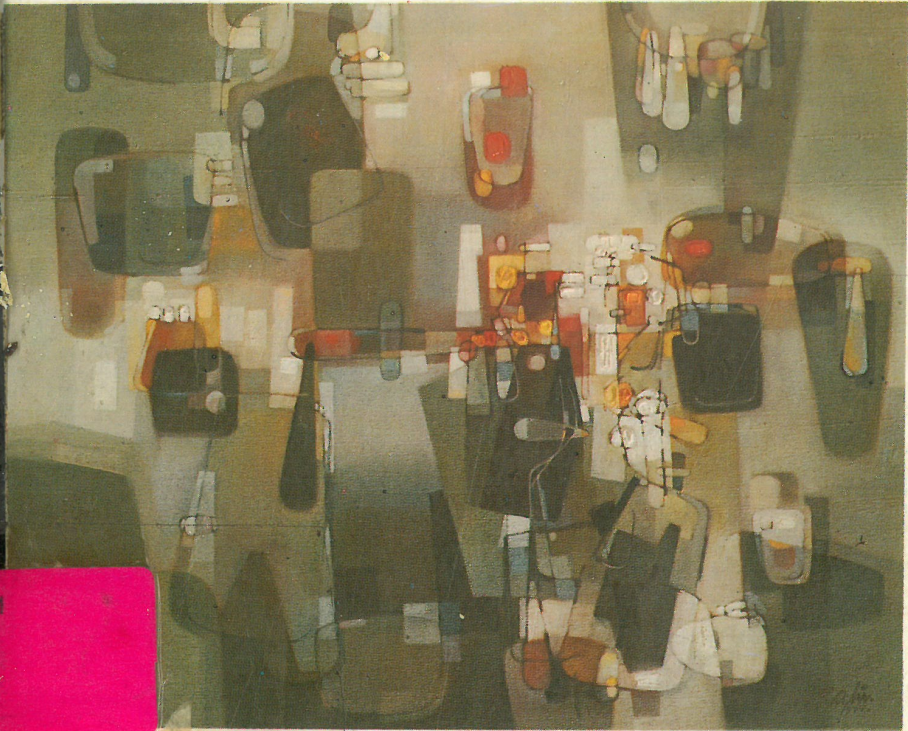




Mansur Rahi



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Publisher & Chief Editor
Dr. Khalid Said Butt
Director General

Mansur Rahi

A Socially Conscious Artist

S. Amjad Ali



Idara Saqafat-e-Pakistan, Islamabad

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MANSUR RAHI

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FOREWORD

The Idara Saqafat-e-Pakistan feels privileged in producing this slender volume of one of the most significant Pakistani artists, Mansur Rahi. In this long artistic odyssey he has touched many parts and points of artistic styles and techniques. He is never static and all his work vibrates with movement and is imbued with a forward — looking vision.

Taking his roots in his family in the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), he was lucky to find all kind of encouragement from his environment. His formal education in the art in Art College, Dacca, in late fifties that gave him a grounding in realistic art proved indeed to be a starting point for the creative young man.

In 1963 when he came to Karachi, he shifted to *Cubism*, under the influence of Pablo Picasso, putting an imprint of his individual creativity on his canvas. For some time when his 'broken forms' became the hallmark of his work, he quietly moved towards a form abstraction that embraced an organic flexibility. Kandinsky might have been his inspiration but was surely breaking out of the stiffness of cubism and coming to light and brightness that he named as '*rayonism*'.

In late seventies his work became a blend of many techniques and resulted into *constructivism*. The colours that sometimes tended to be sombre and monochromatic now bloomed into brighter hues and shades.

Mansur Rahi is a socially conscious artist and is now deeply engaged in contemporary themes of global significance: hunger, war and refugees all over the world.

Mansur Rahi is a Pakistani by choice and visualises the contemporary international scene, with his feet firmly planted in the land he loves and projects in his work.

Dr. Khalid Said Butt
Director General

Biographical

This is the artist, already eminent at the age of 43, who has been invited by the Vice-Chancellor of Peshawar University, to come all the way from Karachi, a thousand miles away, to revive the arts department and to work as an Associate Professor. His life story is worth recounting.

Rahi was born in 1939 in the green and watery world of Maldah, a town in the Bengal State of what is now India. He was a precocious and handsome child, as can be seen from a picture of his childhood.

When in 1947, the Muslim majority areas of former India broke off from India and became Pakistan: what is now Bangladesh, became the eastern wing of Pakistan. Rahi's father Mohammad Younus migrated from Maldah, which fell to the share of India and came to Rajshahi, in the east. In this tranquil little university town Rahi received his schooling.

Rahi recalls with pride and pleasure the small ceremony that takes place in Bengali homes when the child formally begins his education. With the prayers and blessings of all the near relations gathered in the home, the child is guided to write the first letter of the Bengali alphabet. Rahi was given a chalk and a slate on which he was asked to write. However, he refused to write on this small slate. Then taking hold of the chalk, the little Rahi of four years went down on all fours and started reaching out as far as he could with his small arms to fill the entire floor of the verandah or patio with his writing. While his admiring relations watched in wonder, he had executed the first letter of the Bengali alphabet with correct proportions on an enormous size. It was quite an achievement and Rahi's uncle, who was an established artist

working in the great metropolis of Calcutta, declared that this child would grow up into an eminent artist.

The artist-uncle, Ziauddin, became Rahi's hero and he looked up with admiration to some paintings of his uncle hanging in the house. Eager to emulate the wondrous creations, he drew some picture on his slate and hung it beside the paintings, as if the black slate, the white chalk drawing and the wooden white frame of the slate were a painting of sorts. In this way, he kept demanding and getting many slates because the pictures he drew were not rubbed out but preserved in the ready-made frame for others and mainly himself to admire.

Rahi received his school education in Rajshahi and always used to come first in drawing in his class. His drawing teacher, Mr. Suraish, liked Rahi very much and once came to Rahi's father Mr. Younus and said "Take care of your son for he will one day become a favour artist." Rahi soon proved true the forecasts of his teacher for when he was in class IX, there was an open paintings competition held for the whole vast district of Rajshahi (area equal to Multan) and Rahi, a stripling of fifteen won the first prize. He had submitted two entries in water colour, size 2 x 3 feet, one of which showed cows returning home at the end of the day and the other a boat, with two boatmen, sailing on a calm river against the setting sun.

Even at that young age Rahi had developed a fascination for the old masters of the West, like **Michelangelo**, **Leonardo** and **Rubens**. He recalls the pleasure it gave him to copy Michelangelo's drawings, especially to copy and study his foreshortenings of different limbs and members.

His career was clearly marked for him and as soon as he



Composition of Seated Figure – in Green (Oil) – 1976



Wild Horse (Oil) – 1975



Seated Figure in Blue (Oil) – 1973



*Mother
&
Child
1975*



"Portrait" Watercolour – 1959



Study for "THE THINKER" (Charcole) – 1965



Portrait of Mansur Rahi, 1985

Mansur Rahi

A Socially Conscious Artist

Mansur Rahi has many claims to attention and has deservedly remained in the public eye now for two decades, since he held his first one-man show in Dacca and then in Karachi, both in 1963.

He is one of the most consummate abstract artists and has touched the limits of the non-objective in some of his work.

At the same time, he is the most socially conscious artist and has reacted creatively to all momentous happenings in the life of the nation.

He is one of the two artists in Pakistan, the other being **Sadequain**, who have developed a monumental style and painted epic themes in big murals.

He is one of the top ranking figure artists of Pakistan. Rahi subjects the human figure to a drastic process of abstraction which greatly heightens the effect and power of the images, especially, when it is desired to make them monumental or dramatic.

In a lighter vein and for commercial purposes, he is capable of turning out quick landscape sketches in which the ease, flow and freedom of linework and brushwork is superb.

He is perhaps the only authentically abstract artist whose work has evolved organically and convincingly from realistic to abstract, instead of being random sallies into one direction or the other, with no sign of any link between one stage and another, as is the case with some others.

He is a teacher-artist and naturally his work shows technical mastery of a high order and is correct to a degree that begins to jar on certain sensibilities.

As a teacher of art he has exercised a deep personal influence on a large number of young artists and can justly claim credit for having nurtured some of the best rising painters of Pakistan.

He has received the most appreciative notices in the press and extensive and repeated coverage on the radio and T.V.

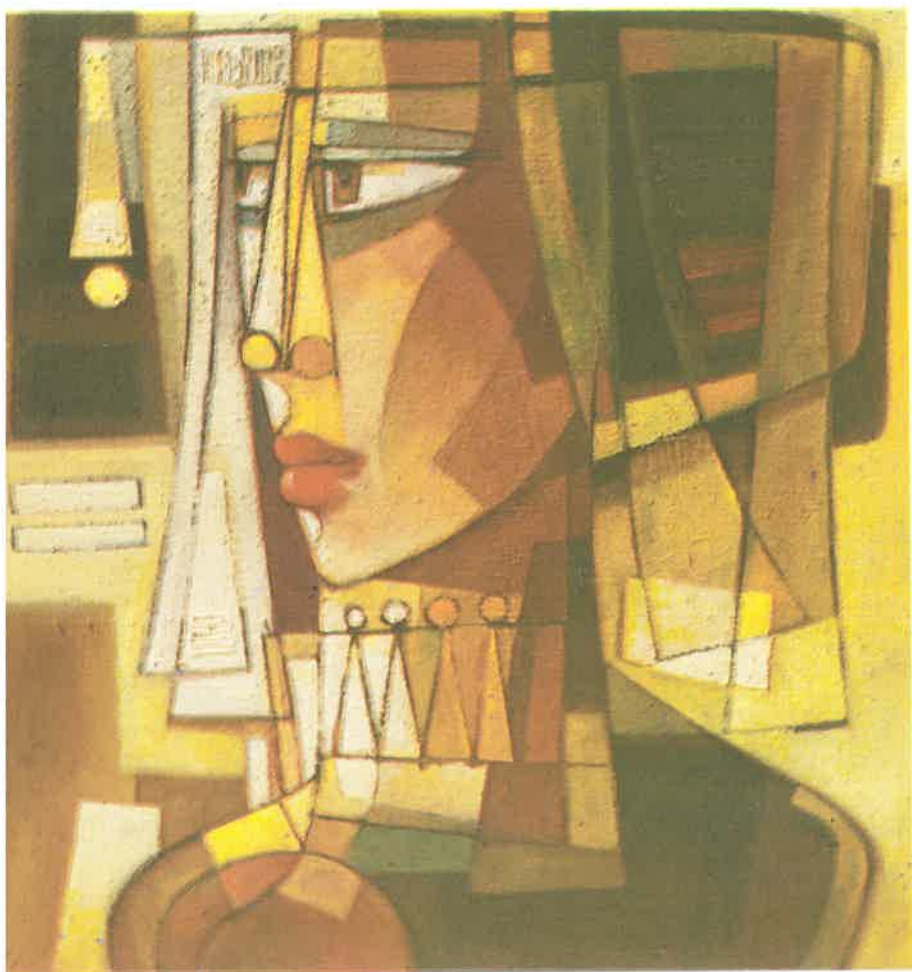
He was awarded the First Prize for Painting in the National Art Exhibition of 1980 organized by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

He has held almost 20 one-man shows in twenty years and participated in numerous group shows within the country and abroad.

On his one and only visit abroad to Japan in 1981 he received the warmest acclaim from the top artists of that home of art.



Revolution (Oil) – 1970



Portrait of a Kashmiri Girl (Oil) – 1975

passed high school he made for Dacca, the capital of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and joined the newly set up Government College of Art and Craft. There he had the good fortune to study under such eminent and outstanding teachers as **Zainul Abedin** and **Kibria** who had made a name for themselves not only in Pakistan but abroad. He was given a firm grounding in drawing by **Zainul Abedin** and in composition by **Abdul Razzaq** and initiated into modern styles of painting by the highly original and gifted artist, **Aminul Islam**, whose influence is clearly traceable in Rahi's latest work.

Rahi not only drew the fullest benefit from his teachers at college but was also an adept student in the school of nature. He adored the thousands of rivers, rivulets and streams that flow through his native land, softly rustling along in winter and menacingly flooding in summer. He, the gigantic monsoon clouds the stormy rains and the gorgeous sunsets that followed. He watched and worshipped the millions of flowers that bloom on the trees, shrubs, creepers and even the weeds and grasses of his land. Above all, he loved the people, the men, women and children, and his loving studies of their forms and faces, dating back to his student days, are proof of the deep attachment he felt to them. Even today, his love of humanity and his warm feeling for his fellowmen is manifest from his friendly eyes, his softly spoken words and his friendly touch.

It was such sentiments that led him to spend some weeks in the dense hill forests of Chittagong Hill Tracts to hold close communion with nature and the unspoilt primitive denizens of the woods. For three months he lived with them, slept where they slept and ate what they ate. He describes with pleasure the incredible hospitality and warm friendship extended by these simple folk and his own enjoyment of their

strange but simple foods and ways of life. Interesting was the uninhibited response to little friendly gestures by the woodland maidens who felt no embarrassment in expressing love and affection and drawing close in bonds of friendship. In fact, he was dismayed to find that his small gestures of common friendship drew such a passionate response from a warm-hearted forest maid. She took it for granted that he would stay with her for ever, and declared firmly that she would not let him go. The strong grip of the female hands provided proof, if any proof was needed, that every word was meant in earnest. Rahi was scared when told by others that she would kill him if he tried to run away from her for these "flower children" of the green woods were also adept in wielding the curved knife used by these woodsmen and woodswomen for common daily work. Rahi was able to make good his escape but not before he had drawn and painted heaps of sketches of his woodland love and other denizens of the woods and the scenes and sights of the woods themselves.

Drawing fullest benefit from his art education, Rahi distinguished himself in 1962 by graduating in the first division with first position at the end of his five years course at the College of Art and Craft.

He soon presented his first offering of paintings of his people by holding a one-man show the very next year after graduation. After he had held an exhibition in Dacca, he was invited by the Pakistan Arts Council of Karachi to hold an exhibition there. Both the exhibitions were well received and were mostly sold out.

The Arts Council, Karachi, was running arts classes in the Council building and Rahi was offered a post as Art Teacher which he accepted. That is how his career began as a

teacher of art and this he has continued till recently when he became head of the department of fine arts in Peshawar University.

While this raw young lad from Rajshahi was winning his spurs in the great metropolis of Karachi, two sisters, former students of the Arts School of Lucknow (India) had also migrated to Pakistan and set up a small art school for girls which they called *The Mina School of Art*. Hajra Zuberi, the charming younger sister, and Rabia Zuberi, the elder, were both bitten by the art bug and not only worked as creative artists but carried on their weak shoulders the burdensome sense of a mission to spread art through education.

Rahi has been inspired by the same ideas through his dedicated teacher, Zainul Abedin, who sacrificed his own meteoric career as an artist on the altar of art education, having spent the best years of his life in teaching and creating artists.

Hajra met Rahi at the latter's art exhibition in Karachi Arts Council and the two rightaway liked each other. It began as a business partnership, when Hajra and Rabia asked Rahi to work as a teacher in the *Mina Art School*. Rahi agreed and thus began an association that took on a romantic turn and brought them still closer together.

Rahi devoted himself diligently to the work of the school. He drew up a new syllabus by consulting the syllabi of the Art Colleges of Dacca and Lahore and of the St. Martin's School, London. He made the school co-educational and in 1965 he was made Principal. He re-organized the school thoroughly and renamed it *The Karachi School of Art*. He got Prof. Shakir Ali, then Principal of the National Arts College at Lahore, to come and inspect the school and to give advice on improvements. Thus in 1966, he was able to get

the school recognized by the Board of Technical Education, Government of Sind, for a four year diploma course and also to get some nominal grant from the government.

The school was fast turning into the art centre of the populous township of Nazimabad in the city of Karachi. Students were flocking in large numbers, both for regular courses and for short evening courses.

The Zuberi sisters, of course, were fully supporting Rahi, as it was after all their brain-child but Rahi had to work hard to bring them upto date on the subject of art and art education, as both were practising a rather traditional form of painting and sculpture.

In 1967, the school was able to hold an exhibition of the work of its teachers and students, which included the new work of Rahi, the poetical paintings of Hajra and the realistic status of Rabia, besides the work of many other talented members of the staff and the student body. The late **Mumtaz Hasan**, Managing Director of the National Bank, and a connoisseur of art and literature, came as the chief guest and gave one of his learned and inspiring speeches. Rahi also delivered an illuminating address on art and art education and held up before the audience the high ideal which he was striving to achieve. It was a very successful function and helped to bring the Art School into the limelight and also its moving spirits, the Zuberi sisters and Rahi.

While Rahi was toiling to promote the Art School, he had fallen a prey to the insidious charm of Hajra, an extremely simple and unsophisticated girl, with an oval face, pink lips and expressive eyes, topped by raven black hair worn flatly and drawn sideways from a middle parting and then backwards and tied into a long plait. However, the Zuberi clan

was a partician group that looked down upon this struggling artist with none of the cultural background of famed Lucknow, the home of culture and refinement. Rahi received threatening letters from some of the Zuberi kinsmen, one of which dared him to come to a certain spot at night. Rahi at once picked up the gauntlet, though by no means a pugnacious person, and showed up at the appointed place late at night, only taking care to have a friend stand by at a distance, under cover, to bear witness, if necessary. However, the threat was not carried out and Rahi was able to prove his sincerity without paying any price of it. That was not the last of his trials, however, and it was after quite a few years Rahi that married Hajra. He has proved a devoted husband and has two sweet children, a girl, Saima, and a boy, Suman Danish.

Evolution of the Artist

Rahi was a very diligent student and strove to derive the fullest benefit from the guidance of his extraordinarily gifted teachers. He made laboriously meticulous life drawings from models, some of which he retains. He studied every limb and every angle of the face and the body, of the old and the young. In the process, he acquired almost as much knowledge of each bone and muscle as a medical student.

He recalls that one interesting study which his teachers asked him and the class to undertake was to draw a young face and then an imaginary drawing of the same face as it was likely to look when aged, and also vice versa. Thus, he was able to master the changes of bone and muscle that take place with age. Similarly, he studied animals at rest and in action, in fierce fights and in utter relaxation. He drew dissected men and animals to master the body structure and anatomy.

In the study of nature, he was taught to draw water and clouds, the velvety darkness of night and the pearly light of dawn. He studied the play of light and colour in the glare of the mid-day sun. Trees and foliage, flowers and leaves, birds and butterflies, all came under the purview of his observation and artistic study.

Not only did he spend many days and nights in hospitals but on railway stations and on construction sites, drawing the labourers as they heaved and pulled and as they lay listless in repose.

Earliest Work

Much of his earliest work was in water colour, not only because this was the cheapest medium for a struggling young artist, but also because it was the medium into which he had been initiated by his Bengali teachers who were unparalleled in Indo-Pakistan, or perhaps anywhere, in this medium. The limpid flow of the water colour on the rough drawing paper, leaving interesting white dots, the running of one colour into another without hardening of edges, the application of darker second and third washes without muddying the painting, and the unerring accuracy of each stroke of which this medium brooks no revision — all these were learnt adeptly by Rahi and used with marked proficiency.

The examples that he has preserved show that his earliest work was naturally realistic: mostly portraits and landscapes. They were realistic in a pedantic and meticulous way as befits a learner eager to master all the details of the subject.

Gradually, his work loosened out and his manner became free and easy in the realistic rendering of his subject.

He began to use the casual and sketchy style so masterfully used by his famous teacher, Zainul Abedin and other artists of Dacca. This was apparent to some extent in portraits but much more so in landscapes in which verisimilitude is not so essential. The different brush strokes are allowed to stand apart or over each other and not merged or mingled. Each stroke seems to be applied swiftly and spontaneously. Details are suppressed under a burst of colour or under deep shadows. Finally, the carefree manner is emphasised by leaving parts of the paper untreated. It was a light and charming form of *Impressionism*.

Worth mentioning is the fact that even in this work there were seeds and signs of his future development as a cubist artist. Though not in his landscapes, atleast in his portraits one could see clearly his strong awareness of the structural and values thrown into relief by light and shade. Even at that stage, he seemed to emphasise the basic form and mark it out fairly clearly, without softening the transitions for smoothing out the edges where two planes meet. One can feel the weight of the solid form and the structural quality of the design.

Post-Impressionism

Having gained a foothold on the ledge of realistic art, Rahi set his sights higher and resolved to scale still loftier heights in his ever more daring assaults on the peaks of perfection.

From Impressionism, he advanced in 1966-67 to the *Post-Impressionism* of Cezanne and Seurat. Going beyond the naturalistic rendering of the subject, he began to give greater emphasis to the compositional structure of the canvas and the solidity of the figures. The cascades of colour and

the limpid pools of paint began to solidify into sharply shaped objects well organized into a carefully controlled plan. There is more feeling for form and space and a distinctly marked design quality.

It may be pointed out that much of these values were more evident in the figure studies and figure compositions than in the landscapes which continued to be marked by the same casualness, lightness and fugitive effects of light and movement that are characteristic of Impressionism.

Thematic Murals

Together with the above stylistic advances Rahi also made some significant departures in the content of his work. He began to reflect deeply on the human estate and human destiny. These ideas he painted in large murals with lofty themes. They were entitled *Birth of the Genius*; *Call of the Soul*; *Soul is Greater than Body*; *Quest of Light*; *Black Sun*; and *Soul in Hell*. In each of these a large number of human figures were drawn and painted, with great emphasis on the structural and formal qualities of the body. The inter-relation and composition of the different figures was done with a strong sense of design. This was not realistic drawing or painting. It was a kind of Post-Impressionism because it was imbued with a strong feeling for form and space and the over-all plan or design was very carefully and consciously executed. The style was well suited for murals.

The work of this period has quite a significant place in the evolution of Rahi as an artist but most unfortunately all this work is lost. He became the victim of the *patronage* of a well-known industrialist with pretensions to culture who offered to arrange a private exhibition of his work at his residence. Rahi agreed because this happened in 1969 a few

months before his marriage when he needed money. In this way he would be able to sell many paintings because it was expected that other rich industrial magnates would also come to the exhibition. The function turned out to be quite a social event but that was the last that Rahi saw of all the paintings put up for show. The kind *patron* never returned them and years of effort to salvage them have proved fruitless. What can a poor artist do against the high and mighty of the land?

Cubism

From 1969 his style changed, though it was evolving in the same direction. The heavy thematic content, philosophical ideas and tragic feeling were greatly reduced though they did not quite vanish from his work because they were part of his mental make-up. However, the emphasis now was in emulating the stylistic achievements of the Cubists. It was the earlier work of **Picasso** and **Braque** which is often called *analytical cubism* that attracted him first. He drew and painted the figures with anatomical accuracy but the leading lines of each area were picked out and emphasised by being rendered geometrically and not realistically. Some were elongated and extended to bring out their full force or to help in creating a design. Some were turned into swinging arcs, firm circles, squares and triangles to render approximately the particular natural shape. In this way the basic character of the form was analysed and brought out more forcefully than it could be in a naturalistic rendering. Other mannerisms and tricks of *cubism* were also used, such as bending out and spreading the hidden side of an image, as the second eye in a profile view. Similarly, objects behind another objects were made visible by making them transparent or translucent. Plane areas were divided up into triangles and other geometrical shapes, and so on.

However, a comparison with the cubist work of Western artists will show that Rahi's work was different. He made use of a very thick black line and it always had a sweeping calligraphic quality, which means that it was taught and free-flowing and tapering, whether in the form of curves or straight lines.

Invariably he had a subject, and this was always a human face or figure. In rendering these figures he developed certain mannerisms. The outline of the human body, which is a series of convex arcs or bulges was often drawn by Rahi as a series of concave arcs or depressions, whose meeting points stood out like sharp barbed points. This deprived the figure of all sensuous quality. Again, the firm and heavily stressed linework was reinforced by showing at least one foot always jutting forward right frontally, and the toes drawn in a straight line, like a series of squares, extremely exaggerated. The second foot was also drawn nearly frontally. The hands were often drawn half-clenched so as to reduce the fingers to a series of rectangles in one row and so as to suggest rage or agony or despair. The head of the figure was almost always shown very small so as to magnify the figure to a massive scale. The broad shoulders, the thick calves and sometimes, the elongated features, all contributed to the impression of massiveness and monumentality. In depicting the face also he devised certain set conventions, like rectangles for eyes, and squares for the pupils, and two cylinders for the nose.

The surface of the picture is broken up into segments and treated like the *faceted cubism* of the early Picasso. It has also the look of shreds of glass, as in Picasso but there are important differences and in fact the whole character of the work is alien to Picasso or to any Western artist, as will be at once noticed by an outsider. First, there is a warm humanism in all paintings and they are not dehumanized formal

compositions like most of their western counterparts. Then, there is much more feelings, whether it is simply a certain elation and exaltation arising from the heroic proportions of the figures or tragic feelings conveyed by the postures and gestures of the figures. Again, there is much more use of the smooth sweeping curve and finally there is much more emphasis on design, so that perpendiculars and horizontals and diagonal curves are neatly tied together to form a well balanced whole. This has such an obviously oriental feeling that it is unmistakable.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Rahi was both consciously and unconsciously following the example of Picasso because we find that just as Picasso moved on from *analytical* or *faceted cubism* to *synthetic* or *collage cubism* and then turned suddenly and unexpectedly to monumental figure painting, so Rahi also, in the receptive and impressionable age of hardly thirty years, followed through all these stages, but, as will be described below, he found synthetic or collage cubism too plain, cold and unexpressive for his purpose and did not produce much work in that style. He did make some paintings in which he placed together several areas of varying values and colours, often geometrical areas, but also others, that add up to a human figure or some non-objective shape. This, however, gave no play to his forte, which was the use of the line with deep emotional emphasis. Therefore, he merged this collage technique of juxtaposed over laid flat areas, with his analytical or faceted cubism, in which the picture area was broken up into segments or facets or wedges and these defined with thick lines or hard edges of light and dark areas meeting in a line. This can be seen in many of his paintings of the period 1969, 1970, 1971 but, above all, in *The Blind in the Black Sun* and in *The Thinker*.

Similarly, in the manner of Picasso, he turned to monu-

mental and heroic figures but did not render them in a realistic manner. Rather, he merged them with his cubist work and used such figures as his subject. With Picasso, this was a passing phase and his interest was mainly in emphasizing volume and bringing out its ponderousness but with Rahi it was in answer to some more deep-seated urge or inner need. There seems to be a frank admiration of gigantic and heroic figures, of massive arms and bulging thighs and calves. At the same time, it is also an expression of his deep humanism and is a way of exalting the common human being, whether he is a wandering musician (*Musician*) or a group of labourers (*Joy of Labour*). At other times, it was simply a mannerism, with magnified feet and minimized head.

Before ending a discussion of this stage, attention may be invited to one painting which appears to be the most successful and satisfying of them all. This is the 4 x 5 feet oil painting entitled *Peace*, painted in 1969. It is basically done in the manner of analytical cubism. The figures of the man, woman and child have been subjected to analysis and the limbs reduced to geometrical shapes bounded by straight lines or sweeping curves. At the same time, one can see in it the desire to use synthetic or collage cubism, in which flat areas, as if cut out of paper, are placed along side or over one another. Such flat planes can be seen in the painting also but mostly in the outer edges and in the background.

It is a masterpiece of composition in which vertical lines and diagonal curves have been most sensitively and effectively woven together to create a veritable masterpiece. There is balance in the painting created by the placement of the sitting figure of a man on one side and a woman on the other and a child in the middle. There is a rhythmic movement pervading the painting from one side to the other. It obviously starts with the face of the man, which has been made arresting by

the look of the eyes, and leads on through the step-like upright-sideways-upright progression of the neck-shoulder-arm-forearm, to the diagonal of the knee-to-foot and the folds of the dress between the two legs. The rhythmic movement progresses through the well-related figure of the child in the centre to the sitting figure of the woman with her near-rectangle torso and the diagonal folds of the lower garment.

The distribution of emphasis through light and dark areas is used to clarify the design and to prevent it from getting jumbled up and also the use of very thick lines is employed to emphasise the basic sweep and thrust of the composition and particularly the rhythmic element which is so important in all of Rahi's work.

This kind of painting may be basically derived from a Western artist but the Pakistani painter has made out of it something that is authentically his own and it is something that is by any standard noteworthy and admirable.

A Lucid Interval

In all his work till 1971, Rahi was striving to gain technical mastery and there was excessive emphasis on the display of skill in rendering the painting. Every line was meticulously drawn and every colour faultlessly laid. It was something too faultless and overwrought, almost inhumanly perfect or finished. Again, the painting was overburdened with content, both of subject and of emotion. It was either an elegy of human suffering or a paean of peace and love and beauty but mostly the former. In both cases, the emotional overtones of the figures were heavily emphasised with appropriate lines and colours: limpid flowing curves and pellucid colours in the latter case and jagged curves, thick black lines

and shadows and sombre colours in the former case. It must have been all mentally and emotionally exhausting and oppressive for the artist to paint canvas after canvas in this manner, without respite, without release or relaxation, and without unwinding the tense and taut frame of mind.

Some such feeling perhaps led Rahi to turn to the more freely and spontaneously expressive style of colourful abstraction which he practised from 1972 to 1975. For a time, he threw subject overboard and let shapeless formless amorphous images issue from his brush which expressed his mood. The strident thick lines of the previous period were also abandoned and a more thin and sensitive line used, not quite impulsive and doodle-like but still free and easy. The near monochrome and the sombre shadows too were replaced with greater colour, which cannot be described as a burst of colour but still as an advance in range of hue and pigment and also a brightening up of the palette. The colour application and brushwork also was more impressionistic and not studiously even and graded as before. The values of texture, free form and free flowing colour were employed in the painting, so that there was a feeling of lease and liberation and joy.

But Rahi is too much of a craftsman to allow himself the indulgence of such a pleasant style for long. He must introduce some challenging problem into it and this he did by painting companion pictures. In one, the main forms were in light and the background was dark, from which they seemed to emerge and in the second case they were dark and the background was light. The broad contours of the two pictures were not the same but similar and the contrasting treatment of colour and light made them like negative and positive versions of the same picture. It was just a fanciful device of the artist and perhaps had no intrinsic aesthetic value but it was certainly a demonstration of artistic skill

and virtuosity. It was obvious that Rahi could not let himself go sufficiently. His whole training and background has been too strict and severe for that. Still, the change was welcome and it showed what Rahi could do in another style. It also showed that there was some sense and logic in the progression of his work from style to style; one followed from the previous one as a reaction or as an outgrowth from the previous one. This at least proves that his work was genuine and grew from inside of him and was not the result of random outside influences and fickle whims.

Though it seems that this style was not quite in keeping with Rahi's nature, as expressed in his previous work, there is no doubt that he produced some admirable canvases in this style also. The dreamlike wraiths of light and colour that seem to turn and twist on his canvases, the contrast of dense dark cloud shapes and iridescent mists shot with colour, create a strangely suggestive world in which the imagination wanders and wallows with pleasure. It has psychedelic overtones that speak of another world beyond the rational. It is a pity that Rahi did not explore this world a little longer. In these ominous shadows and seraphic radiances, he could have found new and unexpected worlds of beauty and meaning.

Return to Orderly World

From this wild and somewhat disorderly world, Rahi again returned to the world of order and harmony, from that of mists and clouds, and amorphous objects and entities artistry, somewhere around 1976.

Again, the clear fully shaped forms return and the world of mists and clouds, and amorphous objects and entities comes to an end. But these new forms are very different

from those that peopled his earlier paintings. In place of the dramatised human figures there were in the period from 1976 to 1981, non-objective shapes. Scattered over the picture space were half a dozen flat rectangular shapes with rounded corners, but overlapping other shapes as if they were made of tinted glass. Before and behind them were arranged much smaller objects that might be likened to dominoes, some upright, some horizontal, often in bunches of three or four, and many other variations of such shapes, intriguingly composed. All were translucent and showed through as they overlapped, taking on new colours by their juxtaposition. There is a soft radiance which suffuses them from the back and sometime creates interesting highlights on the edges of these glassy shapes.

The picture is obviously composed deep in space, as indicated by the presence of certain light and other dark coloured areas and also by the placement of one area or object behind the other. And then there is the lateral and vertical arrangement of the same objects and areas. Thus, it all becomes a very complex and imaginatively exciting composition in which a whole special world has been created peopled with many curious and delectable shapes, placed in delicately balanced relationships with each other. Although, it is so complex and variegated in colour and contour, it is held together in a definite design which is strong and firm despite being unobtrusive. The colours are subdued and limited in range. The light is soft and diffused but the contrasts are made effective even with slight increase and decrease of value and colour. The small domino-like shapes and other such features are highlighted by being painted off white, except when they are wholly or partly behind one of those rectangular pieces of tinted glass, when they take on different colours. The entire colour scheme of most of these paintings, however, is a misty bluish-green. It is brightened

up here and there with small areas of dark red or dark orange or prussian blue.

The notable feature of this series is the remarkable ability to create visual space by placing these flat glass-sheet objects one behind the other and the amazing skill with which they are suffused with light radiating from the distance in the top centre. Then, on top of that, the way in which these rectangular shapes are juggled together and placed in interesting and exciting relationships, is itself most ingenious and aesthetically pleasing. There are few artists in the country who can match him in this uncanny ability to create visual space and iridescent light and such permutations and combinations of abstract forms, as Rahi.

He has, thus, made a wholly original and authentic contribution to abstract painting which cannot be charged with being derivative. He has created his own imagery and placed it in a softly coloured space-world inhabited by tinted glass-sheet objects and little dominoes, all irradiated with "a light that never was on land or sea."

Rahi's whole character is reflected in these paintings: his refinement and coolness, his technical virtuosity, and his rich and complex vision of beauty.

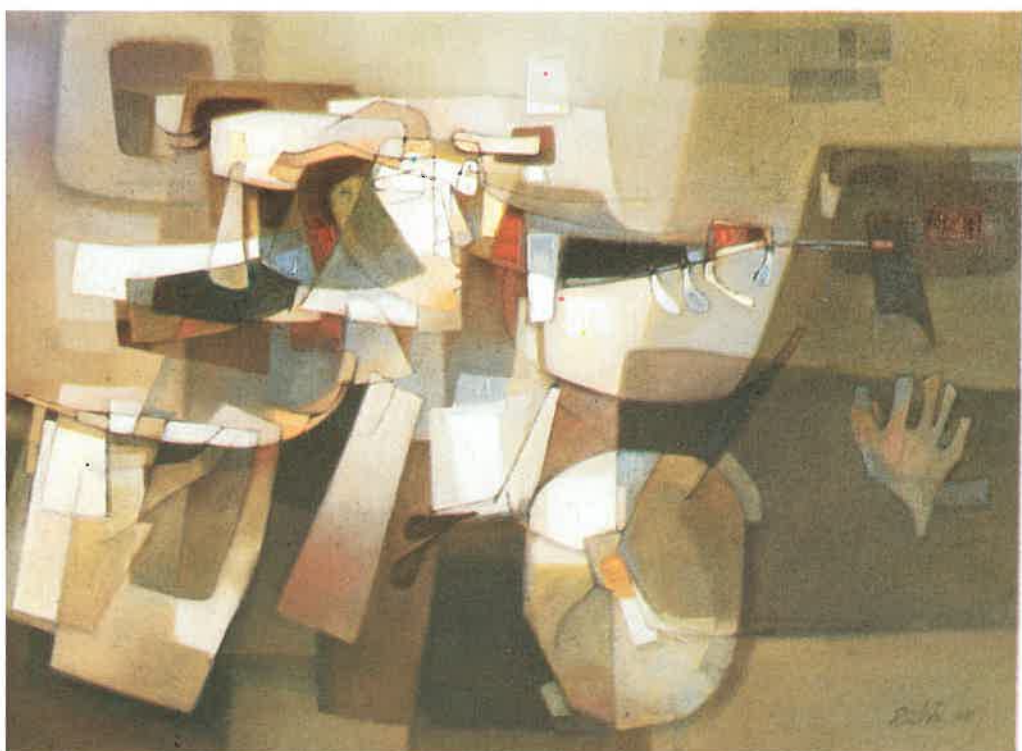
From the romantic colourfulness and freedom of the previous period he has come to a classical calm and composure in which there is nothing casual or wayward or jarring. Everything moves and has its being under the laws of harmony, balance and proportion.

It can be said that this series of paintings is an achievement deserving fullest credit as a genuine and original contribution to the world of art.

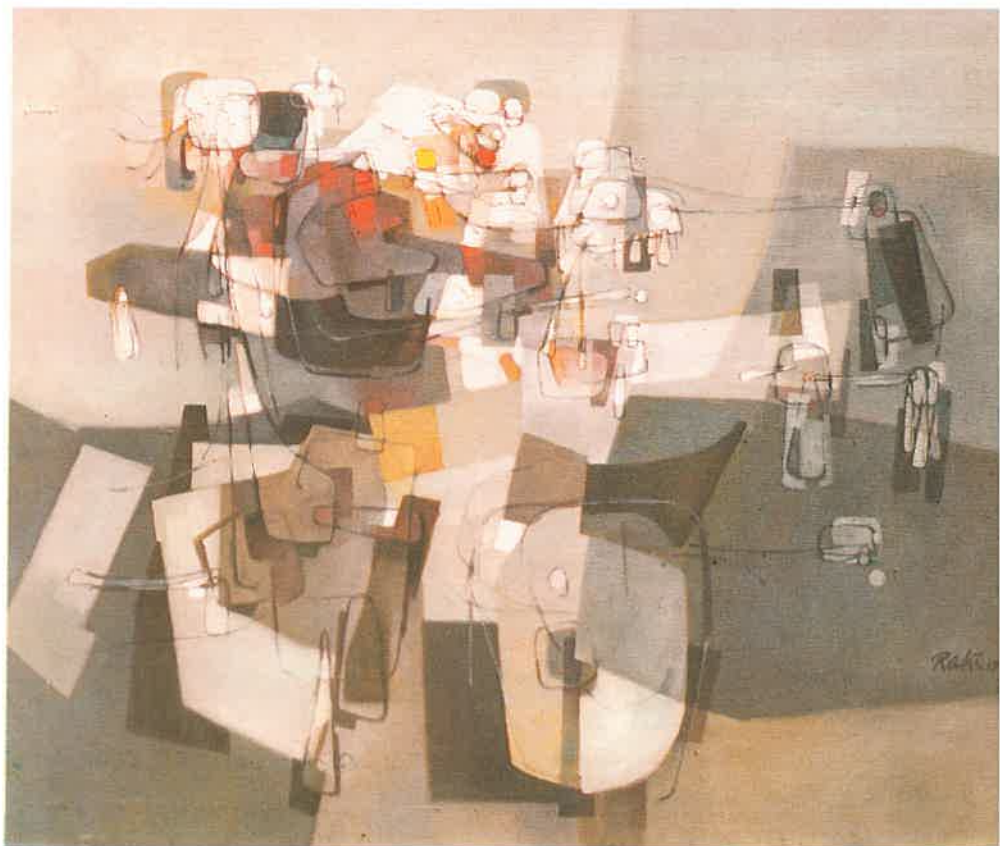




Seated Figure (Oil) – 1978



Call of Memory (Oil) – 1978



Wild Horse – 1977



Two Orphan Boys (Oil) 1978

Themes from Social Events

From this stylistic survey, one could proceed to a thematic round-up which shows Rahi reacting passionately to the major events in the national life, specially the tragedies and disasters. With all his abstraction and other stylistic preoccupations, Rahi was not indifferent to the events taking place around him. Gifted with a sensitive heart and an expressive brush, he responded creatively to the stimuli around him when they became insistent and overpowering.

Such was the case with the cataclysmic cyclone that hit East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1970. Rahi went there to see for himself the extent of the tragedy and the scarred, bruised and battered face of the country. These impressions were seared into his consciousness and emerged from his brush in the form of 27 black and white drawings that had all the fluency of **Ingres** and the force of **Daumier**. To compare them with an example nearer at hand, they recalled the famine sketches of Zainul Abedin of the 1942 Bengal famine. These powerful sketches, in which the artist used brush and Indian ink and drew with his characteristic whip-lash strokes for long lines, jabs and jerks for short lines, distilled the essence of the tragedy in the form of grieving or stunned faces and shattered homesteads and sprawling rotting corpses. It was a macabre vision of supreme tragedy masterfully rendered with the brush. The whole series was shown on T.V. in a special programme called *Dastaan Ek Toofan Ki* and it was later bought by the wife of a Pakistani diplomat who took them in West Germany.

In 1971, East Pakistan went up in flames when the war of independence broke out as a secessionist movement seeking separation from Pakistan. Orgies of brutality were perpetrated by the people who went on rampage to avenge

decades of injustices felt to have been done to them by the non-Bengali settlers and others involved in the administration. The excesses of the military seeking to suppress the erupting disorders added fuel to the fire. In Rahi's drawings of these subjects, there was astonishing command over human figures in action, showing the scenes of war, and glorify the Pakistan forces in their confrontation with the Indian forces that came to aid the secessionists. There were scenes of parachute raids, tank fights, air raids, hand to hand fights, peasants against the Indian soldiers, collapsing buildings, destruction of hospitals and orphanages, violation of women and other brutalities, and the heroic spirit of resistance shown by the people. There was much symbolism in the form of flags and raised fists and trampling boots and finally a baby crawling over the rubble and smiling a symbolic smile over the debris of war.

Later, he drew sketches depicting the tragedy of the 80,000 Pakistani soldiers who were trapped in East Pakistan when the resistance collapsed after India attacked from all four sides. He sensitively and feelingly picturised the plight of the POWs and the mental torture experienced by their families.

Again, in 1973, when disastrous flood devastated large areas of Pakistan lying along the mighty raging river, Rahi was the one to show nature in a tyrannical mood and man its helpless play-thing. These 30 drawings were again shown on T.V. and drew well-deserved admiration. They were also widely featured in the press. All these and such other projects of reportage were labours of love with little pecuniary benefit or any ulterior motive.

In 1974, a historic Islamic Summit of the heads of states of Muslim nations was arranged by the Government of

Pakistan at Lahore. Rahi made a magnificent mural of 6 ft x 10 ft depicting all the heads of states who participated in the Summit. This historic painting was later presented by the artist to the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

In 1980, when a disastrous drought hit the Sahel countries of Africa and many others too in Asia, Rahi made a series of 30 *expressionist* drawings in black and white on the theme of the World Food Crisis. These drawings were exhibited throughout Pakistan. Pakistan T.V. made a special 20 minute programme which was telecast in March, 1973 and was also widely publicised in the national press.

Apart from tragedies and disasters, Rahi also applied himself to the illustration of major events of Pakistan history in the form of expressionistic paintings. There were exhibited once in Rawalpindi and twice in Karachi and form a contribution of lasting value both to the art and the history of Pakistan.

Rahi's Views on Art

Rahi is a great believer in the basic skill and draughtsmanship of the artist. He affirms that if any great abstract painting is analysed in detail, it will be found that each part has been drawn with great skill and artistry. There is nothing shoddy or clumsy or perfunctory in the rendering of any part. This is, because the abstract artist is not trying to find a short cut to success. He has passed through the mill and acquired proficiency in the basic skills of drawing lines and applying paint. He refers, for example, to Kandinsky, who took the epoch-making step towards complete abstraction in 1911, and points out that he was at the same time a great theoretician and teacher of the basic principles and techniques of art at the famous German art institute, the *Bauhaus*.

Among our own pioneers of abstract art in Pakistan, Shakir Ali was a very conscious artist and pains-taking worker, who had spent long years as a student of art in Bombay, London and Prague. In short, Rahi lays great emphasis on acquisition of the basic skills by the artist, whether he wants to work later as an abstract or a representational artist. He must in both cases be a good draughtsman and an adept colourist.

Regarding his own preference for either of these two main streams of art, Rahi says that he has worked in both styles but has found that the range of appeal becomes limited in purely abstract art. If there is a subject in the painting, it helps the viewer to appreciate the picture. This does not mean that the universally valid principles of abstract art are abandoned in such painting. Even with a subject, the highest degree of abstraction can be practised, as Rahi has been doing in his *Wild Horse* series and others. The forms of nature are subjected to analysis and reduced to basic geometrical forms and then reorganized into original and ingenious designs.

But Rahi goes even a step beyond this. Not only does he prefer a painting to have a subject but a social theme. He declares that if four persons enjoyed his paintings in the *Wild Horse* series, 4,000 others appreciated his series of drawings about the World Food Crisis. In this way the artist can come close to the public, and Rahi feels that this is most essential, not only in painting but in music. If you keep the arts so esoteric and mysterious that the common man cannot approach them, then the arts will wither from neglect. Let the artist and the public come half way towards each other. The public should try to understand the basic grammar of art and the artist should make some concession to public likes and dislikes, and thus full communication and rapport will be established.

On the subject of such representational forms of art as portraits and landscapes, Rahi says that it is not enough to copy the likeness. The artist must make a creative contribution in rendering the subject in his own way. His way is his style. He will be judged by his style. This is his signature, his own distinctive contribution.

Of course, major styles are created by master minds and geniuses, styles like *realism*, *impressionism*, *expressionism*, *cubism*, *action painting*, *constructivism* and *neo-realism*. Ordinary artists will work in one of these styles or the other or a combination of these but within this readily available framework, every artist has to make some slight change which bears the stamp of his personality. Thus, cubism was created by Picasso and Braque but the form in which it was practised by Delauney and Feininger gave it an altogether different dimension.

This personal contribution will appear automatically in the painting if the artist is sincere. His effort should be to paint according to his own vision and not according to the likes and dislikes of the public, what is in vogue or what is not. If he is sincere and earnest in his quest for his own ideal, he will achieve a distinctive style, which may not be great, but it will be his own.

Tokyo Visit

In mid 1980, Rahi was in Islamabad, participating in the National Art Exhibition, where he was awarded the first prize for painting. While there, he was given by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, an invitation to participate in the 17th modern art exhibition in Tokyo. Rahi readily accepted and this was quite an event in his life, as this was the first time that he had participated in an international art

show abroad personally. It gave him an opportunity to see the reactions of foreign artists and art connoisseurs to his own work and also to see the work and working of other artists.

This exhibition is organized by the *Asian Arts Exchange and Friendship Society* every two or three years and it is done most elegantly and efficiently, as one would expect from the Japanese. It was a most representative exhibition of artists of South and South-east Asia, as one could easily see from the beautifully produced and lavishly illustrated catalogue. Rahi had taken with him, besides his own work, the work of eight other Pakistani artists: **Sadequain, Jamil Naqsh, Gulgee, Hajra, Laila, Ijazul Hasan, Jamila Masood and M.H. Rumi**. Rahi was happy to find that the work of the Pakistani artists was conspicuous in the whole exhibition which included paintings from the Phillipines, China, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India and of course, Japan. Proof of this was that most of the Pakistani paintings were sold and fetched very high prices. Rahi confides that when he saw buyers so keenly interested in the work of Jamil Naqsh, he quickly added a zero to the price that the artist himself had marked on the canvas, and still it sold. It cannot be discounted merely as conventional politeness of the host that the leading Japanese painter, 72 year old **Kazuo Azuma** said publicly that, in the modern style, the work of the Pakistani artists was the most outstanding, and he was referring to Rahi, Jamil Naqsh and Gulgee. Perhaps, part of the reason was that Azuma himself is a modern artist and most of the entries received for the exhibition were in traditional styles. Rahi, on his part, was much impressed by the fact that most of the artists represented in the exhibition were marked by a distinct Asian character. During the seven different seminars that were held as part of the exhibition programme, Rahi greatly benefited by hearing the views of other artists and

exchanging ideas with them. He emphasised the point that the Asian genius of our art was a precious quality worth preserving and presenting before the world. The new discoveries of colour and form in modern art were to be imbibed but without letting them submerge and subdue our own distinct character, whether we are working in the abstract or the representative style.

Rahi found strong support for his views in the famous 40 year old sculptor and engraver **Narita** who was prominent in the exhibition by his traditional dress of thick wooden slippers, ankle high trousers, and long loose shirt whose fulness was crossed at the neck and held at the waist with a girdle. He struck up a close friendship with Rahi and entertained him at his home for a week.

Another memorable encounter of Rahi was with the 98 year old sculptor **Seiko Sawada** who was in those days working on a 32 feet high standing figure of a woman in wood. He moved up and down and around the wooden figure effortlessly with the help of an automatic crane on which he stood and which he operated himself. The figure was being done in traditional style in a hard wood called *kusu noki* which is as sweet-smelling as sandal wood. Sawada is the revered teacher of many artists, including Mrs. **Shibahara**, the then Chairman of the Asian Art Association. Thanks to the warm hospitality of his Japanese friends, Rahi was able to visit many beautiful places in and around Tokyo such as Kawaguchi, Kuki, Kaskabei, Fuji and Mount Fuji.

One memorable evening spent by Rahi was at a special function arranged in his honour by the artist Narita and **Takashi Esashika** at an exclusive restaurant. The sumptuous feast of dance, music and dinner for the group of half a dozen artists was to cost Narita the equivalent of Rs. 13,000

but when Rahi made quick sketches of the proprietor of the club and of some dancers and singers, the bill was written off and the whole entertainment was on the house. In fact, the orchestra at once improvised a song in honour of the Pakistani artist and played it as the finale to the delightful evening, repeating again and again the refrain, *Great friend from Pakistan*.

During his month-long visit to Japan, Rahi was able to introduce Pakistani art and culture with the help of the art material he had taken with him and also by his talk and his own turn-out and very presence. It was worth a million in the publicity it brought Pakistan and even more so, by the wealth of ideas that Rahi was able to gather from his Japanese comperes, which he is eagerly spreading among his students in Karachi and Peshawar.

Departure for Peshawar

It was soon after his return from Japan late in 1981 that Rahi received the offer of the post of Associate Professor of art in the Peshawar University. The departure from Karachi was quite a wrench as during his eighteen years stay here, he had passed through many stages of his eventful life and achieved many successes, professional and personal, including winning the hand of a charming girl as bride and building his own cosy little home. But, with his optimistic and forward-looking cheery temperament, he set about the task of packing up, in high spirits, and was confident that the future would bring more challenging and rewarding experiences.

It happened that quite a celebration marked the end of this phase in his life. The Karachi School of Art, of which he was one of the founders and for long the Principal, was celebrating the move into its own new premises in Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi, and a big function was held in which,

obviously Rahi was an honoured guest. It was here that Hajra and Rahi met. It was here that Rahi joined the school as its Principal and worked for government recognition and public acclaim. So, the celebration was also a send-off for Rahi and marked the end of one and the beginning of another phase in his life.

Rahi Group of Painters Exhibition

Rahi, himself also wanted to mark this milestone in his life in some conspicuous way. He went to Peshawar in January, 1982 and worked there for five months before the University closed for summer vacation. During this short period he had been able to exercise his personal magnetism and pedagogic skill on the group of eager students who welcomed the arrival of a distinguished teacher in their midst. Rahi claims that he put into practice the Advanced Painting Course (APC) which he had learnt in Tokyo and which had been specially developed to bring the artists of Asia upto international standards. He affirms that the young artists of the North West Frontier province (NWFP) have abundant talent and all that is needed is to put them on the right track with the help of universally valid and eternal values of art. It is for lack of exposure to these ideas that the artists of the Frontier have not been able to break through the barriers of provincialism.

So pleased was Rahi with the results of his brief efforts in Peshawar that he decided to invite some of the best of them to display their work in a group show that he held in Karachi in September, 1982.

This exhibition, which got extensive coverage in the press and the radio, was Rahi's way of gathering together the loose ends of his career, as it were, and tying them up neatly

into a knot. On display here was the work of 36 young artists of whom eight were from Peshawar. Some had graduated from the Karachi School of Art in the first batch which passed out in 1968 and some had graduated only recently (1982) while some others from Peshawar were still students.

Among these was the work of already well established artists, such as Lubna Agha, Mashkoo Raza and Sumbul Nazir and also such promising young graduates of art as Tariq Javed, Abdul Hai and Ghalib Baqar. Then there were from Peshawar, talented student artists like Jahanzeb and Tasneem, Imtiaz Husain, Abbas Ali and Naseeruddin Mohmond.

It was rightly observed in the brochure printed on the occasion that "the present exhibition is a remarkable display of the work of students of one single artist and it would be a great day for Pakistan if all our leading artists took so much interest in passing on what they have achieved to the younger artists." The loyalty and devotion which all these students show to Rahi as their teacher bespeaks of the love and care he has showered on them and all this must have been at the cost of his own creative work as an artist. So, it was an act of self-sacrifice which had in view the greater good of the country and the cause of art.

Latest New Style

However, Rahi has allowed neither his teaching nor his potboiling commercial work nor his considerable social life and camaraderie to stand in the way of his progress as an artist. The evolution of his work from stage to stage has already been discussed. It remains to say a few words about the latest style that is in the process of taking shape. It will be recalled that the last stage was one in which he had turned almost completely abstract and was juggling with rectangular areas of colour that he placed in visual space, one behind the

other or over each other, fully or partly, and in which a diffused strong light was shown radiating from the middle distance, where the horizon would be in a landscape.

From this he has moved on to the next stage in which the achievements of this stage are combined with the figurative work in abstract cubist style that he had done so successfully earlier. Not only has he reintroduced the figure but the figures have a social theme, as in his much earlier work of 1968 and 1969. This does not mean that he is taking a step backward. Rather, he is drawing upon each of his stages and using whatever he had learnt to create a higher synthesis. Thus, he has painted a long panel in which. This is just a way of acknowledging the rights of society on the artist and the desire to achieve closer communication with his public. To some it may appear that the intrusion of the human figure in the free play of forms and spaces is to that extent a loss, because hands, feet and faces cannot be reduced completely to the level of a certain area of space as a rectangle or a triangle. They have a very arresting character and the insistent almost rivetting power of the human eye distracts the attention from the aesthetic game of receding and projecting, dominating and subserving areas. Whether the non-aesthetic value of social themes can co-exist with purest aesthetic values, as conceived in pure abstract, art, can be questioned but we have the example of such masterpieces as *Guernica* by Picasso to prove that the highest degree of social consciousness can imbue and inspire a great work of art. We may, therefore, not condemn out of hand the efforts of Rahi to develop and create a style of his own constructivism and neo-realism in which he can express his acute social awareness and feeling for the human estate while at the same time achieving the plentitude of aesthetic expression. At least, this is something to which we can look forward and hold our judgement in abeyance, while hoping that Rahi will succeed in his endeavour.



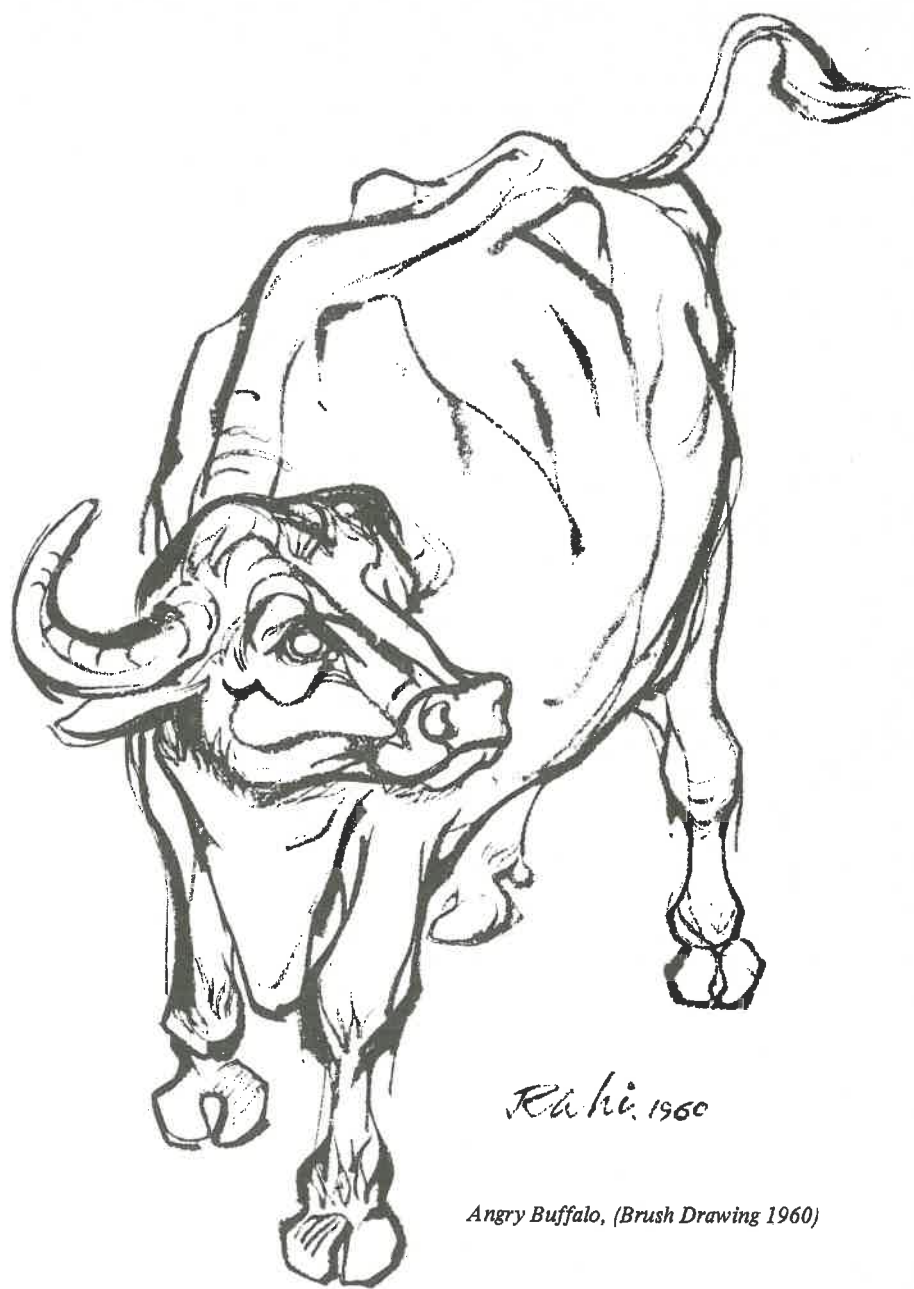
Orphan & The Black Cat – 1984



The Monster – 1984

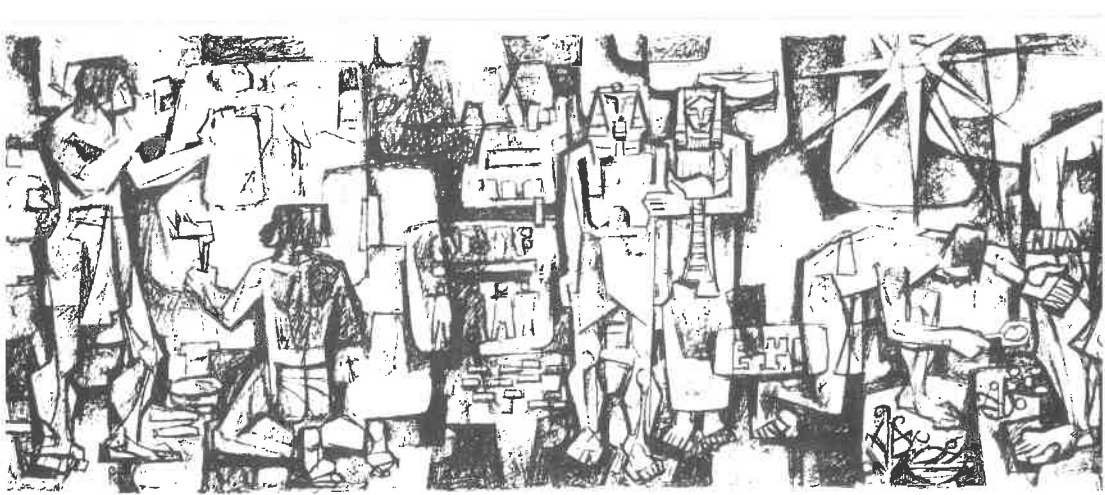


The Cruel Bull – 1984



Rahi, 1960

Angry Buffalo, (Brush Drawing 1960)



Lay out For Mural, "Evolution for Human Civilization". (Charcole Pencil. 1982)



Detail From Mural Layout



Brush Drawing



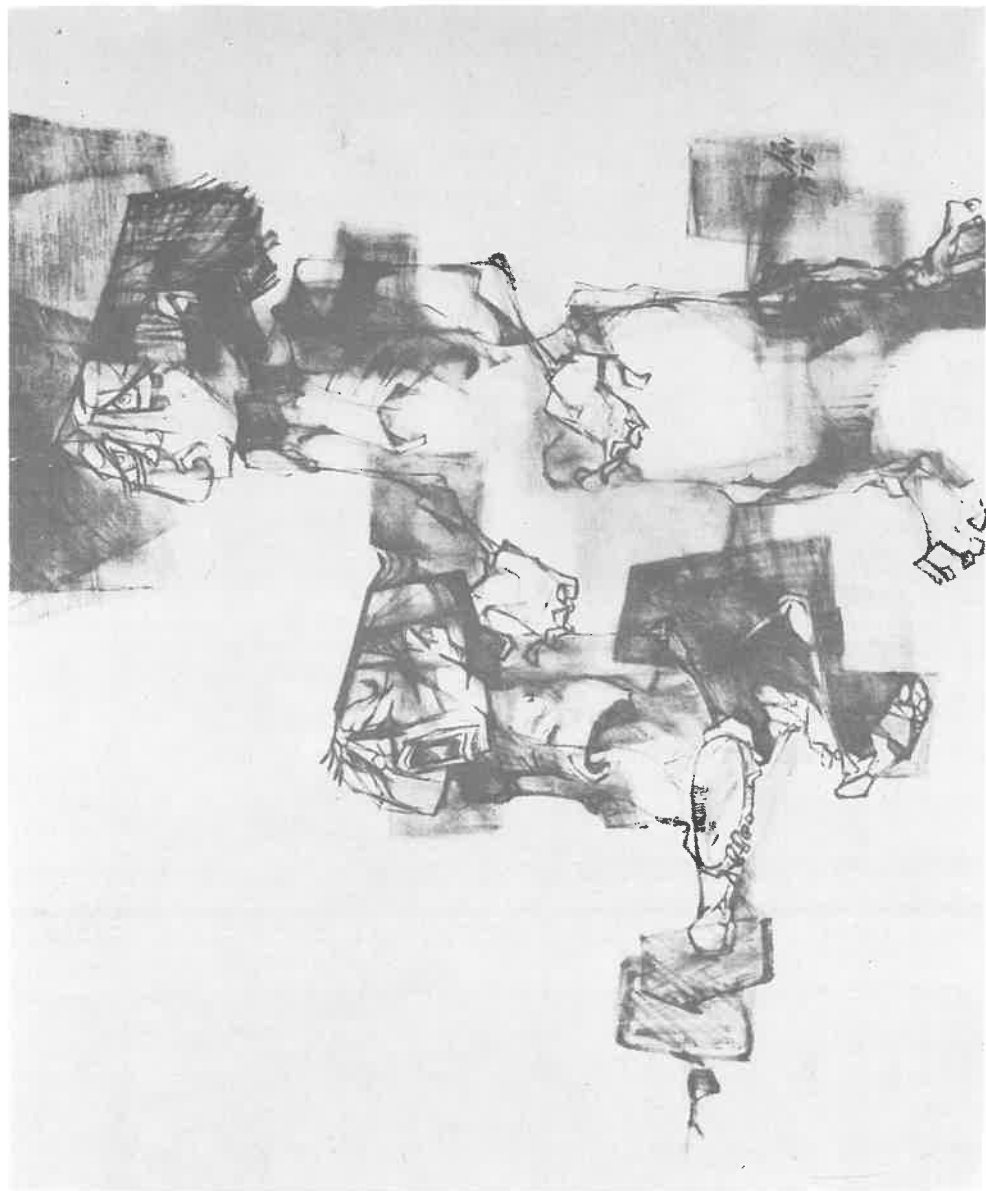
Study for "Wild Horse" (Charcole) – 1977



A man near death licks the dry land in a last struggle for survival
– Drawing from “World Food Crisis”, series – 1974



A three-headed vulture frightens the hungry orphan child
– Drawing from "World Food Crisis", series – 1974



Two Hungry Children

-- Drawing from "World Food Crisis", series -- 1974



The Vulture of evil is defeated by man, who has grown strong on the fruits of his labour with the soil.
– Drawing from *"World Food Crisis"*, series – 1974

VIEWS AND REVIEWS PUBLISHED IN MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS

S. Amjad Ali

(Pakistan Quarterly, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 3 & 4, Autumn, 1972)

Mansur Rahi is a leading artist of East Pakistan, who has not only distinguished himself by making monumental mural paintings on the theme of dignity of labour, but also made moving sketches of the great tragedies that overtook East Pakistan recently, the cyclone of October, 1970 and the Indian invasion of November-December, 1971.

Sultan Ahmed

(The Leader, Karachi, September 1970)

He is not a philosopher or a saint but a young painter who expresses himself through his painting more like a poet does through his verse or a musician through his voice without being wholly logical.

Safdar Barlas

(Dawn, Karachi, November, 1971)

Mansur Rahi is a painter of varied talents and his works project the panoramic view of life in all its beauty and agony: troubles of mankind as well as the sweeping charm and peace of the country's colourful landscape. Rahi's realistic style of the drawings with conscious distortions creates dynamic forms. The spaces are meaningful and clearly defined in each work executed with great love and labour.

Hameed Zaman

(Morning News, Karachi, January 15 1972)

But one artist was busy all through the war. He was Mansur Rahi who did a number of sketches. Hence, he stands out as our lone war painter in the city, while others have their own reasons not to do other than what they have been always doing or undoing.

**Khalilur Rahman
Buglio**

(The Leader, Karachi, April 2, 1975)

AN ARTIST'S WAR AGAINST HUNGER. Karachi fans of painter Mansur Rahi will soon witness some 29 of his recent drawings on an entirely new subject: "World Food Crisis". These drawings are the colourless illustrations, with distortion in the human form, representative of the title. They could

be called "the expressionistic drawings of Rahi", as the painter himself put it.

It is for the first time that any Pakistani artist has touched this subject.

A.P.P.

(*Dawn*, Karachi, March 22, 1975)

Painter Mansur Rahi, Principal, Karachi School of Art, has formed a new group of young painters who will paint Pakistan's cultural elements and help modern evolution of painting.

Talking to A.P.P. Painter Rahi said that "I am leading the painters who will give re-birth to our culture through the media of painting and sculpture.

Javed Ansari

(*Sun*, Karachi, September, 9, 1978)

"Where are the Artists?"

"Studio research is all right", Rahi says "but at certain times the artist's brush needs to be turned in such a direction as to reflect the sufferings of the common man".

**Sajjad Haider
Malik**

(*Pakistan Times*, Rawalpindi, June 29 1975).

He calls himself a pure painter. And it is dangerous to get into a discussion with Rahi, about his work and himself. For the simple reason that he is not

only a significant painter but also an excellent teacher of his art.

Rehana Hakim

(Herald, Karachi, January 1980)

Gulgee has been lucky, like Sadequain and a few others, to get big commissions. So has Mansur Rahi. Rahi paints a few hours daily. "No line, no day," as Rahi puts it. "My horses paintings sold like hot cakes", he says of *The Wild Horses* series he has been working on.

Sultan Ahmad

Mirror, Karachi

The two days exhibition of Rahi's 38 paintings ended yesterday. The exhibits include a large story telling mural whose theme is "Unity is Power". The 11 by 5 feet mural has been done specially for the President's House, Rawalpindi.

Dr. Akbar Naqvi

(Dawn, May 11, 1980)

Mansur Rahi's large out-put, and the logical development of his themes and imagery over a sufficiently long period of time, is as interesting a subject of study as any other major painter of Pakistan. He learnt drawing from Zainul Abedin and learnt it well.

Rahi works with his colours and canvas

in such a manner that the light seems to emanate from them. Shakir Ali could catch and cup light in his colours — Ahmad Pervez can do this when he makes his colour glow with a kind of thermal heat, but in Rahi's works light is also the companion of shade and darkness.

Ali Imam,
(Director, Indus
Gallery, Karachi)

Mr. Mansur Rahi, Principal, Karachi School of Art for the last 18 years, is a renowned painter and art educationist of Pakistan. He is one of the pioneers of art education in the province of Sind where he started the first art school in Karachi and has the credit of producing some outstanding young painters in Pakistan. In spite of his busy teaching schedule, he has 25 one-man exhibitions to his credit. His work is in most leading art collections in Pakistan and also abroad.

Anis Mirza

(*Dawn*, April 22, 1981)

Recipient of the 1981 First Prize Award for Abstract painting, at this year's National Exhibition. Mansur's Islamabad exposition had two sides — the abstract and the humanistic.

Mansur Rahi, a student of Zainul Abedin, who once shook the conscience of the world by his powerful drawings of the great Bengal famine of

1939, calls Zainul "The God of Drawing". Rahi's drawings have a universal message. His drawings titled "Load of Atomic Weapons and the Head asking for rescue" and his "Hate Bomb and Grow Food, The Innocent Suggestion" are poignant strictures by a Third World Painter.

The second part of Rahi's exhibition shows his delvings into the abstract world of plastic and gravitational activity. Rahi call his 1981 stage the period of Constructivism.

RADIO AND T.V. PROGRAMMES

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| 1963 (July) | Radio discussion on art with Edward Carapiet |
| 1966 (September) | Radio discussion on art with Rabia and Hajra Zuberi |
| 1968 (August) | T.V. coverage of solo exhibition of Rahi's work in <i>Roz-o-Shab</i> and discussion with Quraishpur |
| 1969 (September) | T.V. discussion on art, with Hajra Mansoor and Izhar Kazmi |
| 1970 (July) | T.V. Coverage of solo exhibition in Karachi and interview |
| 1970 (November) | T.V. Special Programme on <i>Bengal Cyclone Drawings</i> , "Dastan Ek Toofan Ki", (Produced by Kunwar Aftab of Karachi P.T.V.) |
| 1973 (April) | T.V. coverage and talk on exhibition under the programme <i>Jaridah</i> , Karachi. Interviewed by Ghazi Salahuddin. |

1971 (September)	T.V. coverage of exhibition in Rawalpindi.
1973 (August)	T.V. coverage of Punjab Flood Drawings under the title "LAHER LAHER TASVEER" (Produced by Arif Rana of Karachi P.T.V.).
1974 (May)	Radio discussion on Art, with Ibrahim Nafees, Karachi
1974	T.V. coverage of exhibition of Islamic Summit on the Theme "History of Pakistan"
1974 (July)	Radio discussion on Art, with Hajra Mansur and Nighat Yasmeen at Karachi
1974 (November)	Radio discussion on Problems of Art Students in Pakistan, with four students of Karachi School of Art.
1975	Exhibition of Paintings by students in Radio Pakistan Karachi, followed by discussion with the Minister, Abdul Waheed Katpar, about Art
1975	Radio talk in English, Problem of Art in Pakistan Interview by Riffat Alvi.
1975 (June)	T.V. coverage of solo exhibition at the Pakistan Art Council, Karachi
1975 (March)	T.V. Special Programme on "World

- Food Crisis" drawings under the programme "Roznama". Produced by Tashbihul Hassan, Interview by Tariq Rana (Karachi)
- 1975 (July) T.V. coverage of solo paintings exhibition, sponsored by Pakistan National Council of Arts, at the Liaquat Hall, Rawalpindi. Interview by Sajjad Haider in the programme *Roznama*
- 1975 T.V. coverage of solo exhibition at Rawalpindi.
- 1979 T.V. interview with Athar Shah Khan and Khush Bakht Shujaat in the Programme *Aap Janab* (Karachi T.V.).
- 1980 Radio interview with Anwar Hussain for World Service
- 1981 (April) T.V. interview, as chief guest, in *Nilam Ghar*
- 1984 T.V. comments on art in regular weekly programme *Hafta-e-Rafta*.

(Saqaafat Section.)

Mansur Rahi

B I O D A T A

- 1939 : Born at Maldah (West Bengal), son of Mohammad Yunus.
- 1947 : Migrated to East Pakistan and received school education at Rajshahi.
- 1962 : Graduated in fine arts from the Government College of Arts and Crafts, Dacca, securing first Class first, and was groomed by such eminent artists as Zainul Abedin, Kibria and Aminul Islam.
- 1963 : Invited to Karachi by the management of the Pakistan Arts Council to hold exhibitions. Thereafter, offered a post of art teacher. Spent a year and half on this assignment.
- 1965 : Re-organized Karachi School of Art and got it recognized by the Board of Technical Education and started working as the Principal.
- 1966 : During these three years, Rahi held seven one-man exhibitions and executed 12 murals at different places in Pakistan.
- 1969 : In 1969, married painter Hajra Zuberi.

- 1970 : Visited East Pakistan and made sketches of cyclone affected people.
- 1971 : Having always been dedicated to the concept of Pakistan, Rahi refused to migrate to Bangladesh.
- 1982 : Appointed Associate Professor of Art in Peshawar University.
- 1984 : Departure from Karachi and settled in Islamabad.

EXHIBITIONS

- 1957 Participated in Annual Exhibitions of Paintings at
to Government College of Arts and Crafts, Dacca.
- 1962
- 1963 : One-man show at Dacca, (Press Club).
- 1963 : One-man show at Pakistan Arts Council, Karachi.
- 1965 : Two one-man shows at PNCA and Islamabad Club.
- 1967 : One-man show at The Gallery, Karachi.
- 1968 : One-man show at The Gallery, Karachi.
- 1969 : 1st Prize in Pakistan National Exhibition, sponsored
by ILO in Islamabad.
- 1969 Participated in three anniversary exhibitions of the
to Contemporary Art Galleries, Rawalpindi.
- 1971
- 1970 : One-man show at the Pakistan Arts Council, Karachi.

- 1971 : One-man show of **War Paintings** at The Gallery, Karachi
- 1971 : One-man show at Islamabad Club, Islamabad
- 1972 : One-man show at Contemporary Art Gallery, Rawalpindi,
- 1973 : One-man show at Gallery of Hotel Midway House, Karachi, showing **The Story of Pakistan**
- 1974 : One-man show at Hotel Intercontinental, Karachi
- 1974 : One-man show at Society of Contemporary Art, Rawalpindi.
- 1974 : Group show of Karachi Artists Summer Exhibition at The Indus Gallery, Karachi
- 1975 : Group show of Karachi Artists at Atelier B.M., Karachi
- 1975 : One-man show at Pakistan Arts Council, Karachi
- 1975 : One-man show of impressionistic drawings on the Subject **World Food Crisis** at Gallery of Hotel Midway Hosue, Karachi, sponsored by PIA—KLM.
- 1975 : One-man show at National Art Gallery, Pakistan National Council of the Arts, Islamabad
- 1980 : One-man show at Indus Gallery, Karachi
- 1980 : One-man show at National Art Gallery, Islamabad

- 1980 : Entered paintings in Asian Art Show in Fukuoka, South Japan, through courtesy of PNCA
- 1980 : One-man Show at National Art Gallery, Pakistan National Council of the Art, Islamabad
- 1980 : Participated in Asian art show in Dacca, sponsored by *Silpakala Academy*
- 1981 : 1st Prize — Third National Exhibition of Visual Arts, sponsored by PNCA, Prize given by the President of Pakistan
- 1981 : Visited Japan and participated in 17th Asian art show in Tokyo
- 1982 : Group show in Hirshorn Museum, Washington D.C. USA, Sponsored by ISP
- 1983 : Introduced first time advance painting course in Pakistan and hold group exhibition with Rahi's APC students in Peshawar, sponsored by Abasin Arts Council
- 1984 : One-man show of Expressionistic Drawings of **World Food Crisis** in National Art Gallery, sponsored by ISP
- 1985 : 25 years Silver Jubilee Show at the National Art Gallery, sponsored by ISP