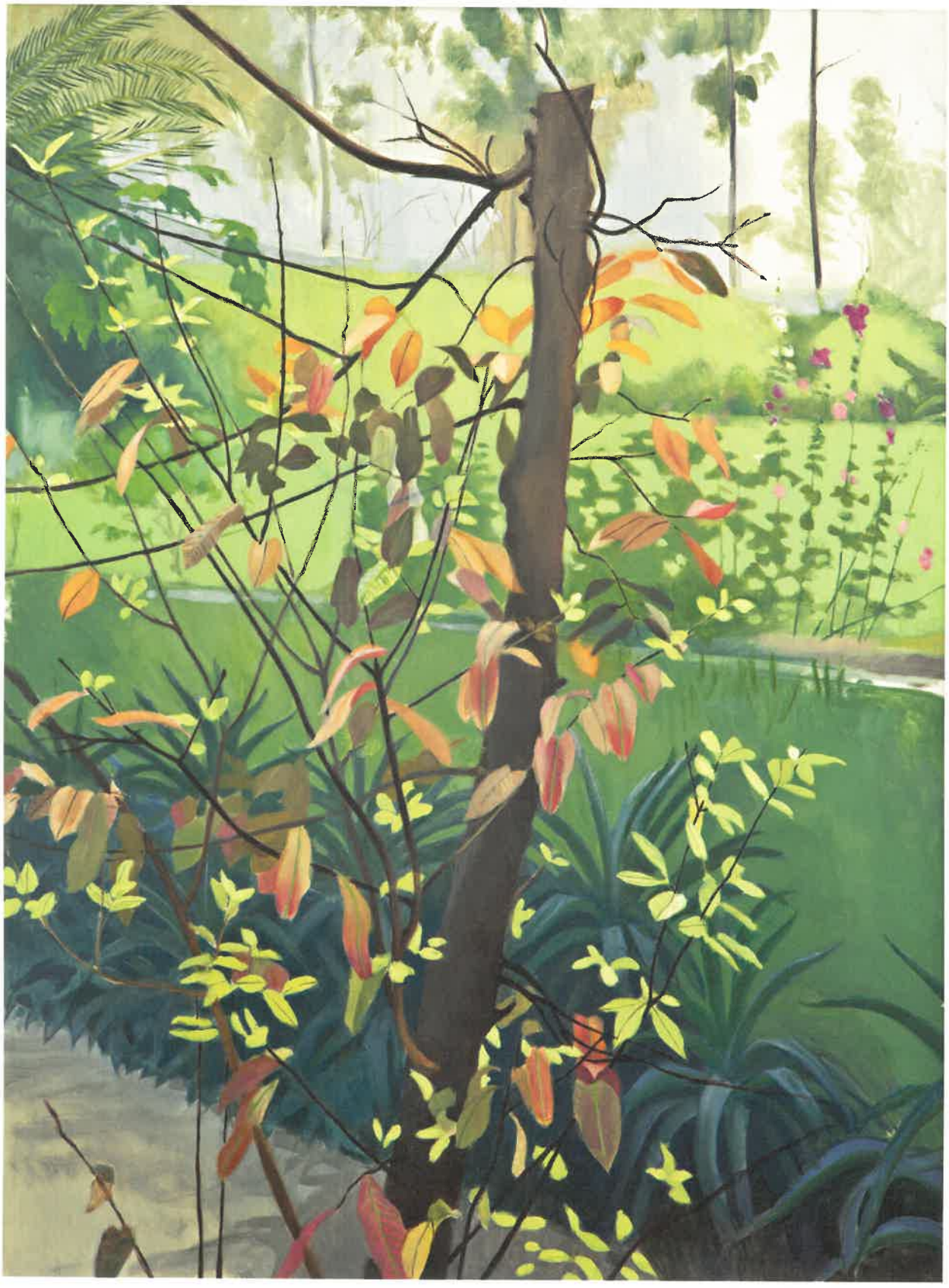
Let us uproot mighty trees
Smother buds and leaves
Pull our heritage to ground
And smash values to smithereens
Let us cultivate malice
Fertilise bitterness with fire
And mount rough vengeance
On friends and foes alike

Let us put an honest gun to our temple
Commit ourselves to death
And hope to be reborn
Anew

Ijaz ul Hassan
(Friday 13-2-1998)

233.

Descent, 2010,
Oil on canvas, 48"x36"
Artist's Collection



234.

Autumn Leaves, 2003,
Oil on canvas, 48"x36"
Artist's Collection

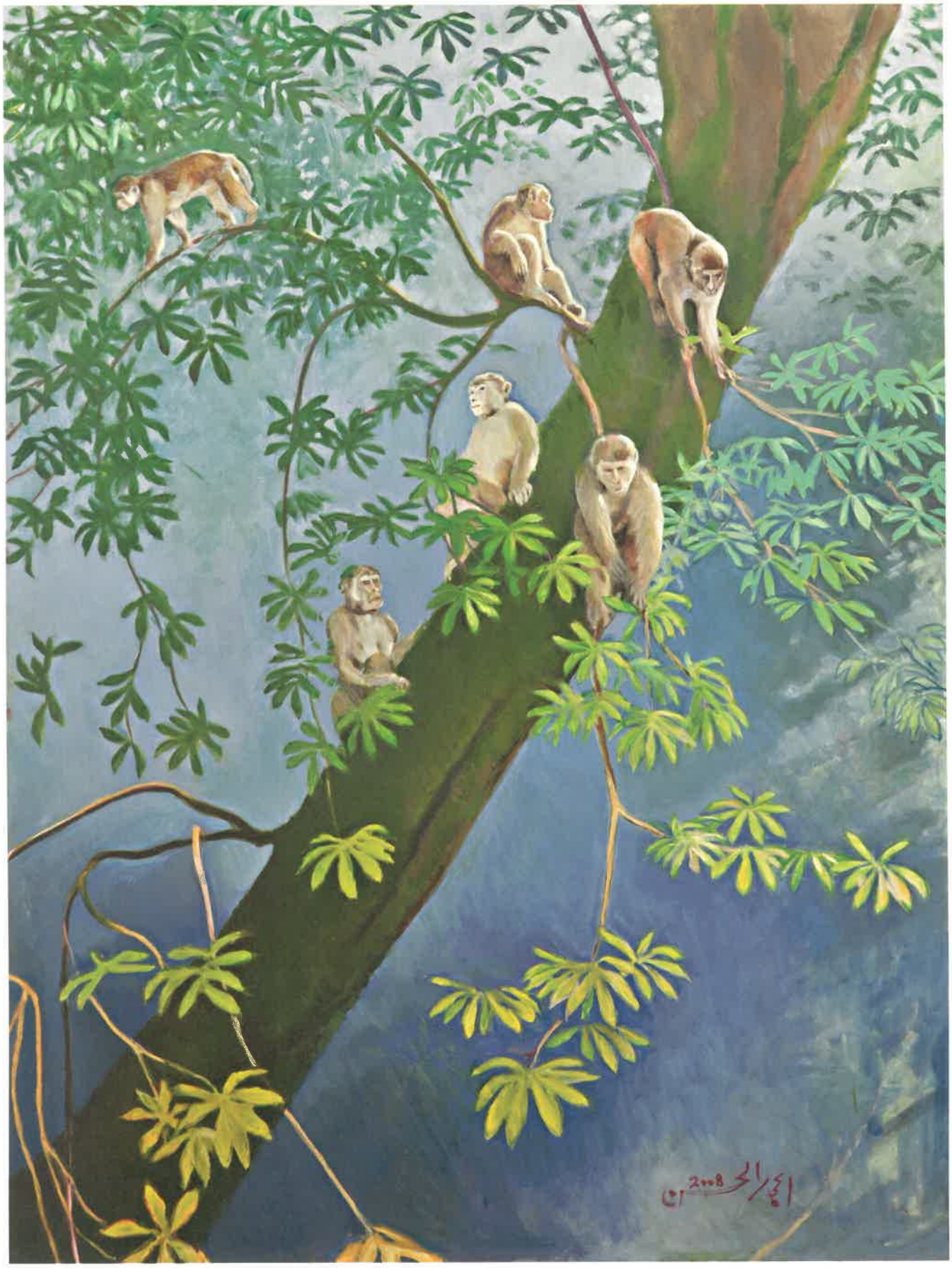
235.

Guava in the Evening, 2003,
Oil on canvas, 48″x48″
Artist's Collection

236. *Prayer Mat – I,* 2010, Oil on canvas, 48″x36″, Artist's Collection.

237. *Prayer Mat – II,* 2010, Oil on canvas, 48"x36", Artist's Collection.

238. *Groping in Darkness,* 2011, Oil on canvas, 36"x 48", Artist's Collection.



239. *Monkeys in Forest,* 2008, Oil on canvas, 48"x36", Artist's Collection.

240.

Rain Descending On Lilies At Night, 2011,
Oil on canvas, 48"x36"
Artist's Collection

241. *Sketch., 2003, Pen on paper,* Artist's Collection.

242. *View in the Window,* 2000, Oil on canvas, 60"x36", Artist's Collection.

243.

And Then It Burst Into Bloom, 2011, Oil on canvas, 48"x36", Artist's Collection.

244. *Champa,* 2012, Oil on canvas, 30"x36", Artist's Collection.

ag. Zahur brushing up his grandfather's painting.

Appendix

Record of Related Activities

245.

Flight, 1990,
Printed collage on paper, 7.5"x5.5"
Artist's Collection

Chance Happenings

Playing with new Techniques

Ijaz published a book on 'Painting in Pakistan' in 1991, and the second edition came out in 1996. F. S. Aijazuddin and his wife Shenaz Aijazuddin joined several voices that expressed appreciation for this huge effort that was the first comprehensive compilation of Pakistan's art work. F. S. Aijazuddin in 'A serious business' writes[30]

> "Ijaz ul Hassan's book was not written in haste; it should not therefore be read in a hurry. It is that kind of book.
>
> .....If one was to search for a single quality about Ijaz ul Hassan's work on his contemporaries and fellow-painters, it would be the impartial seriousness with which he has approached his subject. And for Ijaz, formerly a Professor of Academics at the National College of Arts and now a practicing painter of international repute, painting is a serious business and should be regarded as such.
>
> .....It was an ambitious assignment and one that propelled Ijaz ul Hassan, like some time-voyager, backward into time, into the history of past influences that have shaped our present art-scene, and then forward into the future in search of meteoric new artists.
>
> All first-time authors have to endure a rather arduous soul-testing pilgrimage in search of a publisher. As Cardinal Wolsey lamented about King Henry VIII after his final rejection by the monarch: "Had I but served God as diligently as I had served the King...", so is every author tempted to regret that first rash promise, that step in an impetuous, fervid, ultimately one-sided affair. Governments, like feudal monarchs, can be notoriously whimsical and arbitrary. They commission books and then neglect to publish them; they encourage art and then withhold patronage. They read and return manuscripts but neglect to send back the precious slides and transparencies which were to be used for illustrations. One understands this all too well and therefore sympathies with Ijaz when one reads his disclosure that it has taken him over twenty-three years since that first, but in the end sterile official encouragement to have his book published – twenty-three slow years for the chrysalis of his manuscript to emerge as the colourful butterfly we now behold. The satisfaction he must feel is something he must find difficult to express.
>
> Painters in Pakistan are fortunate to have had an artist of Ijaz ul Hassan's stature and academic background as their chronicler. Pakistan has almost as many art-critics as it has painters. Therefore, the responsibility inherent in such an onerous assignment required an experienced hand which could present the artists and their works in a coherent though not necessarily chronological order.

246. *Search For Meaning,* 1990, Printed collage, 12"x9", Artist's Collection.

The definition of painting according to schools or styles or painters has bedevilled recent investigations in art-history. While the fortunes of patrons have gone up and down, the movement of artists has been lateral, usually the result of a migration in search of work for a newer affluent patron. To that extent, the traditional classification of artists accordingly to style has been found to be not necessarily defensible, and even less valid when dealing with peripatetic modern painters. Ijaz ul Hassan has used a looser grouping that makes coherent sense of the works he discusses and enables any future consideration of the work of artists who have yet to come to fall into convenient slots.

The first part of the book discusses the development of painting style in the sub-continent. It is the driest part of his work but that is the necessary unavoidable preparation, rather like the assembly of dry ingredients before cooking, for the courses that follow. He summarizes the features of the different aspects of early painting in the sub-continent – at Ajanta and Ellora, the Jain, Buddhist, Pala and pre-Mughal Sultanate styles – and then elaborate on the more forceful of the influences in our art-history – the Mughal, the *Pahari*-Sikh and latterly the British.

The second and major portion discusses the work of each of 100 painters and provides biographical thumb-nail sketches about each. Leafing through the book one comes across old stalwart favourites such as Chughtai and Shakir Ali and Sadequain whose names, now that they are dead, evoke a stronger image in the kinds of the public than their paintings do. One meets forgotten friends – Moyene Najmi, Shemza, Ahmd Pervaiz, Safdar and Raheel Akbar – whose works provided a vibrant impetus to the painting in Pakistan during the 1960s; portraitists like Bashir Mirza, Saeed Akhter and the undervalued Colin David; landscape artists following a Pied Piper of a Khalid Iqbal into the Punjab countryside; and the numerous abstract specialists who manage often to say the same thing but in different voices.

.....What do travel nowadays, and should far more increasingly in the future, are their painting and their reputation. Exhibitions of their works tend to be held only in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. That is all very well but the next stop after these should not instinctively be New York, London or Tokyo. There is a large over-populated tract known as the rest of Pakistan which deserve to be encouraged to understand contemporary art. If Pakistani painting is to survive and to progress, it will do so only when the irrepressible talent of its painters is mirrored, through regular and frequent exhibitions, by an appreciative response from a wider public which at the moment happens to live outside the municipal limits of our provincial capitals.

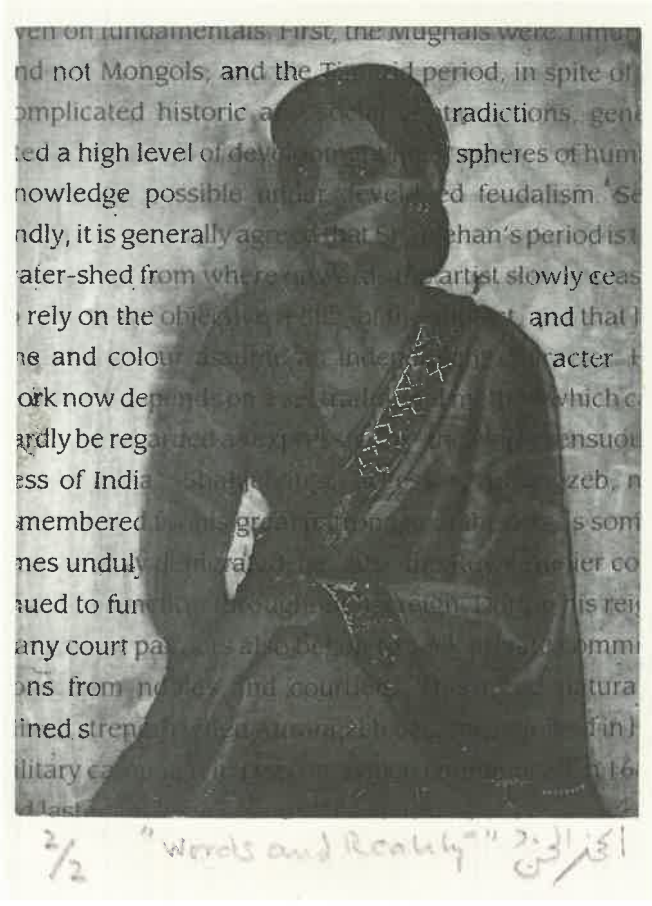
It is for this reason, as much as for many others, that Mr. Ijaz ul Hassan's book deserves to be displayed, seen and read throughout the country – in libraries and in homes, in places like Multan and Bahawalpur, Sukkur and Faisalabad, Peshawar and Hyderabad, Quetta and Khairpur and anywhere else where modern paintings have not yet permeated on any significant scale. His volume can serve as a perfect portable exhibition of Painting in Pakistan."

247.

Facing The Real World, 1990,
Printed collage, 7"x5"
Artist's Collection

248. *Madonna in Mourning*, 1990, Printed collage, 4.2"x3.2", Artist's Collection

249. *The Prey*, 1990, Printed collage, 4"x3", Artist's Collection



250. *Words and Reality*, 1990, Printed collage, 4"x3", Artist's Collection

251. *Charred Madonna*, 1990, Printed collage, 4"x3", Artist's Collection

Shenaz Aijazuddin added in her piece "A necessary reminder":[31]

> "In his book *Painting In Pakistan* published very recently, the artist Ijazul Hassan expresses the hope that in absence of a national gallery in Pakistan, his book might be regarded a temporary substitute. In fact, his book is much more than that. In these troubled times, it stands as a necessary reminder to us that there are civilized facets to the image of Pakistan that are generally overlooked.
>
> The book was conceived twenty-three years ago at the behest of the Ministry of Information, which commissioned Ijazul Hassan, then a teacher at National College of Arts, to collect data on Pakistani painters and to prepare a photographic collection of their paintings. It was formidable task, but undertaken with enthusiasm by the young Professor of Academics, who had not anticipated the capricious nature of government patronage. Seven years later the manuscript was revised for publication by National Book Foundation, an attempt that was later foiled by yet another change of government and therefore a change in policy.
>
> It has now been finally published by Ferozesons (Pvt) Ltd., and is visual treat with 82 colour plates and 48 monochrome illustrations. Rather than confining himself to the paintings executed after the birth of Pakistan, Ijaz sees Pakistani painting as a continuation of a historical tradition of painting in the subcontinent."

While the book was being published he thought of combining the images of paintings in the book to form fascinating prints of several paintings superimposed upon each other to form meaningful compositions. Ijaz believed in innovation and trying out new things. This type of prints had never been tried before and made some interesting compositions. He writes about these prints:[32]

> "One can, I think, safely conjecture that there must be not very many artists today who are known for their painting as well as their writing. I like to mention that, I can be counted in this category because in a way the present exhibition is a bi-product of my having written a book. At the end of last year when I was supervising the printing of my book, 'Painting in Pakistan' at the Ferozesons press it quite accidentally struck me that I had been provided a most rare opportunity to make prints on a most complex and modern machine which is not readily available to most artists for print making. The idea of working on a big industrial machine fascinated me, as much as the excitement of working imaginatively on a huge canvas, highlighting the epical qualities inherent in common life. Anyway it would be a nice change from oil painting.
>
> I began by sorting out the test run sheets and then after careful selection had these fed and re-fed back into the machine. In all there were about forty plates, which I could use to superimpose and create the imagery and the aesthetic effect that I required.
>
> A machine designed for industrial production, which moves like a whirlwind devouring reams of paper with a voracious appetite cannot be tamed to record

delicate inflections of the hand or the heart beat at the spur of the moment. The accidental effects and chance happenings that are in the very nature of such a procedure often lent aesthetic vibrancy and dramatic urgency characteristic of many prints. Later I considered adding a few elements with a dab here and a dab there in different media to pep up a form, trim an image or round off an awkward contour. But I am glad that I abandoned the idea because 'tampering' would have destroyed the spontaneous quality of the works and subdued the true character of the process employed to create them, which is essentially responsible for lending vigour and force to the ideas and ramblings that are expressed and contained in them.

Printed paper waste was fed and re-fed into the machine to imprint the required images from the other plates. Quite often the outcome was far off the desired result. Spasmodically something appeared which was pleasing and could be refined and improved. Sometimes I added a few elements with a marker, a dab of oil or acrylic or ink as pep up to round off the edges.

So much of the past exists in the present and the present in the past. It was provocatively 'fun full' to draw parallels, make prints counter prints, read into images, draw far fetched conclusions, invite the viewer to read between the lines, coin images, make fun of art, celebrate clichés, coin images, invite and encourage copulation among forms, fornicating forms, penetrate, permeate innuendos, conceits."

In the brochure called 'Extempore Images', for this exhibition, F. S. Aijazuddin writes:[33]

"In his book Ijaz ul Hassan has analysed the works of Pakistani painters in a primarily historical context. Using the same paintings he has with flair produced his own individual interpretation. Only a master craftsman of Ijaz ul Hassan's stature and experience could afford to try such an experiment; only an artist of his calibre could succeed as brilliantly as he has done."

References

30. F. S. Aijazuddin, *A Serious Business*, *The Friday Times*, Lahore, January 31-Feb6, p13.
31. Shenaz Aijazuddin, *A Necessary Reminder*, *The Frontier Post*, (Daily), Lahore, 30th January 1991.
32. Ijaz ul Hassan.
33. F. S. Aijazuddin, *Extempore Images*, for the exhibition brochure, Lahore Art Gallery, Lahore, November, 1991.

Other Related Activities

When Zia imposed martial law all political parties, workers and students' unions, as well as cultural associations were banned. As a consequence the Pakistan Artists Equity became dysfunctional. Ijaz ul Hassan joined hands with Syeda Abida Hussain and Farrukh Nigar Aziz and established the National Crafts Council of Pakistan. Its purpose was to mobilize traditional craftsman and promote their crafts by highlighting their artistic endeavours. Later National Artists Association of Pakistan was established by Federating artists of the four provinces. Ijaz ul Hassan was elected as its President and Bashir Mirza the General Secretary. Of the four provincial federating unit the Punjab remained the most active. Ever since its inception held 26 Annual Exhibition and of these at least 18 have been National Exhibitions. The exhibitions were followed by seminars and symposiums that encouraged public discourse about art among the artists as well as the art students and citizens.

Ijaz's involvement in politics led him to fight two general elections in which he was not successful, possibly due to engineered results, (the details of which are being slowly revealed by the Supreme Court in 2012 verdict) but his interest in politics never waned and he has been a constant member of the Pakistan People's Party since its inception in 1968.

ah. Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto at Mian Ijaz ul Hassan's residence with Mian Tariq Hasan (at back) and Musarrat Hasan.

ai. Protest rally of the Awami Ittehad led by Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto – flnaked on right by Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Mian Ijaz ul Hassan (who was the Secretary General of the PPP Punjab) Aitzaz Ahsan and Naheed Khan. Flanked on left Tahir ul Qadri, Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Rao Sikandar Iqbal, March 30, 1998.

aj. At the time of the 1997 Election, Zulfiqar Zulfi is painting a portrait of Mian Ijaz ul Hassan on a Bus that was a unique tool in Ijaz ul Hassan's election campaign.

ak. The Artist receiving the Pride of Performance Award from Ghulam Ishaq Khan the then President of Pakistan.

al. Ijaz ul Hassan (Chairman Artists Association of Punjab) and Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali (Ex. Foreign Minister) cutting Birth Anniversary Cake of late Artist Prof. Shakir Ali, at the Shakir Ali Museum, Lahore. Standing left Amna Pataudi, Tauqeer Nasir (Centre) and Saeed Akhtar and Nayyar Ali Dada (extreme right).

am. Salman Taseer, (Governor Punjab), delivering the inaugural speech at the Silver Jubilee National Exhibition of Artists Association of Punjab. Scene on the stage (L to R) Maliha Azmi, G. Mustafa and Ijaz ul Hasan.

an. Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Jamali inaugurating the exhibition of Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali's paintings organized by the Artists Association of Punjab. From left to right: Ijaz ul Hassan (President AAP), Sardar Aseff Ali, Khalid Maqbool (Governor Punjab), Pervaiz Ellahi (Chief Minister Punjab) and Ghulam Mustafa are seen in the picture.

ao. At the inauguration AAP Annual Exhibition, a view of a portion of the Alhamra Gallery.

aq. On the occasion of a function of Artists' Equity held at Municipal Hall, Nasir Bagh, Lahore, Mian Ijaz ul Hassan (Chairman) the actress Zeba Mohammed Ali and the renowned Qawal Ghulam Farid.

ar. Mahmood Butt and Ijaz ul Hassan.

ap.

A group photo of artists taken at Ghulam Mustafa's House on the occasion of the National Art Exhibition held at Alhamra Lahore, 2003.

L to R: Zufiqar Zulfi, Kaleem Khan, Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali, Naeem Ehsan, Musarrat Naheed Iman, Zafar Ullah, Sajida Vandal, Shahina Zaki, Shahnaz Zaidi, Farah Mustafa, Akram Dost, Raja Changez Sultan.

Zohra Hussain, Marjorie Husain, Naheed Raza, Saeed Akhtar, Ahmed Jahanzeb Malik, Ramzan.

Shehla Farooq, Dr. Mussarat Hasan, Mian Ija ul Hassan (Chairman Artists' Association of Punjab), Rabia Zuberi, Jabbar Gull, R. M. Naeem, Tariq, Ghulam Mustafa (General Secretary Artists' Association of Punjab).

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

as. Ijaz ul Hassan (General Secretary of PAE), Tariq Aziz (Chairman of PAE), presenting a portrait of Chairman Mao Zedong rendered by Mahmood Butt (second right) to a visiting delegation from Peoples Republic of China at a reception by Pakistan Artists' Equity.

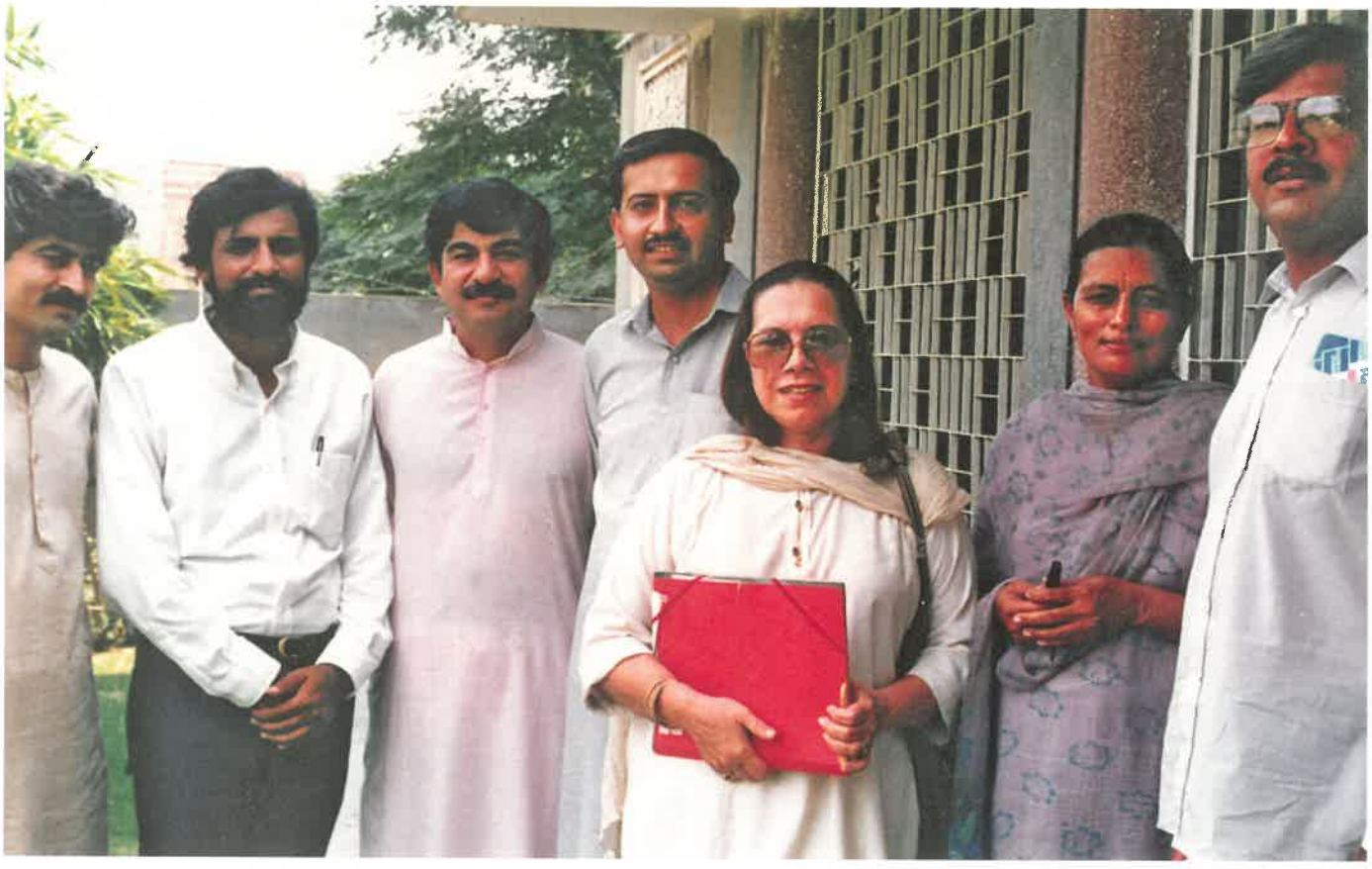
at.

A group photo of the Award Winning Artist at the M. Ismail Film Award distribution ceremony.
From L to R: Khawar Rafi (Nana), Mehdi Hassan and Mian Ijaz ul Hassan, the famous actor Mohammed Ali, Ghulam Mohiyuddin with others.
Seated in front is the famous writer Khadija Mastoor with Mehnaz (singer) and others.

au. At the inauguration of one of AAP Annual Exhibitions, a view of a portion of the Alhamra Gallery.

av. Pakistan Crafts Council delegation with Kamal Devi Chattophadyay, October 1986 India International Centre, New Delhi.
From L to R: Begum General Sher Ali, Begum Salim Khan, Rafia Tariq Rahim, Farrukh Nigar Aziz, Ijaz ul Hassan, Begum Zaree Sarfraz, Uxi Mufti, Syeda Abida Hussain in the foreground on the left.

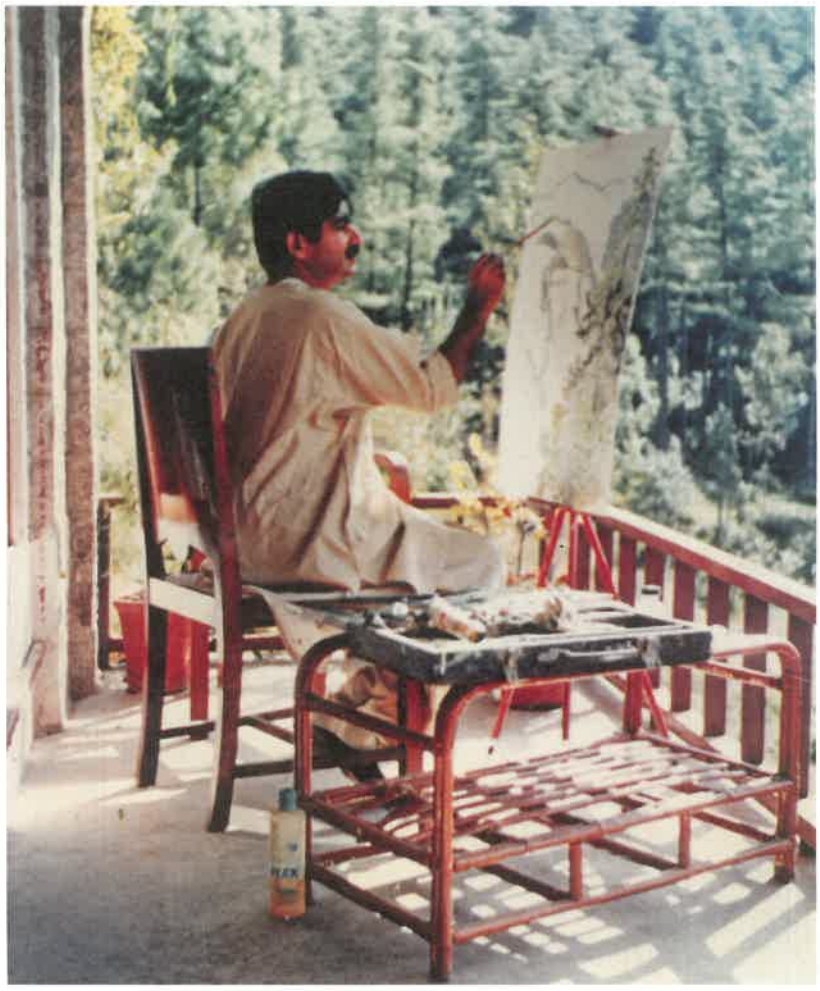
aw. A group photo at the *Artisan At Work* Exhibition held at Lahore, 1988. Standing L to R: Mohammed Ali Wasti and three pride of performance artisans, Ustad Mohammed Ashraf (Lacquer work from Jindri) Shah Bibi (Embroidery from Balochistan) and Kaikaus (papiermache from Azad Kashmir), with Shahnawaz Khan Niazi (General Secretary) and Mian Ijaz Ul Hassan (Chairman of the Crafts Council of the Punjab).



ax. From L to R: Jamal Shah, Ghulam Mustafa, Ijaz ul Hassan (President, National Artists' Association of Pakistan), Laila Shahzada, Zubaida Javed and Ghulam Rasool.

ay. Ijaz ul Hassan visiting Raja Ravi Varma's permanent exhibition of paintings at Travendrum. Ijaz lead a delegation of Pakistani Painters along with the exhibition of Pakistan Painting & Sculpture, curated by him to the SAARC festival at New Delhi and Travendrum in 1992.

az. Mian Ijaz ul Hassan, Saeed Akhtar and Dr Musarrat Hasan.



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Ijaz ul Hassan painting in Bhurban. c.1980

Recent Reviews and Interviews of the Artist.

A group show by Pakistani Artists was exhibited at the Aicon gallery in London in the end of 2007. It was picked up by the *Time Magazine* (quoted on page 244) which ran an article on Pakistan art and the exhibition:[29] It was also highlighted by the daily newspaper *Independent,* London, which printed the following article on Ijaz ul Hassan.

Ijaz ul Hassan: Pakistan's protest artist[34] — Arifa Naqvi (*The Independent*, London)

The Pakistani artist Ijaz ul Hassan has been censored, threatened and even imprisoned because of his work. As martial law descends on his homeland once more, he tells Arifa Akbar why he will never stop fighting.

Published: 20 November 2007

"In 1977, Ijaz ul Hassan was forced into a blindfold and a noose tightened around his neck inside the infamous prison housed in Lahore Fort, as his torturers pretended he was about to be executed. As a young artist who had done little to hide his contempt for the martial law imposed by General Zia-ul-Haq's repressive regime in the 1970s, his activism had left him in the line of fire. For four weeks, he was held in solitary confinement, routinely placed under a dangling noose and taunted with threats to his family, friends and "collaborators", before his guards reluctantly freed him.

The incarceration was the culmination of decades of political activism that began with Hassan's protests as a student at Cambridge University against the Vietnam War, and continued with his efforts to organise union protests in his home city of Lahore and the poster artwork that he produced to inspire a resistance movement, against the military dictatorship in charge of his homeland.

The artwork Hassan made was deemed so explosive that it was censored, refused entry to exhibitions or taken off the walls of museums by gallerists who feared the wrath of the country's brutal regime. Even today, works by Hassan deemed too obscene and seditious for display in the 1970s have still not been shown in Pakistan, although the Canvas Gallery in Karachi recently staged a retrospective of "declassified" works that had previously been hidden from public view.

This week, the Pakistani-born artist is showing some of his images as part of a group exhibition, Figurative Pakistan, opening tomorrow at the Aicon Gallery in central London.

For someone who has always believed in the power of art to affect changes in the real world, today's political climate in Pakistan – where President Pervez Musharraf's declaration of martial law has chilling parallels to ul-Haq's regime three decades ago – leaves Hassan with a bleak sense of repetition. The anger against authoritarianism that he first felt as a young man has in no way diminished.

While he is now one of Pakistan's most revered contemporary artists, Hassan's work is still regarded as subversive, with its graphic images of violence, references to the Vietnam War, and representations of bloody street protests. ---

---For Hassan, his anger cannot be disentangled from his artistic vision. "I have never been able to distinguish between politics and painting. Politics was unavoidable, right from the beginning. There is always something nasty left behind by the army, when it comes. In the Seventies, I was working with a specialised group of artists and writers to strengthen democracy.

"One of the reasons democracy is so fragile in Pakistan is because we do not build up institutions such as the arts, which are essential for democracy. I wanted to create a culture of resistance. Art and poetry can express a form of not surrendering and present the 'other' view," he says.---

---During the most repressive days of Zia's regime, when every form of dissent was crushed and Hassan's artwork was removed from every gallery in the land, he resorted first to putting his painted messages on posters and political leaflets, and then, to using nature imagery and symbols to get his message across. "My paintings were constantly being censored. One time, during the transitional period that led to Zia's rule, I was part of a group show at Lahore Museum that a General, who had been appointed Governor of Punjab was due to attend. My work was ordered to be taken down. I thought: 'How can it reach people if it's not on show?'

"Since I couldn't get my works out using human symbols, I got them out by drawing on images from nature. A lot of my work was based on phenomena from nature, so my painting called The Wild Berry, for example, shows a tree with new shoots, and where an axe falls on a branch there are several shoots growing out of it. Nature excited me and there was always something political in these works," he says.

Hassan was born in 1940, nearly a decade before India was partitioned to form Pakistan in 1947. Throughout his life, he existed in a political landscape riven by death, torture, and the fight for freedom against authoritarianism. "I was seven when partition happened, so I saw people shooting at each other at railway stations and dead bodies coming in from the other side on trains. Then, later on, there was the war with Bangladesh and the military dictatorships. You had to be a very insensitive rascal not to be influenced by such events," he says. ---

Retrospective Exhibition at the Canvas gallery Karachi 2005

After many years of silence Ijaz held a retrospective exhibition of his work at the Canvas Gallery in Karachi. On that occasion Quddus Mirza recorded the following interview with Ijaz.

IJAZ UL HASSAN's INTERVIEW by Quddus Mirza[35]

"After looking at the works from Pakistan, a young art critic in Mumbai was unable to hide her amazement. Before coming to the exhibition, she used to think that new Indian artists are doing cutting edge works, but she was surprised to see that, Pakistani artists have already done that in the seventies.

What she referred in particular was a painting "Rifle Butt" by Ijaz ul Hassan, displayed in the exhibition called 'Beyond Borders'. Her comment certified the presence of avant-garde in the art of Ijaz ul Hassan. His work offers a diversity of approaches and idioms. The painter, a major figure in the art of today, is having his retrospective at the Canvas Gallery in Karachi, where the works from his earlier period to the latest paintings are displayed. The exhibition, 'A Life of Art' is being held from 15th to 31st March 2005. On this occasion Ijaz ul Hassan talked about his work and its history. Here follow the excerpts:

The News on Sunday: This exhibition brings together works from different periods of your creative life. How do you see the relationship between the paintings from the seventies with the political content, and the recent works in which nature is depicted?

Ijaz ul Hassan: When a common man looks at my paintings, he recognizes that it is done by the same hand. One reason is the use of the flat colours, which appear both in the earlier paintings and in the later works.

Now when I look back I feel that the preference for the flat colour was a result of my interest and direct involvement in making political posters, which are printed in flat colours.

Not only in the formal sense but in terms of subject matter, my work from different years is connected with each other. Simply because I do not paint landscapes, I focus on those elements of nature, which are linked to human concerns. I made a lot of paintings based on 'keekar' tree. For me the agonised form of the plant became a symbol of our people. It is invincible too; it keeps on growing even if it is cut. So the tree turned into a metaphor of resurgence. Then there is another form: Of tree and entwining vine. For me it signifies love, as well as a symbol of country and its people. Similarly laburnum tree has also a symbolic aspect. That it blooms in the hottest weather – a sign of growth in the worst conditions.

I never ceased to be amazed with the amount of metaphors in nature.
TNS: What was the background of the works of a more political nature that you did in the sixties and seventies?

I H: During the sixties, probably I was the only painter in the country, physically involved with the political activity. I participated in student unions and trade unions. I felt that a painter not only reflects own self, but interacts with the people, society and the time he lives in. And art is a means to enrich ideas. That, instead of painting, which is the rehashing of modernistic forms – that is like a reshuffling deck of cards – the painter can possess things which are relevant to that specific environment and express the ethos of that period. My political activities often resulted in arrests and police investigations – one drawing made in the prison is being shown in the present exhibition! But I was aware of people and groups who were struggling against exploitations (not only in our country but in other parts of the world like Africa, Asia and South America). I wanted to be their spokesman, and produced works which could be understood by them. And since most of them were not trained in art, nor they were familiar with modernism so I evolved a vocabulary, which was direct and simple. I tried to use imagery, which was already in circulation such as the posters, media prints, films, hoardings. But by aiming to achieve simplicity in my work, I did not sacrifice the complexity of its meaning and multidimensionality of its cerebral content and aesthetics.

TNS: That was in sixties and seventies, but how do you place your work in this age of post modernism?

IH: I don't see whatever I am doing now is in conflict with Modernism or post-modernism; because both are the products of political conditions of the West. Like Existentialism was only possible in Europe and Marxism in poor countries. For instance the technique of collage was relevant in Europe, where walls were covered with posters. The visual environment of the West is very different from our semi rural surroundings. Similarly realism here is not what it was understood in Europe. Here its context is different. Today realism does not mean that you reduce everything to the eye or to copy nature, but it is to include reality (social, political, economic) in your work. Realist artists should be aware of whatever is happening in the realm of politics, literature and art, etc.

TNS: Do you think that today's artists are not conscious of socio-political matters, and they are engaged with commercialism?

IH: Actually since last ten or fifteen years, there have not been any heroic act or personality in our experience. Not only in world but in our own country, nothing is happening, which can move a painter. Most of the art we see now in the galleries can be termed as commercial, which is fine in my opinion. Because a painter, no matter whatever he is producing is doing work by himself. He is not appropriating someone's labour, neither he is swindling funds nor doing fraudulent deals. He is making works out of his own efforts, earning his livelihood from it and not exploiting anyone else.

Whatever is being made now in our art world is, expected by the society. The artists do respond to the demands of their culture. The Renaissance society demanded from Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel, he could have not done it in the vacuum.

TNS: Besides the link with the society, how you approach your work as an individual?

IH: To paint is a second nature with me. If I don't paint I became unhappy, but when I interact with people it gives me ideas.

TNS; How do you start a canvas?

IH; I see things everyday; and don't notice anything unusual. But one day it so happens that I look at something and feel.... oh there is a painting.....then what I have to do is, just to transpose it on to the canvas. I start on the spot, but I complete it in the studio, to bring it closer to my own vision. In my work, the reality is not frozen, it is in a state of repose – much like the Greek sculpture, in which action is not captured but it is represented in a state of equilibrium. I take out unnecessary details. In my paintings each element acquires a separate significance. For example, in my work, every tree is an individual; my trees are not sites. In fact they represent ordinary men or the viewers, because these are common trees, which you may find growing on the roadsides.
Along with the trees I have painted a lot of female figures. But whenever I painted a woman, I portrayed her as a strong character, who is aware of herself, whether she is the actress in the *Thha* or *Mai li* from the Vietnam war.
TNS: How do you view the role of tradition in the present art?

IH: I think that an artist should use his heritage and not worship it. I believe that people who live in the past are devoured by it. However, the present art is not just about the revitalization of the historic forms. There is diversity and richness found in the art of Pakistan – which in a way is quite distinct from the art produced in our neighbourhood – in India!

TNS: In the recent exhibition, 'Beyond Borders' your work was admired by the Indian audience. In your own opinion what are the traits of a good art work?

IH: I think good art is like good poetry. As the audience, upon hearing great pieces of poetry, feel that they could have done this, the good art generates the same feelings in its viewers. They immediately associate with it. On the other hand, with a difficult and strange work, the spectators will be caught in comprehending it: A situation, which is unfortunate both for the makers and viewers of the art!"

Marjorie Husain an eminent critic and prolific writer from Karachi wrote the following article about the exhibition which was held at Canvas Gallery Karachi in 2005.

Ijaz's descriptive imagery[36]

Marjorie Husain

In Ijaz ul Hassan's paintings, one is tempted to stretch out a hand and pluck the blossoms from a tree, so convincing is his view of nature and descriptive his aesthetic expression. Yet there is much more to the distinguished artist whose work covers a gamut of emotions. A collection of paintings exhibited at the Canvas gallery, celebrate his return to Karachi scene after a gap of three decades, and is by way of being a mini retrospective covering as many years in art.

A scholar who never abandoned his penchant for art, Ijaz took a Masters in English from St. Johns College, Cambridge, and whole in the UK spent some time at St. Martin's School of Art. He began by painting familiar sights and scenes, the world around him and in 1956 first exhibited his work in Murree. Since then his work has been shown in art capitals all over the world.

An historic event in 1967 saw Ijaz exhibit his work along with Burki, S. Safdar and Moyene Najmi at the Department of Fine Art, Punjab University. Professor Khalid Iqbal wrote on this occasion. "Ijaz ul Hassan, the youngest of the four, is making his debut in a major exhibition. For so young a painter, he has done very well indeed, and is on the way to fulfil the promise shown in his earlier work." Ijaz revered his mentor, Khalid Iqbal and it seemed fitting recently that Professor Mussarat Hassan, should write a book on her husband's early teacher. Amazingly the organizers of the book launch had managed to collect fifty of Khalid Iqbal's paintings so that the well-attended launch earlier this year, encompassed the distinguished artist's first solo exhibition.

A man of many parts, Ijaz ul Hassan is the recipient of the President's Pride of Performance award in 1992, the highest art award in the country, he is equally well known as a politician. His feelings concerning world issues and those closer to home have been well documented. A prime example is a haunting, painting consisting of three panels in exhibition that beings with man in an idyllic setting, living in harmony with nature and animals. It ends with Hiroshima and the image of a terrified child. The paintings convey the message with extraordinary force more powerful than written words and warnings.

In the 70s, the artist began to examine images clipped from film posters and publications, and used them to express social and philosophical concerns. On display at Canvas is a painting titled Green Revolution, 1973, again using a child's image as a symbol of abused innocence. Expressing his horror of the Vietnam atrocities the artist painted the unforgettable image of a mother carrying weapons along with her child in her arms, while a dancing girl strikes a provocative pose. The painting is now in the collection of Fukuka Art Museum, Japan.

When Martial Law was enforced in Pakistan in 1977, Ijaz expressed subtle defiance using symbols and images in a series of beautiful paintings titled: View through Window. The series proved to be a definitive example of this era, where the observer gazed from a closed interior to the brighter world without. Not dependent on narrative, the symbolism in the work is found within the landscape, the dramatic variations determined by changing light, the sky and the feeling these elements evoke in the observer.

Following the 'View' paintings came: The Girding Vines, and the Lilies, series of stunningly beautiful work acquired chiefly by overseas art buyers. In these pieces, the freshness and clarity of colours appear as enrichment for everyday visual experience. A joyous celebration represented by nature is the four panelled work of art: Let A Hundred Plants Bloom, ushering in Democracy in 1988, and optimistically echoing the works of the great Chinese Leader.

One of my particular favorites is the artist's interpretation of a snow scene in Lexington, USA, full of wintry, misty light against a translucent sky. During visits to his children in the US, Ijaz painted a recognizably personal collection of landscapes, though he is not fond of that description; "Nature paintings", he says. With a rich sense of depth, tone and colour, he describes the changing prospects and seasons.

Over the years, Ijaz ul Hassan's contribution to art has been incalculable as a teacher, artist and writer. For many years associated with the National College of Arts, Lahore, he was Head of the Department of Academics 1966-72 and of Design 69-75. From 1972 – 80, he served as Associate Professor, Academics. One of the founder members of the Artists Association of Punjab, he has been Chairman of the Association from 1986 to date, and with a well coordinated team, he organized nineteen annual exhibitions in which artists from all regions of Pakistan participated. A fascinating raconteur and writer, Ijaz has been regularly writing on painting, art and culture for major national and international newspapers, magazines and has written scripts for radio and TV. Currently he is in touch with a wide

public through a lively column he writes for *The Daily Times*. A book published in 1991, Painting in Pakistan, was the first contemporary book on art in Pakistan. The author pointed out that it took several years to complete and gives an extensive picture of the art scene of the period. In the book the author traced the links between the traditions of the past with contemporary art movements and in the process, wrote in detail on artists in every part of the country. He also imparted his own significant philosophy of art.

"Good intentions do not by themselves give birth to art. The artists who lay verbal stress on content or good social motives, often turn out sterile, uninspiring products because they have not actually experienced or even perceived their subject. Life, which has not been lived, cannot be portrayed, interpreted or expressed in a convincing manner. Ideas and feelings, which have not fired the mind and imagination or touched the heart, are inevitably insipid and lifeless. On the contrary, the artists who worship form for its own sake, who separate from content, aesthetics from ideas, and beauty from meaning, have indeed chartered many unexplored paths, but at the expense of deviating from the grand avenues of life."

Ijaz ul Hassan's exhibition in Karachi offers art enthusiast the opportunity to view his work first hand. He is an art legend, full of surprises and definite opinions gleaned from experience. At a recent exhibition he commented with optimism on the state of art in the country: "In the last half-century Pakistan painting has achieved high level of excellence. It has unusual diversity of styles, expression and concern that needs to be properly acclaimed. Art in spite of official apathy has forged ahead on its own." Ironically, this has been a source of strength from where the artist has earned his freedom - the freedom to choose. Pakistani artist has not worked with any national agenda but has created works that have been motivated by his rapport with nature and his concern for people and society with which he interacts.

In the first issue May 2012 of ***Art Now Pakistan*** an online, monthly, bi-lingual publication offering critical insight into the art of Pakistan. Aasim Akhtar published the following interview.[37]

Mian Ijaz-ul-Hassan

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

By Aasim Akhtar

Mian Ijaz-ul-Hassan is a painter who has always worked against the grain, generating massive controversies in the process. As a critic pointed out, 'Ijaz-ul-Hassan has dared to go where none with his sophistication has gone before'. His outstanding talent as an artist has, however, secured him a place at the forefront of Pakistani painting for nearly half a century.

Ijaz-ul-Hassan was born in 1940. His early education culminated in a period of tenure at Aitchison College followed by a stint at Saint Martin's School of Art, London. As a mature student, Hassan enrolled at Government College, Lahore, reading English Literature, before transferring in 1964 to St John's College, Cambridge.

Now known simply as Mian - even to family and friends – he is an internationally acclaimed artist working at the height of his powers to give visual embodiment to a lifetime's observations and perceptions about the human condition. The interview below is the result of a sporadic interaction that I have maintained with him over the years, which warmed up into a period of considerable activity, when sections of our dialogue were scheduled to be published in ANP (Art Now Pakistan). He has lived in Lahore since years, single-mindedly painting in his studio, and grappling with what may be called his 'old age' style. He has grown hair, which is now grey, and he looks like an Old Testament prophet. Periodically he releases a stream of paintings like sparks, and then retires into political activism. Excerpts:

AA You are neither a 'genre' painter nor a 'painter's painter', as they say, whether by choice or by irony of fate. What is your stance towards making art?

MIH Whether it is non-figurative work done in 1960s or figurative work of later years; whether it is leaves, tendrils and lilies or something which is brutal in terms of its subject matter, I have consciously avoided marketing poverty and selling events. At the same time, I don't impose a will because each subject has its own identity. Now when I have a large body of work – I've been painting for twenty-six years – I still don't impose a signature or style on my work. Neither I determine the choice of subject nor let the subject determine me. I do, however, allow the subject to evolve its own form. The subject and I work together, and arrive at a consensus. I don't like to wrest a subject ever. In this sense, each painting is a unique experience.

People often accuse potters of making the same pots repetitively, whereas, each pot is a unique pot. Potters are limited because they work on utilitarian forms, whereas painters have a relatively greater freedom of dealing with imagination, ideas and aesthetics, which are far more subjective. Moods and feelings, sentiments and emotions, and states of mind are best expressed through work, and cannot be clearly defined by words. Work emphasises particular moments, whether they are momentary feelings or moments of intellectual concern.

I've only been able to paint what has moved me, what has, somehow, gripped my soul and my imagination. I don't paint the servitude and wretchedness of people; instead, I paint their inherent strength – the invincibility of common resolve and individual endeavour. Look at the agonised form of 'keekar' (acacia) tree that I paint! Nobody pampers the acacia; no one waters it. Look at its remarkable resilience. Where there's a branch today, there'd be a multitude tomorrow. To me, acacia is a symbol of the agony and the ecstasy of the common man.

Likewise, if you look at my portrait of a man with rivulets of blood flowing down his face, the blood is translucent like spring water. The idea is not to make your liver turn in revulsion to blood; or to make your blood curdle. It appears that the face is bejewelled, yet it's a symbol of state terrorism.

AA Would your symbolic approach to the natural form of acacia liken you to Sadequain, who saw 'political metaphor' in the cactus form?

MIH I have never forced images upon any subject; instead, they evolve from it. One has the luxury of describing one's feelings in words in literature, but in painting, one has to assemble them in such a manner that in one go, they are all transmitted. In other words, a painter's task is much more complicated than a writer's. I have made paintings like 'Lilies in Rain', 'Lilies at Night' where lily stood for a fragile being striving to survive in a hostile environment or for an endangered creature afraid of darkness, and so on.

Then I began to see 'rain' as a blessing, especially after seeing an earlier copy of an illustrated Qur'an. Few people would know that some early manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an were illustrated with Byzantine imagery. One of the symbols employed was that of rain – rainwater falling in droplets over the script suggesting the descent of sura upon earth from the skies, in the religious context; rain in the arid desert of Arabia, fertilising not just the soil but the minds of the Quresh.

I don't invent or discover symbols in nature; I just underline them. Having said that, I don't make use of symbols; I employ metaphors.

Wild berry has also been a recurrent presence in my work, its five branches bearing resemblance to a stretched limb. Munnoo Bhai once remarked, "It looks like the hand of Christ." Behind the berry bush is a

modern glasshouse. I felt motivated to put it there not necessarily to convince people into reading metaphors into it!

About 30-40 years ago, when I saw a 'jamini' tree in my lawn for the first time, I planted a climber around it. And one day, as I watched it grow, I discovered caterpillars as thick as my index finger crawling atop its leaves. There were fresh leaves too that resembled human hands. I was looking out a glass window worrying the leaves may soon be eaten. While I wanted to save them, I felt I couldn't because I was confined to a self-inflicted cage – intensified by the memory of interrogation in Lahore Fort, of how the view through the window emerged in my work. That's how the first picture of the series, 'View Through the Glass Cage' happened. 'Cages' are subjective, and even though you may say it's easy to break a glass cage, one may lack the will or one has been taught to fear the freedom of stepping out of a glass cage.

The climber kept growing, and I kept painting it. It endorsed the concept of the union of lovers – in Indian miniatures, a vine entwining a tree trunk signifies unity among lovers! Following that, I did a whole series of paintings based on Iqbal's couplet: *Pewasta reh shajar se umeed-e-bahar rakh*.

AA What encouraged you to become a painter?

MIH Never for a moment have I thought I could ever not paint!

I never really compartmentalised my life with the result that it remained without a purpose for a long time. I enjoyed the company of great teachers at the art school – Moeen Najmi, Sardar Mohammad, Khalid Iqbal, etc. I have never pretended to be an academic although I spent a good chunk of my life in the academia. (Academics have no sense of reality). I sincerely believe that art colleges kill more artists than they can produce!

People who fail to find a job elsewhere end up becoming teachers. They are not good role models and they don't inspire you. You become a poet when you are inspired, not when you have learnt the grammar or expanded your vocabulary. Likewise, painting is not about acquiring skill. Even tarts have skill. They know how to pamper men into believing they are special. The artist has to look for the means to deluge the cataclysm that wells up in him. Take the example of a deaf boy and a mute girl in love with each other. Do you think they cannot convey or communicate their feelings in the absence of a language? Love is the basic emotion, here without which language would be of no help. Your emotions, ideas and thoughts, your concerns will determine who you are, and enable you to find the right technique, words or subject matter to express yourself.

The principle of conformity in an art college is more like a parade ground. Do you know which art school Picasso and Dali went to? Their academic qualification has never been quoted as the reason behind their success. Or, for that matter, which school did Keats go to? For all I know, Shakespeare studied neither at Cambridge nor at Oxford. The 19th-century painter would go to the gallery and get the stimulation.

AA Are you a proverbial son-of-the-soil painter?

MIH Whether you have to lift 5 kilos of weight or 100 kilos, your feet should be firmly planted on the ground, and the ground is where you are. The world doesn't begin beyond the horizon line; it begins under your feet! It's a question of ownership. If you cannot own what belongs to you, you can't stretch yourself beyond. A lot of our problems are borne out of our colonial past. For example, our well-educated lot can't read Shah Hussain in its mother tongue – the Punjabi vernacular. It thinks it's a great curiosity. On the other hand, it's become increasingly fashionable to attribute everything to colonisation.

I regard myself as a modern person – not in the sense of serving a cliché! At the turn of the last century, a lot of painting in Europe has been very incestuous and carnivorous in that it lived off the previous movements. It doesn't go back to life to reinvent it; instead, it reacts to and negates what preceded it. It becomes an academic, aesthetic and cerebral exercise, which places it in a highly urbanised milieu.
Tradition is something you learn from and forget about. I am the inheritor of a tradition who will create a future. One should not live in the past; one should be connected with the next moment. One must, however, live one's life with full awareness of where he's coming from. I believe that a painter or a poet can't be more than what he essentially is. After what has happened in the country, how many painters and writers have ever passed a resolution? Punjab Artists' Association, let alone any five leading artists of the country, has not passed a resolution on any national issue in the last twenty-five years. Unlike the west where most information is either quoted or reported, we can witness directly what's going on around.

AA How would you respond to the allegation that landscape painting is retrogressive?

MIH The Urdu-medium artist who hails from a lower middle-class background and cannot articulate his work in English will be known as 'retrogressive.' He ends up imitating the environment he sees. The English-medium artist, on the other hand, who travels abroad and is well-exposed to new art forms, ends up imitating the western trends. Likewise, the Punjabi poet is 'ill-educated' compared to the Urdu poet who is sophisticated and cultured, even though the former may recall Waris Shah backwards! It's a class phenomenon.

Secondly, our streets and by-lanes had never been painted before by anyone. Landscape painting was a way of reclaiming your own environment, and to come to terms with yourself. Why is Khalid Iqbal a modern landscapist? There is a hint of metaphysics in those strips that lie between the rural and urban divide. Like Mondrian, he builds his pictures stroke-by-stroke, tone after tone. When he paints water, it is brackish and muddy but when Allah Bux paints water, it appears a fairy would emerge out of its depths. It's your vision and not your style that brands you modern!

People in France got to see their landscape for the first time in painting only after the arrival of Impressionism there. It is not quite necessary that one may also perceive what exists. Sometimes it is over stretched, sugarcoated and repetitive. Pakistani painting commands a great breadth, and is moving at its own momentum. It is not being sponsored by the state or by any multi-national. The private entrepreneur has not even sponsored a fountain to be installed in a public square.

Would you charge sheet the beautician who emasculates a female, for being retrogressive? There are many beauticians and one painter who beautify nature. It's probably easier for people to relate to what's happening in New York than here!

AA What factors led to your confinement in Lahore Fort?

MIH The Principal of the National College of Arts, Lahore, Mrs Abbasi Abidi, was persuaded by the Intelligence Agencies to nominate me as the person who had been witnessed stealing the Cyclostyle machine from the Principal's office, when I had left the college three years earlier. I was first taken into custody at Anarkali Police Station where the SHO apologized to me for being helpless in this case. Later, the Deputy Incharge of Lahore Fort, Rana Wasiq came up and produced some printed pamphlets against Zia-ul-Haq. I was kept in solitary confinement at the Fort for three weeks – badly treated, bruised and threatened. I realised man is a gregarious animal who requires company. I engaged myself in studying the movement of shadows along the wall.

The incident at Naukhar is a separate one that happened earlier in 1976, during the early years of my party. I was president of the Pakistan Artists' Equity at that time. We had proposed to take painters, musicians, actors

and writers to Naukhar where a peasant rally of some one thousand peasants was supposed to be taken out. Upon the orders of the then Chief Minister, the entire district's police came charging on us and arrested us. We were kept there until 14th August. It came to my mind again, '"Are they being incarcerated or are we being incarcerated." Freedom is not something to run after but something to exercise.

AA Could you shed some light on the representation of women in your work?

MIH There are two women in 'Thah'. The one at the back is in woodcut, while the other one in the foreground is a painted figure of female film actor Firdous. I was trying to make a comment on the viewer by presenting two angles of view from two different societies: the consumer's view and the creator/observer's view. In 'Rifle Butt', the bikini-clad and the sari-clad woman becomes a butt to the gun because she is not constraining in any way. This beautiful, innocent, harmless sculpture of a woman becomes a butt to the gun that triggers off in another direction, in another part of the globe. The Vietnamese woman is the only one in bxw; the rest of the world is coloured. With the barrel of the gun resting on her head, she is the only one aware of the moment but there is no anguish or despair on her face. The button on her shirt is more powerful than the navel-button of the society woman. The painting is about two separate worlds and their attitudes. I was only enhancing people's awareness to investigate, to let these women know that this is how the society looks at you: You are a viewer's victim, and this is exactly what's expected of you! The weeping child is seeking your sympathy and love. Consciously, I did not set out to convey a message; I just shared my perception.

On another note, *Khooni Chowk* is about an incident with an intervention from Pablo Neruda. Yahya Amjad had translated his poem as: *Yeh ghaddar auj-e-taraqqi pe pohanchay / Shaheedon ki laashon ko zeena bana kar / Isi chowk mein in darindon ko la kar saza do, saza do*. It was one of the earlier paintings in which the pattern was very strong. The other paintings of that time are less political and represent the popular culture when I was assimilating a lot of posters, hoardings and media film advertisements printed in litho pasted on the walls all around the city, into my work.

The period following that, featured the Bangladesh Saga triptych. The painting was divided into sunset, night and morning. People's slaughter and hunger was the message.

And then there is the figure of a siren. It's related to the colonial/imperial culture's attitude towards women. In a capitalist society, the status of a woman with all her liberties is that of a whore. Obviously, that's the attitude adopted by the general public. By remaining silent you become, however inadvertently, a butt to the rifle, which will be fired on the innocent (as depicted in the *Riffle Butt*).

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37. Aasim Akhtar interview Published in the first issue of the online art magazine, *Art Now Pakistan*, May 2012.

Ijaz ul Hassan's writings on art and miscellaneous issues

After the publication of the book on Painting in Pakistan in 1991, there was a long gap in Ijaz's writing output. But then he was cajoled into writing a weekly column for *The Daily Times*, which he continued to do for almost three years. He has a unique way of viewing the world. What he cannot put on the canvas he has with gusto expressed in words. His themes vary. He has been a regular writer for newspapers and magazines on topics that relate to the arts as well as the crafts, political and social comments. From the most delectable art appreciation to the nostalgic charm of his personal experiences, he takes his readers on journeys that caressingly touch upon folklore as well as quaint customs, practices and ancient wisdom.

For three years, after 2002 he was a weekly contributor to 'The Daily Times', a popular daily newspaper of Lahore, in a column that was titled "The Way it was". He contributed almost two hundred articles in this series. His writings on various issues include his essays published in;

1. Daily Times, *THE WAY IT WAS,* By Mian Ijaz Ul Hassan

1. A substitute for the real thing
2. A bowl of pumpkin soup
3. A crow on the parapet
4. A friend in need is a friend indeed
5. A helmet is cheaper than your head
6. A journey to Baghdad
7. A lakh in life, lakh and a quarter after retirement
8. A spirit which must not die
9. Aay watan pyaray watan
10. Adrift in India with Sohail Iftikhar
11. Afghanistan afloat in time
12. Akhri Angrez
13. Amazing my foot!
14. Amrita Sher-Gill nude and makings of an artist
15. An accident
16. Apprehend the father and thrash him
17. Art and globalisation
18. Art and national security
19. Art and nationalism
20. Artist and his freedom
21. Benefit of state awards
22. Betrayal for the larger good
23. Better safe than sorry
24. Birds of a feather
25. Book launch and a rare perspective
26. Breaking a rock with eggs
27. Bugti lets our heaters burn
28. Casting a shadow on pink memories
29. Chughtai in the woods
30. Confused about culture and purity
31. Cows and buckets
32. Delete Bs and Ps to correct Ps and Qs
33. Dial M for merger
34. Diwali mubarak
35. Does the fire hurt
36. End-of a graceful innings
37. Even a bald eagle would do
38. Even freedom fries will do
39. Far away and long ago
40. Fifty-fifty chance
41. Finding a corresponding link with nature
42. Fix the rooster, not the hen
43. For a fruity,sporting Pakistan
44. For butter or for worse
45. Forging a myth
46. Friends in the neighbourhood
47. From Rumi to Mao
48. Gallan baatan
49. Gelded art and gilded capitalism
50. Goofers,golfers and gardens
51. Grumpy heron and ingenious hen
52. Half-empty glass of water
53. Honourable-Vs pompous Indians
54. How should I know
55. How to win freedom
56. Impossible to please anyone
57. In the company of fair women
58. Indeed what has changed
59. Infidels and brother Muslims
60. Iris and the river of fire
61. Jack and the Queen of Hearts
62. Khwaja's melting pot
63. Let a thousand flowers bloom
64. Let there be no losers
65. Live now or cash later
66. Looking back at the sixties
67. Memories of another time
68. Men without honour and justice
69. Mera bhi toe hai
70. Modernism revisited

71. Mothers of the world unite
72. Naukhar Kissan conference and our brush with law
73. Not a shoe to wear
74. Not for faith but for sport
75. Of BOs and-Pakistan's national emblem
76. Of Laburnums and Kikars
77. Of looswallahs and sheedis
78. Of past and present
79. Of pehlwans and miniatures
80. Of pride and prejudice
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83. On rewriting literature and laying eggs
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88. Reminiscing about Lahore
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92. Seeking strength from innocence
93. Settling a point with a clean single blow
94. Sexing up paintings
95. Sobering thoughts-for-a new year
96. Some inimitable characters
97. Stability and poise in things at rest
98. Standing this side of the window
99. Still is, I'm afraid
100. Sweep it under the prayer mat
101. Take it or leave it
102. Tasting the collective good
103. The absurd and absurdity
104. The Afghanistan I saw
105. The almonds will bloom
106. The joy-of eating well-cooked trotters
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108. The melting ice cube
109. The naval invasion
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111. The small matter of patriotism
112. The third opinion
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115. To keep or not to keep promises
116. To *Thal* with friends
117. Tricks the eyes play
118. Try spitting out the anger
119. Turkish delights before dinner
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124. Where things belong
125. Why oh why
126. Will the advice be taken
127. With as much wind as possible
128. Wives yes,but no kites
129. Women for the taking
130. Would you rather bang your head
131. Wretched common things
132. Writers and sweating painters
133. ZAB spoilt the servants
134. Zeus, menthe and vinegar

2. Friday Times

A few years ago Ijaz happened to go on a cruise to the Mediterranean. Among others he visited Rome, Venice and Florence and was enthralled by this revisit to the Renaissance. I call it a revisit because he had seen the Renaissance through books and the real life experience with face to face viewing of many of the paintings, was an overwhelming experience. He produced several delightful article on the subject and to my mind these articles present an original and charming glimpse into many of the social and artistic aspects of the Renaissance.

3. Introductions for the Annual Artists Association's Brochures

4. Unpublished Articles read at Seminars

5. Fifty Unpublished Poems

During his visit to the United States in the early nineties, he had a sudden urge to write poetry. His mood in these poems is varied. From the dark and dismal thoughts connected with the realities of the world around him in some of the poems, he suddenly swings towards hope in others.

Urdu Poem by Shahnawaz Zaidi, an eminent painter and a poet
Former Principal College of Art and Design, University of Punjab, Lahore.

اعجاز الحسن

مُصوّر ہو یا تم عطّار ہو کوئی
جو تصویرِ لبِ گُل سے
کشیدِ حسن کرتا ہے
درختوں کے تنوں پر چڑھتی بیلوں سے
وہ خوشبو کاشت ہوتی ہے
جو سانسوں ہی نہیں
آنکھوں میں بھی
پر کیف احساس اور تصوّر خیز تعبیریں اُگاتی ہے
گلِ تازہ
جو برگِ دیو پیکر کے تناظر میں
لچکتی شاخ پر روشن، برہنہ تن کھڑے ہیں
دادِ نظارہ کے طالب ہیں
یہ کیا وہ صورتیں ہیں جو
ابھی تک
خاک میں پنہاں پڑی تھیں

اب
گُل و لالہ کی صورت پھر نمایاں ہو گئی ہیں
یا
ہمارے خواب ہیں
اک عہدِ فردا کے
یا وعدے ہیں
کسی خوشحال دنیا کے۔!
سراپا حُسن و رعنائی
مجسم چشمۂ خوبی
تمناؤں کے کینوس پر
گلِ پر وردۂ فطرت کی معصومی
گھنے پتوں کے ٹھنڈے سائیباں میں
آسماں کے چھید
جن میں کل کے
میرے آنے والے کل کے

پوشیدہ اشارے ہیں
سحر کے
استعارے ہیں۔

مصوّر۔
اے مرے حساس دل ساحر
کبھی اک نالہ وشیون
کبھی اک چیخ تم سے بھی نکل جاتی ہے
پھر بھی تم
محبت سے ہمیں اُمید کی صورت دکھاتے ہو
نا جانے تم
میانِ برگ و گُل
اس عہد کی ناکامیاں کیسے چھپاتے ہو

پروفیسر شاہنواز زیدی
سابقہ پرنسپل کالج آف آرٹس اینڈ ڈیزائن
پنجاب یونیورسٹی، لاہور

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252. *Sketch*, 1986, Charcoal on paper, 14"x10", Private Collection.

Dr Musarrat Hasan's book on Ijaz ul Hassan, one of our foremost painters, is an outstanding endeavour in art interpretation. This book produces more than 250 of Ijaz ul Hassan's paintings and most learnedly and perceptively connects them with every aspect of the artist's life. It draws upon biographical data and events and social issues of the time and important formative events the world over. It acquaints us with the painter's diversity of pursuits in his own painting, as well as other concerns ranging from art criticism to his commitment in the field of culture and struggle for human rights and advancement of common social and political causes. The book puts the artist's work that spans a period of over five decades in this perspective. This is achieved through careful investigation and research. The narrative is scholarly and extremely readable. What lends strength to Dr Hasan's analysis and propositions is that they are abundantly supported by the works of the artist. The book without doubt is a landmark achievement. As for the artist himself, in our plebeian aristocracy of art, he certainly is the king.
Jalal Uddin Ahmed, Director General Fomma Trust, Karachi, Ex Executive Editor Arts and the Islamic World, London, Author of the pioneering book on Art in Pakistan, published 1954.

In a country where history is often forgotten or distorted, it is refreshing to read Dr Musarrat Hasan's wonderful book on Ijaz ul Hasan's long and prolific career. The author has traced the artist's development as a person, a painter and a politically engaged citizen. Dr Musarrat is an art historian and author of several books, including the groundbreaking Paintings in the Punjab Plains. She is also an artist in her own right. She is thus ideally equipped to discuss the influences that shaped Ijaz ul Hasan's style, technique and vision. She has also focused on Ijaz's political activism that has played such a significant role in his development as an artist. Above all, the author has gathered many of Ijaz's works in one gorgeous volume. By selecting paintings and drawings from different periods of his illustrious career, she has traced his emergence as one of Pakistan's foremost artists. A book to treasure.
Irfan Husain is a regular contributor to the daily Dawn and is the author of Fatal Faultlines: Pakistan, Islam and the West.

Musarrat Hassan in creating this book has painted the development of Mian Ijaz ul Hassan's style and sensibility on the canvas of history. Mian Sahib's paintings signify his sensitivity to nature as well as the human condition. They enable us to experience simultaneously the sensuousness and the transcendent beauty of nature counterposed to the brutality of an unjust society. We are invited to apprehend this polarized metaphor through an existential choice: to actualize the organic connection between our sense of beauty and our humanity by building a more humane society.
In the "Bangladesh Saga" the ineffable beauty of a distant dawn is juxtaposed with murdered victims of state oppression lying in the darkness of the night. The first light only highlights the blood on their bodies.
Then there is "Thah", which shows a woman fighter in the Vietnam War nurturing her baby as much as an emerging society. The balance in the posture of a woman fighting for justice is in sharp contrast to the instability of the woman offering her body for sale. The contrast is explosive.
There is the "View through the Door". The lyricism of the blossoming foliage beckons us with its sensuousness to re-establish contact with nature and our own nature. But alas we are separated by a glass window: in our constricted space we are filled with a longing to bloom unhindered.
"Approaching Shadows" shows a home amidst intimations of an epochal change: silence and utter stillness pervade the scene. The branches of a line of trees in the foreground are suffused in the haunting light of a setting sun in the background. In the womb of the encompassing gloom, a new awareness and a new epoch is taking shape. As Hegel in his lectures on history remarked, "the owl of Minerva opens its wings only at dusk". Mian Sahib through this painting makes eerily palpable this point of inflection in our history.
Dr. Akmal Hussain is author, economist and activist who has helped build organizations of the poor for Participatory Development at the village, district, provincial and national levels. He is currently teaching at the FC College University as a Distinguished Professor of Economics.

It was an honor to read the manuscript. Congratulations on this magnum opus.
Dr Louis Herlands is a PhD, Chairman & CEO Minerva BioSciences, Inc.