

Of Colour & Form

The Art & Architecture of M A Ahed

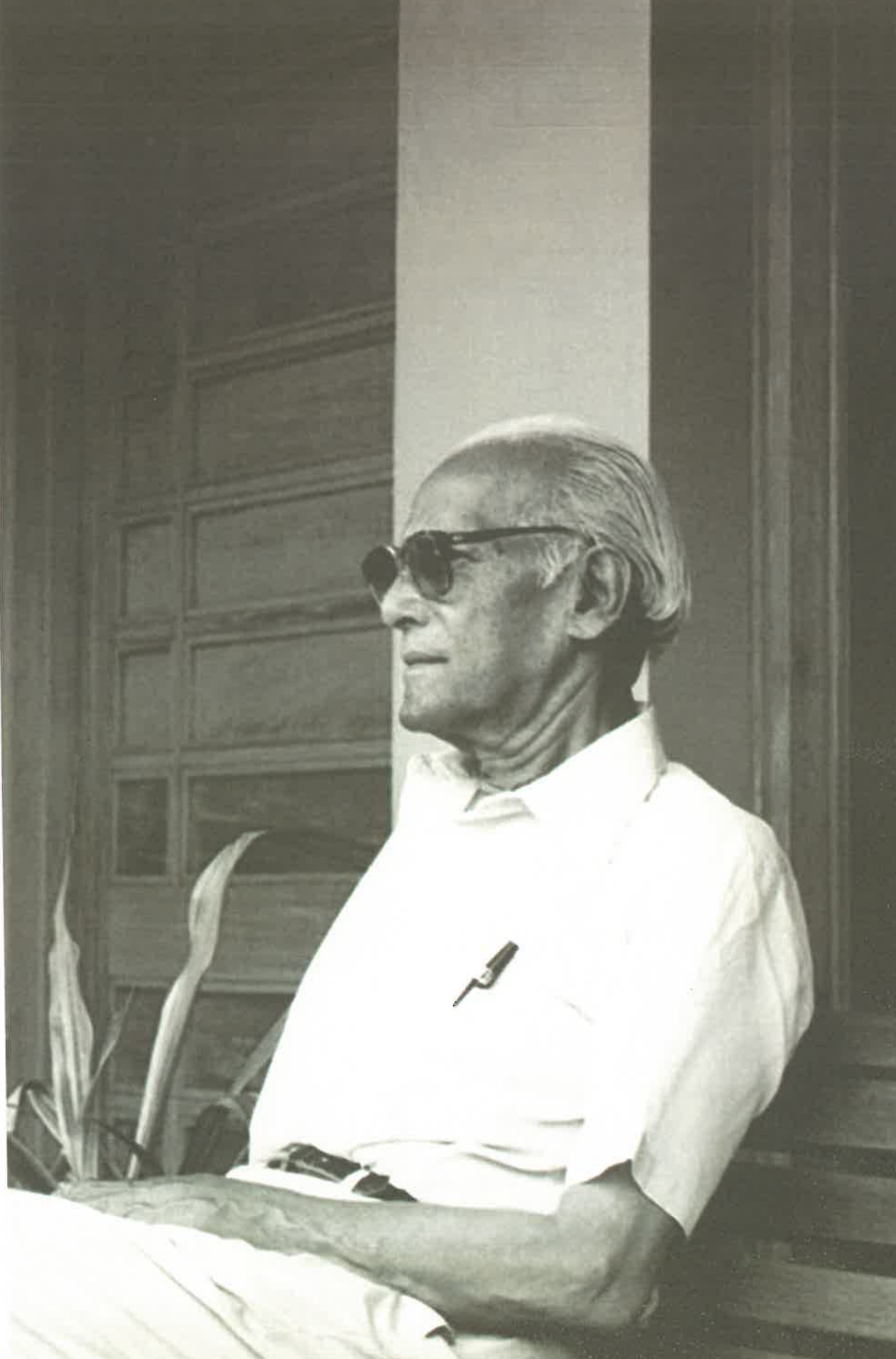


“Colour, texture, composition and form interested me.
In architecture as well, I saw these as being very important.”

— M A Ahed



Muhammad Abdul Ahed, November 2000



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Phone: +92-21 35698110

Fax: +92-21 35684712

URL: www.fomma.info

E-mail: contact@fomma.info

Layout, cover & graphic design

Farida Abdul Ghaffar

Photography

Muhammad Hamid Khan & Farah Ahd

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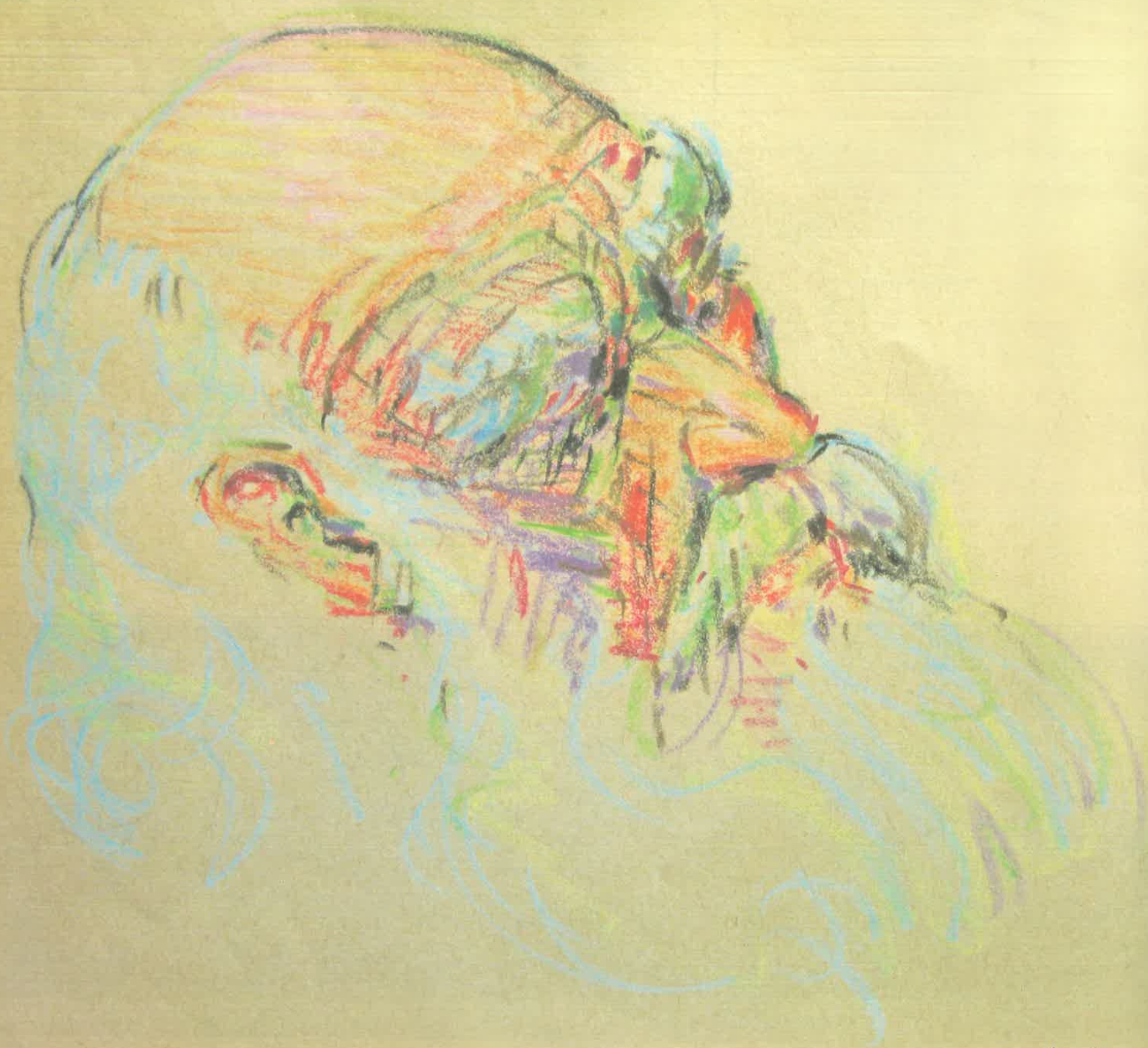
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For Appie, who brought me into this world,
and
For Abba, himself a Renaissance man,
Who encouraged me to be what I wanted to be,
So that I could become who I am.

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FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to write the foreword for a book dedicated to Muhammad Abdul Ahed's life and work. A book such as this one has been long overdue; considering the immense talent of the man, as well as his prolific contributions to both Pakistani architecture and painting, very little has been written or understood about M A Ahed's career as an architect and painter.

I feel fortunate to be especially qualified for this undertaking. I first became acquainted with him during our student days at the J J School of Art in Mumbai in 1941. Following our meeting again in Karachi in 1958, both my father, Mirza Noor Ahmed, and I maintained a tremendously close friendship with M A Ahed; it was a multi-faceted relationship, based on mutual respect and trust, as well as on an intensity of shared interests in the arts. Until his death in 2001, we met weekly without fail, to discuss the issues at hand in our respective lives; among other things, his painterly and architectural concerns and my interest in the development of the Urdu Noori Nastaliq script.

I am delighted that following decades of silence, a book about M A Ahed's many achievements in the arts is being published, which attempts to redress, at least in some measure, the injustice done to this great Pakistani artist and architect. M A Ahed was a silent man, committed to doing rather than talking about doing; it is not surprising, therefore, that in a world where the loudest voices, clamouring for attention, generally receive the most acclaim, an artist of M A Ahed's quiet demeanour has remained largely unappreciated. So, I am thrilled to be part of the effort to break this silence forever!

Ahmed Mirza Jamil
Karachi, January 2010

PREFACE

The author of any book must feel caught between the excitement of exploring the subject and the fear of not being able to do justice to it. In the case of writing about an artist, the author's misgivings are exacerbated by the inherently ambiguous nature of art itself; the author always worries that s/he may have misinterpreted the intentions of the artist.

This book was conceived when, a few days after Muhammad Abdul Ahed passed away in November 2001, I began to feel the urgent need to document the life and career of one of Pakistan's greatest pioneering painters and architects, who has remained surprisingly little known to this day. Having worked at Ahed Associates for two years, I was generally aware of M A Ahed's many achievements; I was, however, largely unaware of the great breadth of his immense talents; the writing of this book has, therefore, truly been a journey of discovery for me.

With regard to the book at hand (my first), I was gripped simultaneously with the thrill of exploring a largely uncharted territory and the self-doubts of a novice writer. My fears were compounded by the fact that no prior book on the subject existed which could serve as a point of departure.

Moreover, while a tremendously prolific painter and architect, Muhammad Abdul Ahed was extremely frugal with words; throughout his life, he evaded discussing his work in interviews and public forums. Consequently, very little written material based on the artist's own explanation of his philosophy of life and art was available to me. I have, therefore, had to analyse M A Ahed's buildings and paintings, and have had to rely on the accounts and opinions of those close to him, in order to formulate my understanding of not only the man that M A Ahed was, but also of his art, which is the true expression of his soul. I have consciously attempted to keep the book succinct; brevity is desirable for its own sake, and it is particularly apt for a book about a man of so few words. And more importantly, in the presence of work so potent and eloquent, the text can only serve a supportive and supplementary role. I hope that this book will prove to be the first of many more books on this subject.

Sheba Akhtar
Karachi, January 2010

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In writing this book, first and foremost, I am indebted to Ejaz Ahed for candidly sharing his keen personal and professional insights into a man whom he had known since his birth only as a father, but whom he truly discovered as a human being only after becoming his professional colleague. It requires a great deal of objectivity and maturity to impartially analyse the strengths and shortcomings of one's own parent; without Ejaz's honest observations with regard to his father's life and career, this book could not have been possible. I am also grateful to Ejaz for making the vast quantity of M A Ahed's sketches, paintings and architectural drawings available to me.

For generously sharing their invaluable insights into a very reserved and private man, I am grateful to Begum Shahreyar Bano, M A Ahed's life-long companion and widow, and his elder son, Javed. In addition, this book could not have been written without the insightful contribution of M A Ahed's most trusted friend, Dr Ahmed Mirza Jamil.

For proof-reading the manuscript, and for her valuable criticism and comments, I would like to thank my good friend and "amusing muse" Sehr Bokhari; I am grateful to my colleague Arif Belgaumi and to Rafiq Azam, a fellow architect from Bangladesh, for their ideas and suggestions.

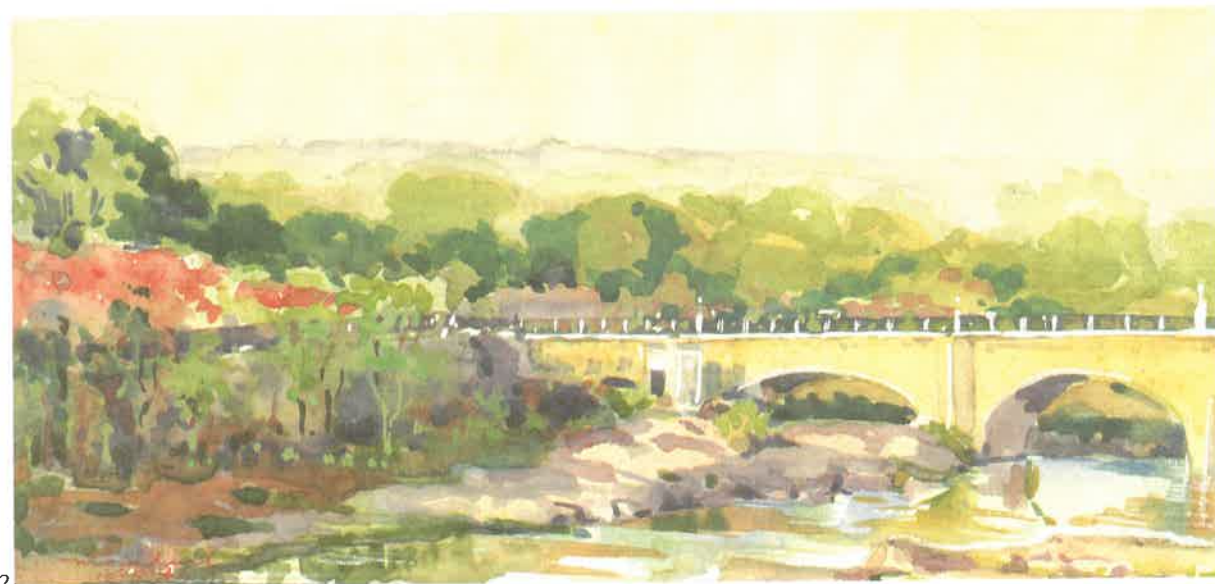
For their kind assistance in enabling me to visit and photograph M A Ahed's buildings, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Waqar Kazmi, Bilal Chaudhry and Mian Muhammad Aurangzeb.

I would also like to thank the Foundation for the Museum of Modern Art (FOMMA) for the publication of this book.

Last, but not least, I acknowledge, with profound gratitude, the tireless effort, meticulous care and boundless enthusiasm with which Farida Abdul Ghaffar has composed the text and graphic material, which forms the heart and soul of this book; in photographic work, she was ably assisted by Muhammad Hamid Khan, Hussain Ali Khan and Farah Ahed. The energy which has gone into writing this book was nourished by the emotional support of my husband, Hamid, and the boundless enthusiasm of my daughter, Zeest.



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The Early Years

In 1919, as the world recovered from the tumultuous experience of the First World War, a child was born in Hyderabad, Deccan in India, who was named Muhammad Abdul Ahed in the family tradition. He received an unexceptional early education at the local primary and secondary schools but developed some quite exceptional traits and habits at an early age. Although born with a disabled right hand, he began to draw and paint with his left hand in his sketchbook at the tender age of five or six years, perhaps because he was unable to participate in the games that the other children played. With a keen eye (and the tireless support and encouragement of his mother, a strong woman who was determined not to let him feel sorry for himself), he more than compensated for his physical disability at quick, spontaneous sketching. His sketchbook became a constant companion for the rest of his life, a medium through which he explored and captured the infinite, often fleeting, variety and richness of his world. As with Leonardo da Vinci¹, the artistic giant of the Italian *Renaissance*², Abdul Ahed's sketchbooks provide a marvelous record of the insatiable curiosity and inexhaustible creative insight that he possessed throughout his life.

Having a number of musically gifted family members, he developed a keen interest in Indian Classical music early in life; he learned to play the harmonium so well that later in life he would regularly play with the most preeminent Classical musicians in Pakistan. The rhythmic order that one finds in the mature architectural designs of M A Ahed is reminiscent of a similar fusion of architecture and music that is found in the work of the great Modern American architect, Louis Kahn³, the latter also having been a passionate musician.

His family wanted him to enter the wood-working business like his younger brother but, quite understandably, the young Abdul Ahed wished to study the fine arts after completing his secondary schooling in 1940. On the pragmatic advice of his elder brother, Dr. Rabb (who had raised him after the untimely death of their father, when Abdul Ahed was just eight years old), he opted, however, to study architecture at the Sir J J School of Arts

1,2. Views of Hyderabad, India painted in watercolour during the middle nineteen forties

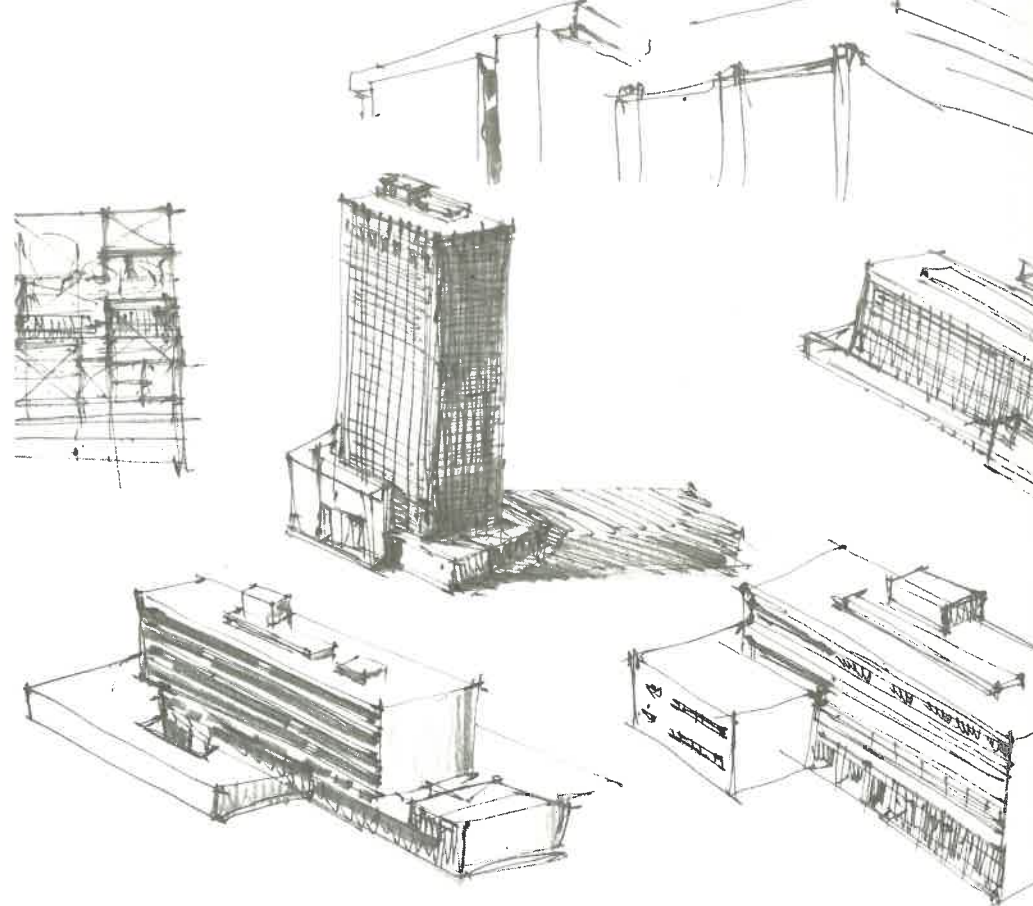


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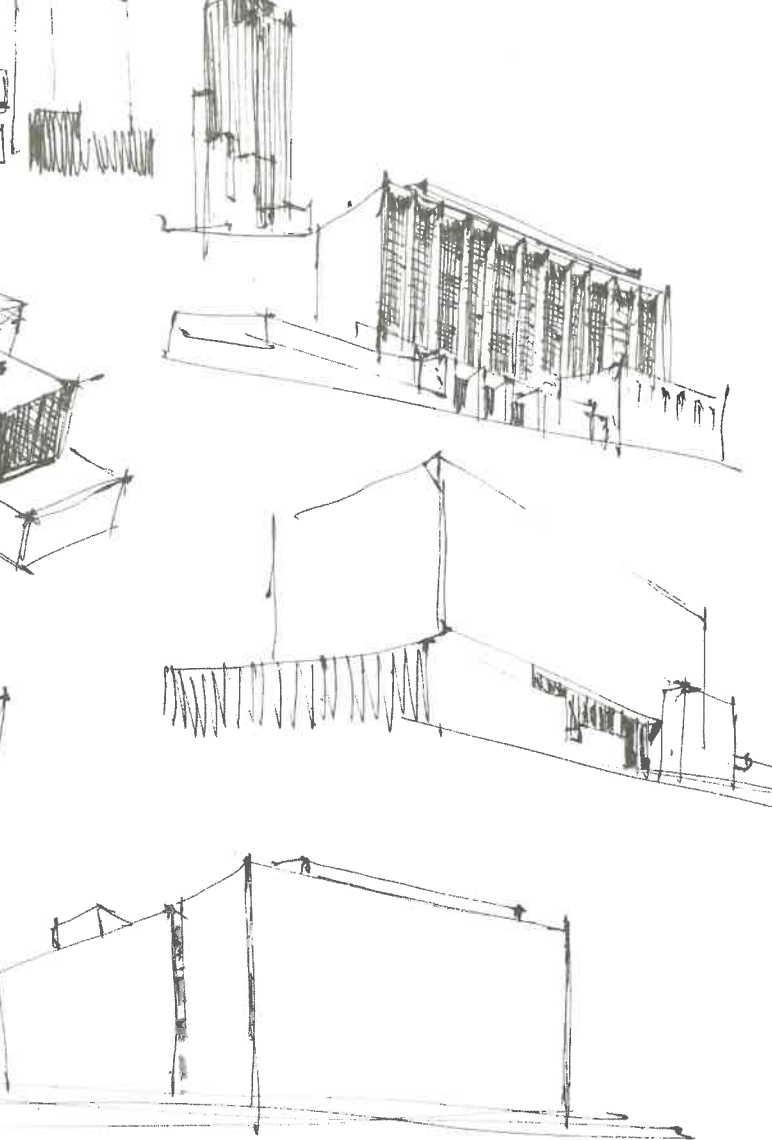
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1. Family photograph, 1947
2. M A Ahed with his wife and sons, 1953



in Mumbai. The admissions officer at the School tried his best to discourage the young Abdul Ahed from taking the entrance test due to his disabled hand, but the young man's determination and artistic aptitude were such that he not only passed the competitive examination but excelled at it. Thereafter, his ability to study architecture was never questioned.

While he was enormously successful in architecture, both at school and later in practice, the fine arts remained his foremost passion, as he would candidly confess throughout his life. His experience of studying architecture at an art school within a cosmopolitan environment was tremendously enriching in terms of his creative and intellectual development; his circle of friends had diverse interests including the fine arts, performing arts, literature, music and philosophy. Like the young Alvar Aalto⁴ (who would later become the most preeminent Finnish Modern architect) at the Helsinki Polytechnic, Abdul Ahed at the J J School became involved in numerous dramatic productions, designing props and painting backdrops. In addition, his caricatures were featured regularly in the local newspapers. The diverse and prolific creativity that M A Ahed demonstrated at the J J School was to be a mere precursor to the immense talent he would exhibit as an architect and painter in the years to come.



Architecture

Upon completing the first three years of his architectural studies in Mumbai in 1943, M A Ahed returned to his native Hyderabad for the next five years to work in the Town Planning Department and at the private practice of M Fayazuddin, the most reputed architect in Hyderabad. Here, in 1947, he married Shahreyar Bano Haqqani, the educated niece of his employer, with whom he would have two sons, Javed and Ejaz.

The desire to complete the remaining two years of his architectural education urged him, however, to travel a year later, by ocean liner, to England where he obtained the Diploma in Architecture from the Leicester College of Arts and Technology in London, in 1951. At thirty, Ahed was several years older than the rest of his classmates at Leicester, and leaps and bounds ahead of them in terms of his conceptual design capabilities, as well as his presentation techniques and skills. As a result, he excelled at school and assumed the role of a mentor in studio, guiding fellow students in their design projects. His studio work from this period demonstrates a remarkable level of maturity and vision for a young architect; it embodies the promise of Ahed's architectural designs in Pakistan in the years to come.

During the course of his studies in England, Ahed worked for the Leicester County Council and also became associated with an architectural firm, Grenfeld Baines; he subsequently became an Associate Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (ARIBA). The experience of studying and working in England was extraordinarily stimulating for a young man of M A Ahed's intellectual and creative abilities. London was then, as now, the cosmopolitan hub of Western culture with innumerable museums, art galleries and theatres, and Ahed was eager to absorb all that they had to offer. Specifically in terms of architecture, London was at the heart of the massive post-World War II reconstruction, significant parts of it having been completely destroyed. There was a tremendous and urgent need for mass housing, as well as the rebuilding of large sectors of infrastructure. The time had arrived for large-scale application of mass-produced prefabricated concrete, steel and glass technology that formed the basis of the Le Corbusian⁵ utopia. Ahed found himself in the midst of this architectural



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1,2,3. M A Ahmed during his stay in England, 1948-51

energy, both in terms of its polemical and practical implications, and he took its lessons to heart.

When the time came to return to his homeland in 1951, he chose to settle in Pakistan rather than in India. While India had recently been liberated from two centuries of British colonial rule, Pakistan was born in 1947. The infant nation had very little infrastructure to speak of, and its institutions needed to be created. For an aspiring, young architect, there could not have been a more opportune place or moment to embark upon a professional career. M A Ahmed settled in Karachi, the nation's first capital and its port city, a city destined to become the country's largest metropolis. He joined the PPWD⁶ under the leadership of Mehdi Ali Mirza⁷, the most preeminent architect of his time, whose work Abdul Ahmed greatly admired and whom he considered to be the pioneer of Pakistani architecture. The two architects worked as partners on many public and private buildings before the untimely death of Mirza in 1961. At the time, the PPWD office was located in a two-room "quarter" on Jehangir Road. During office hours, the front room served as the office of the PPWD while the Ahmed family occupied the rear accommodation; thereafter, the young wife and two children would have the use of the front room as well. M A Ahmed remained at the PPWD for fourteen years, the last six years as its Chief Architect; this position gave him the opportunity to work on the most important and prestigious public projects of the period, both in the then West and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

Together with Mirza (with whom M A Ahmed's professional relationship soon strengthened into a deep, lifelong friendship), Minoo Mistry⁸





and Rustomji⁹ (all architectural graduates of the J J School), M A Ahed established the Institute of Architects in Pakistan (IAP) in 1957 and the Government School of Architecture in Karachi in 1958. The latter institution, which he later headed as Principal for six years, bears the distinction of being the first in the country to have also enabled women to acquire an architectural education, culminating in a Diploma in Architecture; the first two female architecture graduates of the School were, in fact, nieces of M A Ahed. As a brilliant lecturer of solid geometry, drawing and construction, M A Ahed taught and inspired a generation of younger Pakistani architects, some of whom later worked as partners with him for twelve years in his private practice, Ahed Associates.

Ahed spent the greater part of 1960 touring many cities of the United States, to study the planning of hospitals and medical facilities, through the auspices of the US Department of State; he subsequently became a member of the American Hospital Association in Chicago. A reticent man, M A Ahed's way of reaching out to people was to draw their portraits; he made many acquaintances in this manner throughout his travels in the United States as he had done earlier in Britain and elsewhere.

M A Ahed had a prolific architectural career, both while he worked for the PPWD as well as in private practice. The country was young and much needed to be done, architecturally and otherwise, in the public sector. Moreover, there were very few well-qualified professionals in Pakistan at the time; so, naturally, M A Ahed made his mark on the architectural profession, impressing clients and associates alike with his immense talent. When he established his own practice, Ahed Associates, many of his PPWD clients continued to seek his professional services, the most notable of whom was Shujaat Ali Hasnie, the then Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan. He commissioned M A Ahed to design the headquarter building of the Bank in Islamabad; this became the first major architectural project of Ahed Associates and the one with which M A Ahed would be identified the most. Like Lorenzo de Medici¹⁰, the magnanimous benefactor of the Italian Renaissance, Hasnie was an ideal patron, a grandee with a discriminating



M A Ahed during his study tour in the United States, 1960



A pastel sketch of Mirza Noor Ahmed at work
by M A Ahmed, 1964

taste; he surrounded himself with men of the arts, crafts and letters at regular evening gatherings at his stately home in Karachi. It was during these relaxed cultural *mehfils* (social gatherings) that Ahmed painted several portraits of Hasnie and his family, which remain to date in the Hasnie ancestral home in Multan. As the personal relationship between the two men strengthened, Hasnie developed complete confidence in the architectural design and judgment of M A Ahmed and assured him of the commission of all State Bank projects throughout Pakistan during his tenure as Governor. The patronage of Hasnie and of others like him (such as Nawab Muzaffar Ali Qizilbash, Finance Minister to the Government of Pakistan), ensured that M A Ahmed neither needed to promote his practice nor faced any serious professional competition throughout his career. In this regard, Ahmed enjoyed an enviable professional situation, one that has changed a great deal since his time.

Much can be understood about M A Ahmed's architectural style from the study of two very different houses that he designed during the late 1950's and early 1960's. The residence of Dr. Ahmed Mirza Jamil¹¹, occupying a site of 2,000 square yards in PECHS, was begun in 1959 and was completed by the end of the following year. Mirza Jamil had studied painting at the J J School while M A Ahmed was an architecture student there. Subsequently, when the two men met again in Karachi in 1958, Ahmed developed a deep friendship not only with Mirza Jamil himself, but also with his father Mirza Noor Ahmed¹². Both father and son were erudite men and immensely gifted artists (they co-developed the Urdu script *Noori Nastaliq*¹³ some years later), so Ahmed found much meaningful substance in his friendship with both men throughout his life. The portrait by M A Ahmed of Mirza Noor Ahmed is considered by his son (himself a highly gifted painter) to be the best ever painted, so completely has the artist expressed the intensely energetic personality of the subject.

As a result of his special relationship with the client, the architect took a uniquely personal interest in the design and construction of the Jamil Residence, making site visits as often as every other day. M A Ahed and Mirza Noor Ahmed collaborated on the design of the garden, the latter having a keen interest in plants and landscape design. The garden was completed well before the completion of the house, providing a tranquil setting for the long discussions that the two men would have on a wide variety of topics, including philosophy and the arts among other things, during Ahed's site visits. The soothing presence of the luxuriant garden welcomed the Jamil family when they moved into the house in 1960 and it remains a natural haven today; the rippling sound of the fountains, the chirping of the birds in the aviaries and the fragrance of the flowering plants envelop one's senses so completely that one forgets the close proximity of the house to the noise and pollution of Shara-e-Faisal. The experience of this garden brings to mind the words of the Mexican architect Luis Barragan¹⁴:

I believe that architects should design gardens to be used, as much as the houses they build, to develop a sense of beauty and the taste and inclination toward the fine arts and other spiritual values... The construction and enjoyment of a garden accustoms people to beauty, to its instinctive use, even to its pursuit.



Jamil House with garden, Karachi, 1959-60
(First floor subsequently added by owner)

The large, sprawling house entered from front or back, is gracious in scale and in its architectural language without being ostentatious in character. Incorporating load-bearing concrete walls and high ceilings, it is cool in summer and warm in winter and, notwithstanding its proximity to a major vehicular artery, remarkably quiet and serene within. The grid of the *brise soleil* (sun-screen) on the external walls shades the windows from the glare of the strong Karachi sun, as well as creates a rhythmic play of shade and shadow on the walls that varies seasonally and from dawn to dusk. The use of this versatile device in M A Ahed's architectural vocabulary, in terms of its climatic responsiveness and textural richness, is reminiscent of the architecture of Le Corbusier in the south of France and in India, as well as of the buildings of the pioneering Brazilian Modern architect Oscar Niemeyer¹⁵, all dating from the 1950's and the 1960's.

The architect's own house, designed and built by M A Ahed between 1960 and 1961, completely embodies the architect's simple philosophy regarding house design:

A house should be simple. It should look like a home and display the taste of its residents. It should be well-built ...¹⁶

The Ahed House is entirely different in character from the Jamil Residence. Occupying a site of 725 square yards in the KCHS Union Area of Karachi, it is built with exposed load-bearing masonry walls of sandstone rubble (hand-set by the architect himself in rough wooden formwork); the stone was procured from the re-grading of the hill that was being carried out at the rear of the site. The use of local stone not only significantly reduced the cost of construction, but makes the house appear to emerge naturally out of the rocky terrain since its material was, after all, once part of the hilly ground. In the way that the Ahed House is inextricably anchored to its dramatic site, one is strongly reminded of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright's¹⁷ design approach, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between building and landscape, as at Taliesin West¹⁸. Notable features of the massing of the house are the gently sloping roof and the use of angled walls, perhaps an admission of Ahed's stylistic debt to Niemeyer; the occasional hollow concrete block screen wall is probably his unabashed acceptance of Wright's tremendous influence on his design. Throughout, the windows are recessed within the *brise soleil*, the frame of this shading device being either projected out of the volume or flush with it, to create compositional variety.

The most striking feature of the house is its scale; in contrast to the grand scale of the Jamil Residence, the Ahed House is extremely modest, even intimate, in scale; the small rooms with low ceilings evoke the protective quality of Wright's residential design. The layout of the two-storey house is compact: the ground floor accommodates the living room, dining room, master bedroom and the service areas; two bedrooms, a game room, a kitchenette and a generous terrace were originally provided on the first floor, but the upper level was subsequently modified by Ejaz Ahed in 1975. M A Ahed's studio was situated at the mezzanine level above the garage, where he spent so many hours of solitude immersed in his books or the musical tides of his harmonium; in his last years, most of the architect's waking hours were spent here absorbed in his painting.



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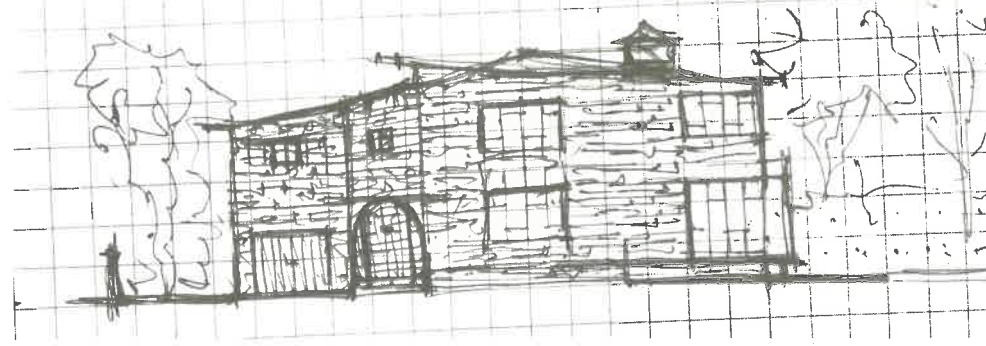


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1,2. Views of Ahed House, Karachi, 1960-61
3. Taliesin West, Arizona, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1930's



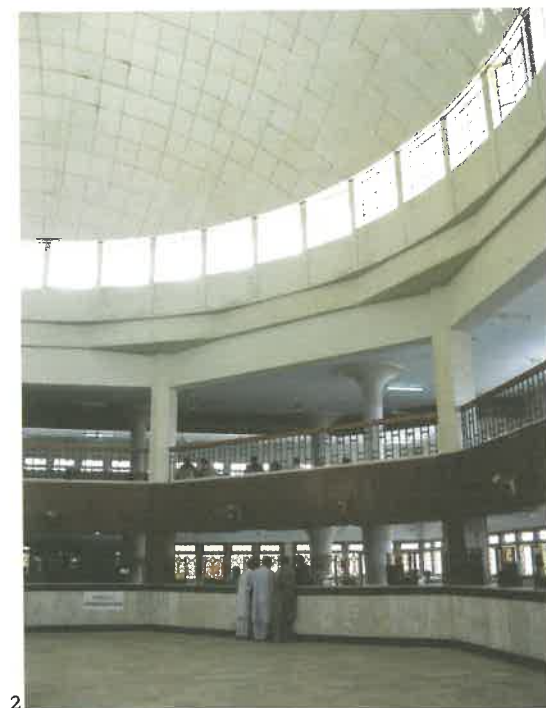
The interior is finished in the characteristic materials of the day, *viz.* terrazzo floors throughout, with the kitchen and bathroom walls finished in ceramic tile, all durable and low-maintenance materials.

M A Ahmed led an austere life; he enriched his life not with material possessions but with creative fulfillment. His professional expertise and stature had gained him the respect and trust of some of the most intellectual, successful, influential and affluent members of Pakistani society. But he was equally comfortable in the company of socially humble folk, because what mattered to Ahmed were integrity, authenticity and humanity. Wright has insightfully stated that an architect's own house is the architectural equivalent of a painter's self-portrait; it not only incorporates the architect's programmatic requirements (the equivalent of the artist's facial features in a self-portrait), but it sums up the essence of the architect's design philosophy (as a self-portrait reveals the summation of the artist's personality). In keeping with this notion, the Ahmed House is entirely different in scale and materials from M A Ahmed's other architectural work, domestic and non-domestic, all of which is grand in character. The Ahmed House is a wonderfully comprehensive embodiment of the architect's personality, values and design philosophy: quiet, even reticent, simple, modest and frugal.



1. Elite Publishers Ltd Factory and Offices, Karachi, 1964
2. M A Ahmed with Dr Ahmed Mirza Jamil at Elite Publishers

In 1964, M A Ahmed designed the factory and offices of Elite Publishers Limited, a printing establishment founded and managed by his dear and trusted friend Ahmed Mirza Jamil. The unrivaled quality of the work produced by Elite was the result of the artistic sensitivity and tireless determination on the part of Mirza Jamil to produce uncompromising standards in all aspects of publication. As with his friend's house a few years earlier, M A Ahmed took tremendous interest in the design of the Elite factory and office building. He designed the executive office with a view to the dimensions, operating requirements and loading conditions of the electronic scanning machine that Mirza Jamil had recently imported from Germany and that he himself operated. The layout of the office has worked so well that it remains unchanged today after more than four decades.



1. Lily-pad column capitals, Johnson Wax Building, Racine, Wisconsin, USA, 1936-51
2. Post office hall, GPO Building, Karachi, 1966-67

As with Louis Kahn, M A Ahed was occupied during most of his architectural career with the design of civic and institutional, rather than residential or commercial, buildings. The General Post Office (GPO) complex on I I Chundrigar Road in Karachi, dating from 1966-67, is characteristic of the architect's style. The original design consisted of a dramatic compositional play of juxtaposed masses: a horizontal cubic volume, surmounted by a dome, placed as a foreground object against twin vertical slabs in the background. In the final design, the vertical slabs were, unfortunately, significantly truncated, thereby reducing the dramatic impact of the composition. Even so, to a great extent, the design retains its original richness, both in terms of massing and surface articulation.

As with his other works, M A Ahed wrapped the foreground volume, fronting onto I I Chundrigar Road, with a perforated skin that also serves as a *brise soleil*; this skin is richly patterned on the north and south sides, while the east and west facades incorporate a simpler rhythm of vertical louvres. The elegantly proportioned dome appears to float lightly on the horizontal volume and is tethered to it with vertical concrete supports. As in most of Wright's work, upon entering this building, the visitor experiences a dramatic sense of buoyancy as s/he moves from the compressed, dark entrance vestibule on the first floor into the unexpectedly grand, illuminated space of the domed public hall of the post office.

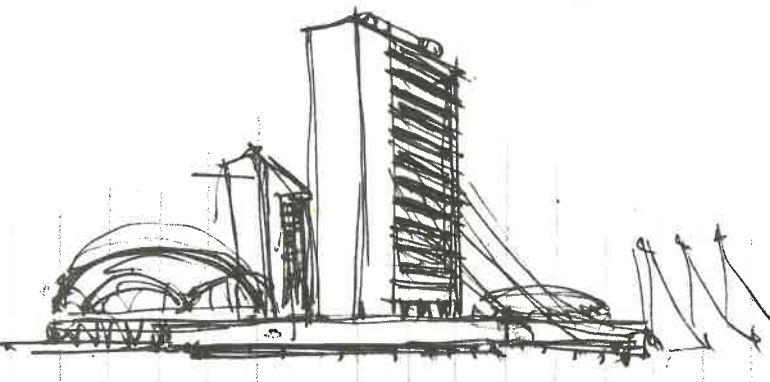
The design of the domed hall effects a wonderful transition from a rectilinear to a curvilinear geometry through the intercession of the octagon, a design strategy employed throughout the history of architecture. The drum of the dome is supported on eight squinches¹⁹, in the Islamic tradition of dome construction, thereby establishing continuity with the architectural heritage of Pakistan. The modern materials and technology used, however, relate this structure to the other great concrete domes of its time. The light, filtering through the clerestory windows that form the glazed drum of the dome, softly washes the white canopy overhead, to imbue the space with a luminous glow; the space, while defined with monumental geometry, is surprisingly comfortable in scale.



General Post Office Building, Karachi, 1966-67

An interesting feature of the design is the articulation of the columns in the post-office hall with bell-shaped capitals that are reminiscent of ancient Egyptian papyrus flower capitals; this is perhaps a reference to Wright's use of lily-pad capitals in the Johnson Wax Administration Building²⁰.

M A Ahed used the expertise that he had gained on his study tour of American medical facilities in 1960 to design the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital in Karachi in 1970. The 200-bed hospital was designed as a major public health facility for the northern districts of Karachi. The layout consists of two five-storey masses, horizontally articulated with alternating solid and glazed bands, each with a central, originally landscaped, courtyard. The building is accessed through a well-proportioned, spacious lobby; the generous corridors provide efficient circulation for staff and patients, both ambulant as well as those on stretchers and wheel-chairs. The wards, clinics and offices are well lit and ventilated, precluding the need for costly air-conditioning. The interior of the reinforced concrete structure is finished with cost-efficient, low-maintenance and durable materials, viz. plaster and paint on the walls, marble flooring and granite cladding on the column bases.





State Bank of Pakistan Building, Islamabad, 1964-70

The most significant example of Ahed's architectural style is the State Bank of Pakistan Building in Islamabad, completed in 1970; this was the first major project that M A Ahed received when he established his private practice, Ahed Associates, in Karachi in 1964. The building has served as the National Assembly of Pakistan, as well as the Senate of Pakistan for seventeen years, and it has the distinction of being the only post-Partition building in the country to be featured on a Pakistani currency note.

As with the work of other great architects, an analysis of M A Ahed's architectural design reveals a thematic unity throughout his career; the design of the State Bank Building is a culmination, on a grand scale, of that of the GPO Building in Karachi. This centrally air-conditioned building houses a banking hall, a vault, an office tower, a seminar hall (with a seating capacity of about 800 people and equipped with a simultaneous interpretation system), a large dining hall and an auditorium. In the time-honoured tradition of Le Corbusier and Niemeyer, and even more dramatically than at the GPO Building, the design constitutes a rich compositional juxtaposition in which a horizontal, rectilinear, grounded volume serves as a visual podium for the vertical slab and the dome. Ahed stated:

I designed a simple mass with slits in the front and a dome on the top. The dome is placed centrally. On one side I placed the auditorium, and balanced it with the office tower.²¹



Congresso Nacional, Brasilia, Oscar Niemeyer, 1960



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President Yahya Khan inspecting the chandelier at the Quaid-e-Azam's mausoleum which he visited on Friday. This beautiful chandelier was presented as a gift by the Muslim Association of the People's Republic of China.

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1. President Yahya Khan inaugurating the State Bank of Pakistan Building, Islamabad, 1970
2. Article from Pakistan News Digest, 15 January 1971

As at the GPO Building, in addition to volumetric contrast, the articulation of the skin and fenestration incorporates a modulated play of rhythm and texture, achieved through a varied frequency of the solid and void elements, to create a wonderful tapestry of light, shade and shadow. Perhaps inspired by the works of Felix Candela²², Pier Luigi Nervi²³ and Eero Saarinen²⁴, the dome is articulated such that the canvas-thin concrete canopy seems to billow buoyantly from its tether-like angled concrete supports. As at the GPO Building, the glazed drum of the dome is supported on an octagonal geometry defined, both architecturally and structurally, by eight squinches. While similar in form to, and more grand in scale than, the dome of the GPO Building, the interior of the domed banking hall of the State Bank Building now, unfortunately, lacks the luminous quality of the post-office hall; this is due to the dark painted ornamental pattern on the acoustic tiles that were applied to the ceiling. Tragically, the vertical slab and the seminar hall of the building have been occupied by a government agency since 2003 and have suffered a great deal of damage since then. The State Bank Building is a summation of M A Ahed's architectural style: the design subtly harmonises solemn dignity on the one hand, and compositional variety on the other, to create an architectural language that befits the civic nature and monumental stature of the nation's principal financial institution in its capital city.

In 1968, following the return of Yahya Merchant, the architect of the *Quaid-e-Azam's* mausoleum in Karachi, to India, M A Ahed was appointed Honorary Consulting Architect by the Government of Pakistan for the completion of the building, together with its gardens. With Ahed's professional expertise, the structure (whose four inclined walls were then under construction) was completed according to the spirit of Merchant's design. The only notable modification made to the design was the simplification of the central arched entrance on each façade. Like Wright and Aalto, Ahed's *oeuvre* (body of work) encompasses the entire spectrum of design from planning and architecture to product design. It is not surprising, therefore, that the most important design contribution of M A Ahed to the *Quaid's* mausoleum is not in terms of its architecture. With his characteristic attention to detail, Ahed designed the chandelier that



M A Ahed being awarded the *Sitara-e-Khidmat* by President Yahya Khan, 1971



M A Ahed (seated fourth from right) with members of the *Quaid-e-Azam* Memorial Fund Board, Karachi

forms the focal element of the monumental, yet simple, central domed space of the cenotaph chamber. This chandelier was manufactured in China and gifted by the Muslim Association of the People's Republic of China to the people of Pakistan in honour of their *Quaid-e-Azam*. M A Ahed served as a Member of the *Quaid-e-Azam* Memorial Fund Board (QMFB) from 1970 until 1990.

In 1971, Ahed served as a Jury Member on the panel of the International Design Competition for the Regent's Park Mosque and Islamic Centre in London. The same year, he was awarded the *Sitara-e-Khidmat* by the President of Pakistan for his meritorious services to the nation.

M A Ahed had a remarkably simple and straightforward architectural philosophy: "Architecture is a representation of society..."²⁵. He believed that the design of a building should fulfill its purpose comfortably with regard to cultural, climatic and programmatic requirements, and that such consideration would generate its form:

... a building is more than just a form... A building has to function, it must fulfill its purpose. If it does not work, then it is like sculpture, not really architecture.²⁶

That Ahed's architecture truly fulfills the intentions of the architect in this respect was emphatically confirmed when the author visited the State Bank of Pakistan Building in Rawalpindi. A security guard, on hearing of a book being written about the architect of the building where he had worked for twenty-two years, came rushing to the author. "This is the best building in all of 'Pindi", he said proudly in Urdu; "it doesn't matter whether we have electricity or not; we get plenty of light from both sides and lots of fresh air. God will reward Ahed Saheb in the hereafter for benefiting so many people in his life." If a building is best judged by those who spend many hours of the day in it throughout the year, then it can confidently be stated that M A Ahed's buildings throughout Pakistan have proved to be successful works of architecture.

Like any other bright and talented architect of his generation, M A Ahed was receptive to the architectural influences of the Modern Masters, as well as to those of his renowned contemporaries. Ahed's architecture was particularly inspired by the design philosophy of Wright, who has been called "the father of Modern architecture". Ahed's debt to Wright's design is evident in his sensitivity to scale, to the relationship between building and site, and to the use of materials and technology; also, as with Wright's work, geometric order and formal composition became the hallmarks of M A Ahed's mature architectural style.

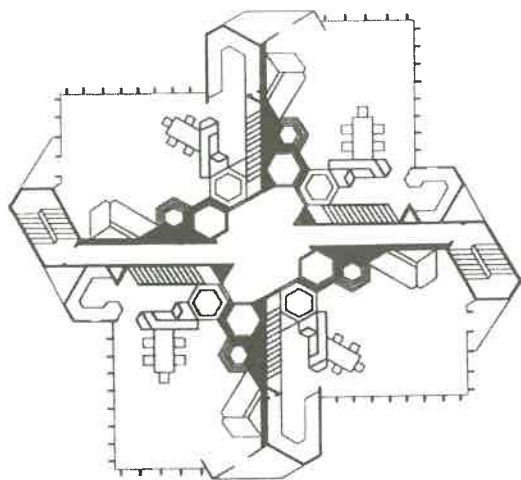


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2

1,2. M A Ahed inspecting construction works



1



2

1. St. Mark's Tower project, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1929
2. Residential tower proposed by M A Ahed

Like the great *Bauhaus*²⁷ architect, Mies Van der Rohe²⁸, M A Ahed believed in the necessity of architectural form, cladding and articulation, to be built with the materials and technology of their time, in order to express the *zeitgeist* (spirit of the time):

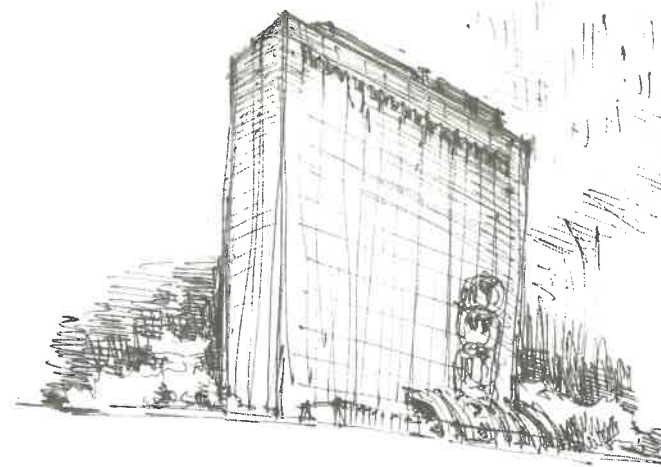
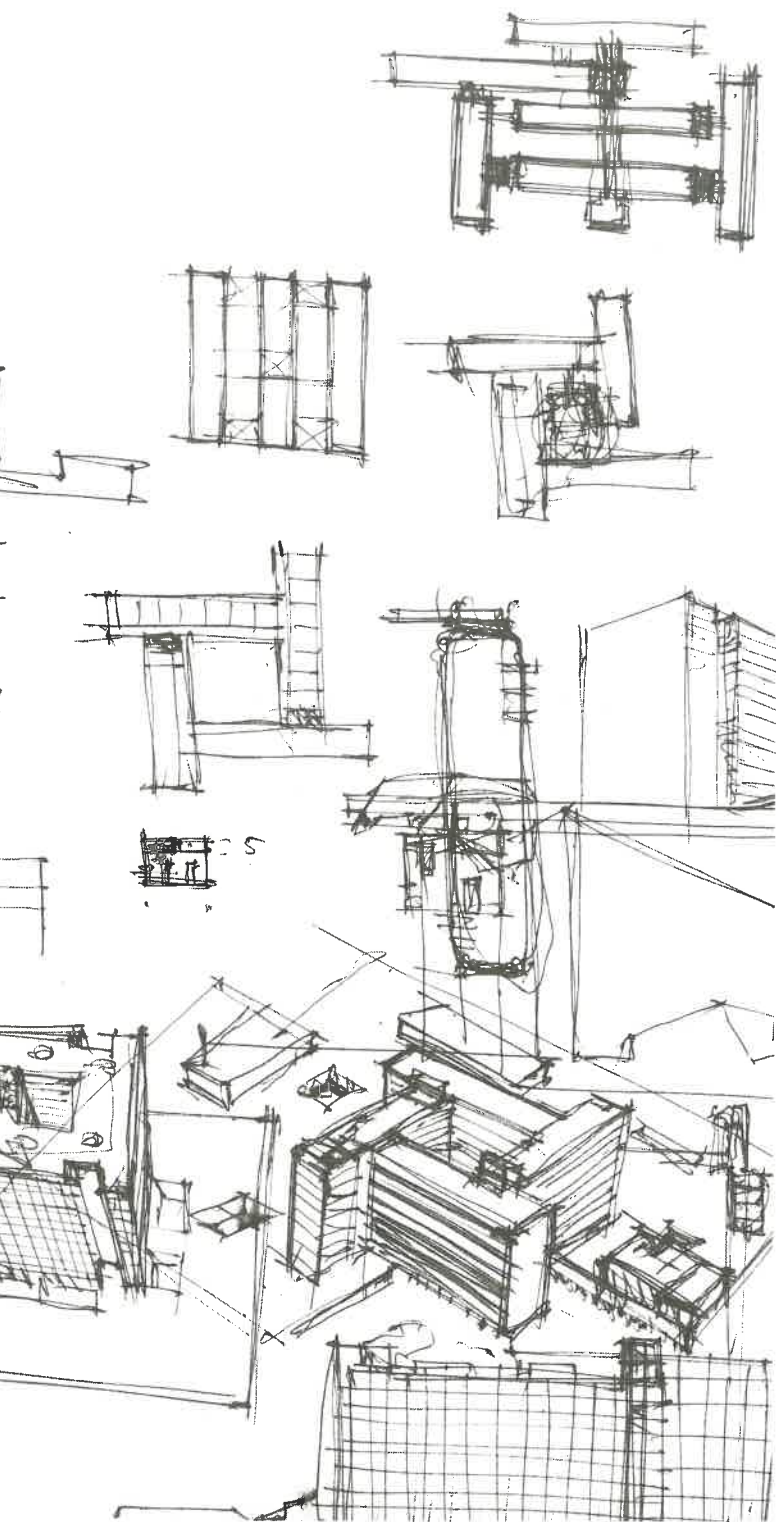
As long as the building works, the 'covering' may change. And it will and must change with time.²⁹

Moreover, Ahed himself acknowledged the influence of Niemeyer on his work. This is vividly expressed in Ahed's architectural compositions: the juxtaposition of discrete Platonic and semi-Platonic forms in concrete, each form didactically containing a specific function, and each articulated with a patterned, perforated skin of rhythmic textures, to achieve climatic responsiveness and visual enrichment. Ahed acknowledged:

Colour, texture, composition and form interested me. In architecture as well, I saw these as being very important³⁰.

Niemeyer's design itself owes a great debt to the architectural style of Le Corbusier; consequently, some of Ahed's architectural projects are visibly derived from those of the Modern Master. The notion of an ornamental screen applied to the outside of the building volume is quite typical of the Modern architectural style of the 1950's and 1960's throughout the world; in the case of M A Ahed's architectural design, the use of such applied decorative screens was also consistent with his painterly interest in tonality and texture.

The architectural designs of M A Ahed, both institutional and residential, embody tremendous compositional richness, both in terms of massing and surface texture, as well as spatial grandeur; his architectural *oeuvre* is an eloquent manifestation of a profound understanding of proportional harmony, the laws of structure and the nature of materials in the drama of space-making.



The transfer of authority from one generation to the next is rarely an easy process, requiring a great deal of mutual understanding and trust in the best of circumstances. In the case of Ahed Associates, the transfer of management from M A Ahed to Ejaz Ahed was complicated by the nature of the relationship between father and son. M A Ahed was, inherently, a solitary man who found it difficult to cultivate meaningful human relationships. In addition, he had never had an opportunity to bond with his own father; lacking a role-model, his perception of a father-figure was, therefore, based on a conventional characterisation of the father solely as a provider. As a result, his sons grew up being strangers to him, whose abilities he neither knew nor could trust. In 1976, Ejaz wished to join his father's practice; he had completed his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the IIT³¹, had successfully worked at the SOM³² office in Chicago for three years, and had established and run the PEPAC³³ office in Karachi for two years. Notwithstanding these achievements, M A Ahed had little comprehension of his son's professional capabilities, and consequently, for quite some time, he dismissed Ejaz as being incapable of managing Ahed Associates simply because he was "not white-haired". It took a great deal of mediation on the part of Mirza Jamil, one of the very few people whose judgment M A Ahed valued, to convince him. Mirza Jamil explained to his old friend that "business is like a relay race": if the baton was not passed smoothly and in a timely fashion from one runner to the next, neither would win the race and all would be lost. This analogy made sense to Ahed; he heeded his friend's advice, and the reins of control at Ahed Associates were, thus, passed on to the second generation, with M A Ahed continuing in his capacity as Founding and Advising Partner until his death in November 2001. The original premises of the practice had continued to house, until recently, the office of Ahed Associates, for some four decades. The practice that was founded by M A Ahed is now headed by his son, Ejaz Ahed.



Art

M A Ahed always confessed that painting, not architecture, was his natural calling in life: "My first love has always been painting"³⁴. He had a long and tremendously prolific, as well as versatile, career as an artist during which, following in the footsteps of the great *Renaissance* Masters, he practised all forms of the visual arts, as well as music; but, as a fine artist, he was primarily a painter. Like Le Corbusier, although Ahed painted throughout his life, he became more well-known as an architect. Even during his career as a practising architect, his typical day at the office would be divided between architectural design with his staff in the studio and painting in solitude in his private office. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that Ahed's architectural articulation has been enriched by his painterly sensitivity, and that his paintings embody a profound sense of architectural space. Unlike the work of Le Corbusier, Ahed's architectural and painting compositions appear, however, to be quite independent of each other.

After retirement from architectural practice in 1977, when he was still in his prime at merely 58 years of age, M A Ahed was able to devote himself completely to painting. Although in his youth he had painted primarily with oil paints, most of his later work was painted with watercolours, more fluidly and spontaneously expressing his subjects, as well as the verve of the artist's hand. His favourite theme became the idyllic rural landscapes of Pakistan, in which he explored the humanity of the country folk going about the daily activities of their lives. The simplicity of the artist's genre is in keeping with the artist's own lifestyle: seated on a *durree* (woven mat), he painted without an easel in the quiet solitude of his studio at home.



Perhaps the most notable feature of his paintings is the immense diversity of the subject matter that interested him, as well as the wide variety of graphic media that he employed. His work can broadly be categorised as portraiture, life studies, still life, landscapes and nonobjective compositions; each category has been explored extensively in oil paints, pastels, chalk, charcoal, ink or pencil, although the artist's favourite medium was, undoubtedly, watercolour. This graphic medium is the oldest known to man for his artistic expression³⁵; although perhaps the most difficult to master, for the facile watercolourist who has learned to control the medium's inherent "unpredictability", as well as its irreversibility, the expressive possibilities are infinite, due to the inherently transparent luminosity of the colour washes on the paper. The artist's characteristic approach to the subject, whatever the medium, is spontaneous and immediate; some works are more formal and finished, while others are quick and sketchy.

M A Ahed has stated: "Before I could write, I could draw"³⁶. He began to maintain a sketchbook at the young age of eight, but the bulk of his earliest work, while still a youngster in Hyderabad, has tragically been lost. Fortunately, some of the drawings and paintings from his days at the J J School have, however, survived; although they include still life studies, as well as copies of the European Masters, the vast majority consists of portraits of fellow students and acquaintances, mostly finished paintings in watercolour. Portraiture and the study of the human figure remained Ahed's favourite genre throughout his life, and he executed these works in all available media. Perhaps portraiture gave him the opportunity to minutely and intimately explore the complexities of human nature at a safe distance and on his own terms, without having to verbally engage his subjects; given his natural reserve, he would undoubtedly have found this interaction to be difficult, perhaps even tiresome. A notable feature of



1



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1. Watercolour by M A Ahed; 1985; Private collection
2. *The Milkmaid*; Jan Vermeer; 1658-1660; Oil on canvas; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Ahed's paintings, in this regard, is the complete absence of self-portraiture; it seems that the painter was always comfortable behind the canvas, never in front of it.

Although not a specialist like the Dutch artists, the influence of the seventeenth century Dutch portraitists on M A Ahed's portraiture is understandable; while an art student at the J J School, Ahed had copied the Dutch Masters, among other great European artists, and some of these copies have survived. Dutch painters, such as Hals³⁷, Rembrandt³⁸ and Vermeer³⁹, made enormous contributions to the art of portraiture, both in technique and subject matter. The influence of Hals on Ahed's portraiture is primarily in the selection of ordinary people who are depicted in their everyday environment; there is a complete absence of self-consciousness or formality between subject and painter. In fact, the subject often seems to be entirely oblivious to the presence of the painter, so completely engrossed is s/he in the task at hand.

Rembrandt's influence on Ahed's art is most noticeable in the portraits of the old men and women that he has painted: the pathos expressed in the wrinkled, grooved faces of these old folk reveals a profound understanding, even empathy, on the part of the artist of the hard, perhaps tragic, experiences of their lives. The grace and nobility with which these humble folk carry themselves impart an unmistakable grandeur, even monumentality, to these unforgettable figures, ennobling the honest labour of their lives. The mastery with which Ahed handles the subtle gradation of *chiaroscuro* (gradation of light and dark), to create delicate nuances of highlights, shade and shadow and, thereby, to achieve an emotionally charged atmosphere in his paintings, is strongly reminiscent of Rembrandt's work. Vermeer has influenced Ahed as well; the painter's depiction of ordinary people, immersed in their work, reminds one of the Dutch "Little Master's" *Milkmaid*. Ahed's paintings are small in size, requiring an intimate distance for viewing, like those of Vermeer. Ahed's portraits are imbued with a profound sympathy for humanity in all its variety, which is the true hallmark of artistic authority.



Head of a Man; Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn;
1660's; Oil on panel; Ashmolean Museum,
Oxford University

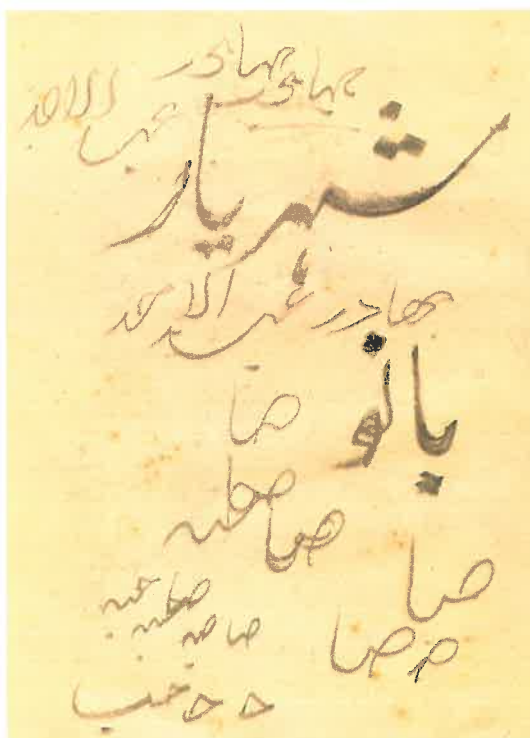


Watercolour by M A Ahed; Undated; Private collection

... The pathos expressed in the wrinkled, grooved faces of these old folk reveals a profound understanding, even empathy, on the part of the artist of the hard, perhaps tragic, experiences of their lives.



1,2,3. Pencil sketches of his wife by M A Ahed; 1977; Private collection



No discourse on M A Ahed's art can be complete without a discussion of the countless thumbnail sketches he did throughout his life of family, friends, acquaintances, even strangers. These quick sketches, whether portrait or figure studies, executed in ink, pencil or charcoal, are often more insightful about the personality of the subject than any finished painting could ever be. A large group of these is devoted to the study of his wife, in the familiar surroundings of their home during the course of the day; she is spontaneously caught in the midst of her domestic activities, often unaware of her husband's penetrating gaze, as when resting or sleeping. For a reticent man with a conventional Muslim upbringing, this was probably the only way that Ahed knew of expressing his love for his lifelong companion. Another sizable group of his sketches, most of which is executed in ball-point pen, was done while watching television during the later years of the artist's life; a large number of erstwhile well-known faces, that have since faded into oblivion, peek momentarily from the past as one browses through the discoloured pages of the artist's sketchbooks.



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2

1. Watercolour by M A Ahed; 1955; Private collection
2. Norham Castle, Sunrise; Joseph Mallord William Turner; 1840-1845; Oil; Tate Gallery, London

During the later part of M A Ahed's life, starting from 1985, there is a noticeable shift towards landscape painting in watercolour; the human figure continues, however, to appear even here, sometimes distantly but often as the focal element of the composition. The landscapes are sometimes real but often imaginary, or a blend of the two; they are typically inhabited by simple folk (usually accompanied by donkeys, horses, goats, camels or cattle), who are engaged in their daily activities, their depiction giving the artist the opportunity to continue his exploration of the human body in varied postures. There is candour in their faces and they carry themselves with dignity and poise; the children reveal an innocence that has remained untainted by the experience of life. Often a profound sense of deep, open space is achieved by the placement of natural elements, such as vegetation, rocks, human or animal figures, in the foreground or middle ground against the background of the distant sky, to create a spatially layered composition. Whether incorporating the vista of a verdant grassy field on a mild summer's day, a rocky promontory on a wet stormy night, or a parched desert landscape at midday, and whether populated or not by people or animals, these serene or violent landscapes touch the chords of one's soul as they reconnect one to nature in all her moods.

With regard to landscape painting, no student at the J J School could escape the tremendous influence of the preeminent English landscapists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, among them Constable⁴⁰ and Turner⁴¹. While Ahed's depiction of rural life within idyllic natural settings is akin to the subject matter of Constable's paintings, the spontaneity of his technique is Turner-esque. Moreover, a young artist of Ahed's sensitivity was bound to be receptive to the profound influence that the French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists had on generations of painters; not surprisingly, Ahed's landscape paintings incorporate the important



Poplars; Claude Monet; 1891; Oil on canvas;
Museum of Art, Philadelphia



Watercolour by M A Ahed; Undated; Private collection

contributions of the French landscapists to the development of their genre. The Impressionist Monet⁴² was the first to paint directly from nature, setting up his canvas outdoors, in order to capture the immediate, often fleeting, "impression" of the experience; this practice also enabled him to study the effects of varying light conditions on colour, as captured in his painting. Degas⁴³ studied the ways in which the static art of painting could convey the dynamism of natural forces, especially the movements of the human body, as explored in his countless paintings of ballerinas. Cezanne⁴⁴ explored the nature in which the two-dimensional surface of the painting could illusionistically express the three-dimensional structure of form and depth of space. Ahed took to heart the lessons that he had learned from the French Masters in the formulation of his own philosophy and style of painting. Occasionally, one also discerns a remarkable similarity to the work of the



1. Watercolour by M A Ahed; 1957; Private collection
 2. *A Distant View Of Haarlem From The North-West*;
 Jacob Ruisdael; 1670's; Oil; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Dutch landscape painter, Ruisdael⁴⁵, notably in those of Ahed's paintings in which the grandeur of the sky dwarfs the human presence on earth.

For a six-month period during the 1990's, M A Ahed experienced a profound sense of imminent death. The paintings that date from this period reveal a deep preoccupation with human mortality, expressed in the form of phantom-like spirits, rendered in gloomy tones of sombre hues, journeying across eerie dreamscapes, to the realm of the beyond. Whether Ahed's own soul was among these traveling phantoms, one shall never know for sure.

Many paintings from 1972 onwards, and especially those that belong to the year 2000, the year before M A Ahed died, are predominantly highly abstracted or non-objective compositions. In contrast to the morbid paintings of a decade earlier, these watercolour paintings are executed with spontaneous, swirling strokes of vibrant colours, exuberantly sprinkled and splashed in a joyous celebration of life. A notable compositional theme of these paintings is the manner in which diagonal elements have been lyrically played off against the orthogonal picture frame, imparting a strong element of dynamism to the composition. Another characteristic is the use of spiraling bursts of colour that radiate out from one or more centres, some being vaguely discernible as exuberant floral still-life or fiery landscape compositions, the abstraction bordering on non-objectivity. The optimism that these works embody perhaps reflects the sense of fulfillment that M A Ahed felt towards the end of his life; his had been a life well-lived in the pursuit and accomplishment of his artistic and architectural objectives. These compositions form a wonderful finalé to his lifelong achievements in the arts.

An interesting aspect of all of M A Ahed's drawings and paintings is the complete absence of any label or title; only a date and his signature identify each work. Reticent by nature, he appears to have been wary of words, relying on graphic and musical means, instead, to communicate with others. Of course, his works need no words, so potently and completely do they express the intentions of the artist.



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2



3

M A Ahed with Dr Ahmed Mirza Jamil
1. and artist Ismail Gulgee
2. and artist Ali Imam
3. at the National Gallery, London

During the pre-television days of the 1950's and 1960's, Karachi enjoyed a lively café culture, the most notable venues in the city being Café George and Café Rex; here artists, performers and writers would gather for hours of discussion on the controversial issues of the day. M A Ahed was a regular visitor to Café Rex, where he spent his evening hours after work; sometimes he would talk but more frequently, being a man of few words like Mies, he would sketch his acquaintances and friends:

Private faces in public places
Are wiser and nicer
Than public faces
In private places. (Wystan Hugh Auden)

Architects such as Naqvi⁴⁶ and Siddiqui⁴⁷, as well as artists Gulgee⁴⁸ and Nagi⁴⁹, were great admirers of Ahed's live sketches.

M A Ahed's typical day would end with several hours of reading and, being an avid reader, he enjoyed reading a wide variety of books; his interests encompassed art history, philosophy, poetry, science fiction, detective novels, as well as comic and illustration books, among other subjects. A virtuoso with the harmonium, Ahed's Saturday nights were religiously devoted to Classical music *mehfils* at friends' homes, at which he played the harmonium till the wee hours of the morning with some of the greatest *ustads* (masters) of the day. He had a profound understanding and appreciation of the subtleties of Indian classical music, as well as of Urdu and Persian poetry; his thirst for learning knew few boundaries. His son, Ejaz, recounts that when father and son had heated arguments over the management of the practice, the elder Ahed would retire to his studio to play the harmonium until the early hours of the morning; he would emerge completely refreshed in the morning. A reserved man, M A Ahed has confessed: "I am an introvert. I live and work for myself, by myself ..."⁵⁰; he found superficial conversation to be tiresome and much preferred either the company of his very few trusted friends or, ideally, solitude. Barragan has stated: "art is made by the alone for the alone". For M A Ahed, creativity, not human relationships, was the primary means of self-expression, a means by which he understood the world around himself, both in terms of its external manifestations and in terms of its internal order.

... Abdul Ahed
experienced a profound
sense of imminent death ...
a deep preoccupation
with human mortality,
expressed in the form of
phantom-like spirits, ...
journeying across eerie
dreamscapes, ... to the
realm of the beyond.

Watercolour by M A Ahed; Undated; Private collection





With his granddaughter, 1987



M A Ahed with his family, 2000

The Late Years

The birth of a daughter, Farah, to Tayyeba and Ejaz, in 1985 brought about a profound change in M A Ahed's life. He had been an aloof father to his sons, trying his best to fulfill the conventional "paternal responsibilities" that were expected of him by his family and society. But now, relieved of that burden, he could express with abandon his great affection for his grandchild; he adored his granddaughter unabashedly, visiting every day to play with her. Not surprisingly, this new-found joy in his life also changed his attitude towards other people, and towards life in general: he became less reclusive and more receptive to the company of others and to the enjoyment of life. It seemed that the grandchild had penetrated the hardened core deep within him that no one else had ever managed to reach, and had unlocked a part of him that perhaps he himself did not know he possessed; Farah had changed her grandfather forever.

With boundless self-confidence and sheer determination, together with immense natural creative talent, M A Ahed heroically overcame the tremendous hardships of his physical disability, which would have daunted and discouraged others, to become one of the great pioneering architects and painters of Pakistan. Ahed's numerous buildings in the major cities of Pakistan and Bangladesh and his paintings, both at the National Gallery in Islamabad and in countless private collections around the world, are major artistic contributions to the cultural heritage of Pakistan. His diverse and profound interest, knowledge and creative ability in the fine arts, architecture, music, literature, philosophy and languages, is in the tradition of the Indian literary giant, Khusro⁵¹. His enormous accomplishments, anchored in a deeply spiritual morality and a self-effacing humility, bear witness to the *Renaissance* man that Muhammad Abdul Ahed truly was. ■



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2

1,2. Quick ink sketches of his granddaughter by M A Ahed; 1999-2001; Private collection

“Let not the burden of time ever
burden you.”

plates

The photographic reproductions that are presented here have been selected as representative pieces from a vast body of the artist's work. They have been collected from a variety of available sources; a large number of oil paintings have, unfortunately, been lost. The art pieces have been edited with caution and discretion, with the intention of preserving the vintage quality of the work as it has survived over the decades.

The plates that follow have been categorised into three sections: *ahed at school*, *ahed as architect* and *ahed with himself*. Within each section, the plates have been arranged iconographically rather than chronologically, in order to enable a more comprehensive appreciation of the artist's work.

“Before I could write, I could draw.”



ahed at school



Plate 001



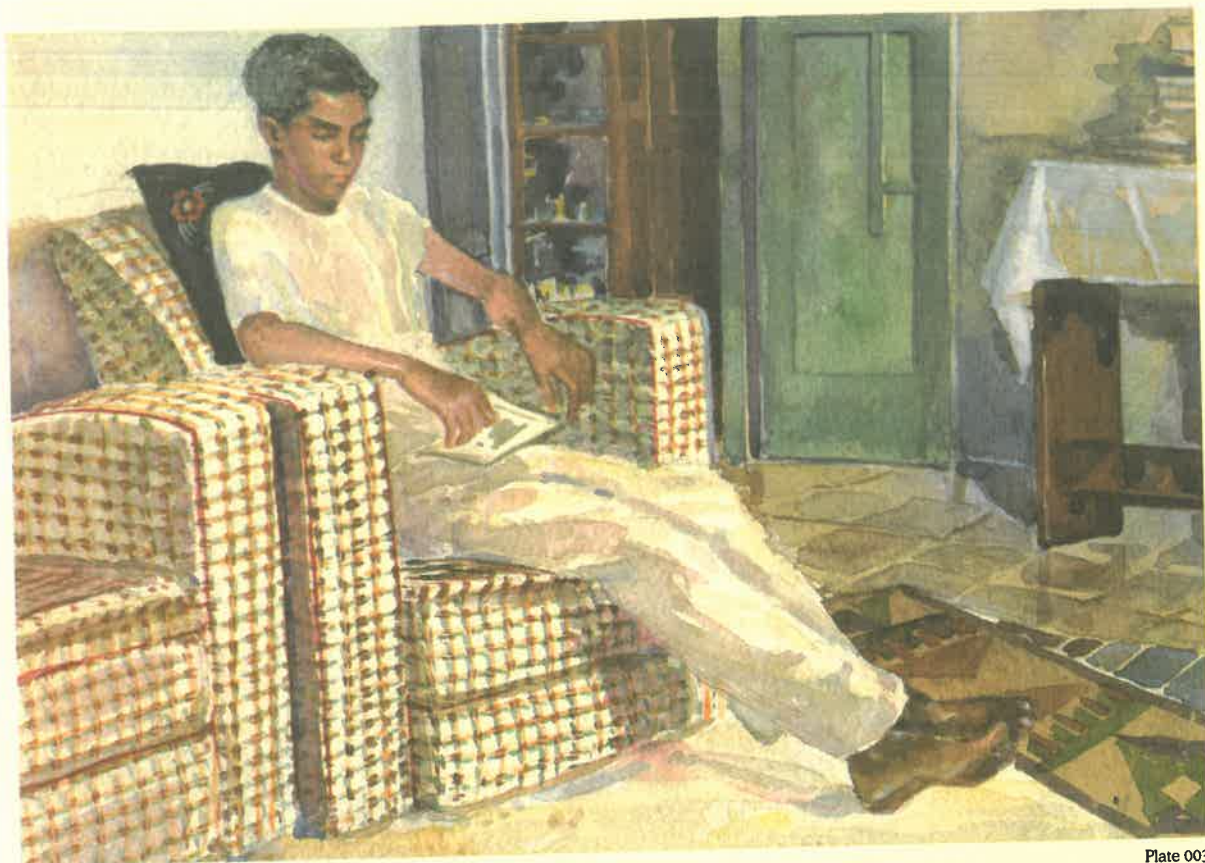


Plate 003



Plate 004



Plate 005



Plate 006





Plate 008



Plate 009



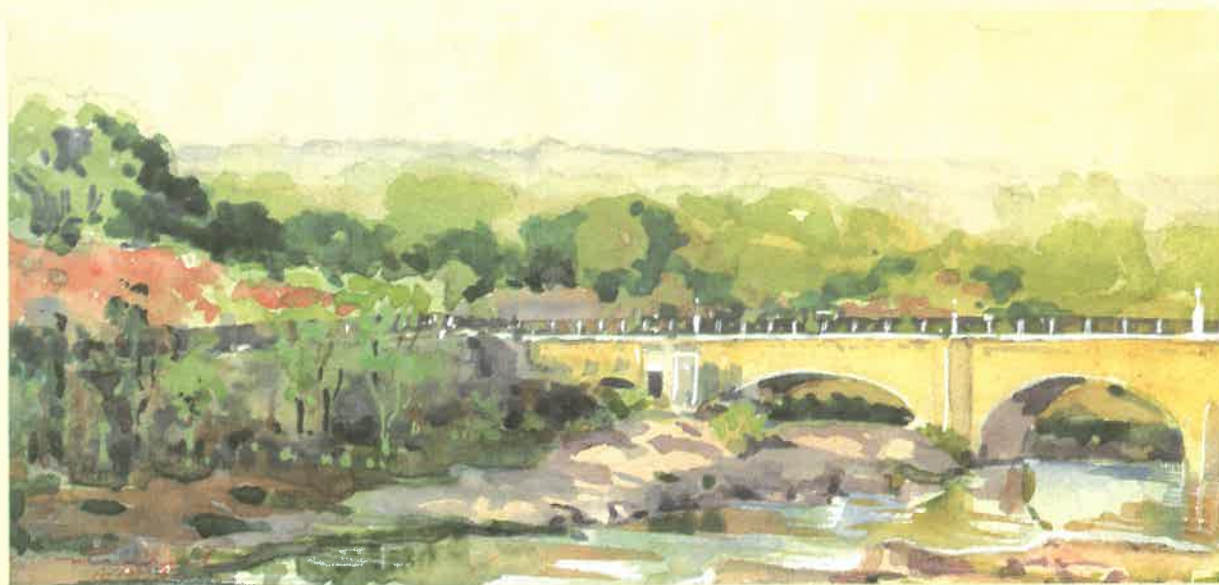


Plate 011

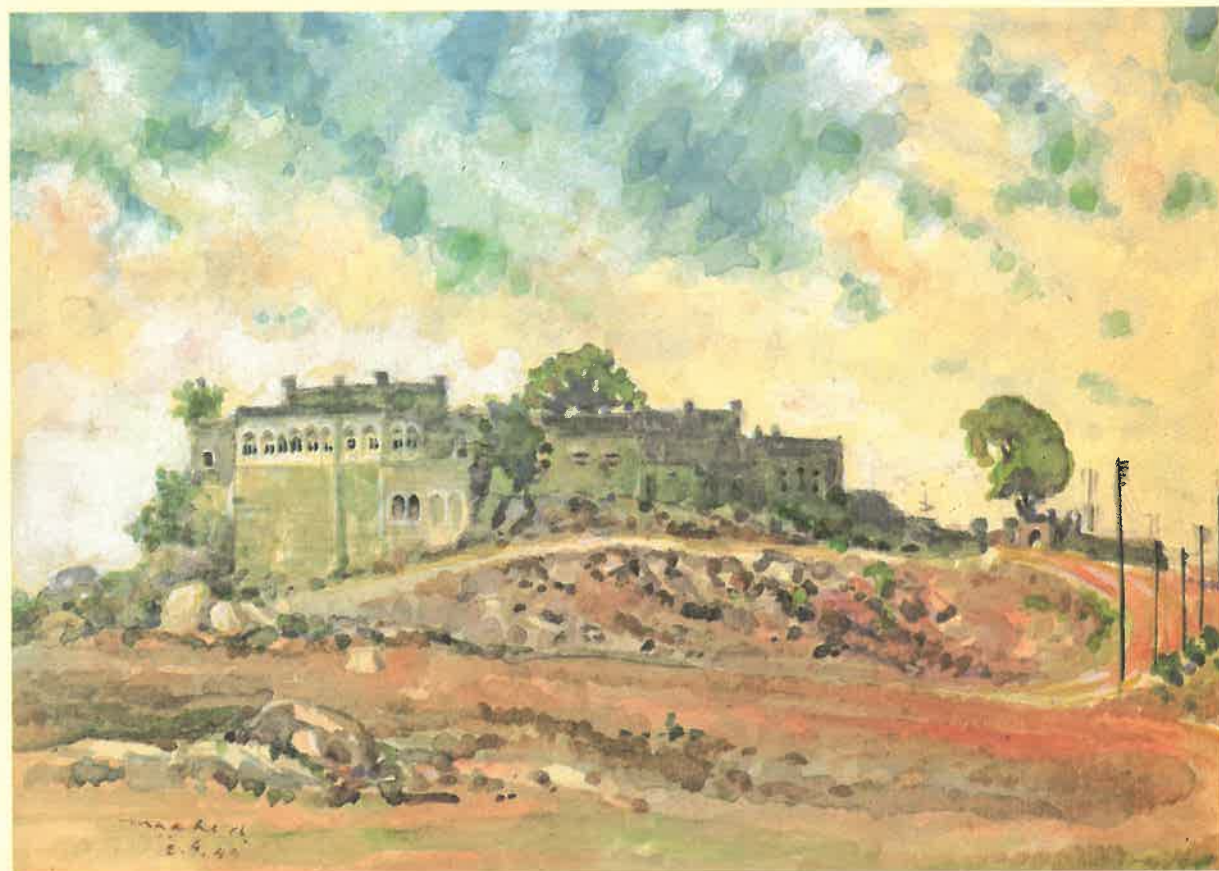


Plate 012



Plate 013



Plate 014



Plate 015



Plate 016



Plate 017



Plate 018



Plate 019



Plate 020



Plate 021



Plate 023



Plate 022

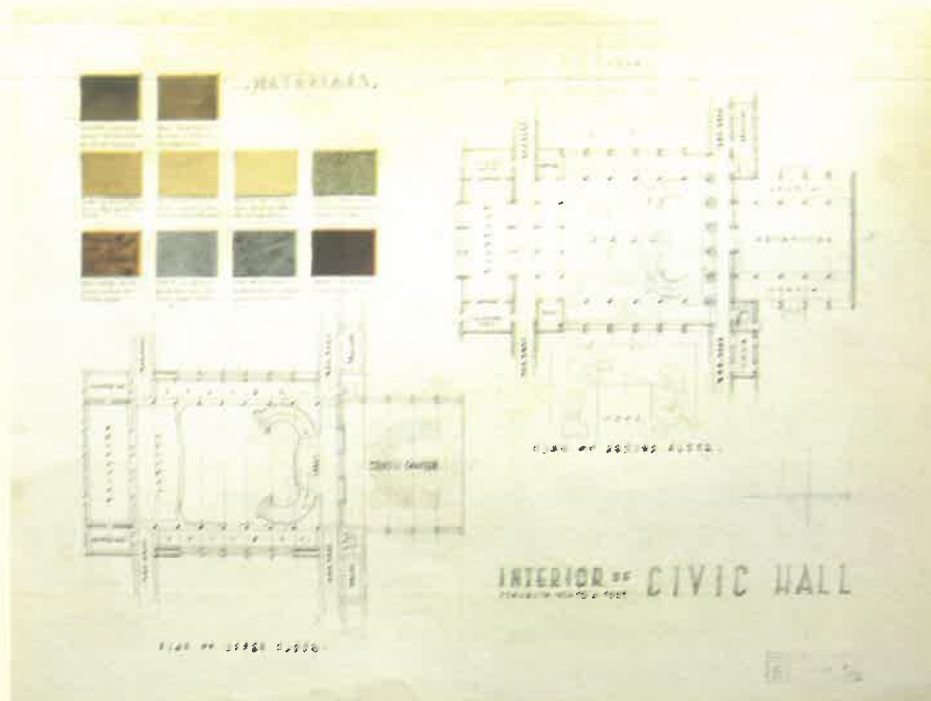


Plate 024



Plate 025



Plate 027



Plate 028

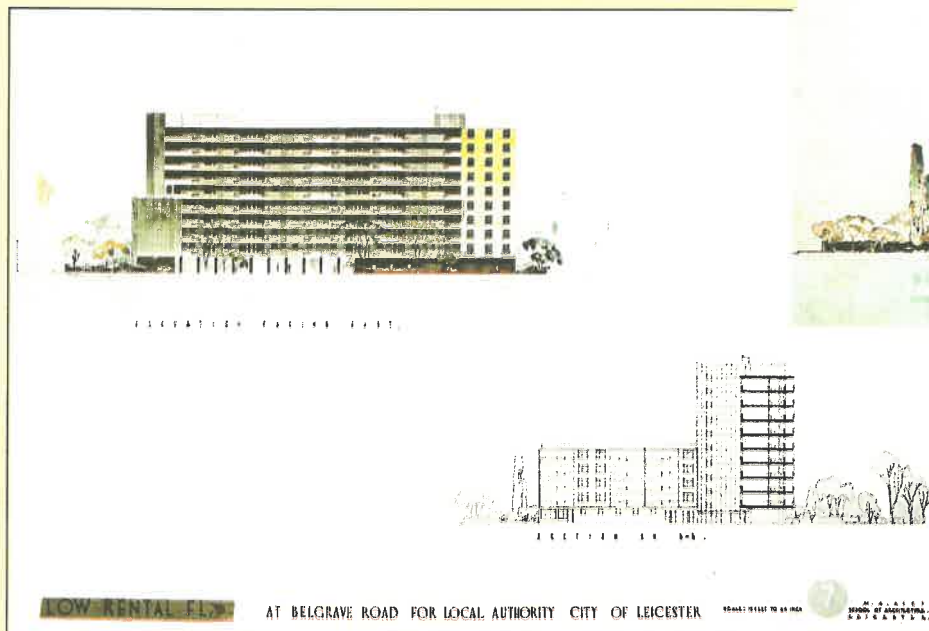


Plate 026



Plate 029

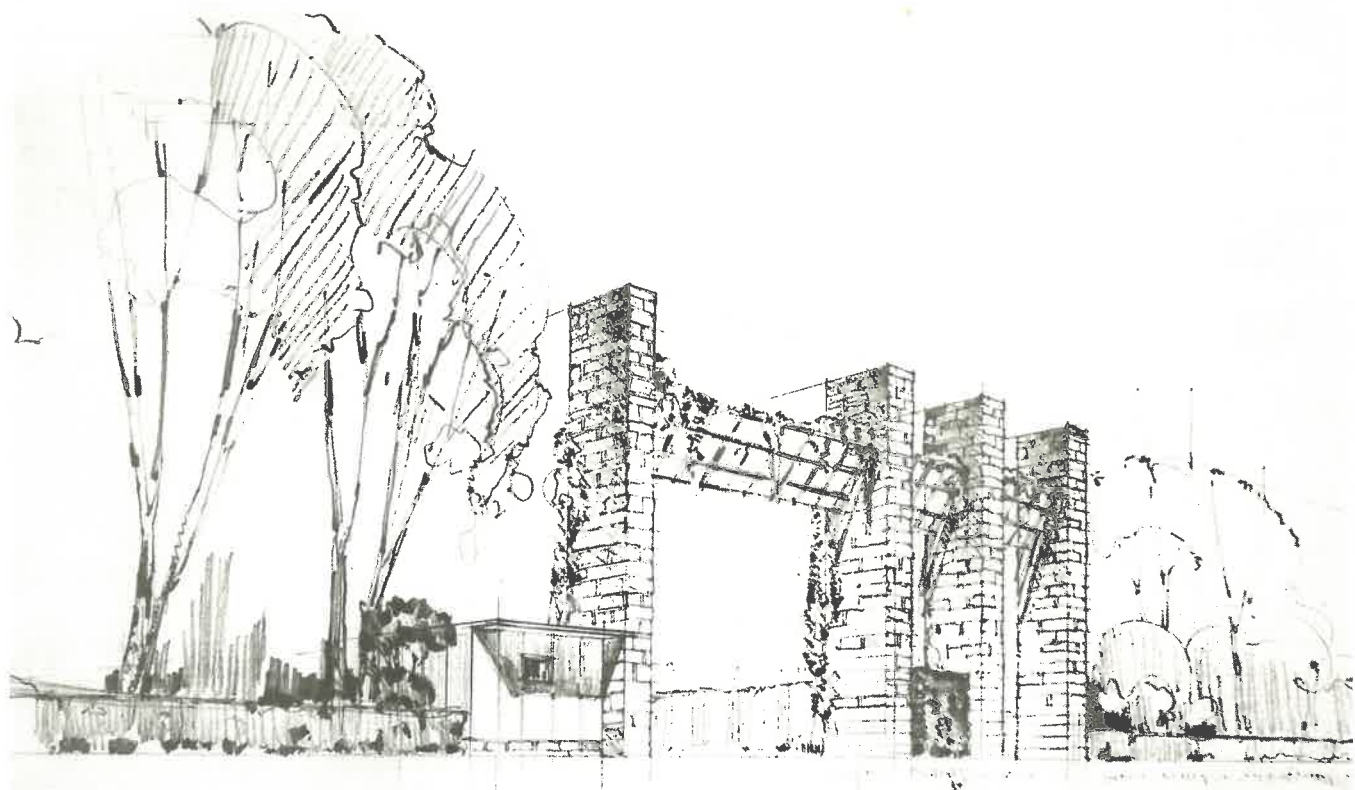


Plate 030



VIEW ON WEST.

Plate 031

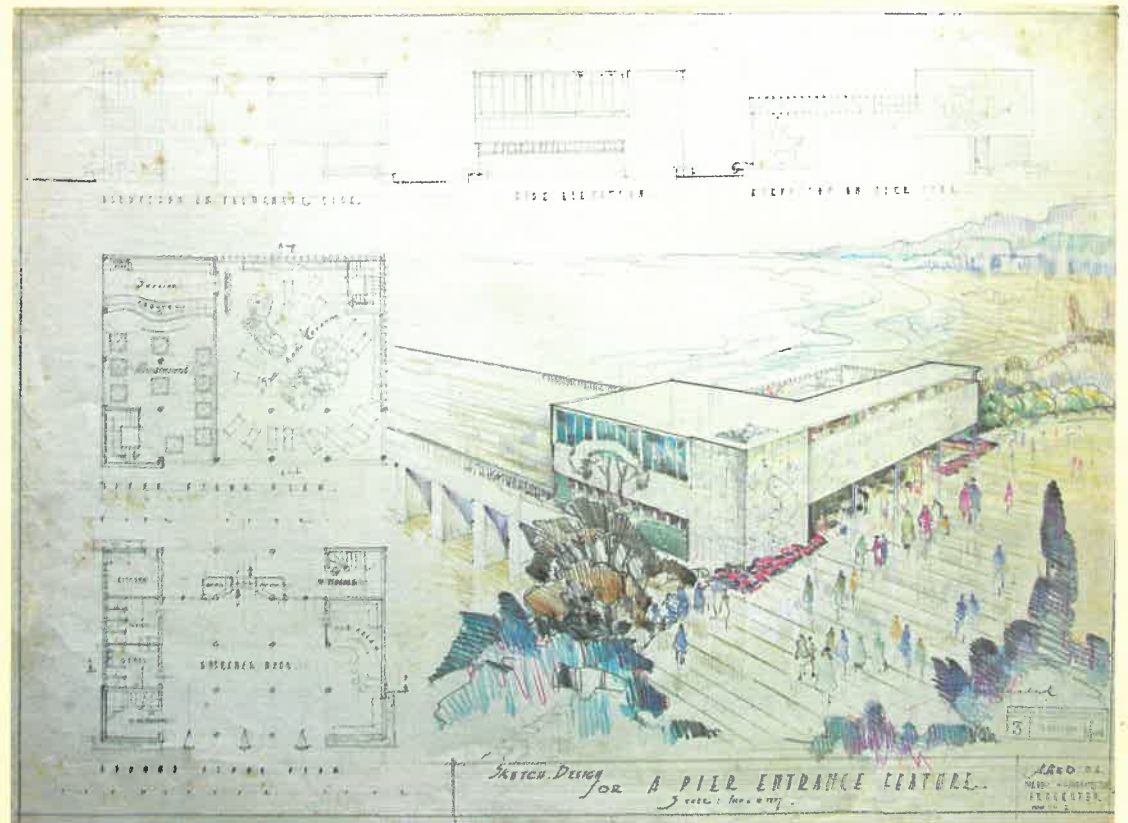


Plate 032



Plate 033

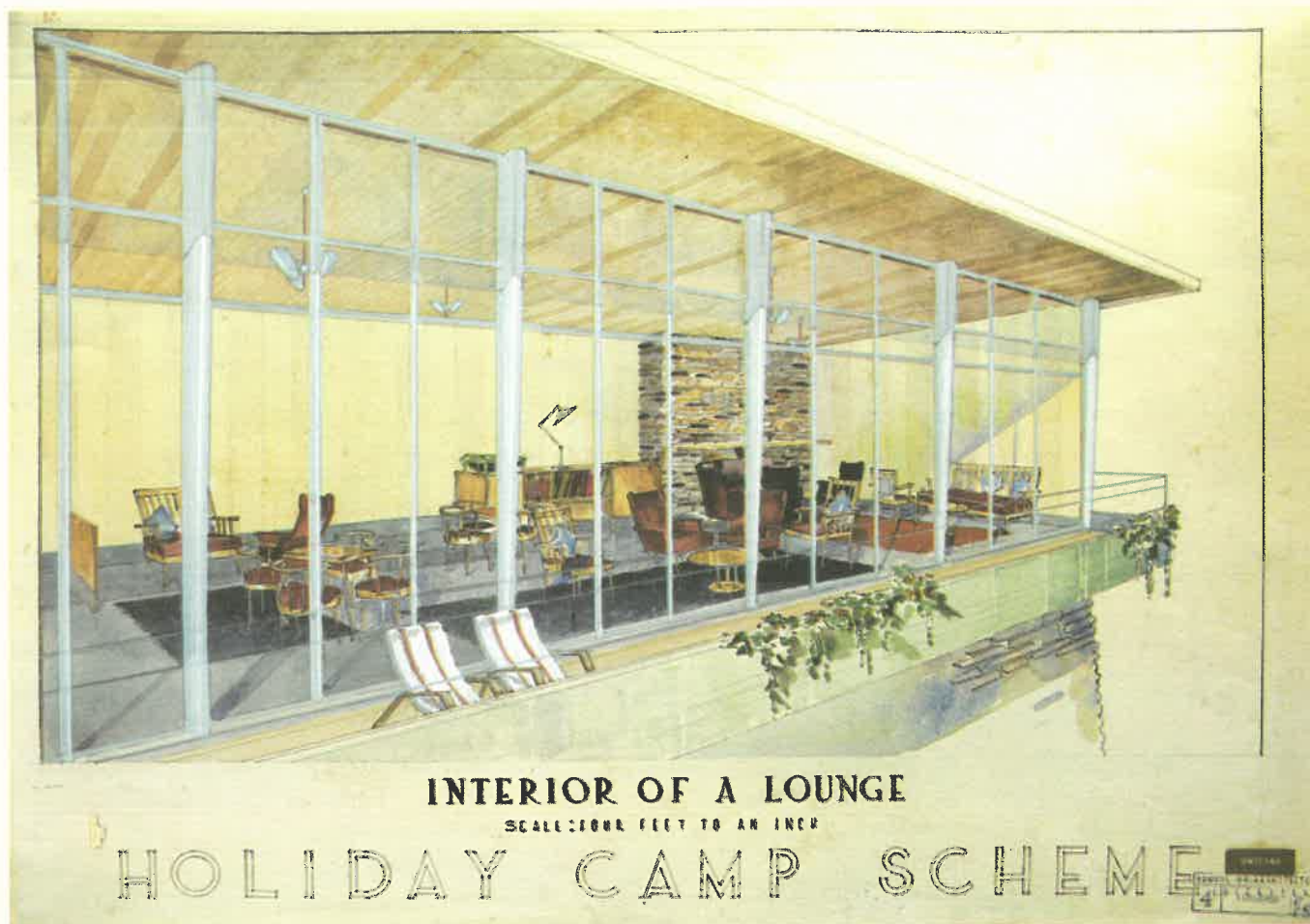


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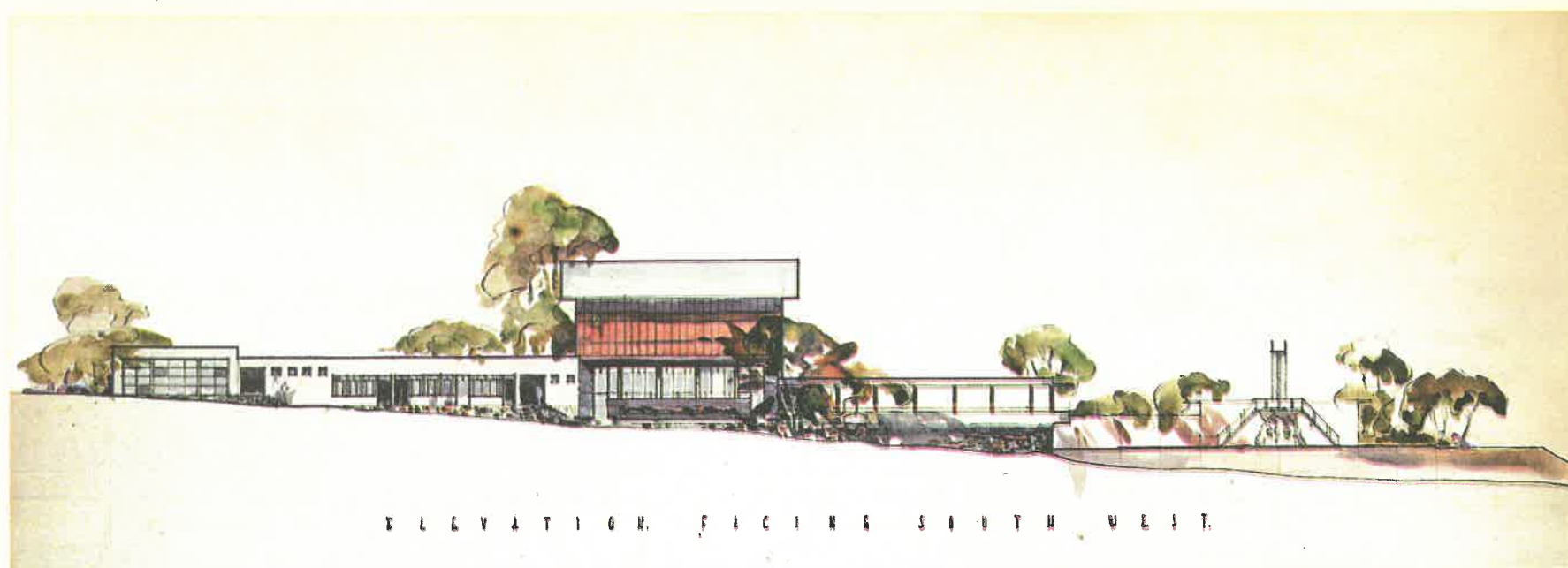


Plate 035





Plate 037



Plate 038



Plate 039

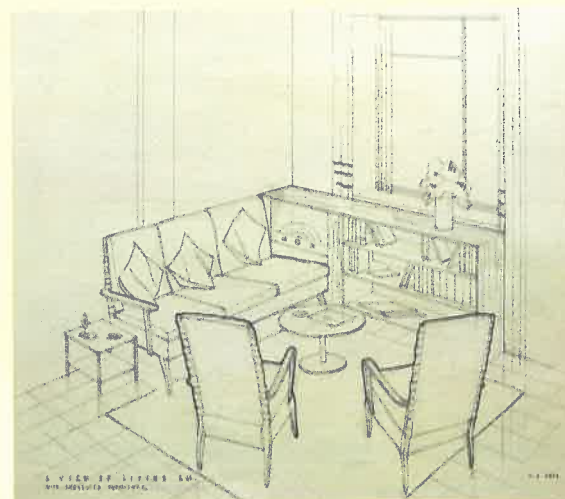
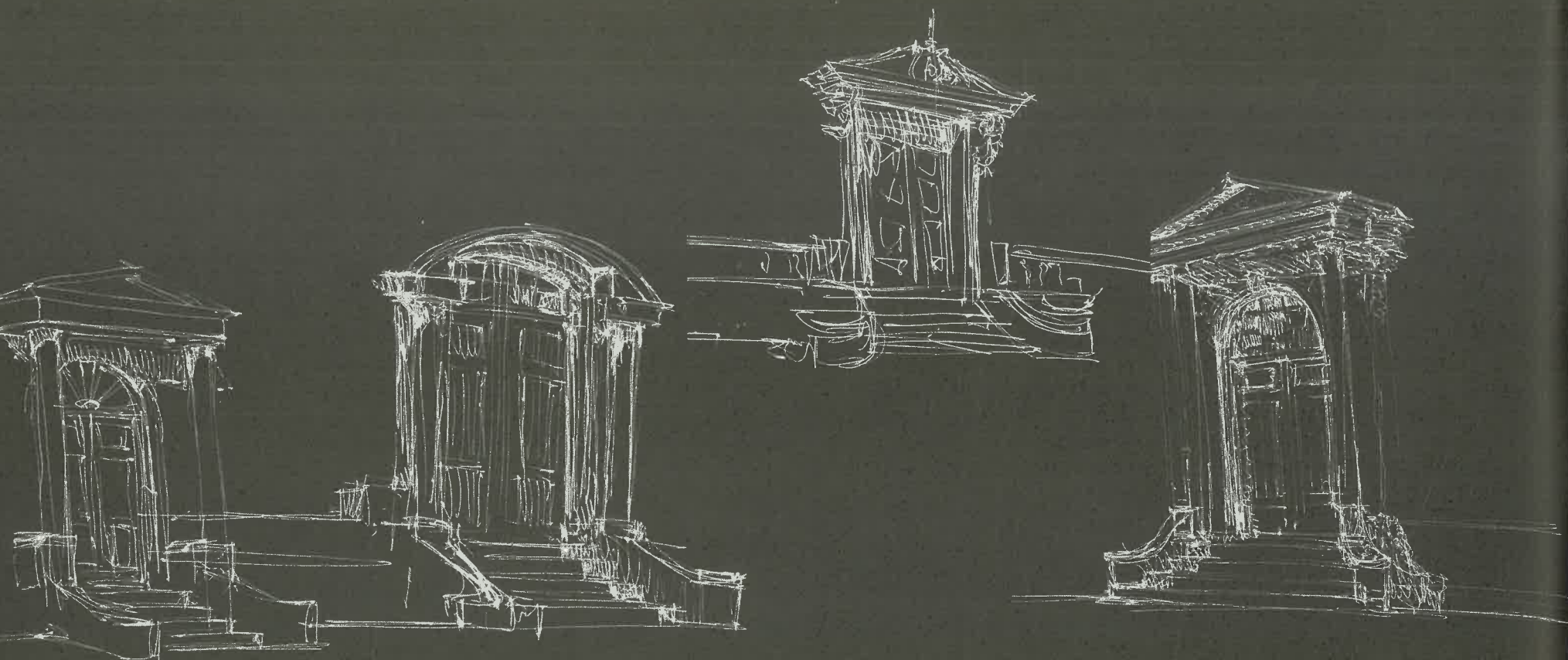


Plate 040

“... a building is more than just a form...
A building... must fulfill its purpose. If it
does not work, then it is like sculpture,
not really architecture.”

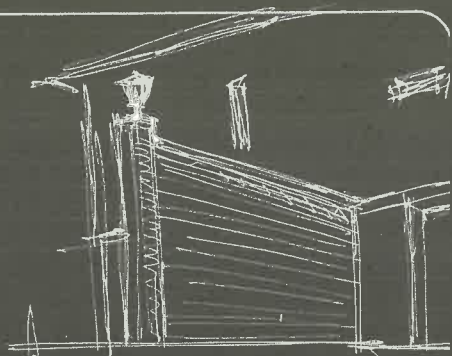


ahed as architect



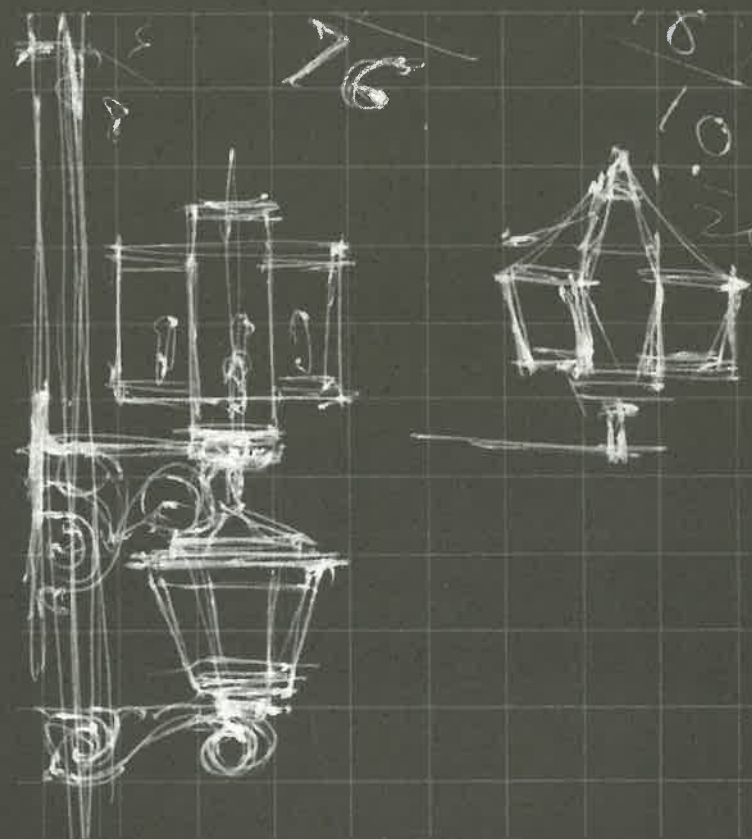
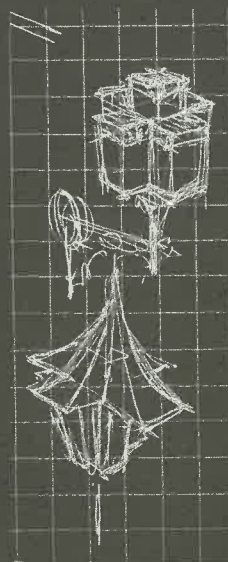
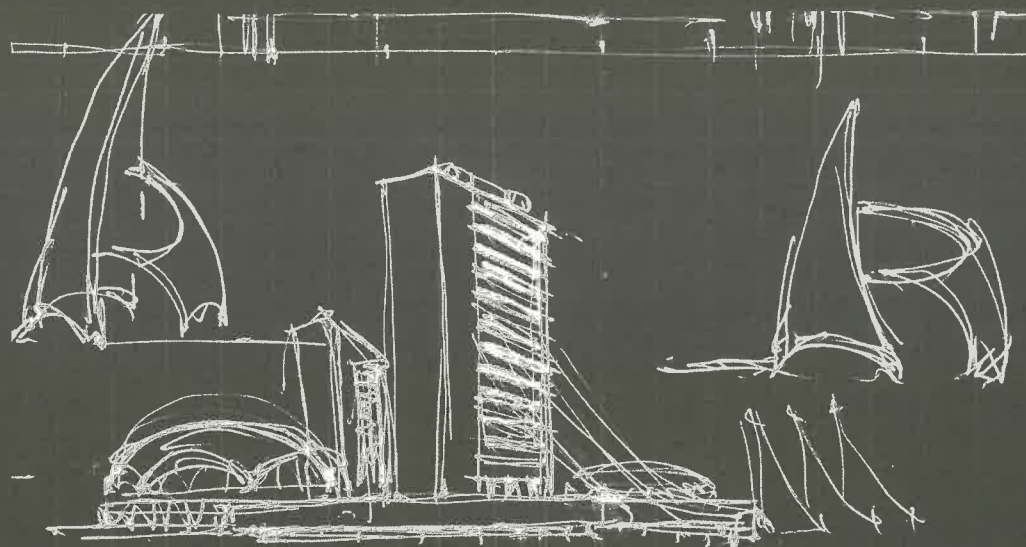
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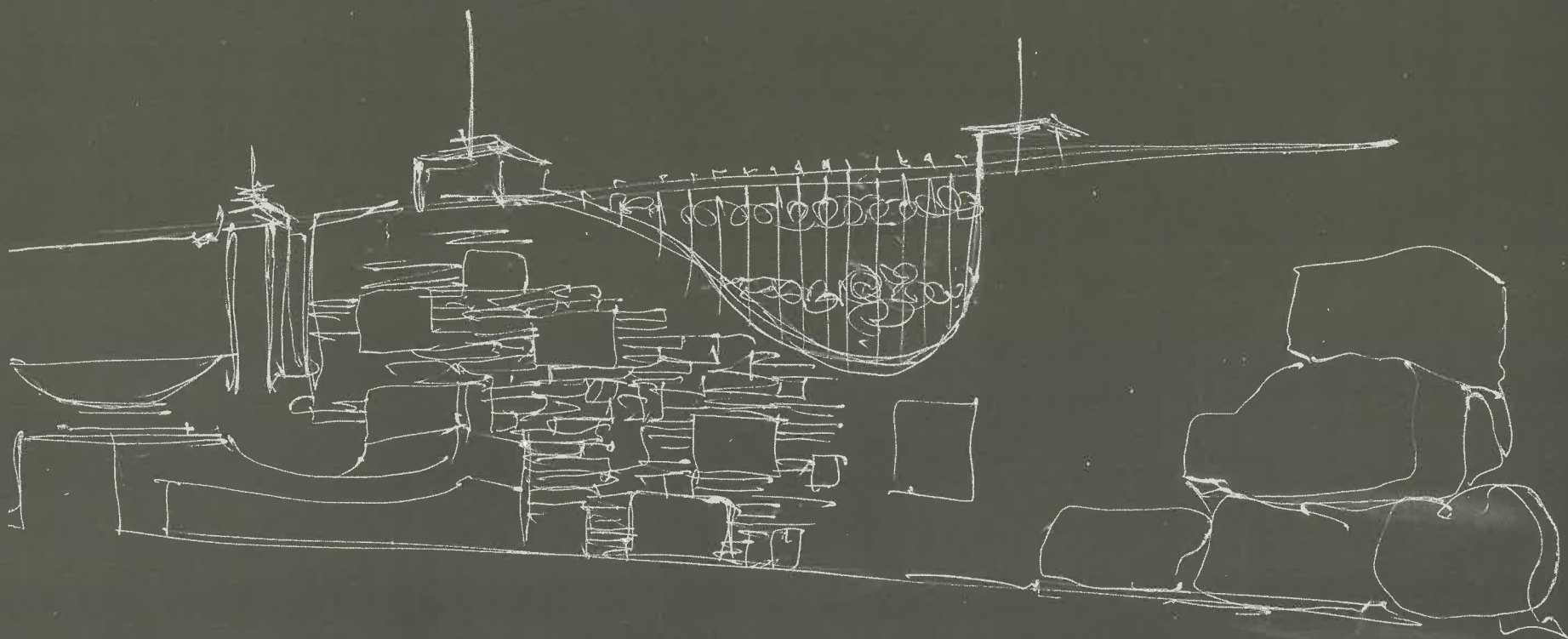
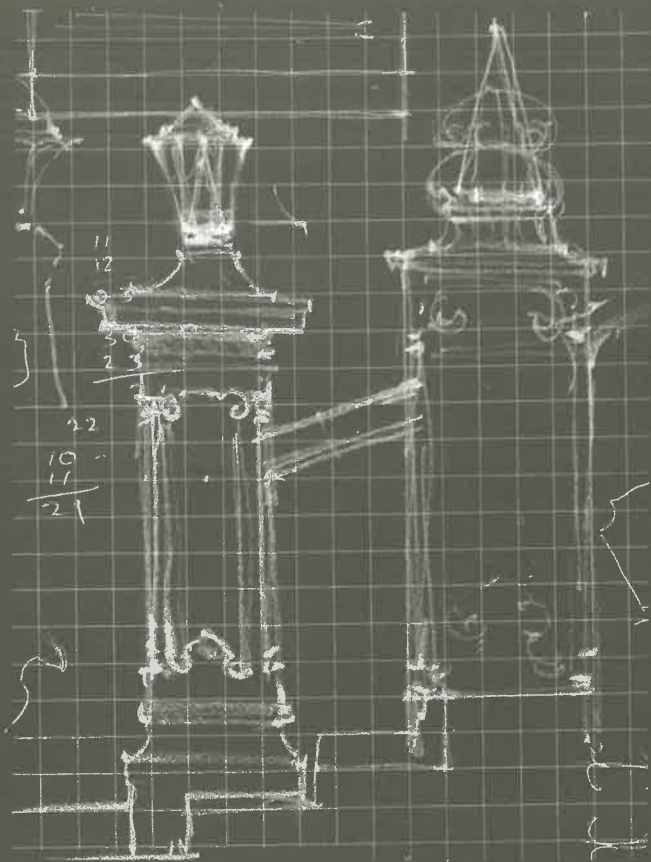
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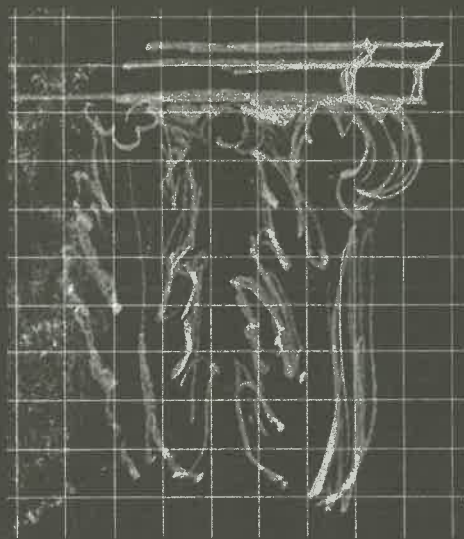
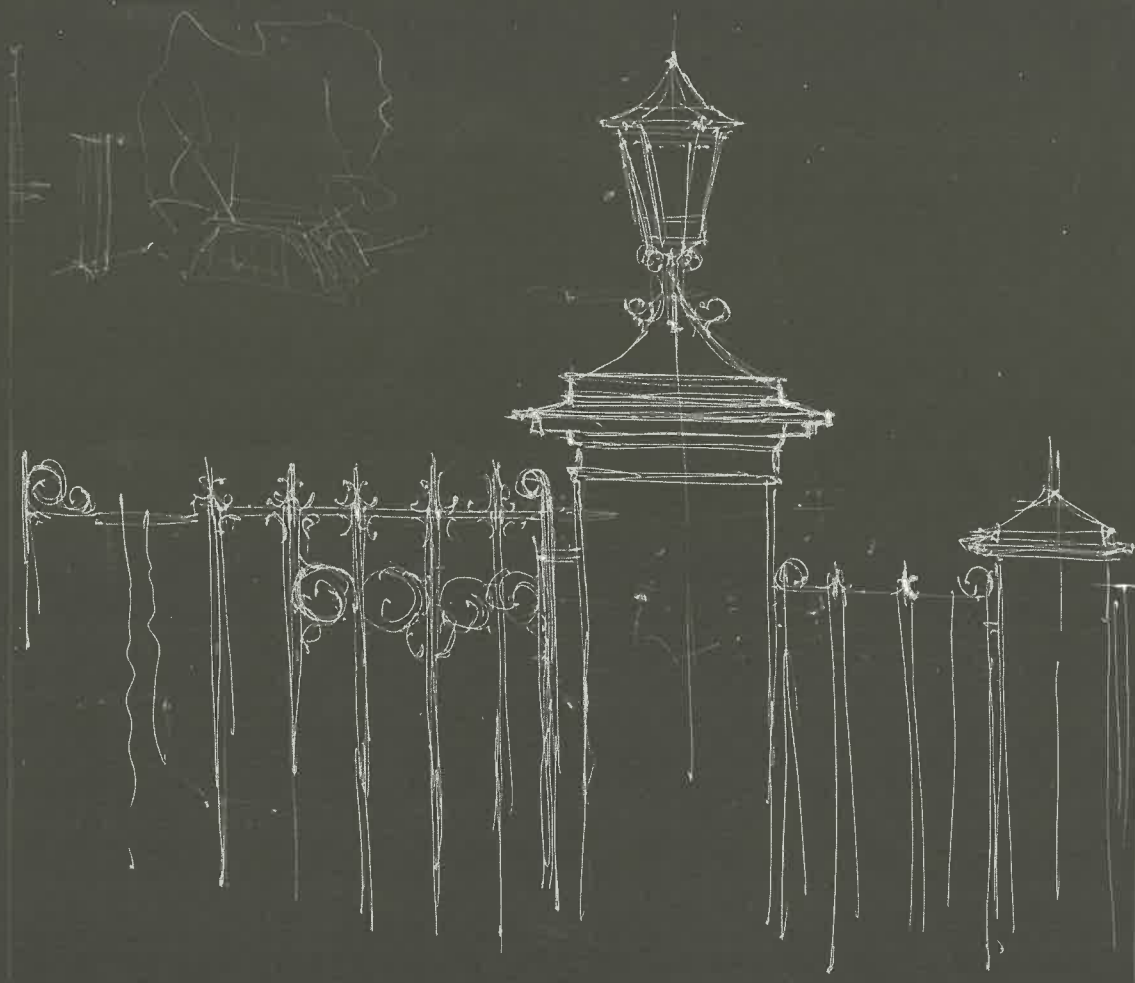
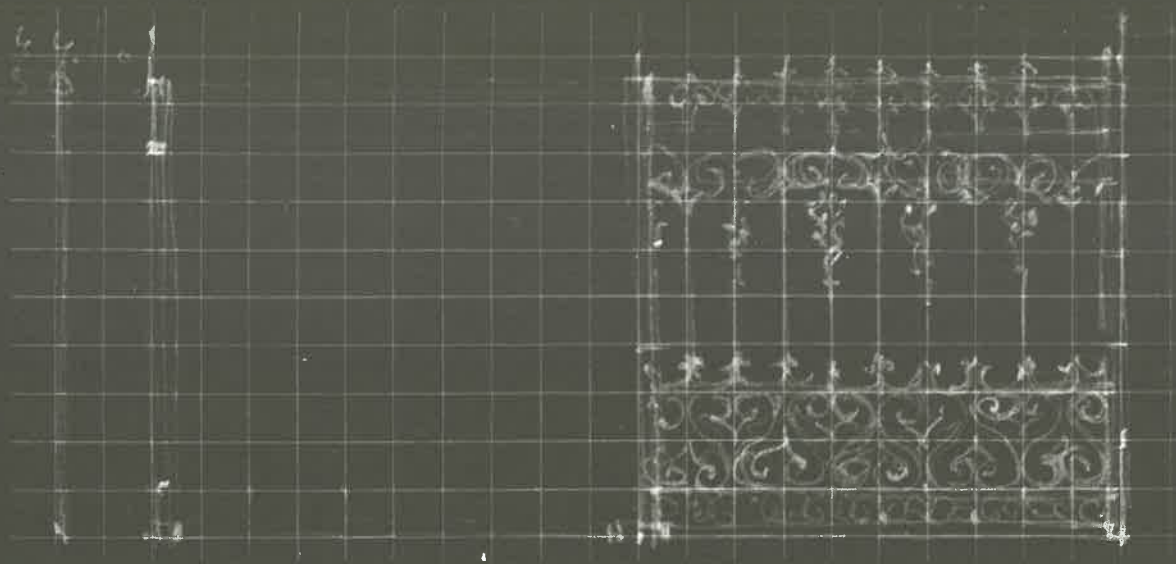


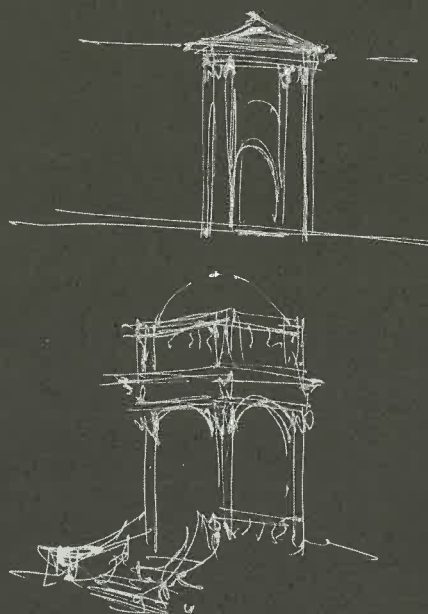
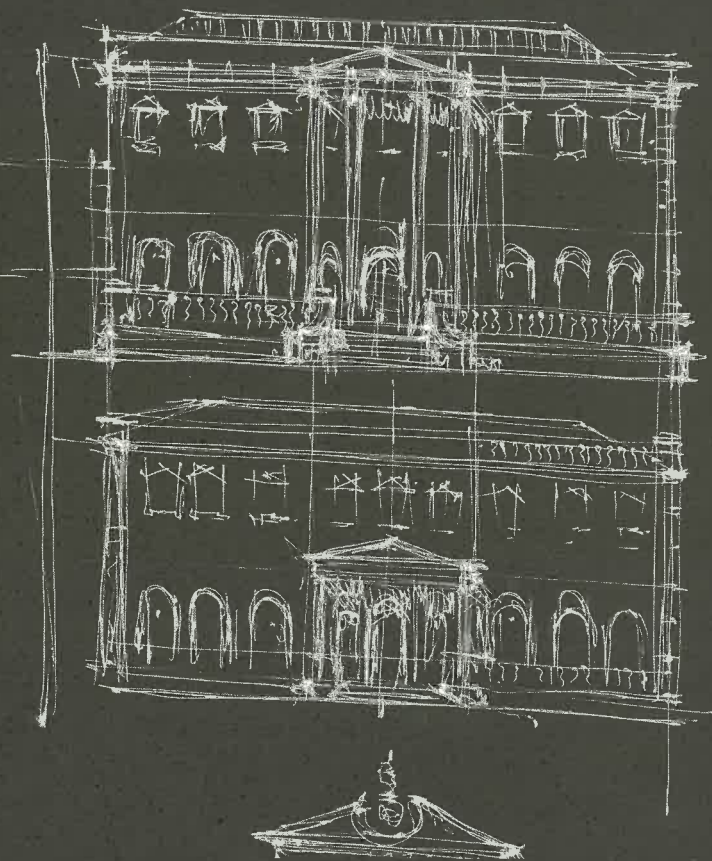
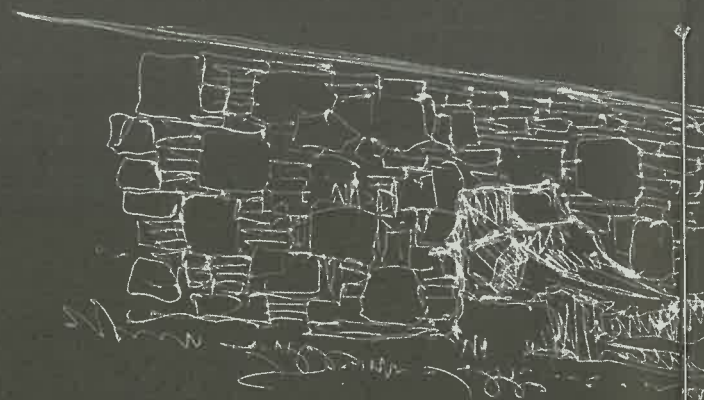
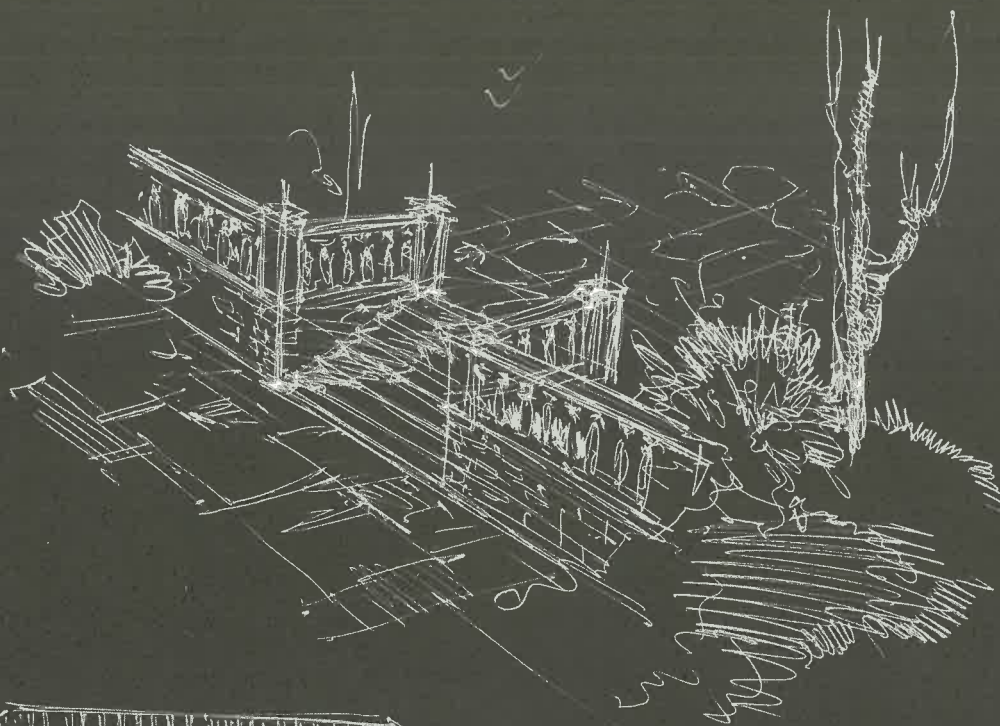
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SUNDAY









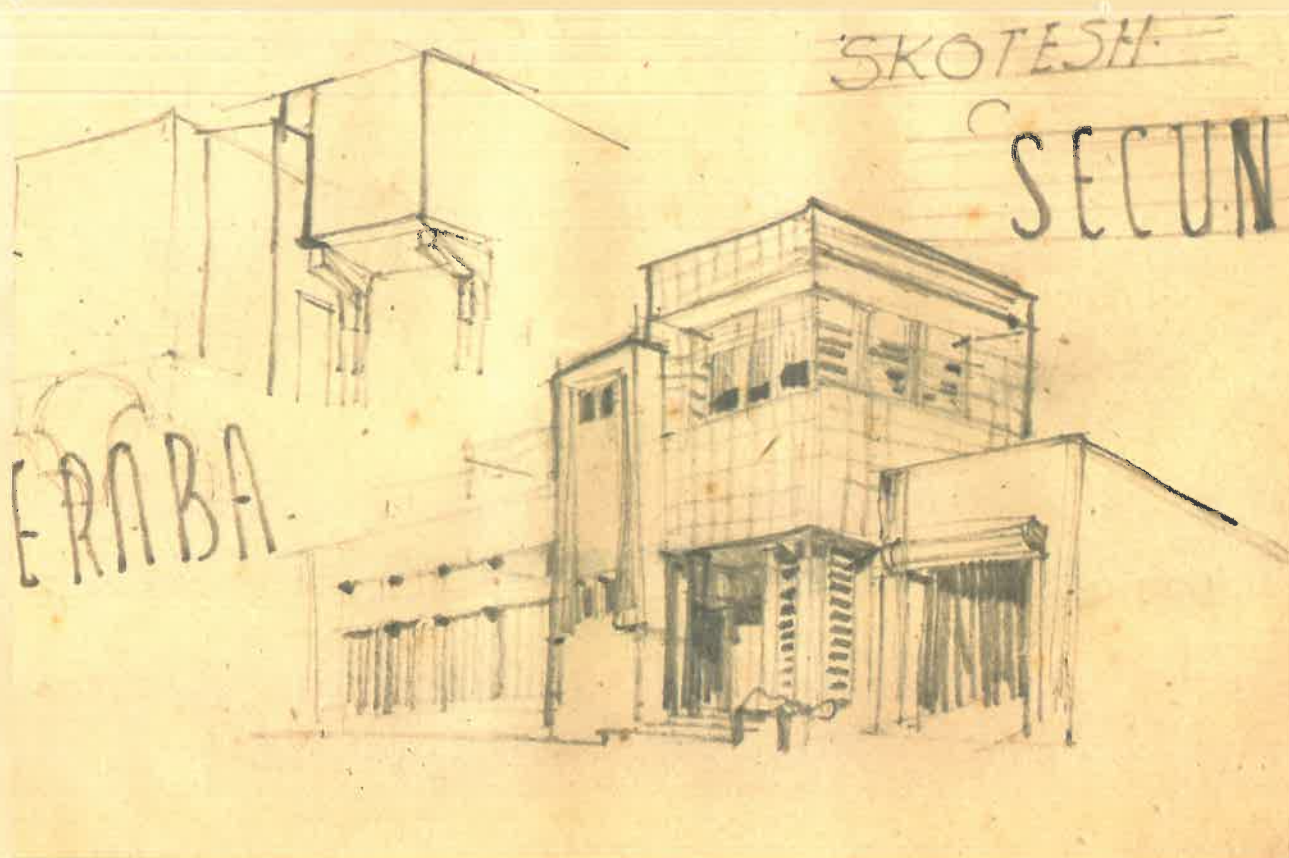


Plate 044



Plate 045

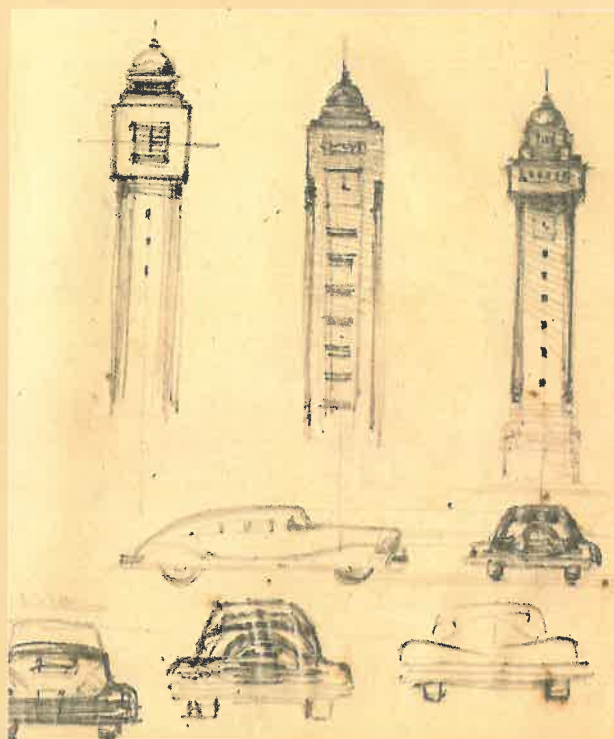


Plate 046



Plate 047

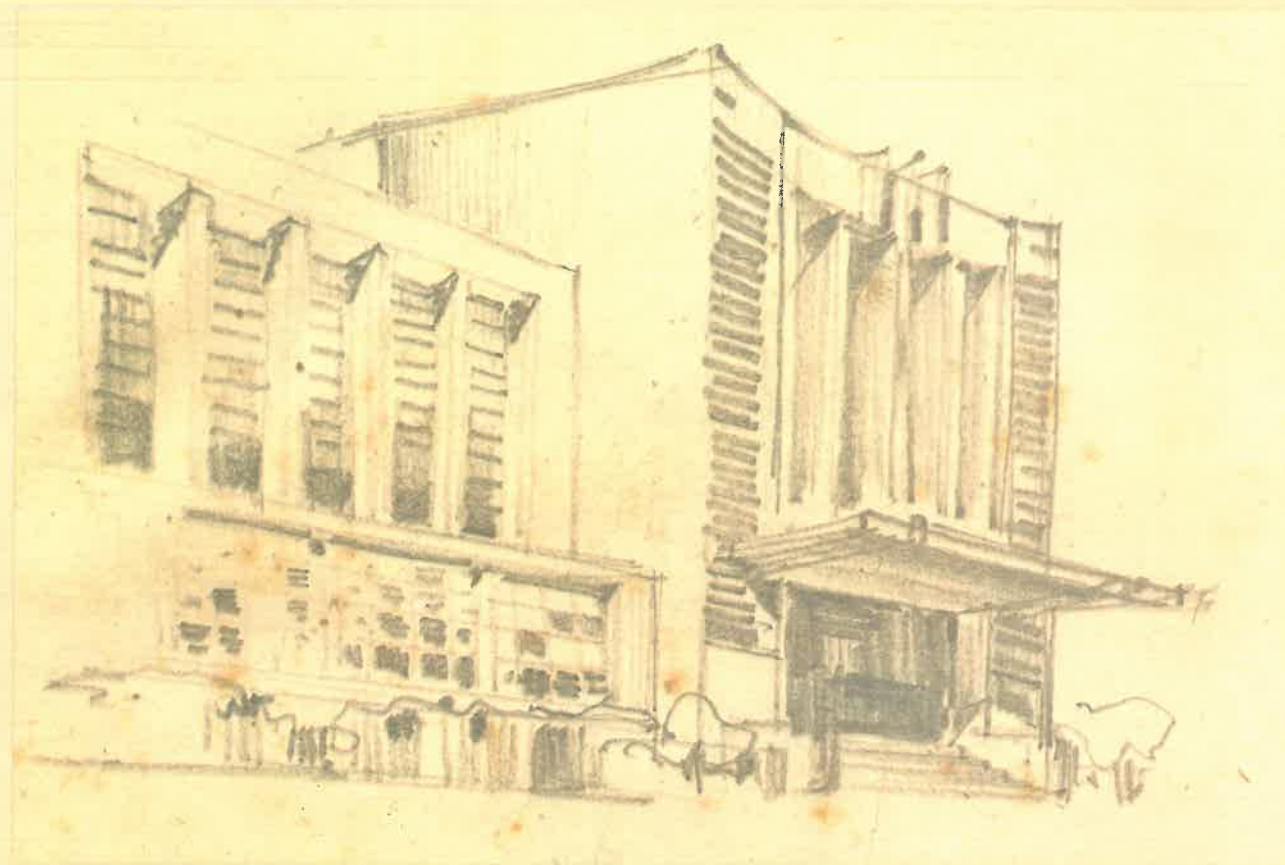


Plate 049



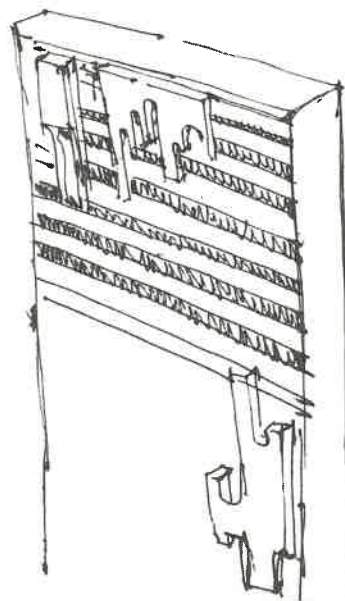
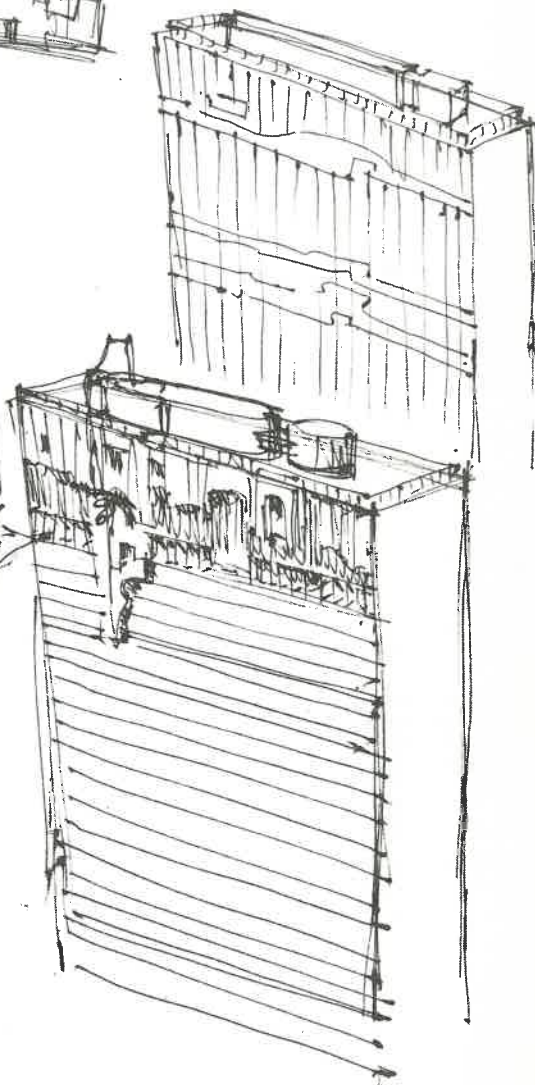
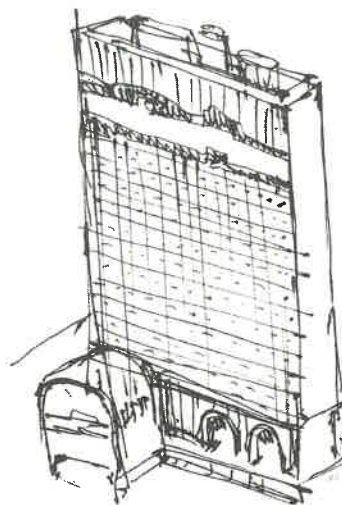
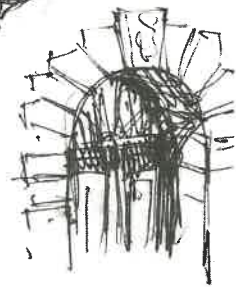
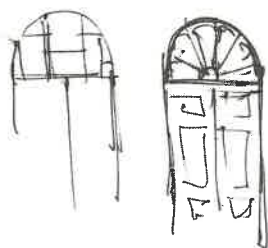
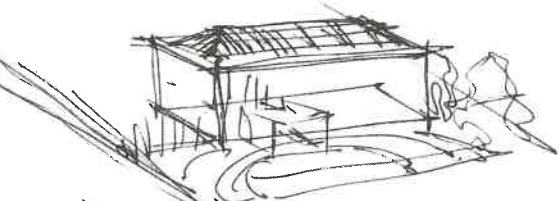
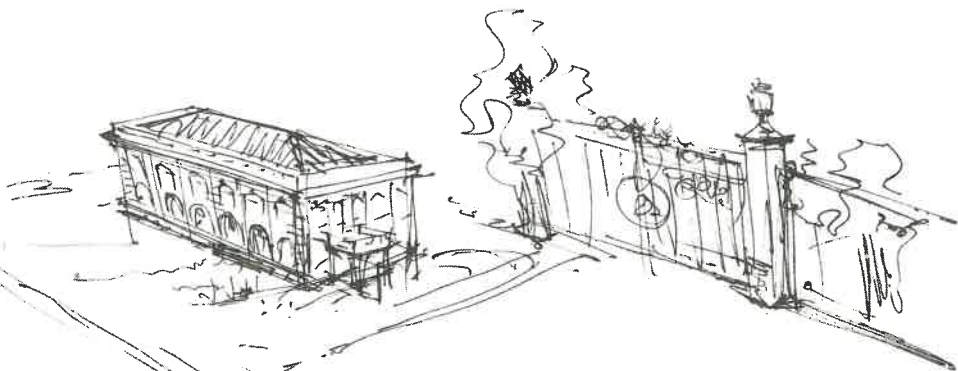
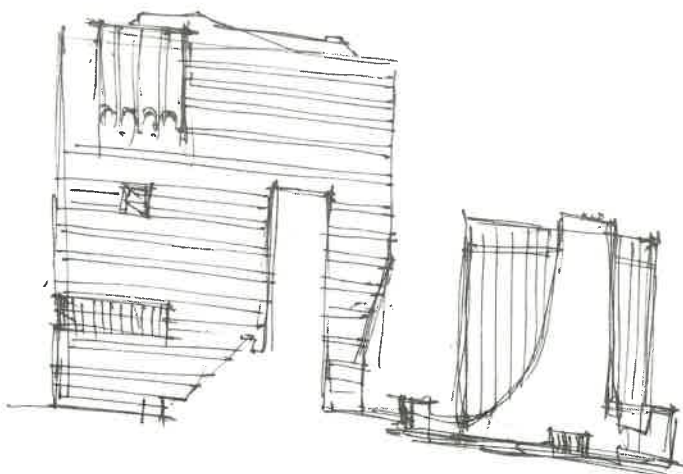
Plate 048

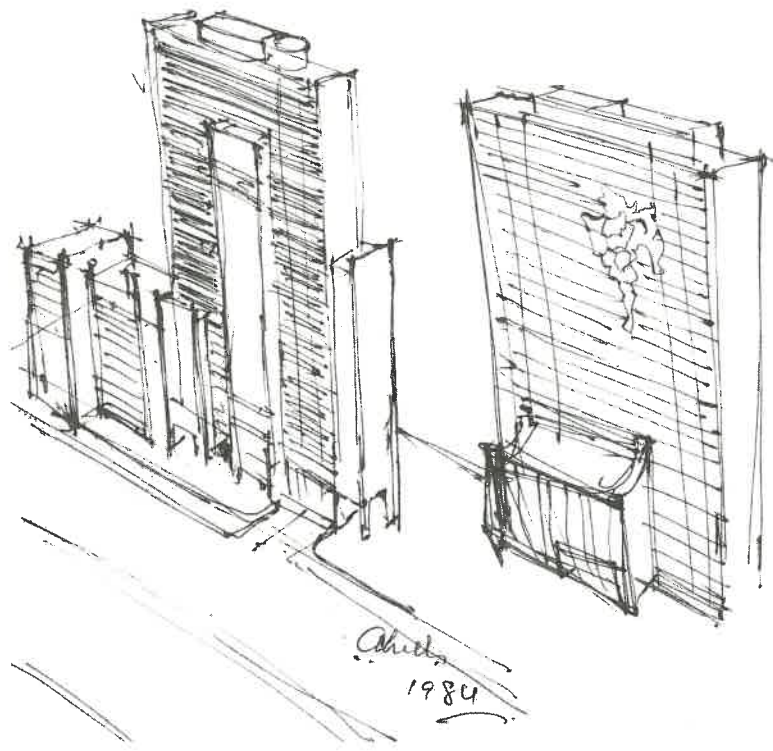
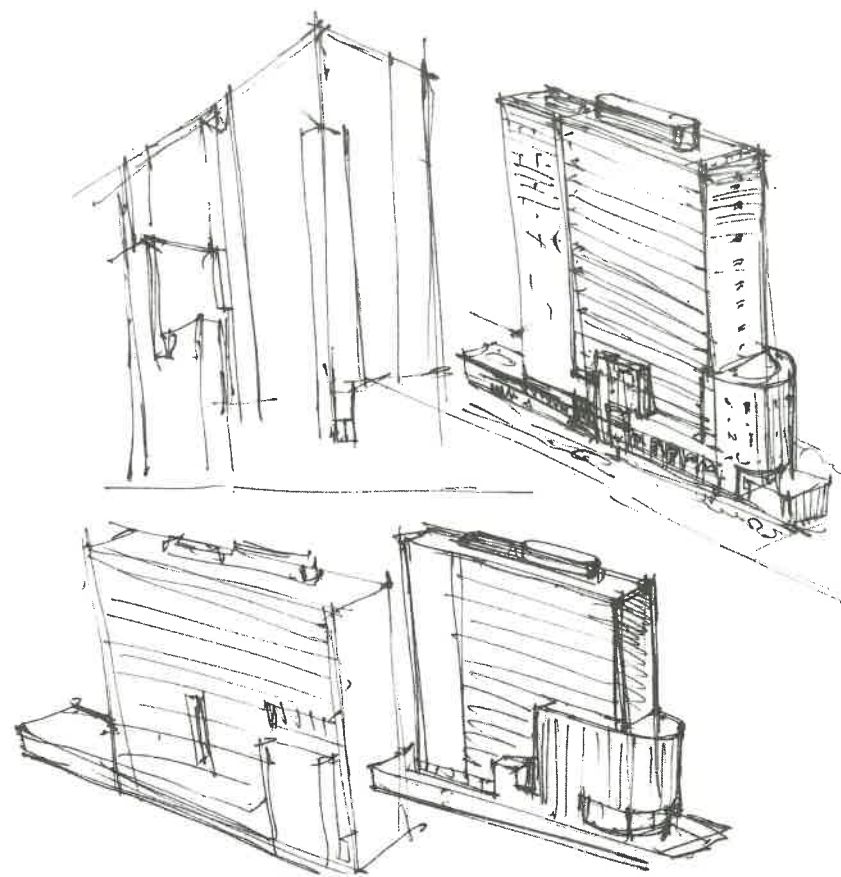
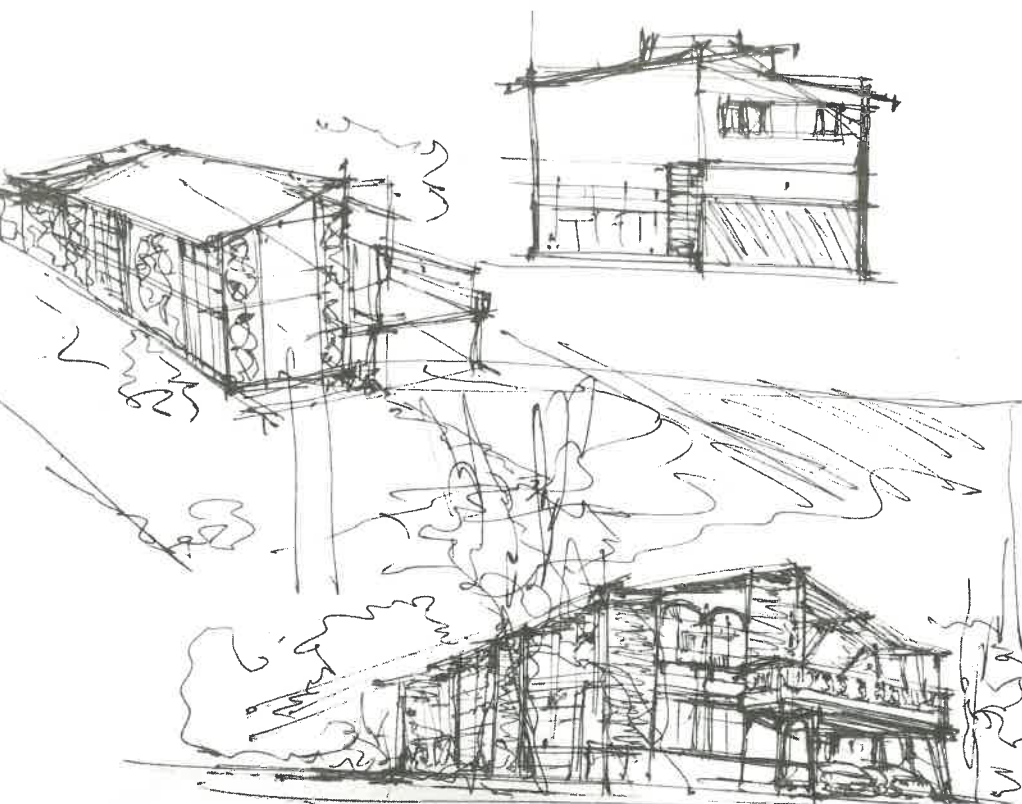


Plate 050

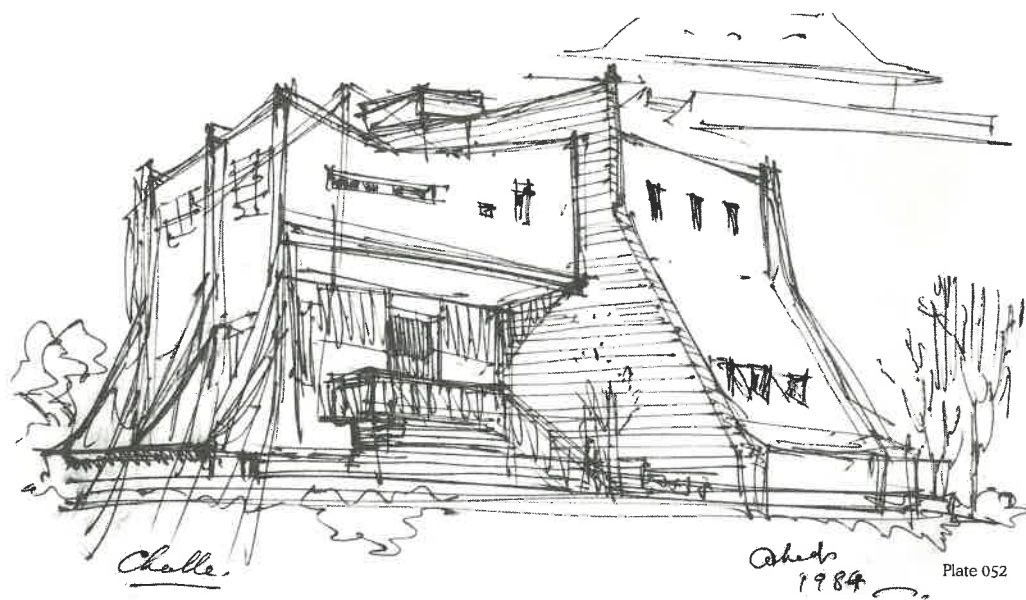


Plate 051





Chelle
1984



Chelle

Chelle
1984

Plate 052

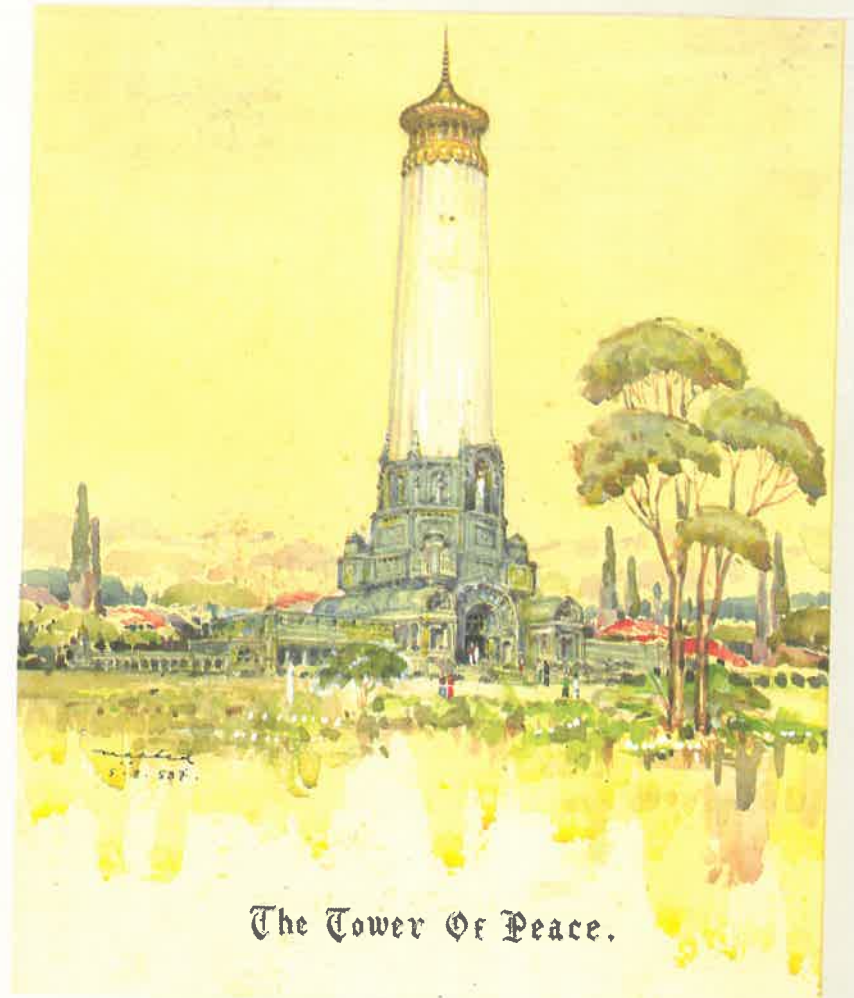


Plate 054



Plate 053



Plate 055

Proposed architectural projects

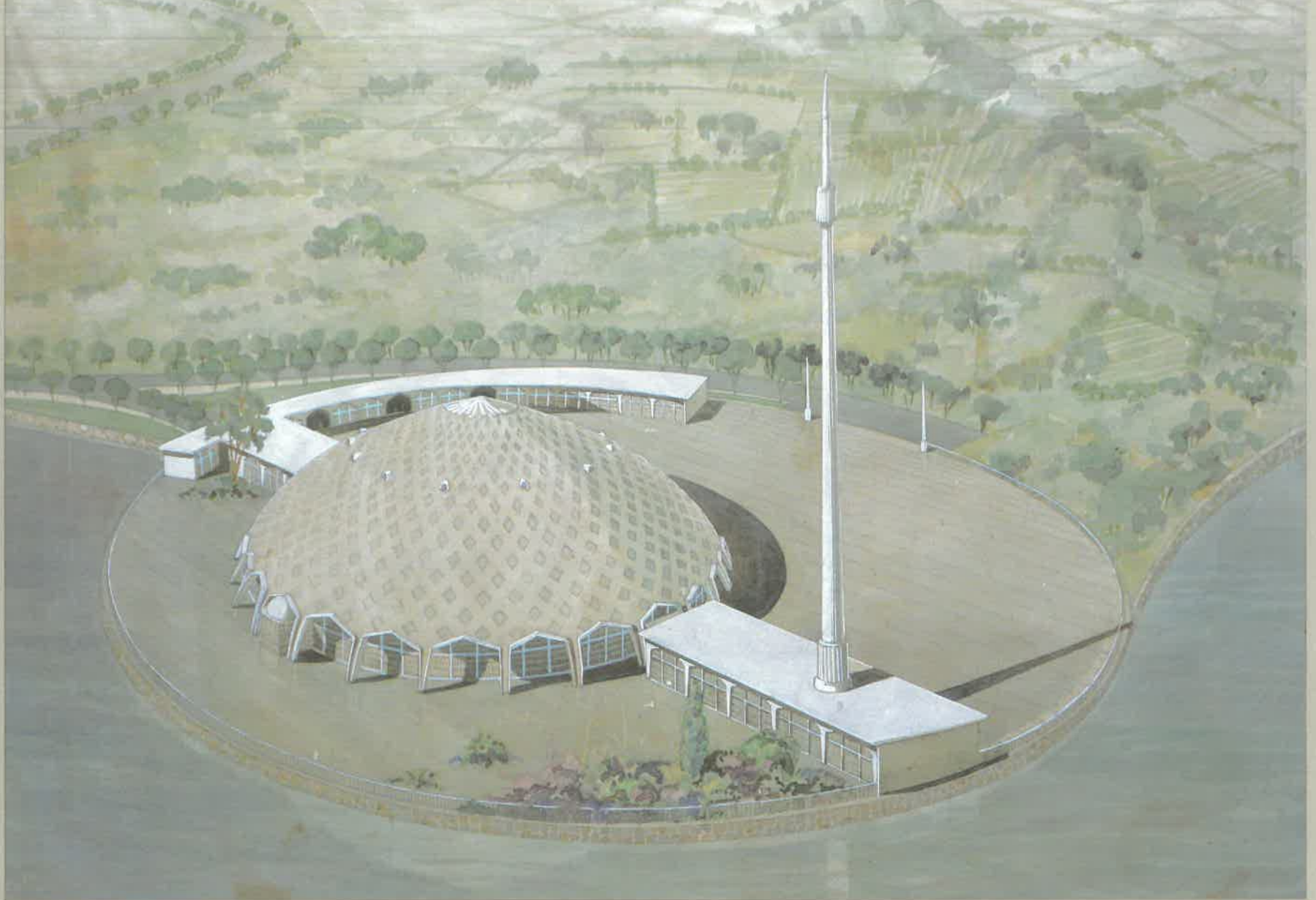


Plate 056

First prize winning entry for the Mosque
in the Secretariat Complex, 1965
Islamabad

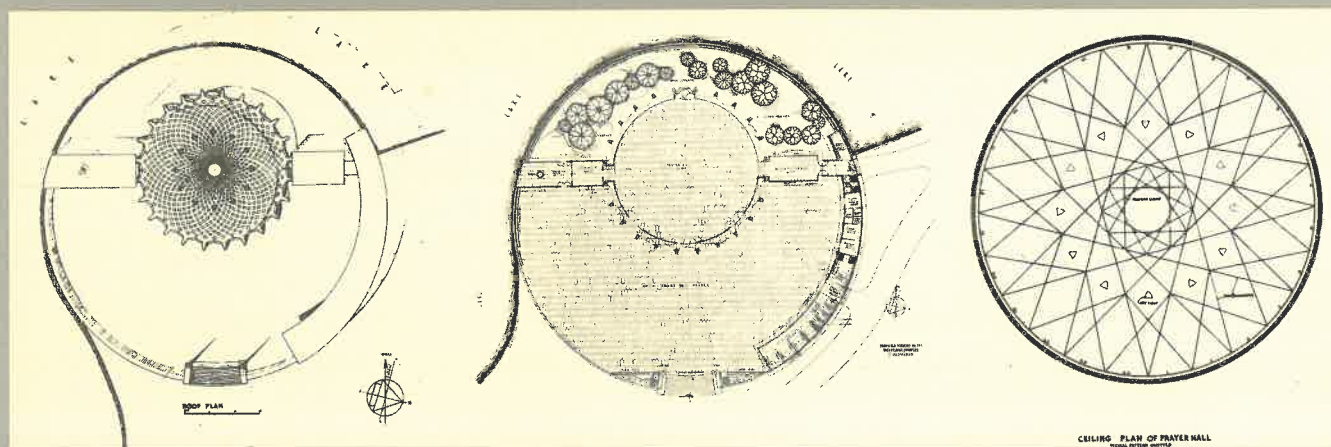


Plate 057



Plate 058



Plate 059

Design proposals for office buildings



Plate 060

Mosque proposals



Plate 061



Plate 062



Plate 063



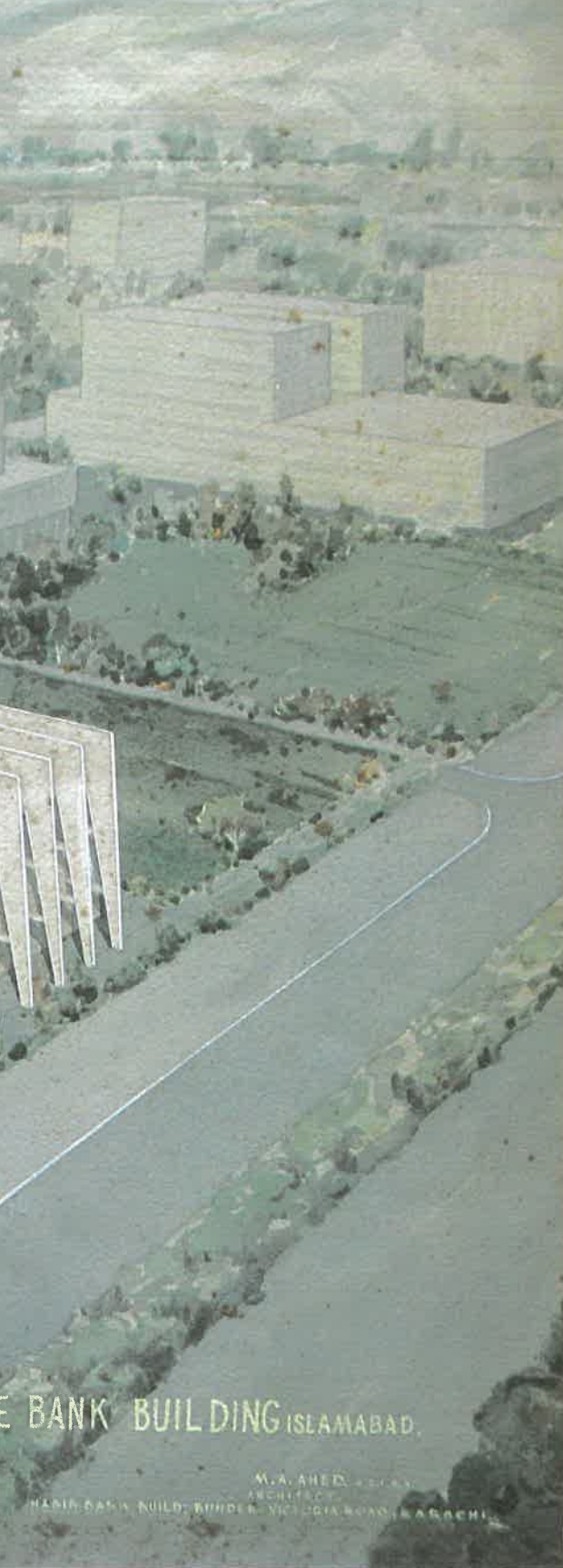


Plate 064

State Bank of Pakistan Building, Islamabad



Plate 065



Plate 066



Plate 067



Plate 068

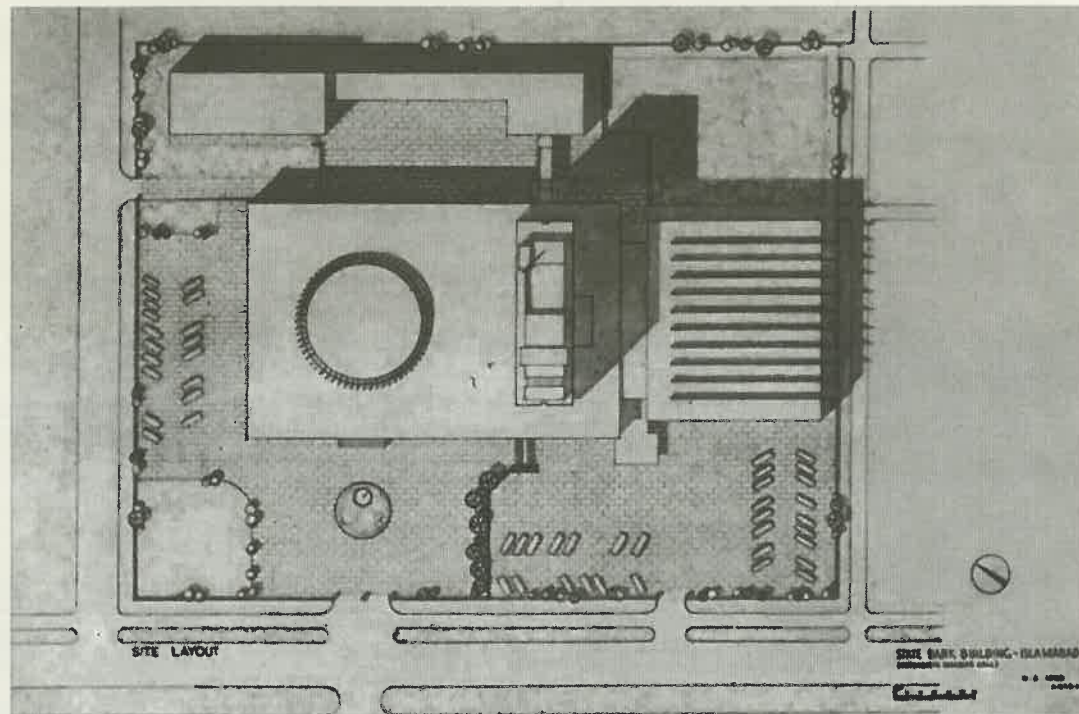


Plate 069



State Bank of Pakistan Building, Rawalpindi

Plate 070



State Bank of Pakistan Building, Dhaka

Plate 072



A design proposal for the State Bank of Pakistan Building, Lahore

Plate 073



State Bank of Pakistan Building, Hyderabad

Plate 071



State Bank of Pakistan Building, Lahore

Plate 074

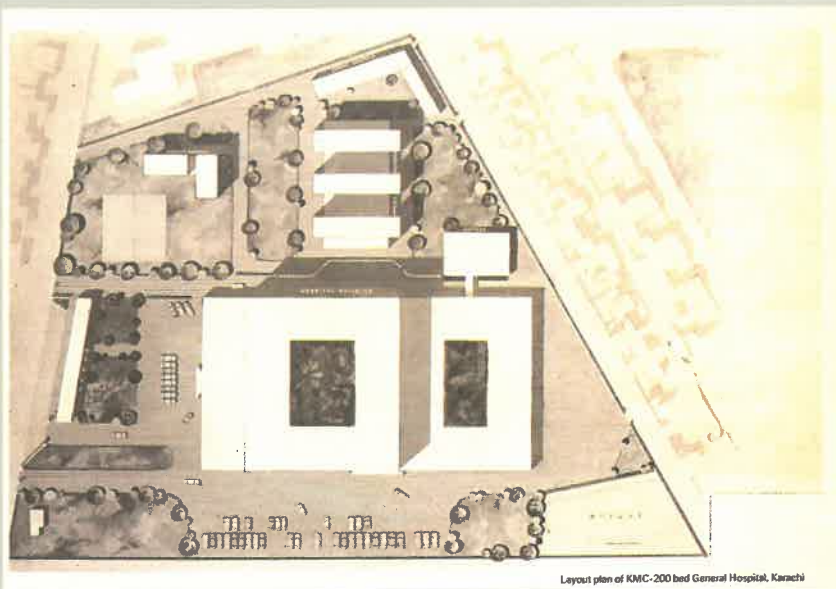


Plate 075



Plate 076



Plate 077

KMC General Hospital (Abbasi Shaheed Hospital), Karachi

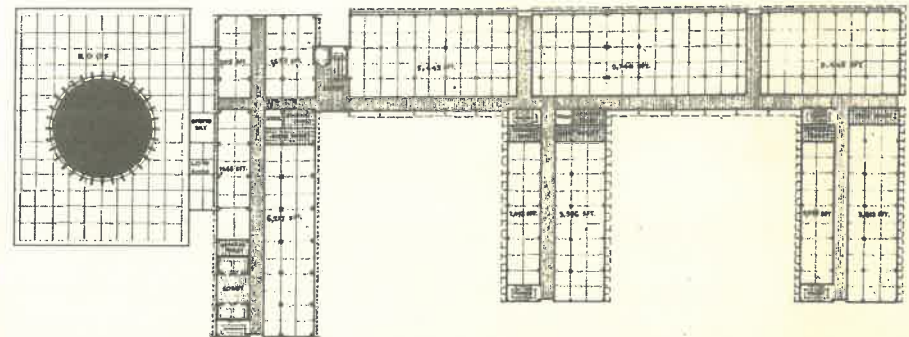


G. P. O. BUILDING KARACHI

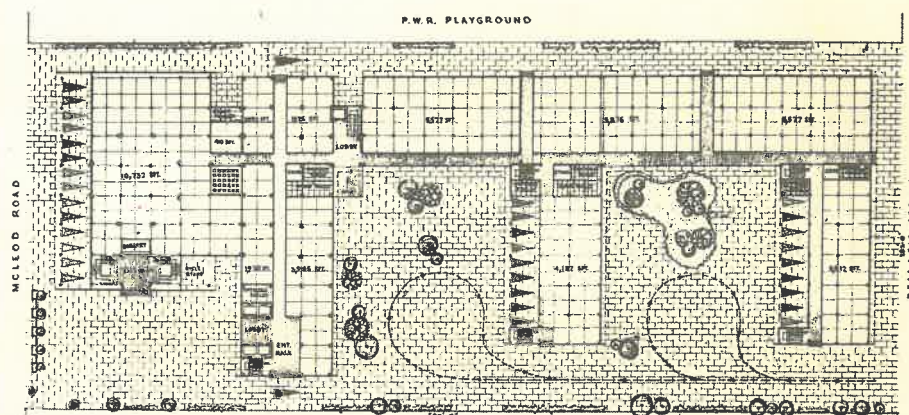


Ahed Associates
ARCHITECTS
M. A. AHED P. M. AHED (REGISTERED)
ARCHITECTS
HABIB ABUL KALAM, PONDWER, KATONIA ROAD, CHENNAI
PHONE 74-4579

Plate 078



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



NATIONAL PRESS TRUST

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Plate 079



General Post Office Building, Karachi

Plate 080

081



Design proposals for the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission Headquarter, Islamabad

Plate 081



Plate 082



Plate 083



Plate 084

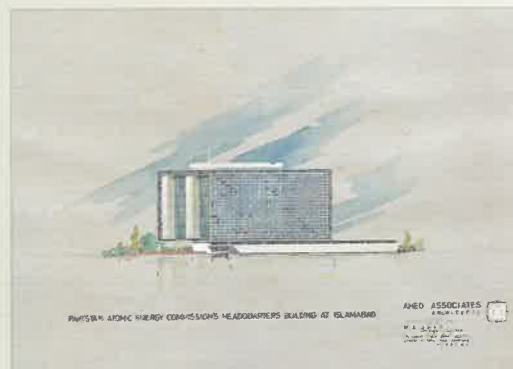


Plate 085



Plate 086



Plate 087

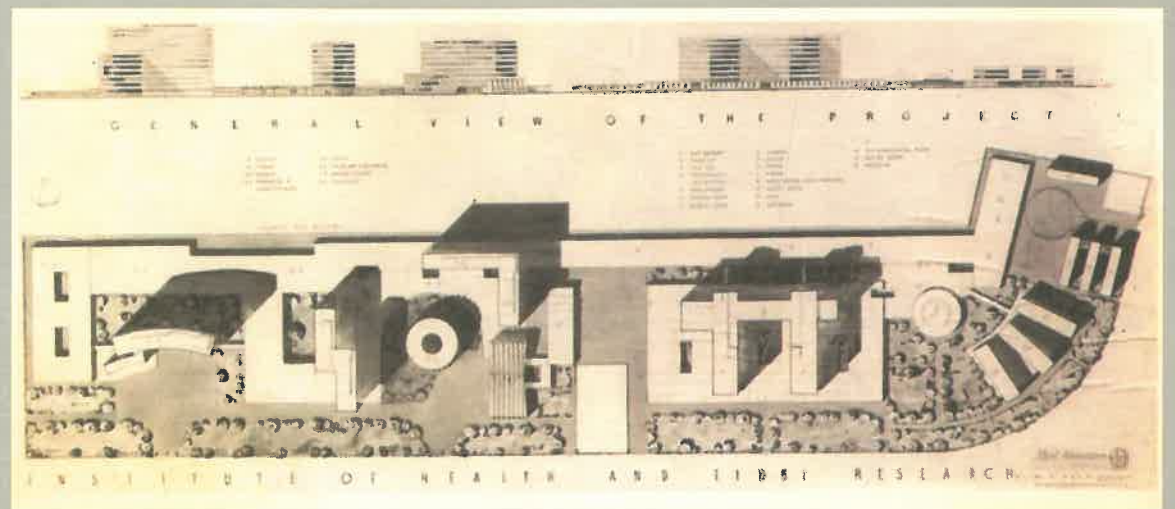


Plate 088



Plate 089

Design proposal for the Institute of Health and Tibbi Research, Karachi



Plate 090

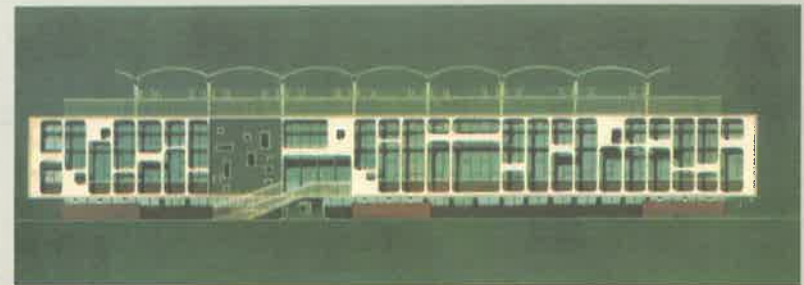


Plate 091
Lahore Gymkhana and Golf Club, Lahore (First design project of Ahed Associates)



Plate 092

Design proposals for exhibition pavilions



Plate 096



Plate 097



Plate 098



Plate 099



Plate 100



Plate 103

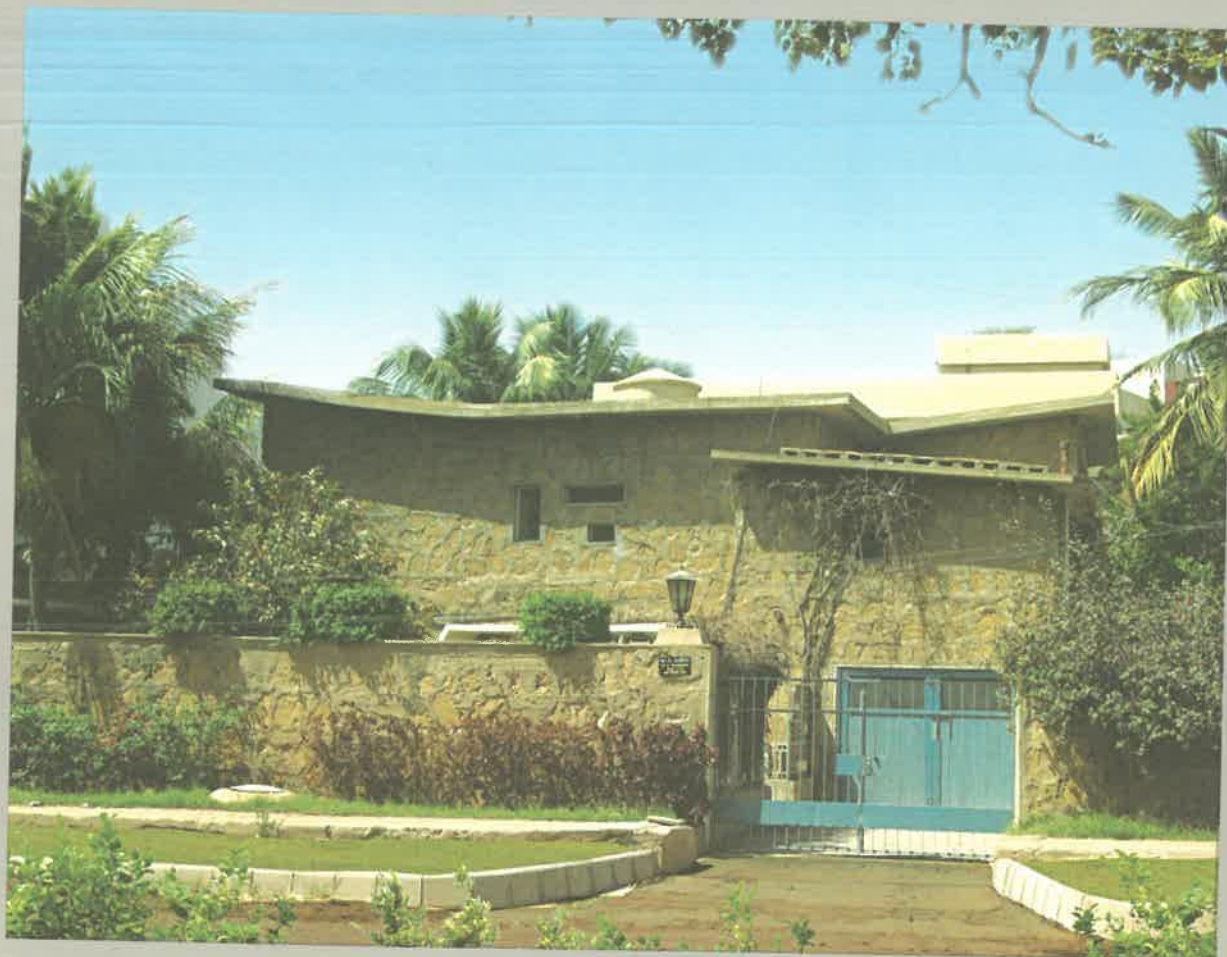


Plate 101



Plate 102

Resthouse, Gulshan-e-Maymar, Karachi



Ahed House, Karachi

Plate 104



088

Plate 105



Plate 106



Plate 107



Plate 108

Jamil House, Karachi



Raziuddin House, Karachi

Plate 109



Plate 110



Plate 111



Peshawar International Airport, Peshawar

Plate 112



Plate 113



Plate 114



Plate 115



Plate 116



ELEVATION ⊕ LONGNITUDINAL WALL

Plate 117

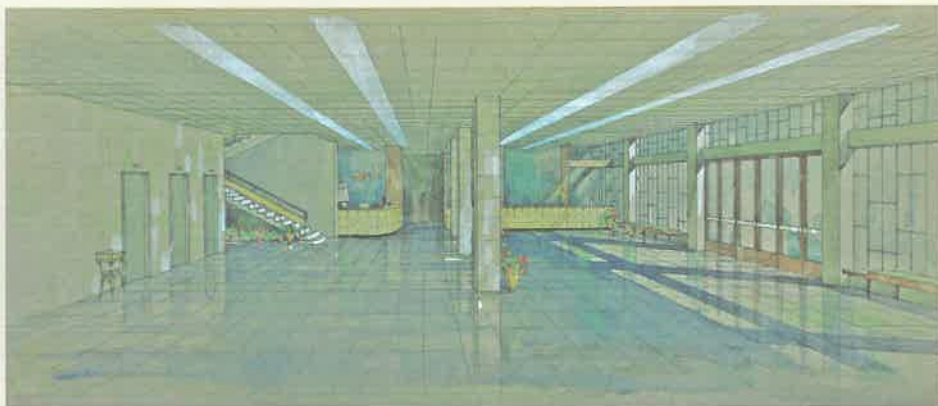


Plate 118



Plate 119

“I live and work for myself, by myself...”



ahed with himself



Plate 120



Plate 121



Plate 122



Plate 123



Plate 124



Plate 125



Plate 126



Plate 127

... portraiture gave him the opportunity to minutely and intimately explore the complexities of human nature ...



Plate 128

... his wife in the familiar surroundings of their home during the course of the day ... [is captured] in the midst of her domestic activities, often unaware of her husband's penetrating gaze ...



Plate 129



Plate 130



Plate 131



Plate 132



Plate 133



Plate 134



Plate 135



Plate 136



Plate 137



Plate 138



Plate 139



Plate 140



Plate 141



Plate 142



Plate 143



Plate 144



Plate 145



Plate 146



Plate 147



Plate 148



Plate 149



Plate 150



Plate 151



Plate 152



Plate 154



Plate 153

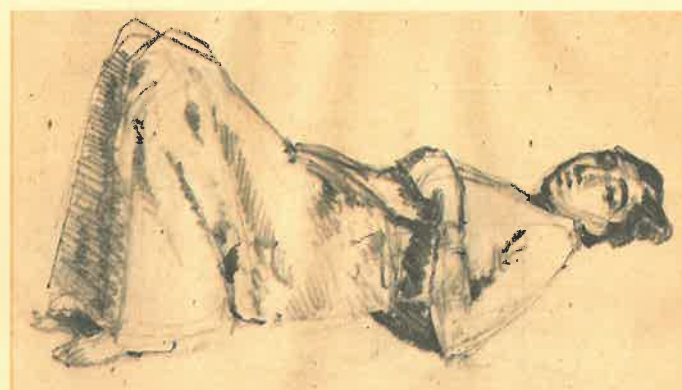


Plate 155



Plate 156



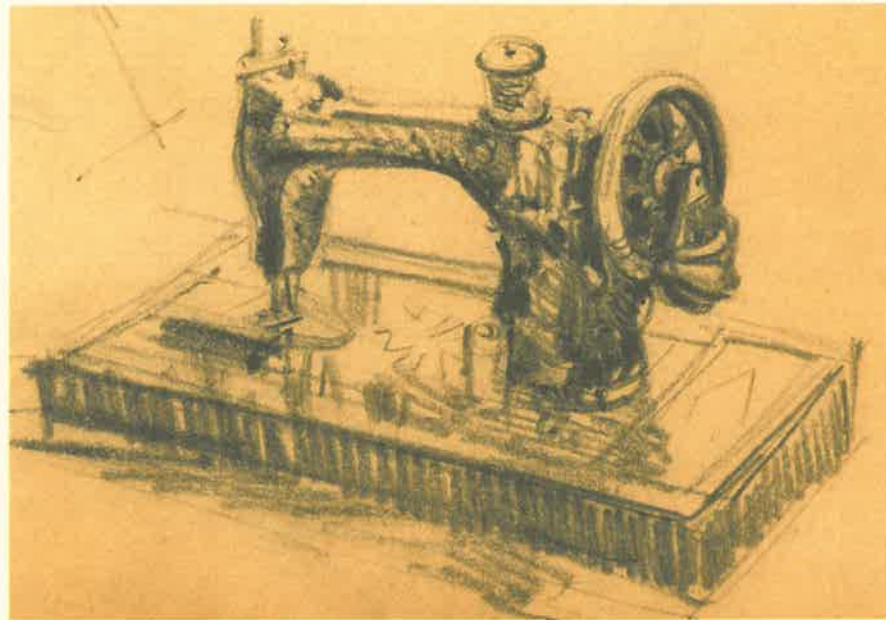


Plate 158

His sketchbook became a constant companion
... through which he explored the infinite ...
variety and richness of his world.



Plate 159



Plate 160



Plate 161



Plate 162





Plate 164



Plate 165

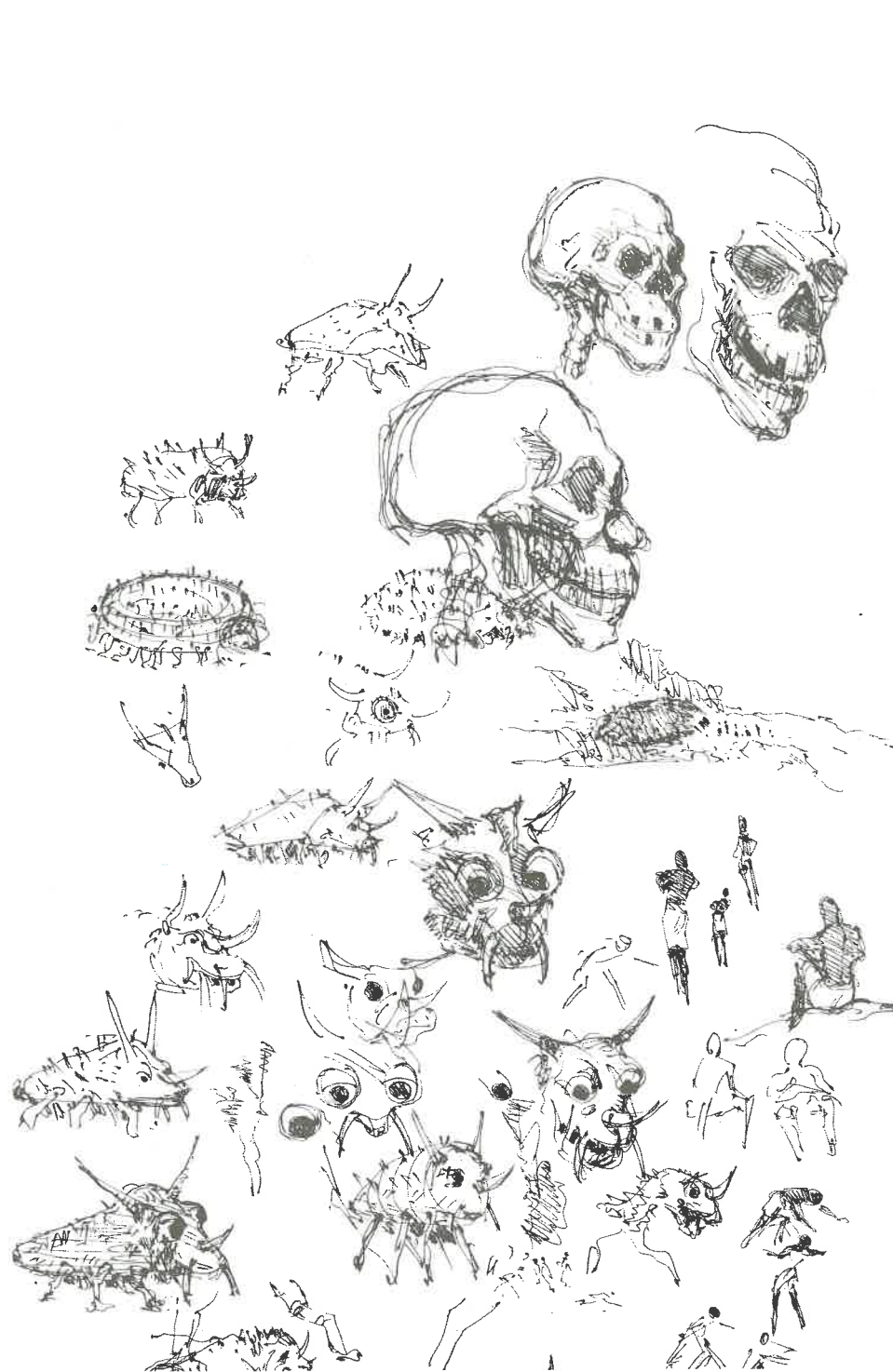


Plate 166



Plate 167

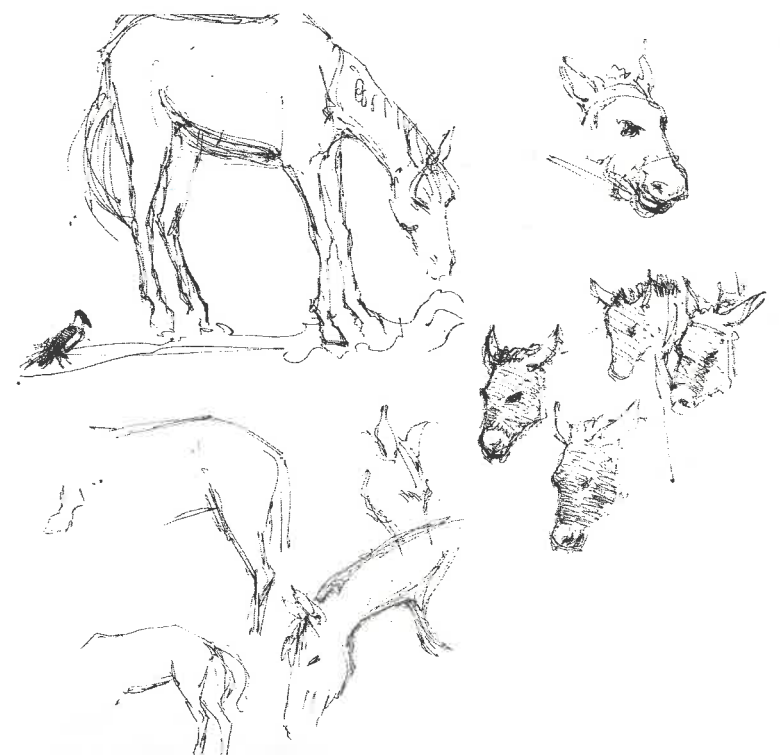


Plate 168



Plate 169



Plate 170



Plate 171

ابرهوان

الحاج خولان مهدي



سکین



Plate 172



Plate 173



Plate 174

Sikh member of the
Parliament, (India)
Khushwant Singh.
Khushwant Singh.

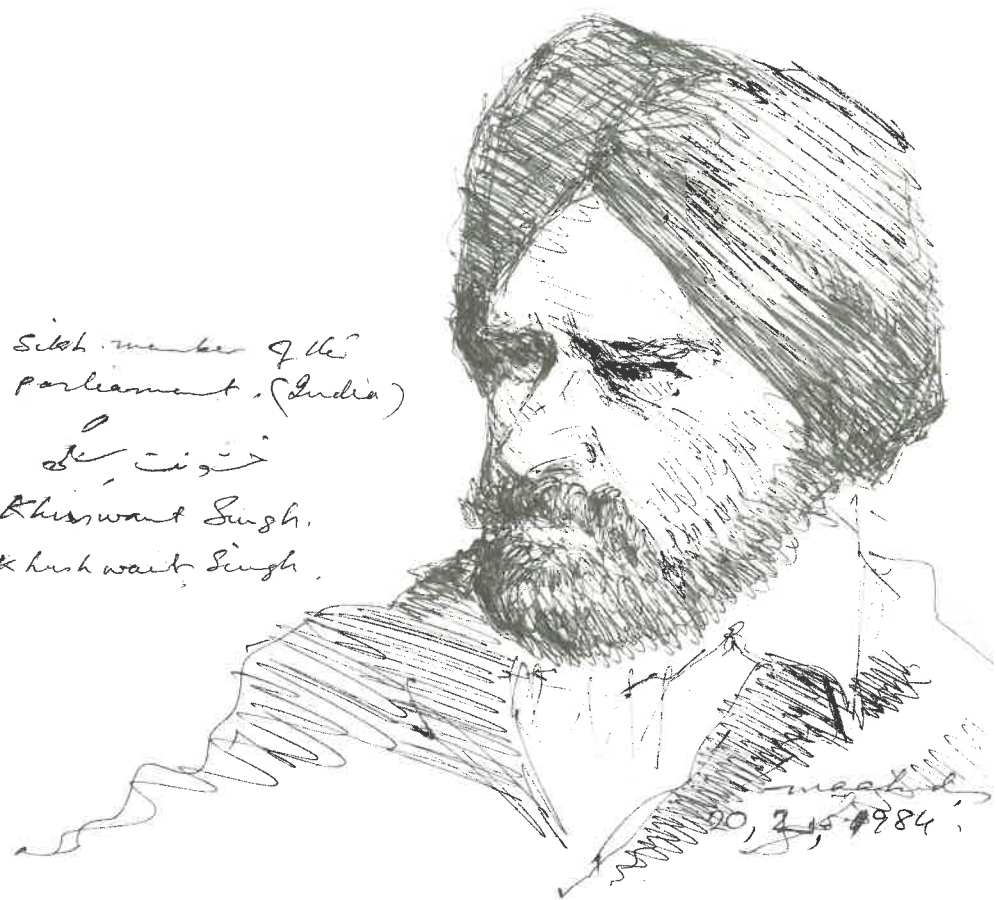


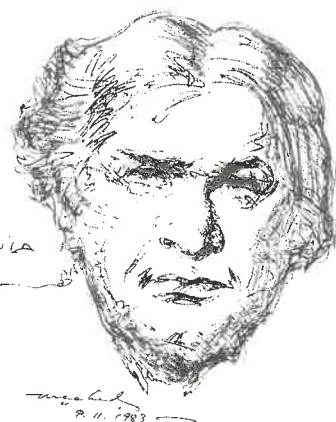
Plate 175



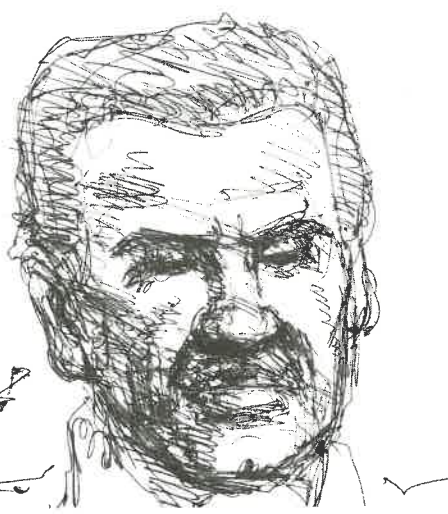
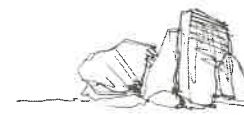
ڈاکٹر ابوالفتح عیدین

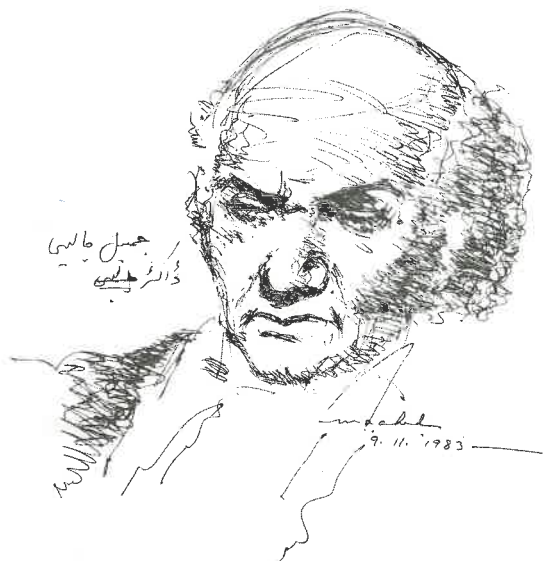
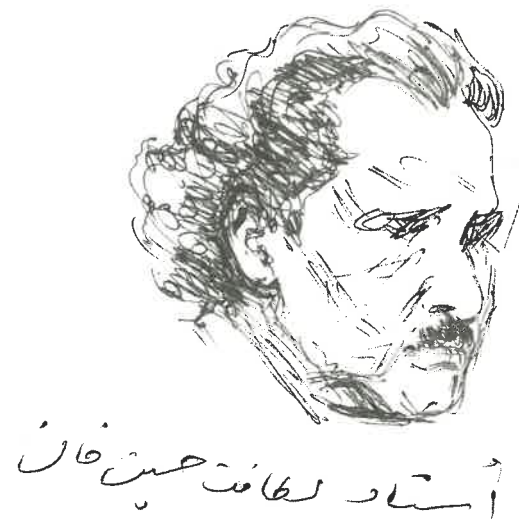
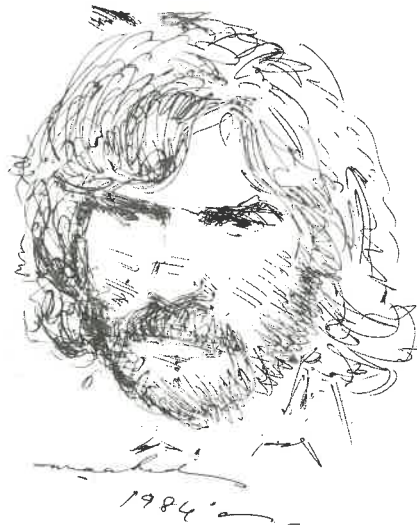


عبدالله علی شہ



مولانا مقصود الدین





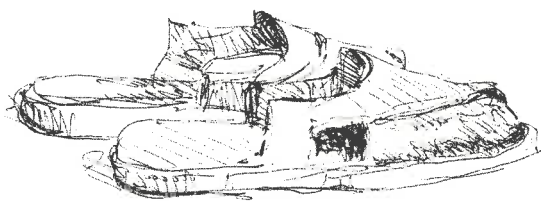


Plate 178



Plate 179



Plate 180



meahed

22. 8. 1983



Plate 182

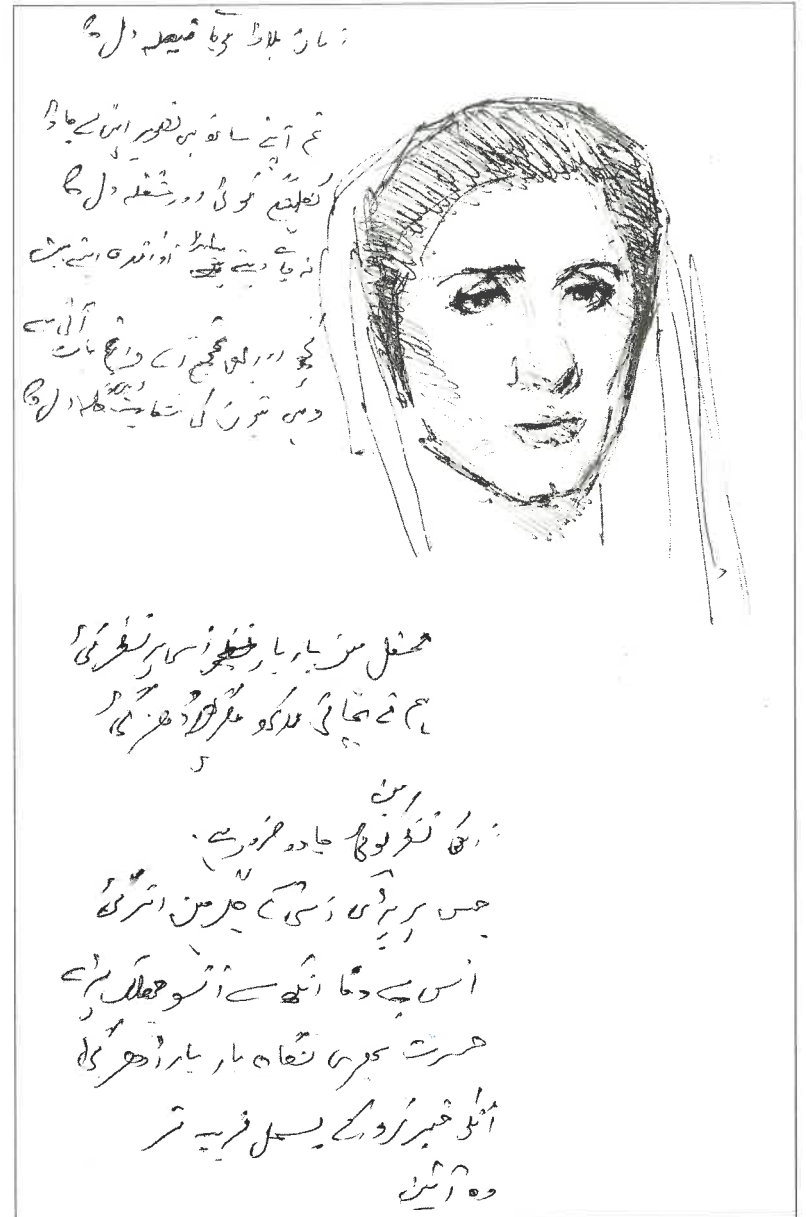


Plate 183



Plate 185



Plate 187



Plate 188



Plate 189



Plate 190

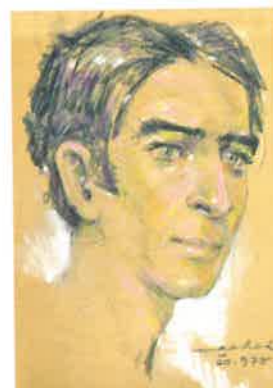


Plate 191



Plate 192



Plate 186



Plate 193

On 2nd November 2001, Ejaz Ahed received a letter addressed to his father from an old schoolmate in England. In the letter, he stated that he had been a student at College with M A Ahed and that the latter had sketched a portrait of him during that time which he had treasured all his life, a copy of which he enclosed. He described how he had obtained M A Ahed's present address from the RIBA in London and that he hoped that the letter would reach him. In his reply, Ejaz greatly appreciated the effort that he had made to get in touch with his father, but regretted to inform him that his letter had arrived a day too late; M A Ahed had passed away just the day before.



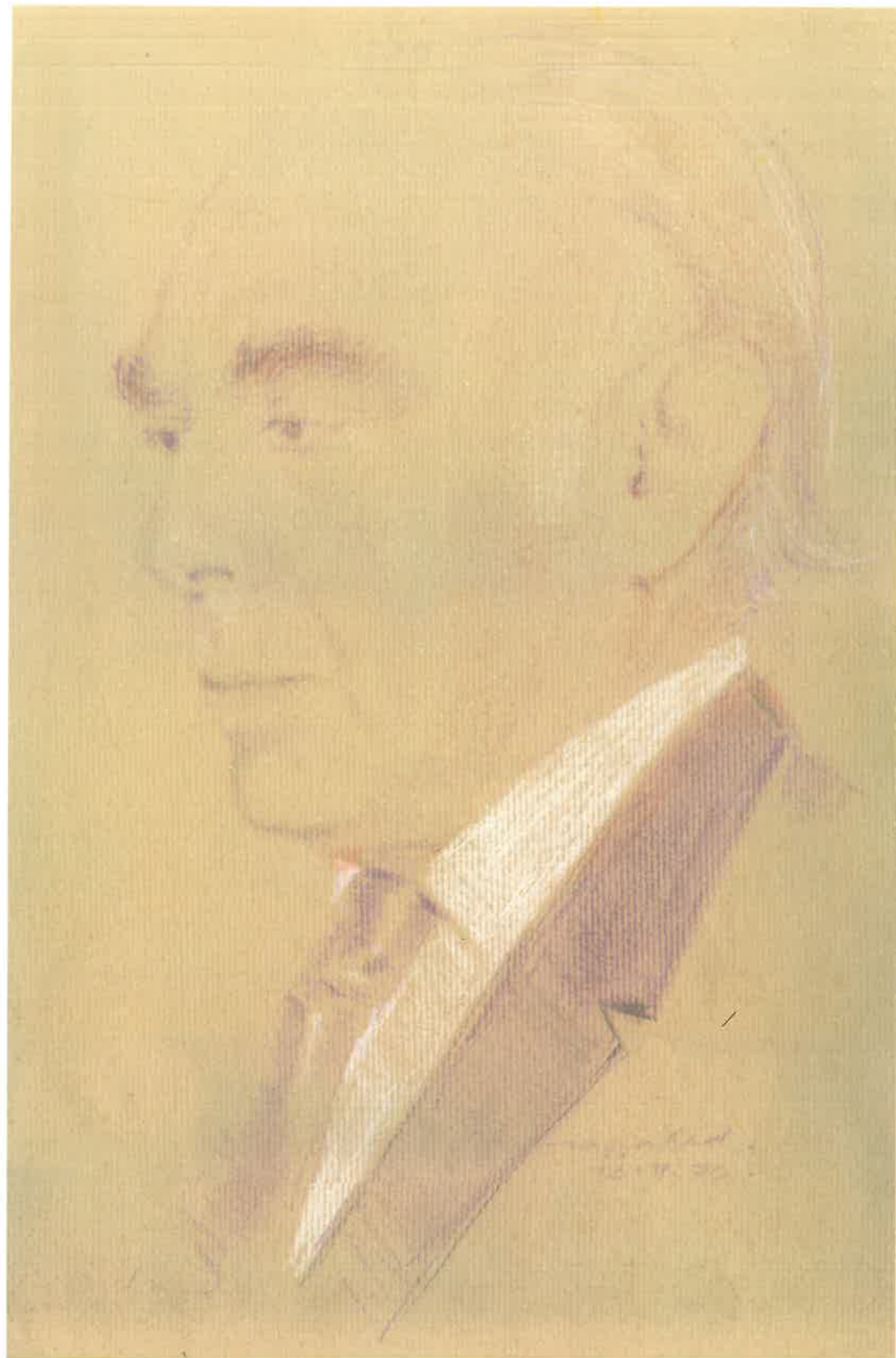
An old schoolmate, Pastel, 1945

Plate 194



Shujaat Ali Hasnie, Pastel, 1969

Plate 195



Nawab Muzaffar Ali Qizilbash, Pastel, 1970

Plate 196



Hakim Muhammad Said, Pastel, 1968

Plate 197

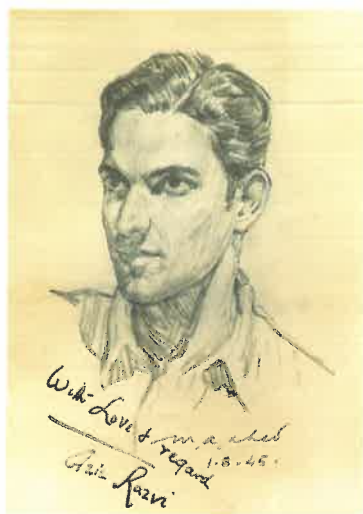


Plate 198



Plate 199



Plate 200



Plate 201



Plate 202



Plate 203



Plate 204



Plate 205



Plate 206



Plate 207



Plate 208



Plate 209

Mirza Ehsan-ul-Haque, Pencil sketches, 1983



Plate 210



Plate 211

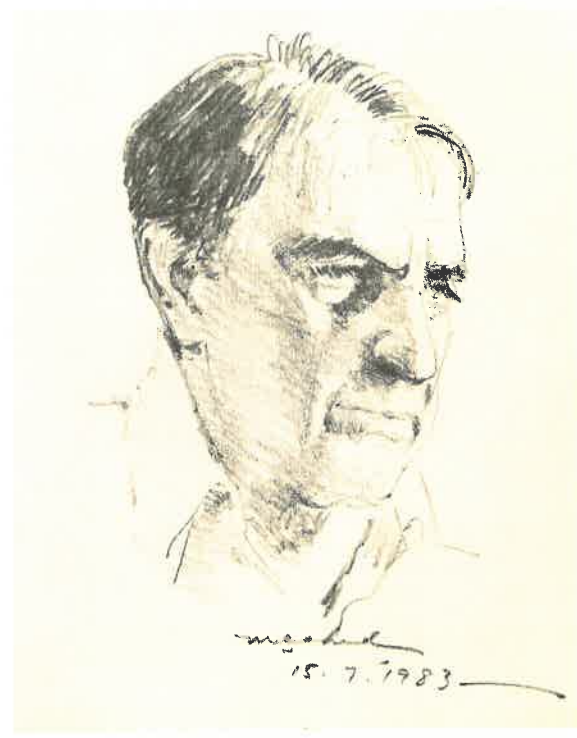


Plate 212



Plate 213

Ovais, son of Dr Ahmed Mirza Jamil, Pastel, 1965
Dr Ahmed Mirza Jamil, Pastel, 1965



Plate 214



Plate 215

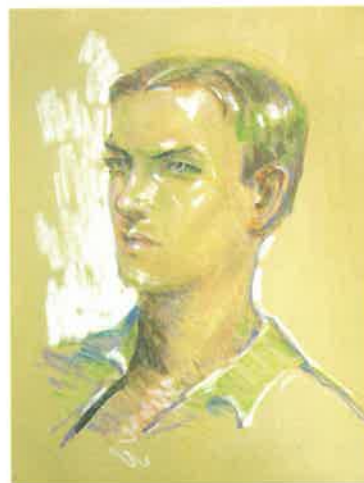


Plate 216



Plate 217



Plate 218

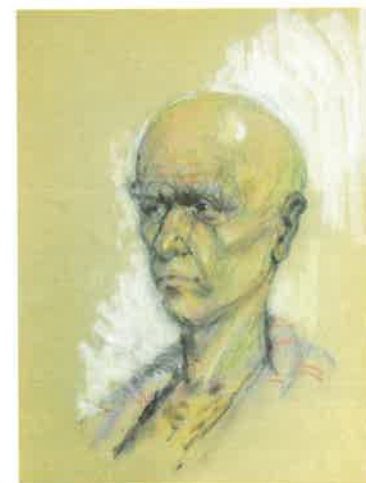
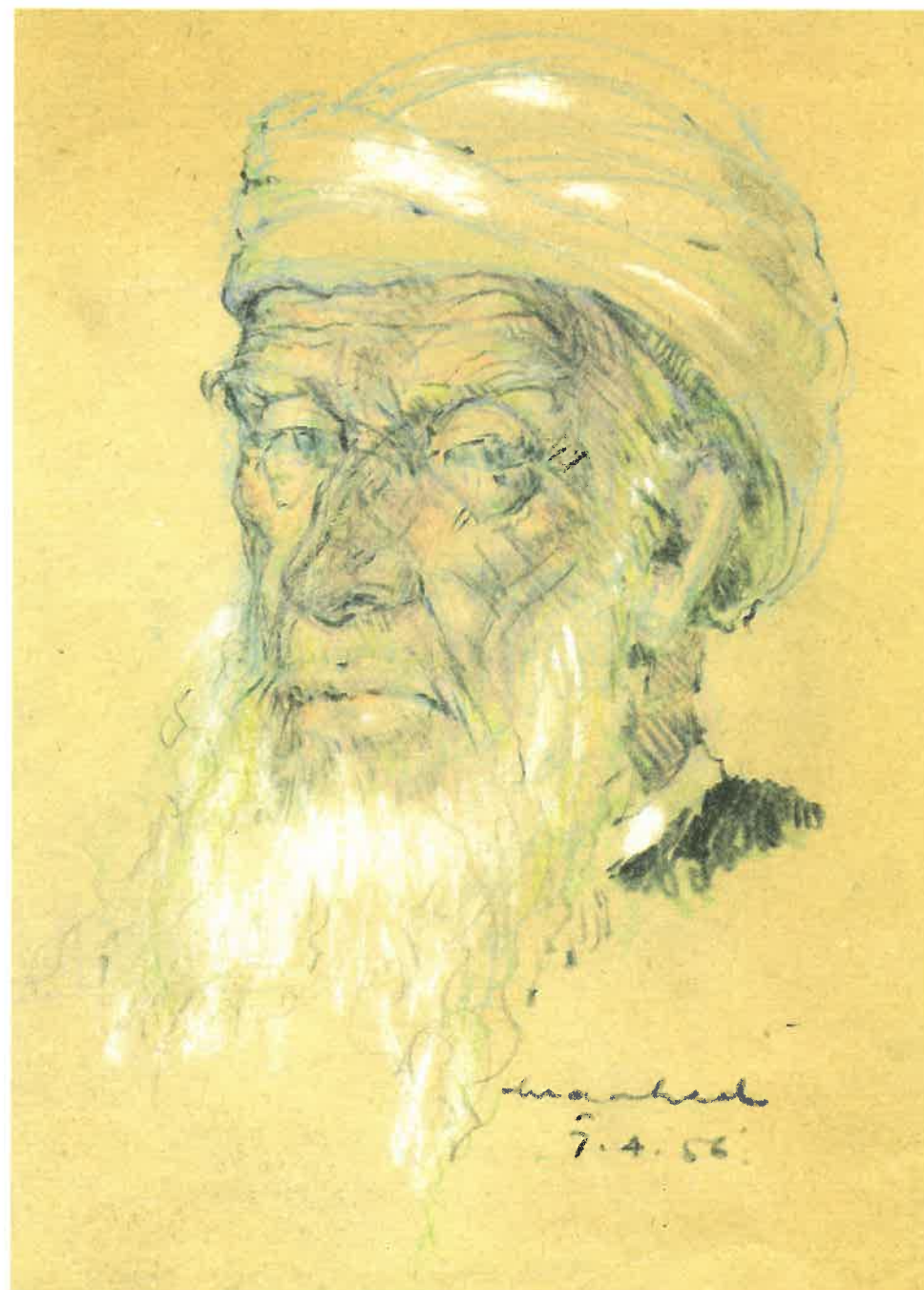


Plate 219



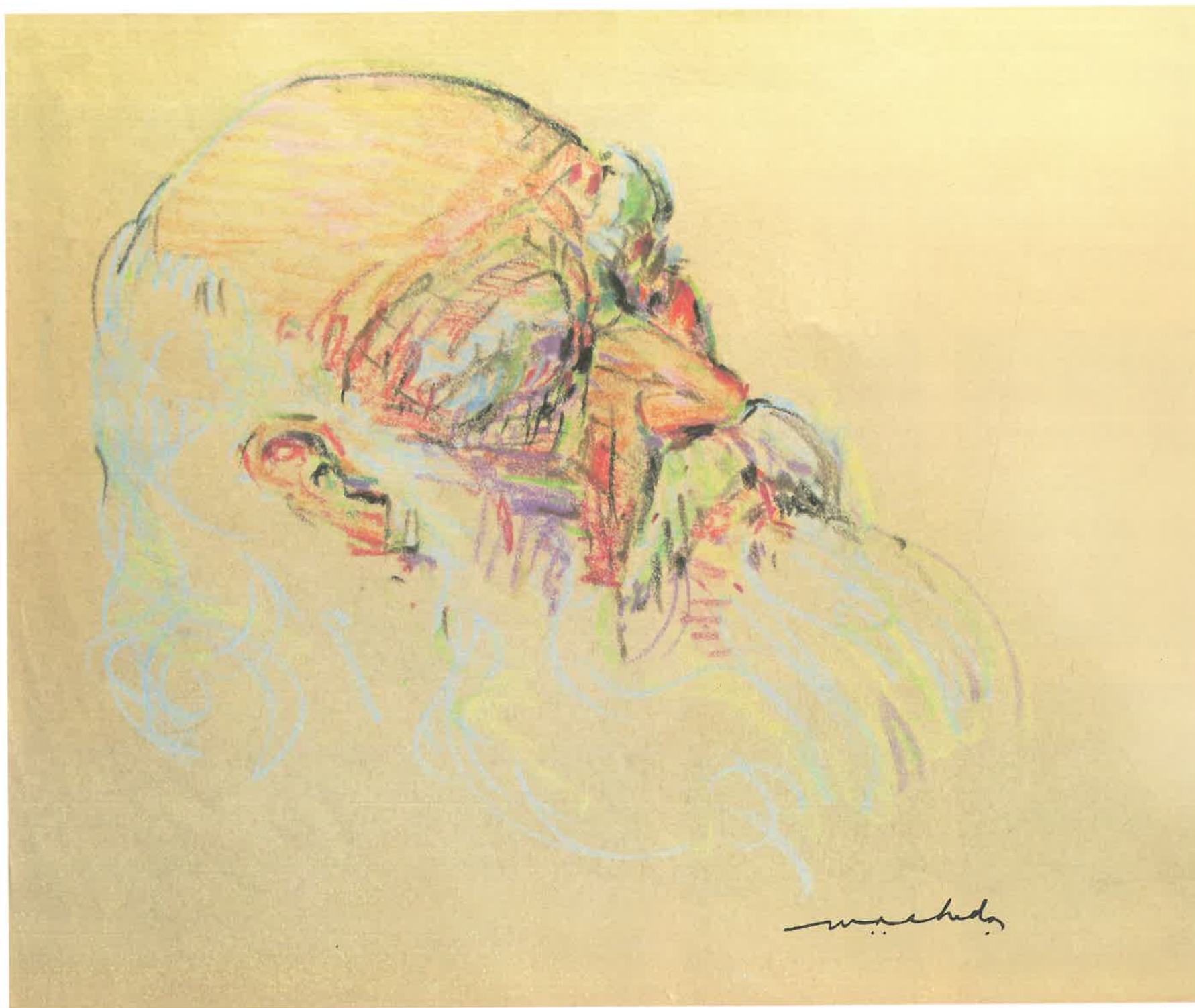


Plate 221

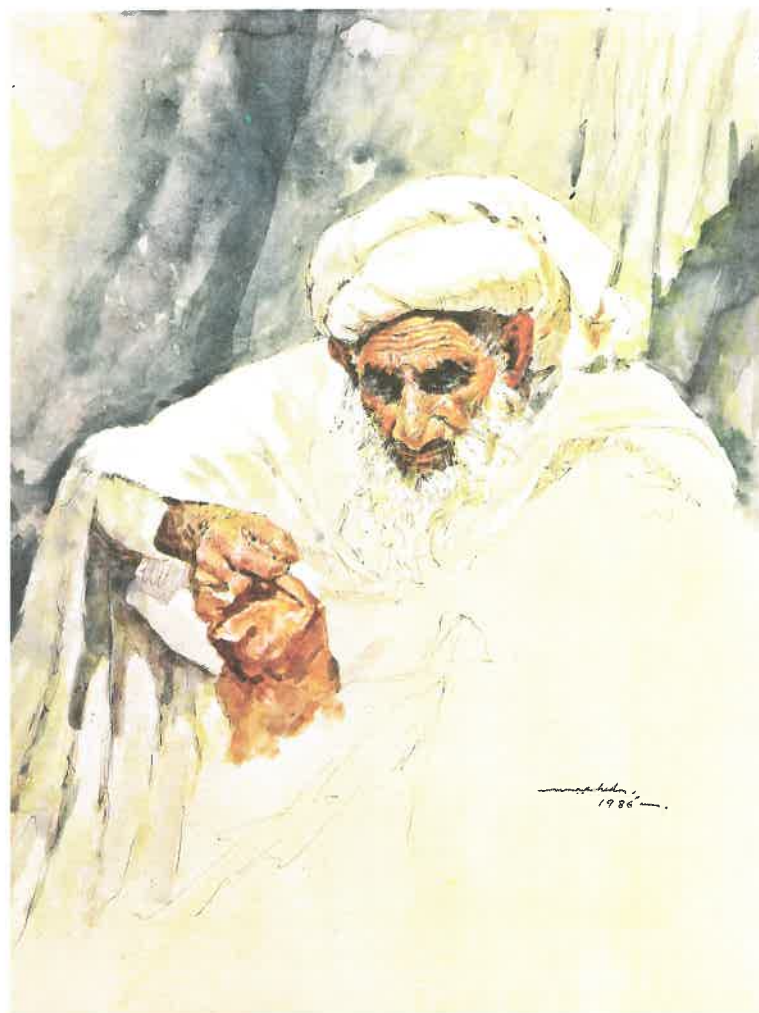


Plate 222

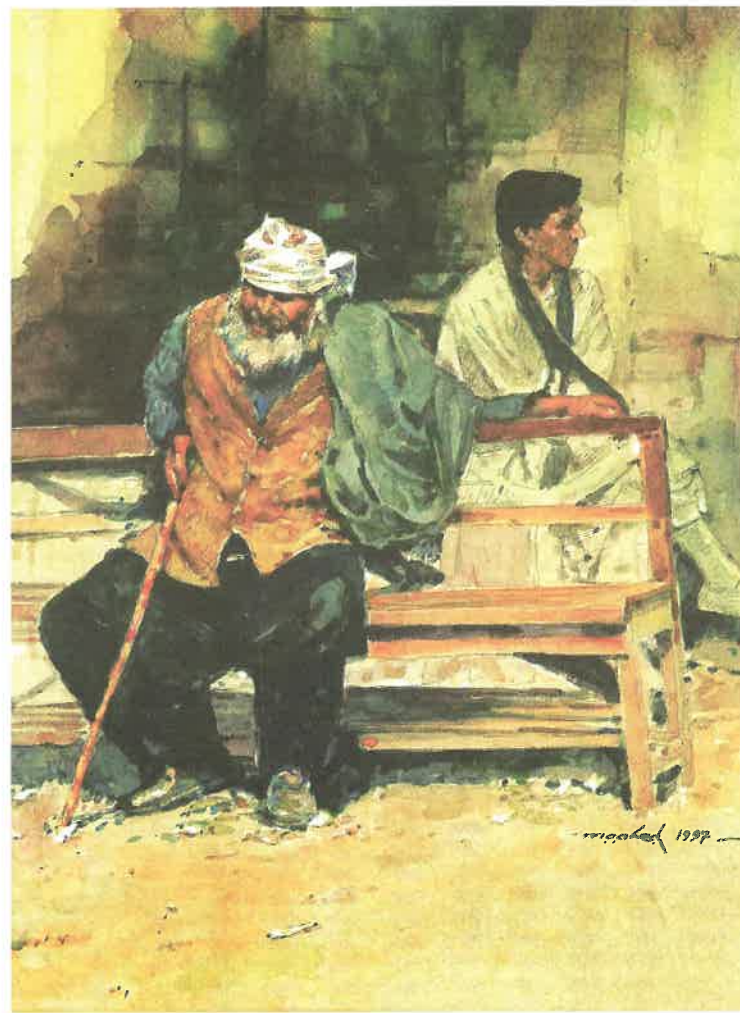


Plate 223



Mehdi Ali Mirza, Pastel, 1950's
130

Plate 224



Mirza Noor Ahmed, Watercolour, 1960

Plate 225



Mirza Noor Ahmed, Oil, 1960

Plate 226



Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan, Watercolour, 1965
132

Plate 227



Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, Oil and Pastel, 1954 Plate 228



Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Oil and Pastel, 1954 Plate 229



Plate 230



Plate 231



Plate 232



Plate 233



Plate 234



Plate 235



Plate 237



Plate 236



Plate 235



Plate 237



Plate 236



Plate 238



Plate 239



Plate 240



Platé 241



Plate 242



Plate 243



Plate 244



Plate 245





Plate 247

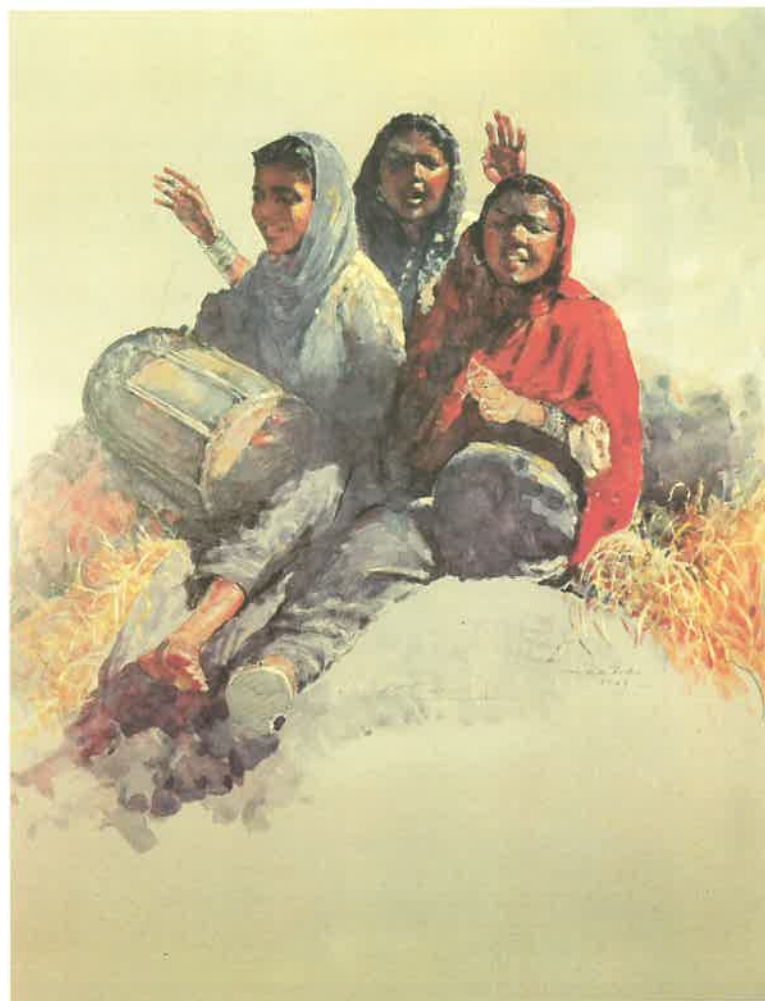


Plate 248



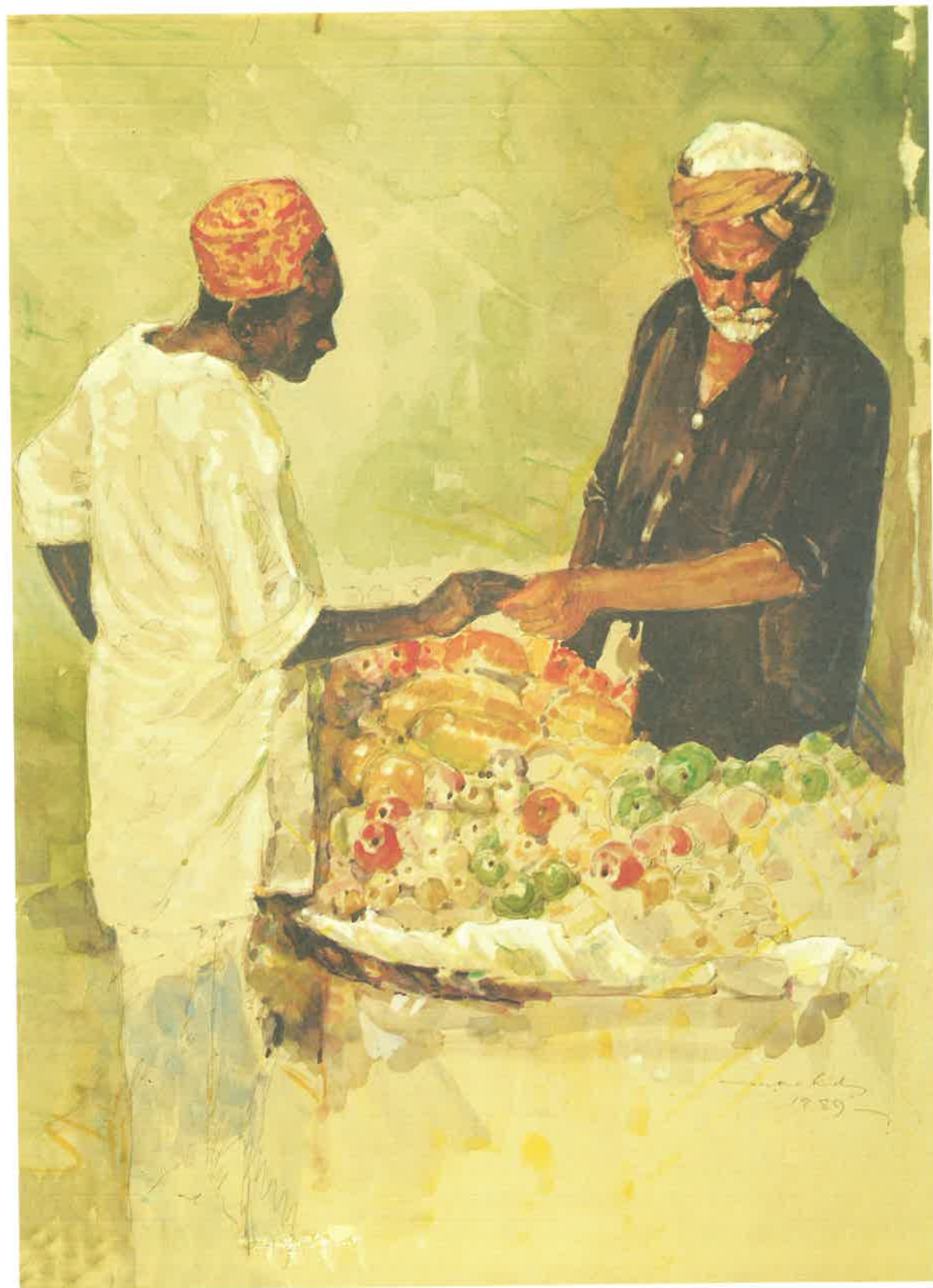


Plate 250





Plate 252





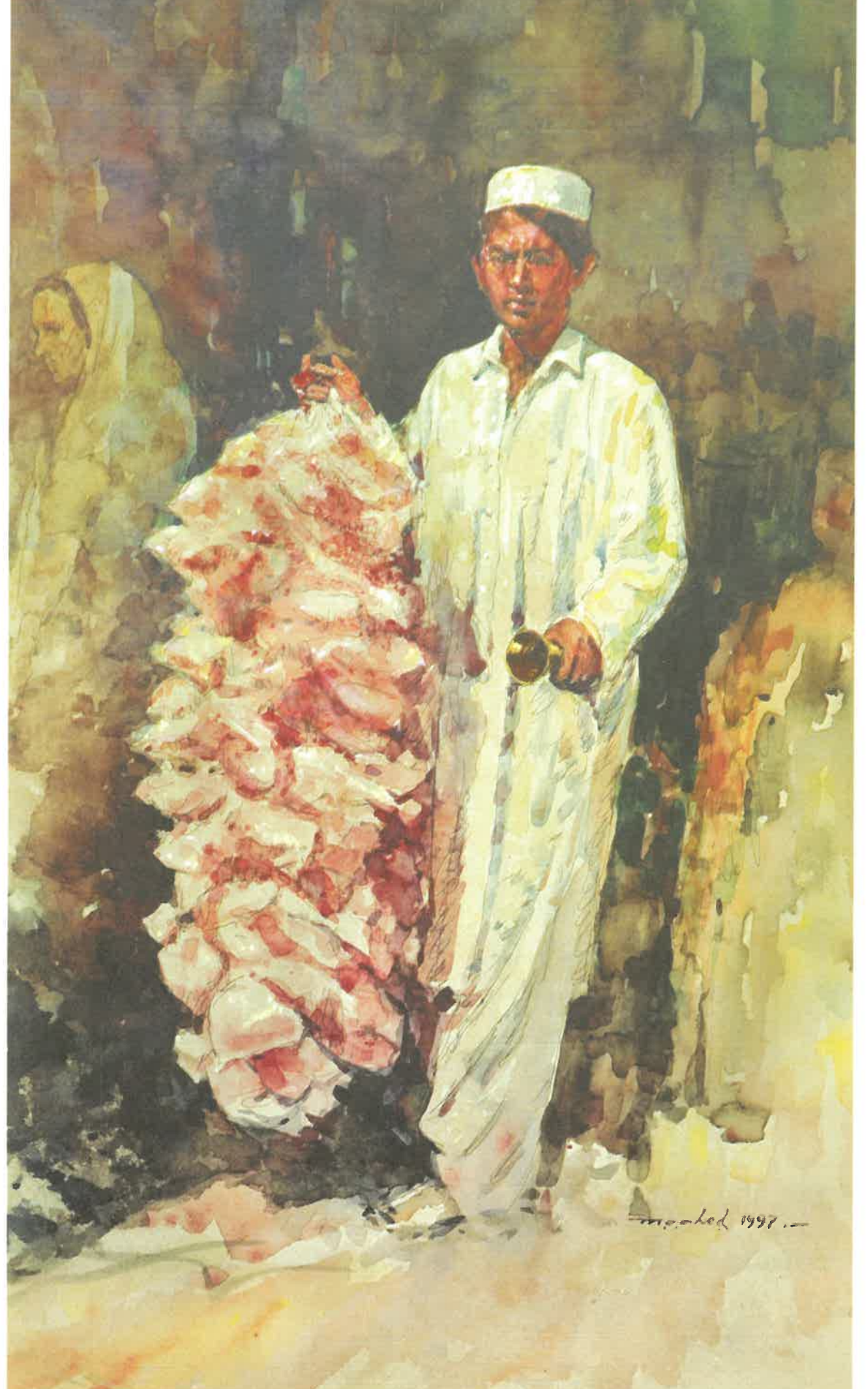




Plate 256



Plate 257



Plate 258



Plate 259



Plate 260



Plate 261



Plate 262



Plate 263



Plate 264



Plate 265





Plate 267



Plate 268



Plate 269

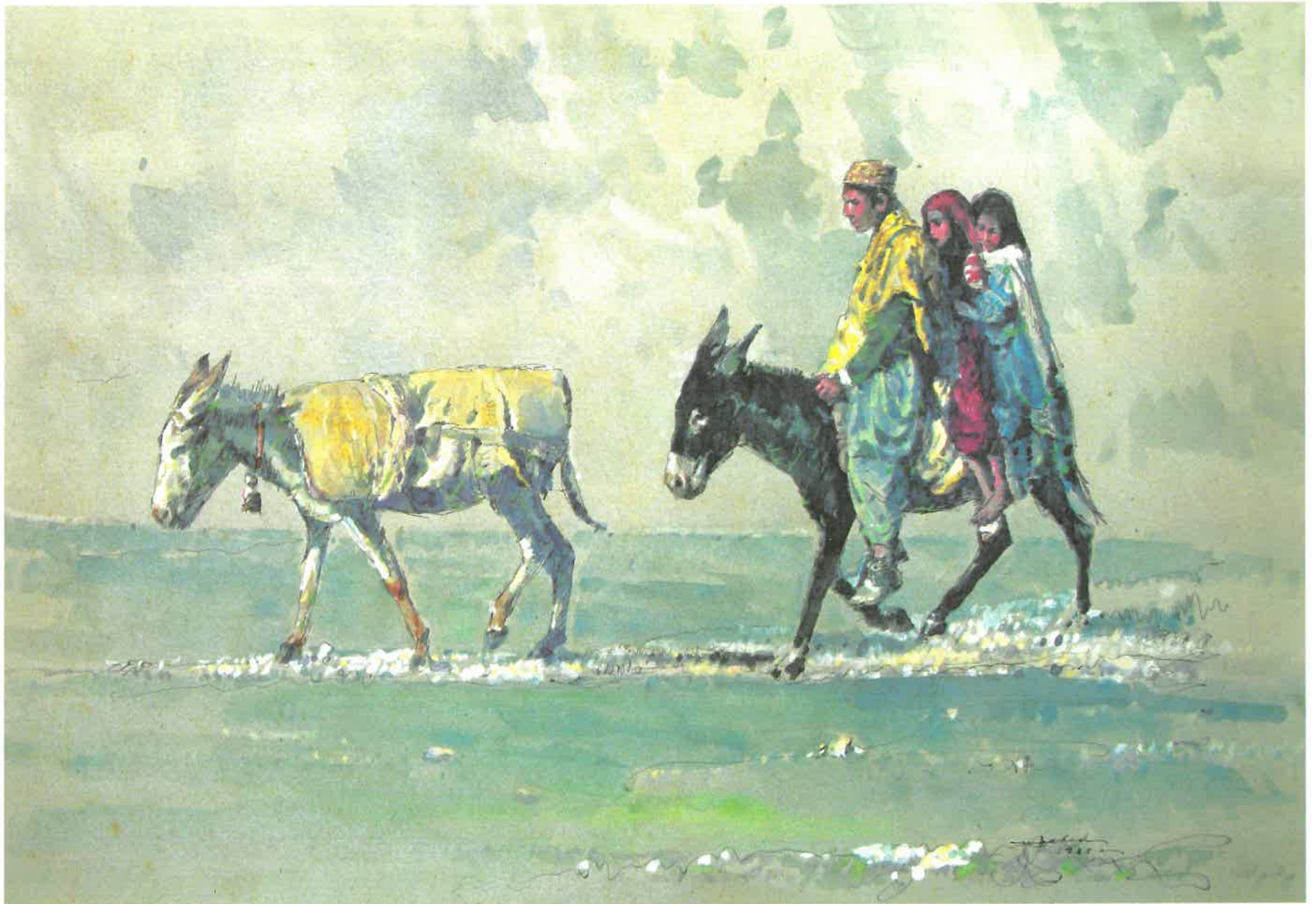




Plate 271



Plate 272



Plate 273



Plate 274





Plate 276





Plate 278





Plate 281

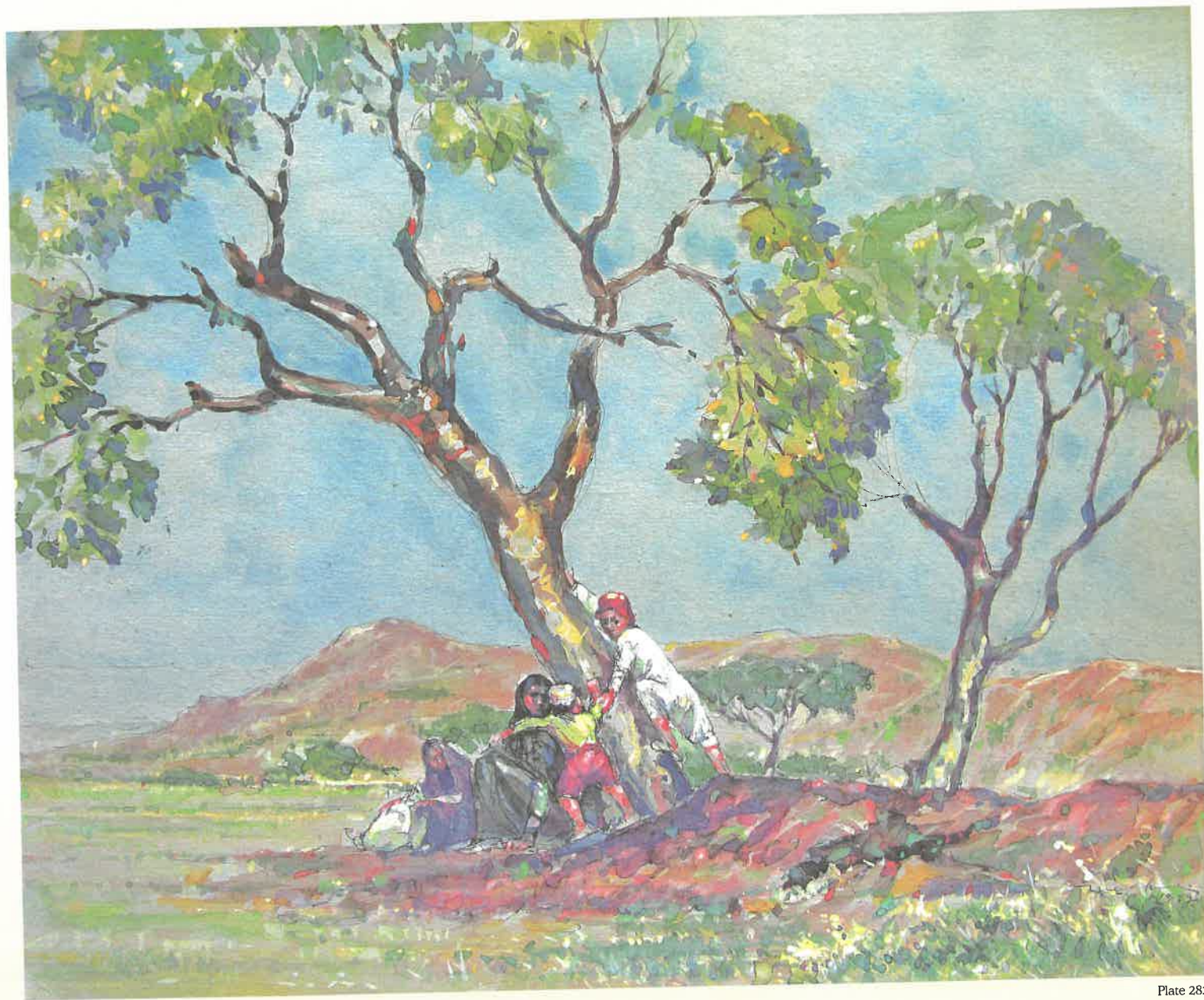


Plate 282





Plate 284



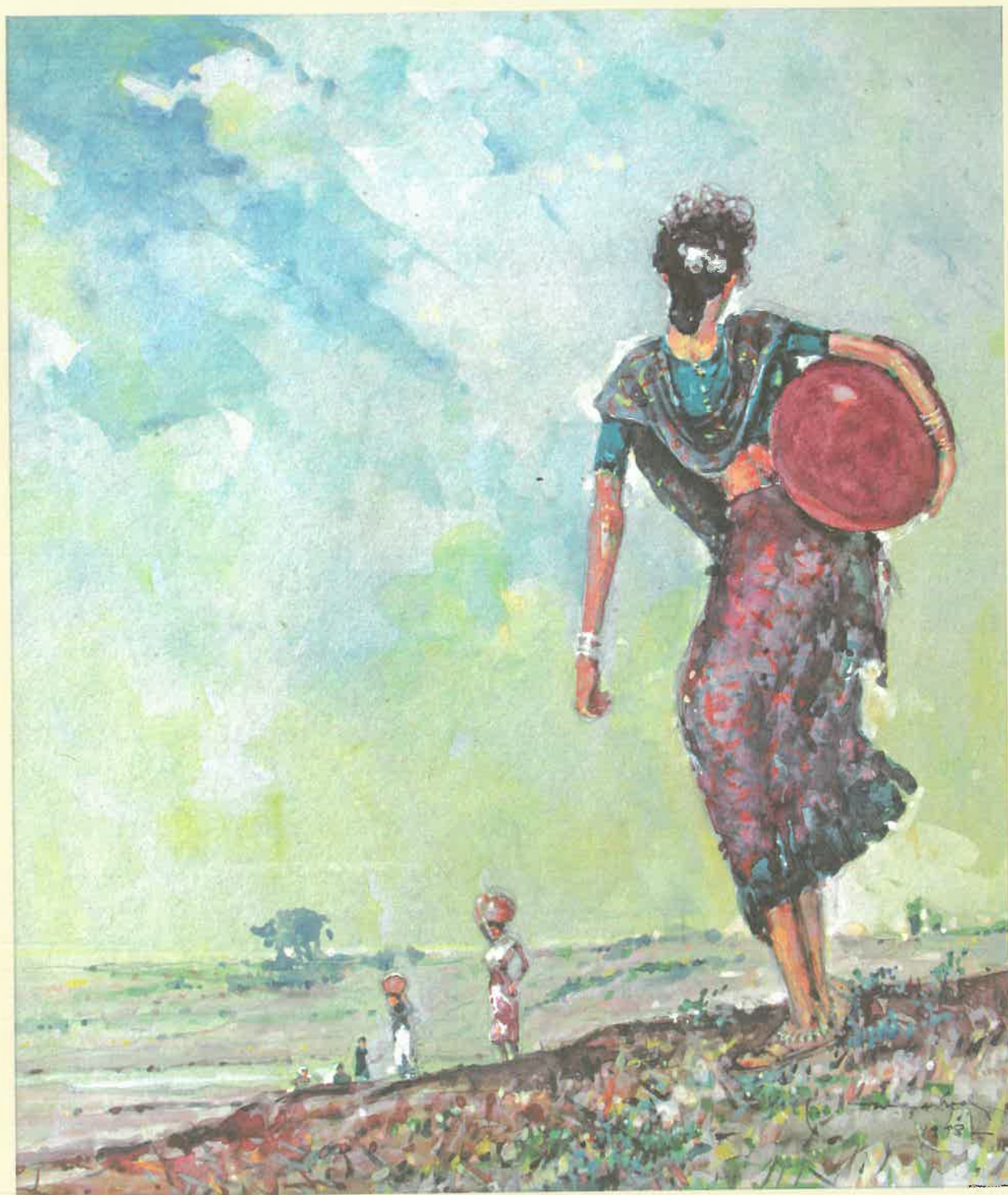


Plate 286



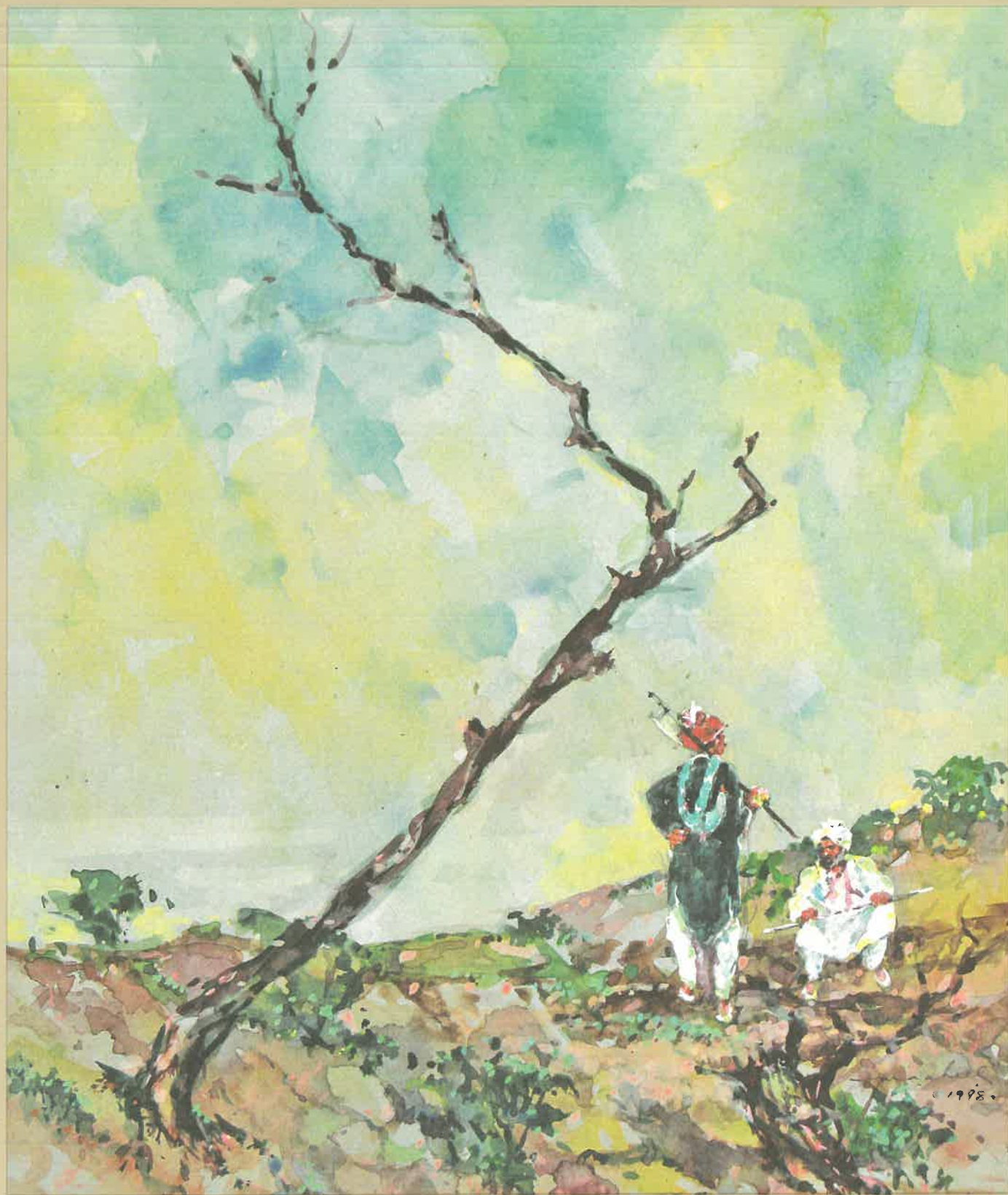


Plate 288





Plate 290





Plate 292



Plate 293



Plate 294



Plate 295



Plate 296



Plate 297



Plate 298



Plate 299



Plate 300



Plate 301



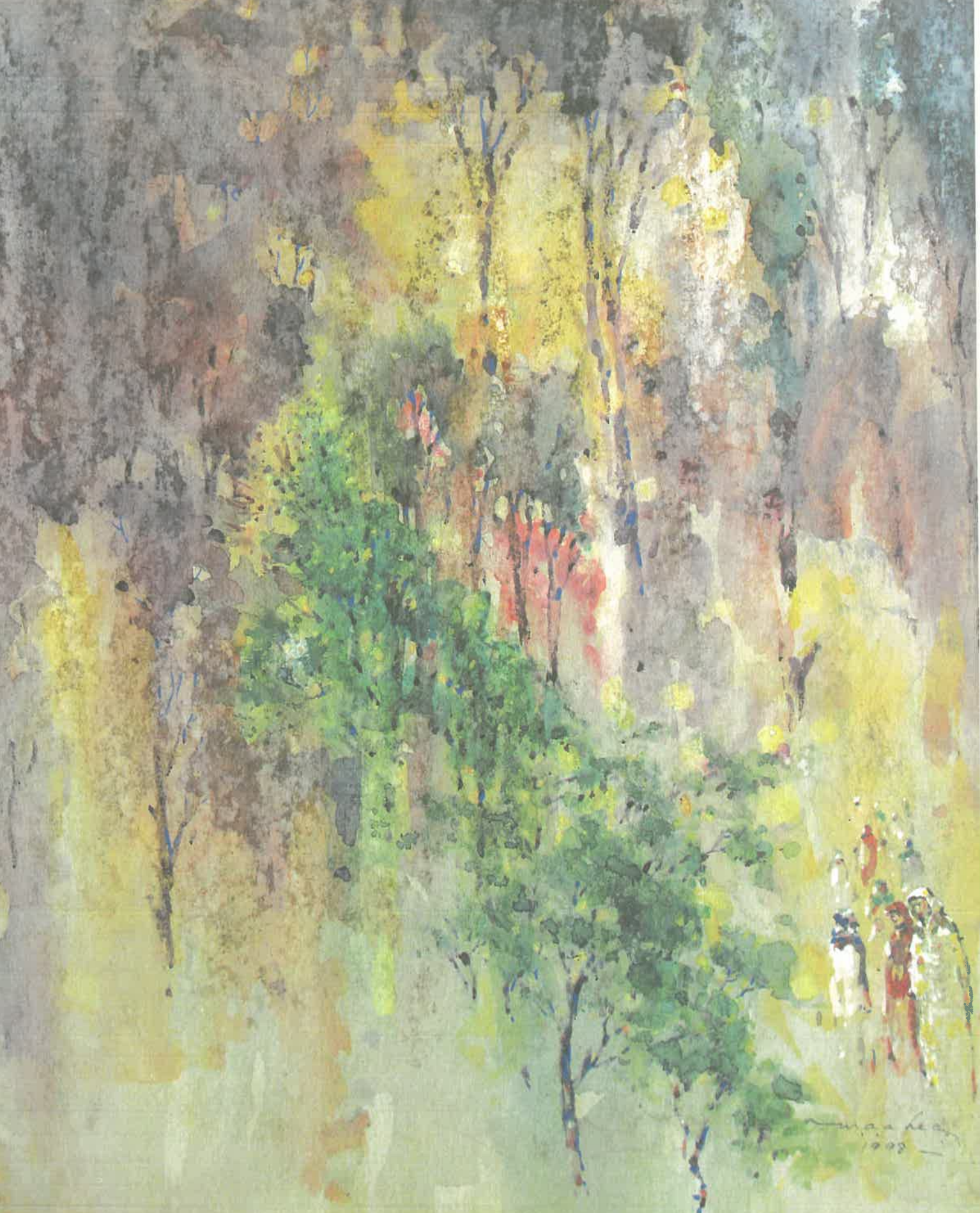


Plate 303





Plate 305



Plate 306



Plate 307

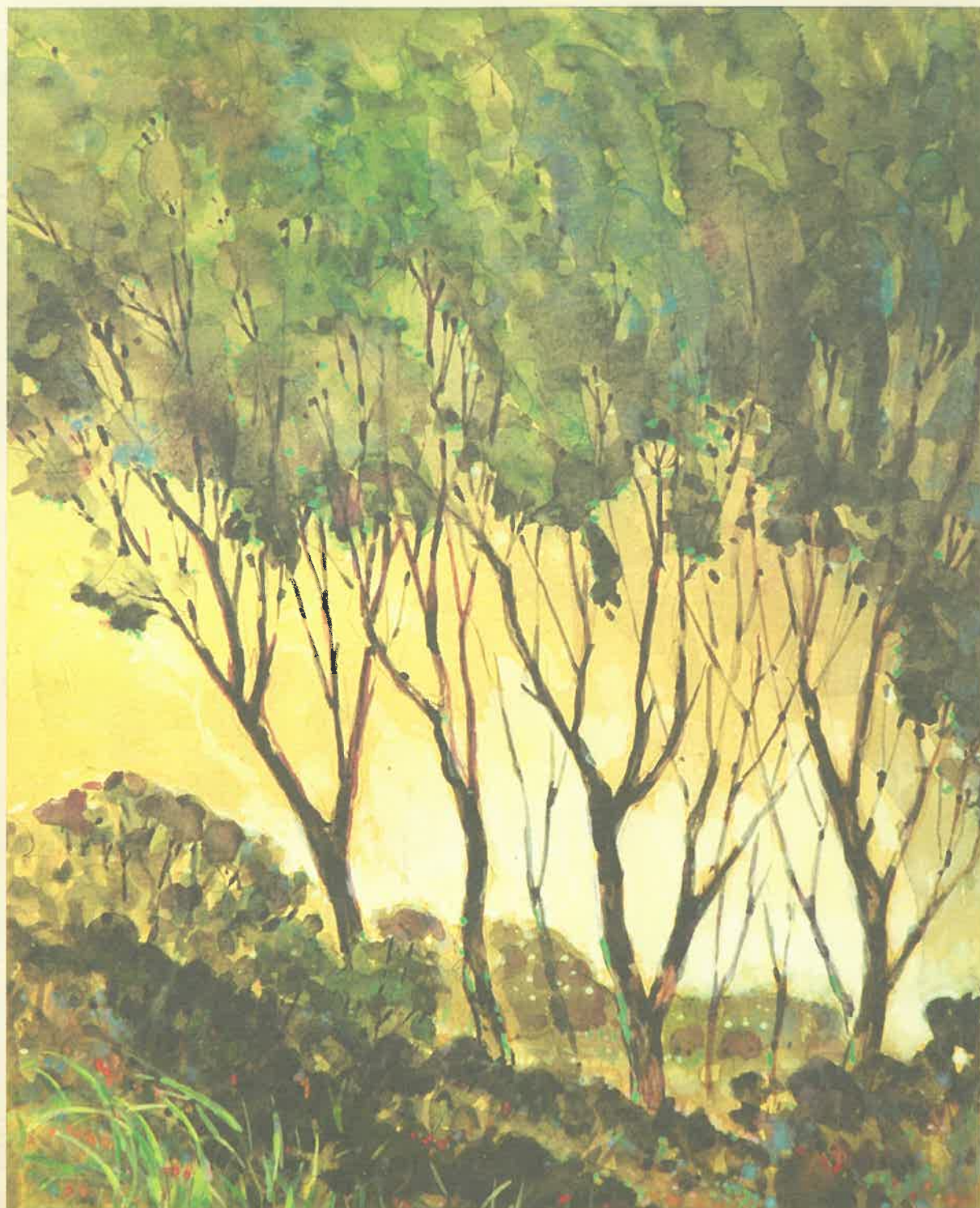


Plate 308



Plate 309



Plate 310



Plate 311



Plate 312



Plate 313



Plate 314



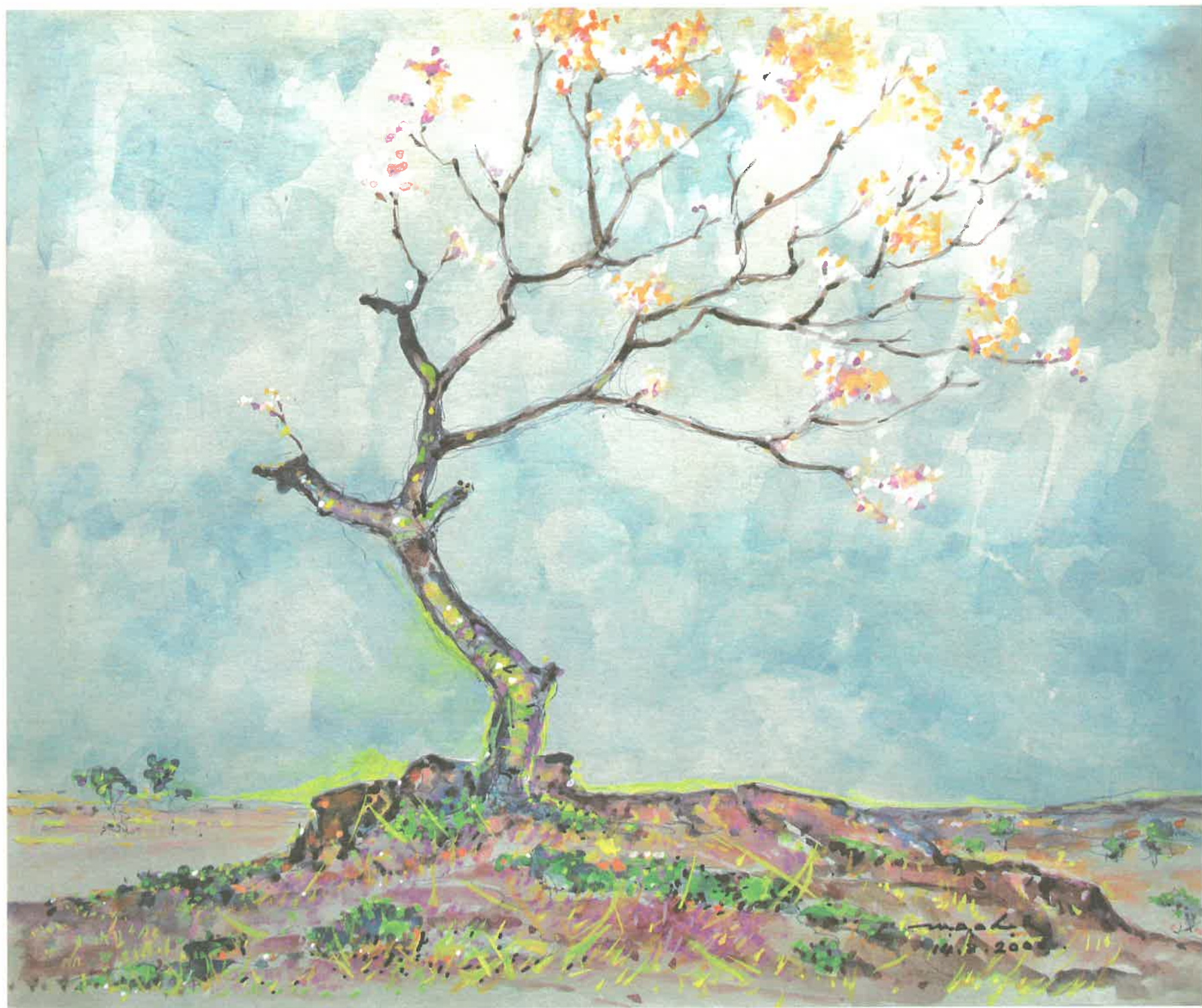


Plate 316





Plate 318



Plate 319



Plate 320



Plate 321



Plate 322



Plate 323



Plate 324



Plate 325



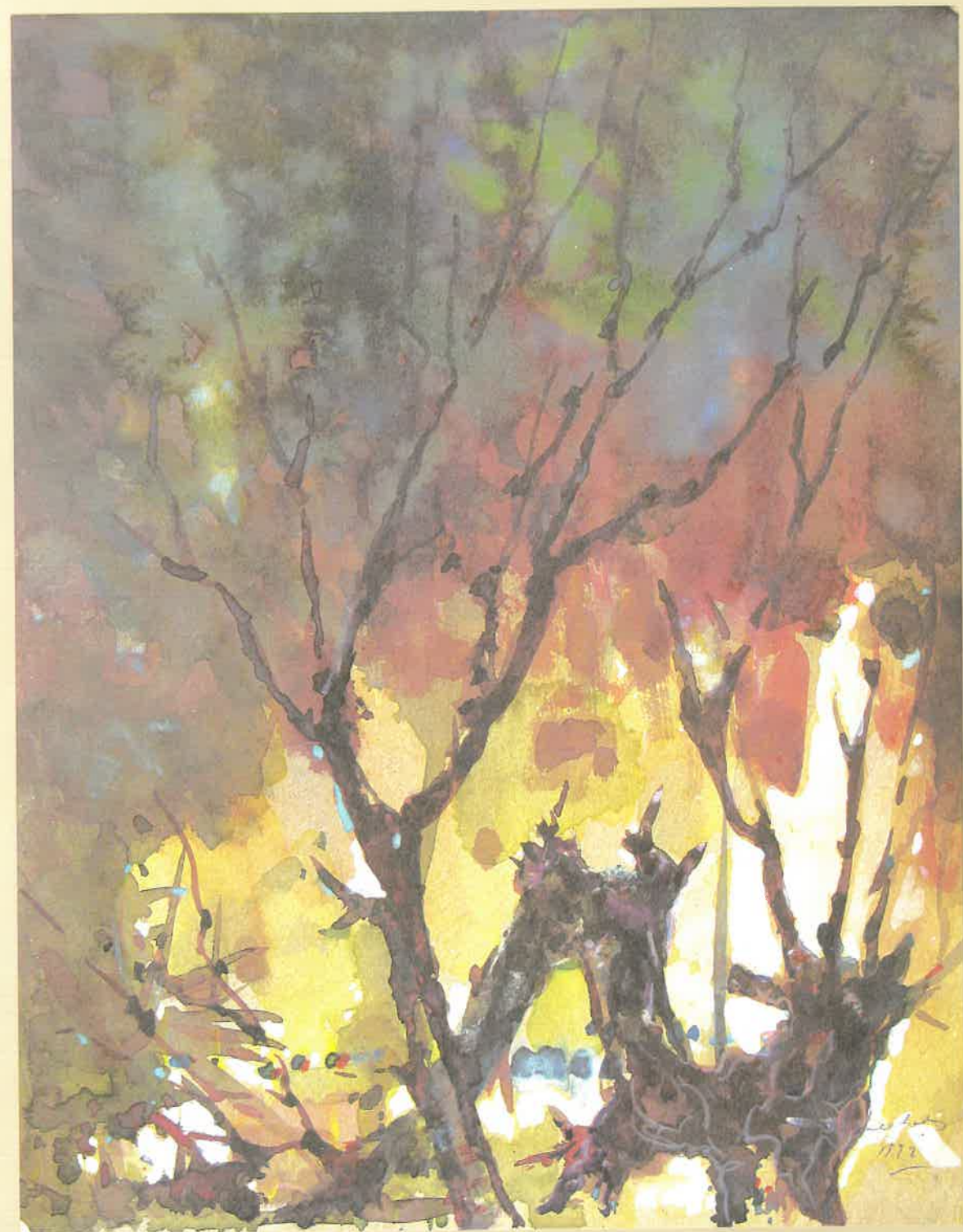


Plate 327



Plate 328



Plate 329

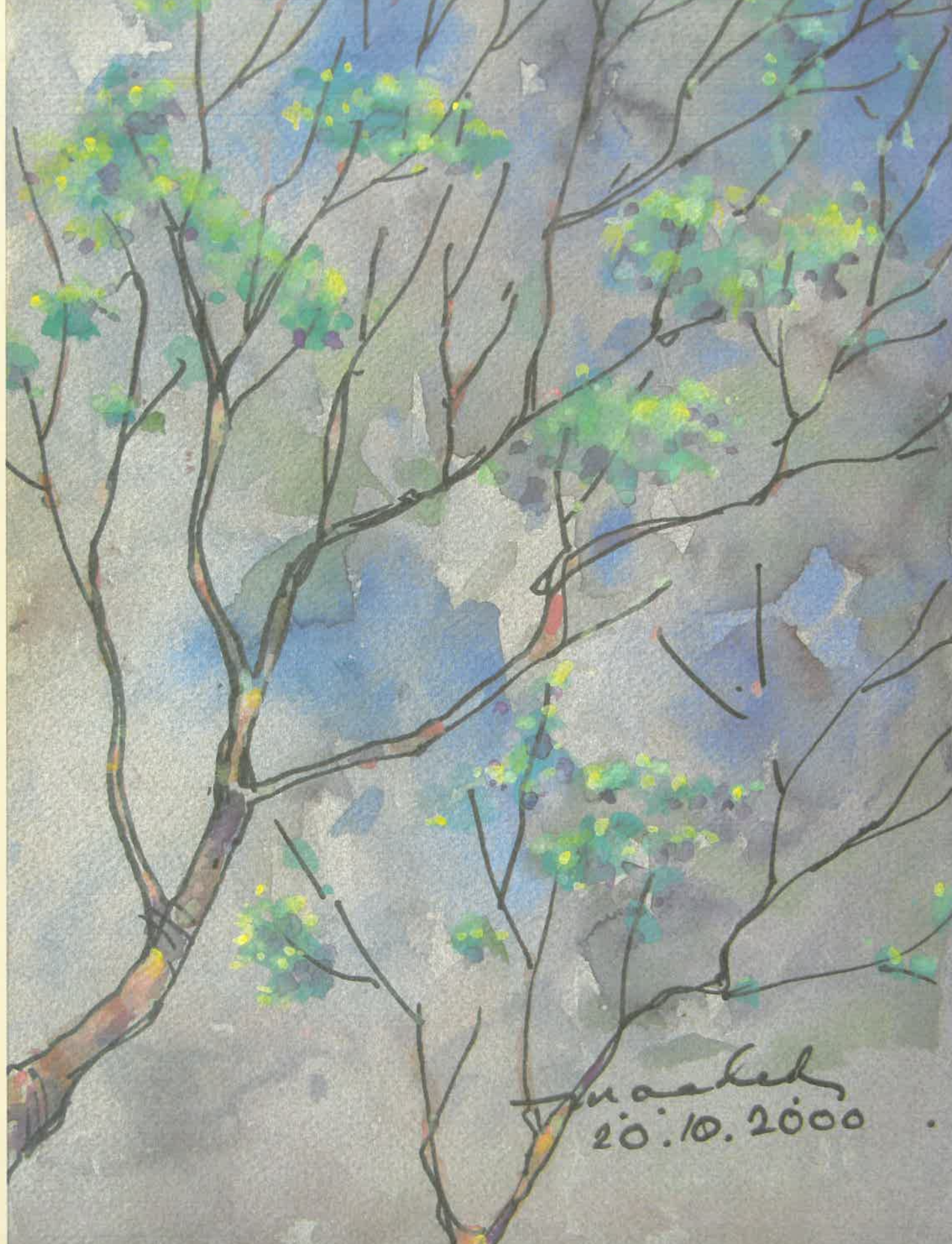




Plate 331



Plate 332



Plate 333





Plate 335



Plate 336



Plate 337



Plate 338



Plate 339



Plate 340



Plate 341



Plate 342



Plate 343



Plate 344



Plate 345



Plate 346



Plate 347



Plate 348



Plate 349



Plate 350



Plate 351



Plate 352



Plate 353



Plate 354



Plate 355



Plate 356



Plate 357





Plate 359





Plate 361







Plate 363



Plate 364



Plate 365



Plate 366



Plate 367



Plate 368

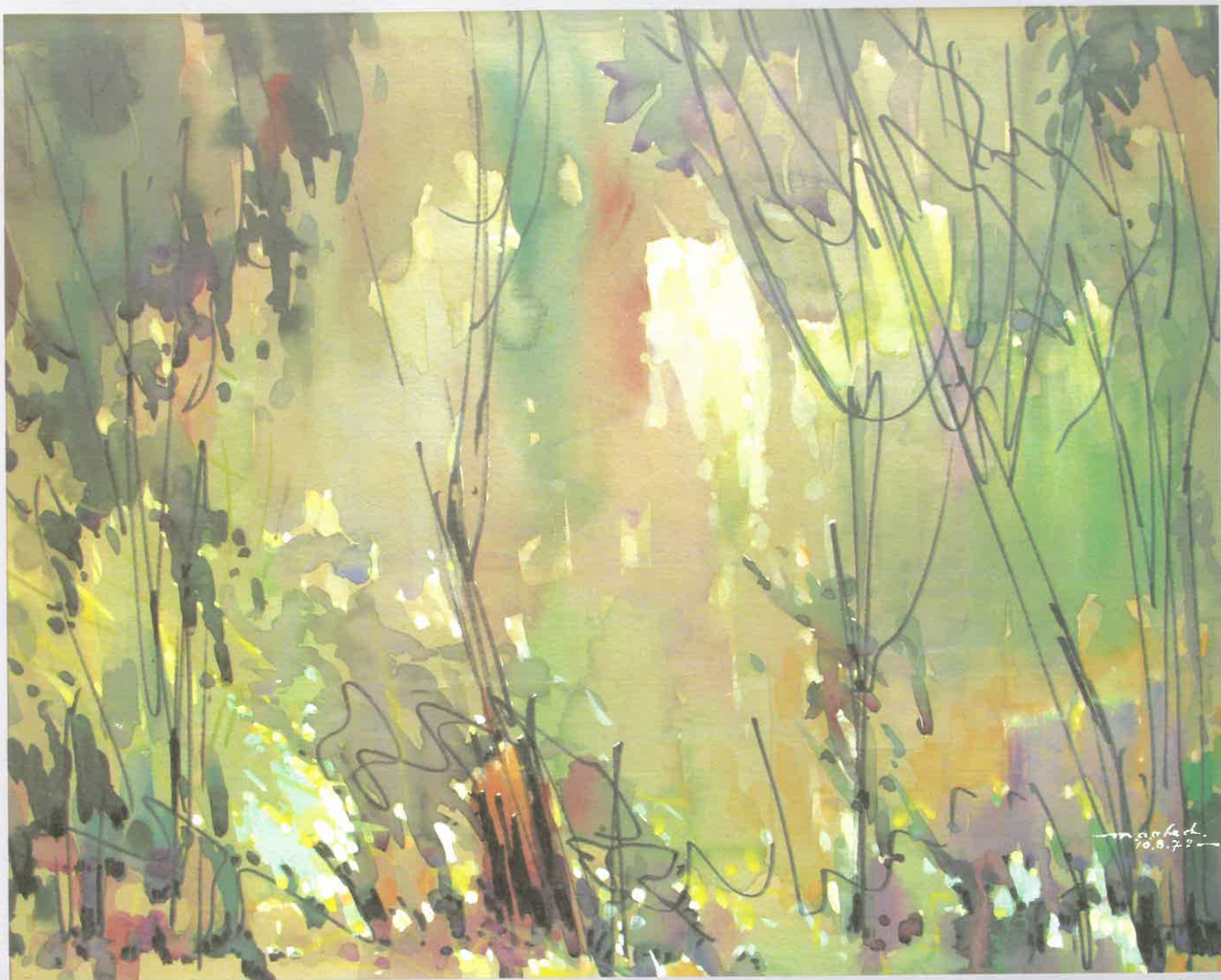


Plate 369



Plate 370

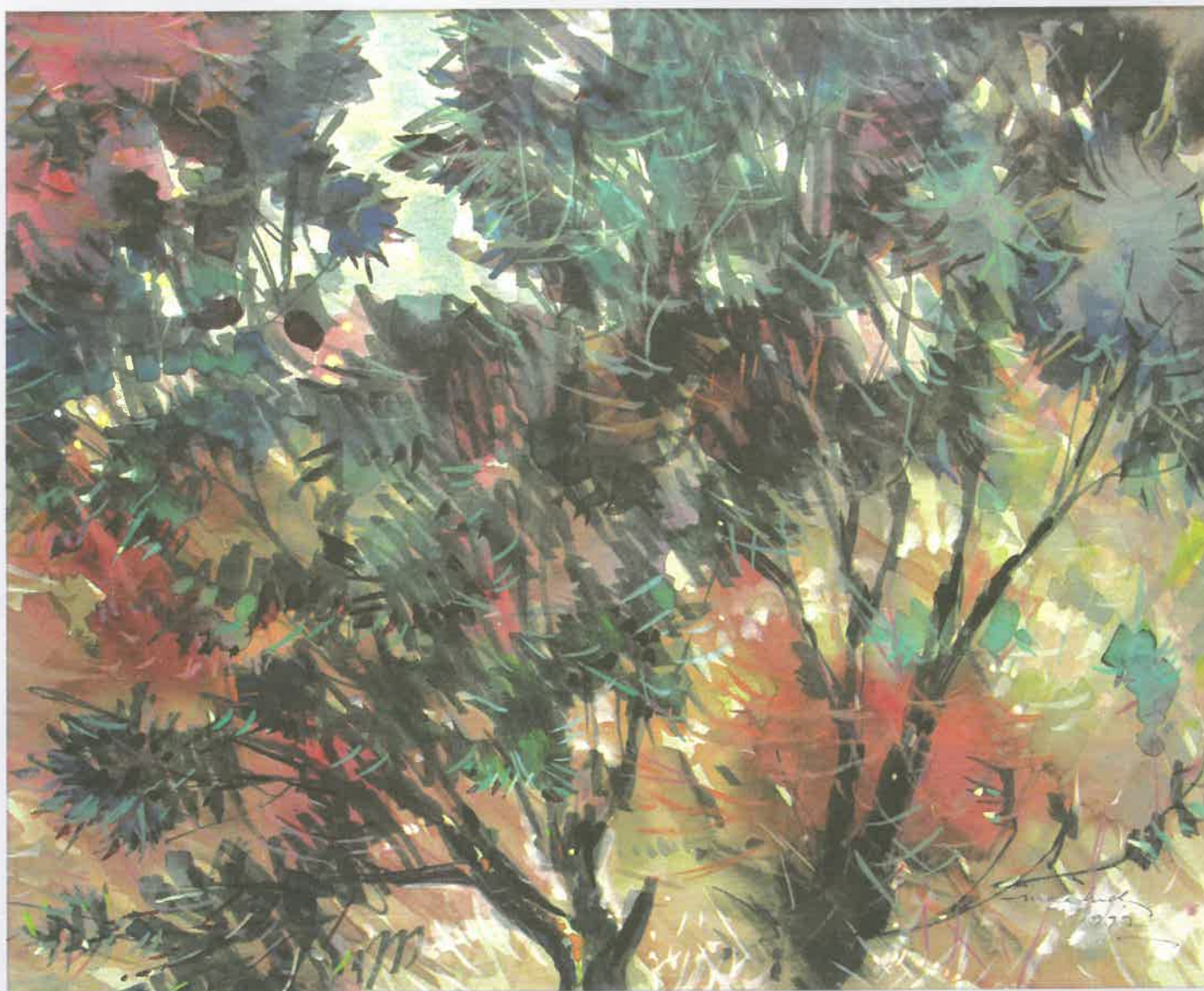


Plate 371





Plate 373



Plate 374



Plate 375

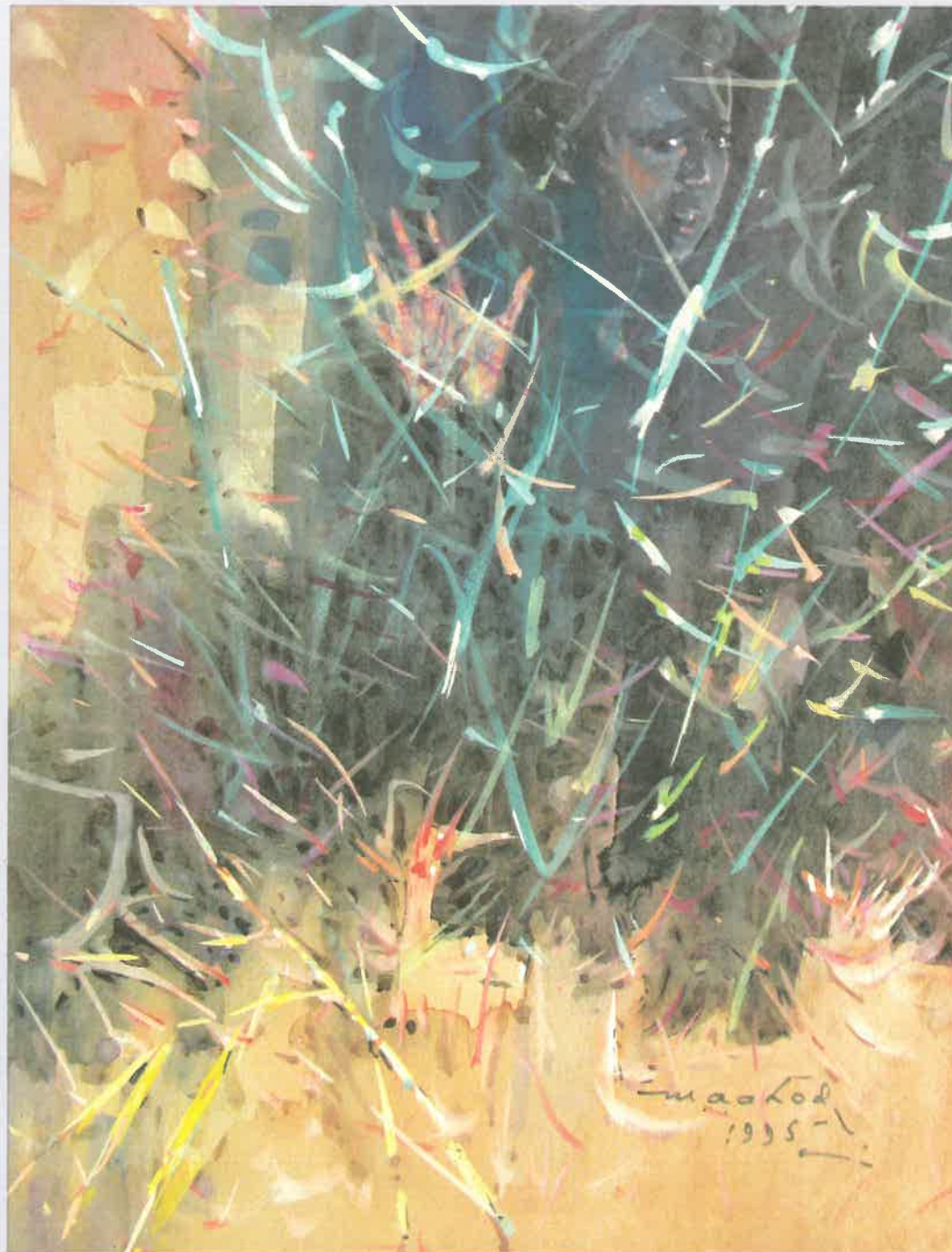


Plate 376

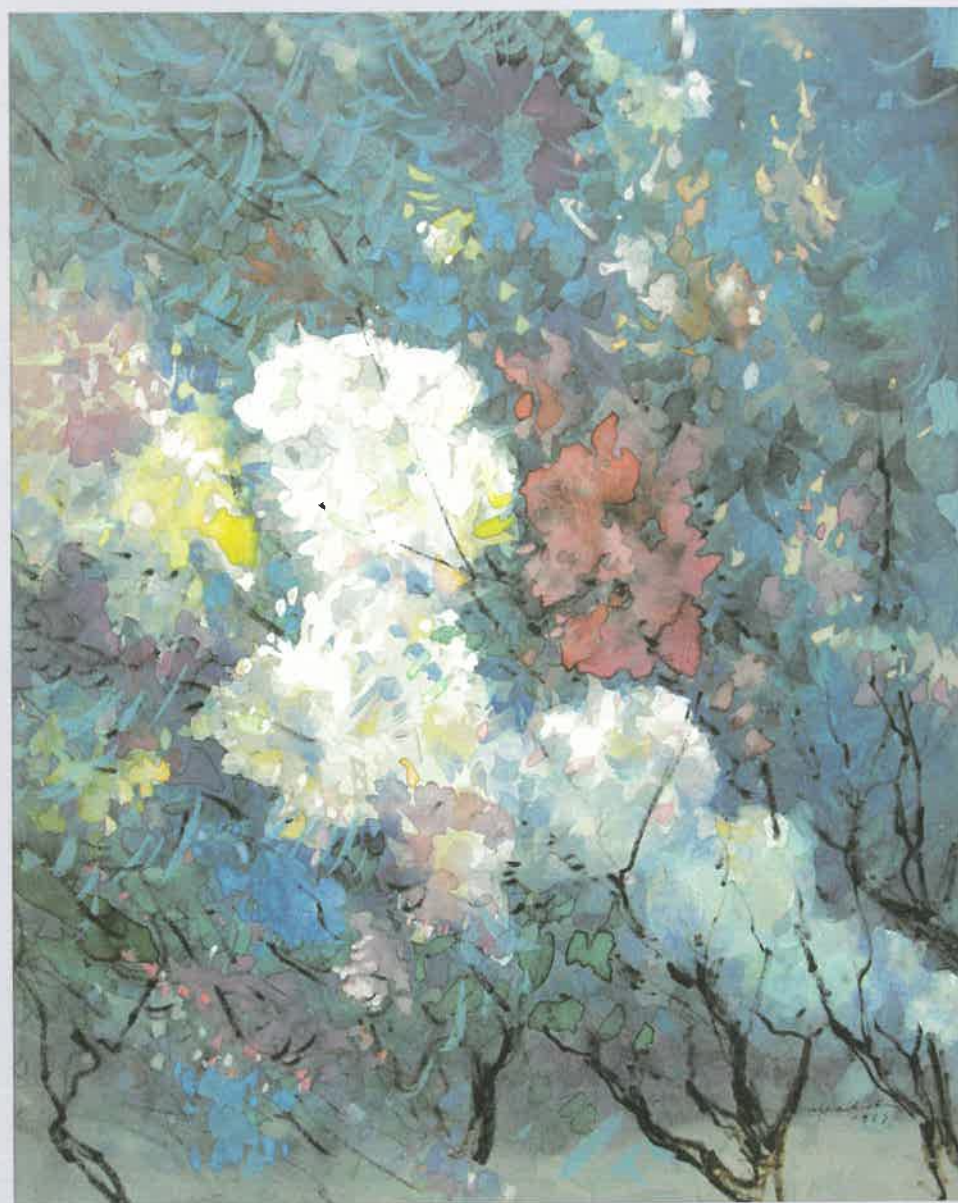


Plate 377



Plate 378



Plate 379



Plate 380

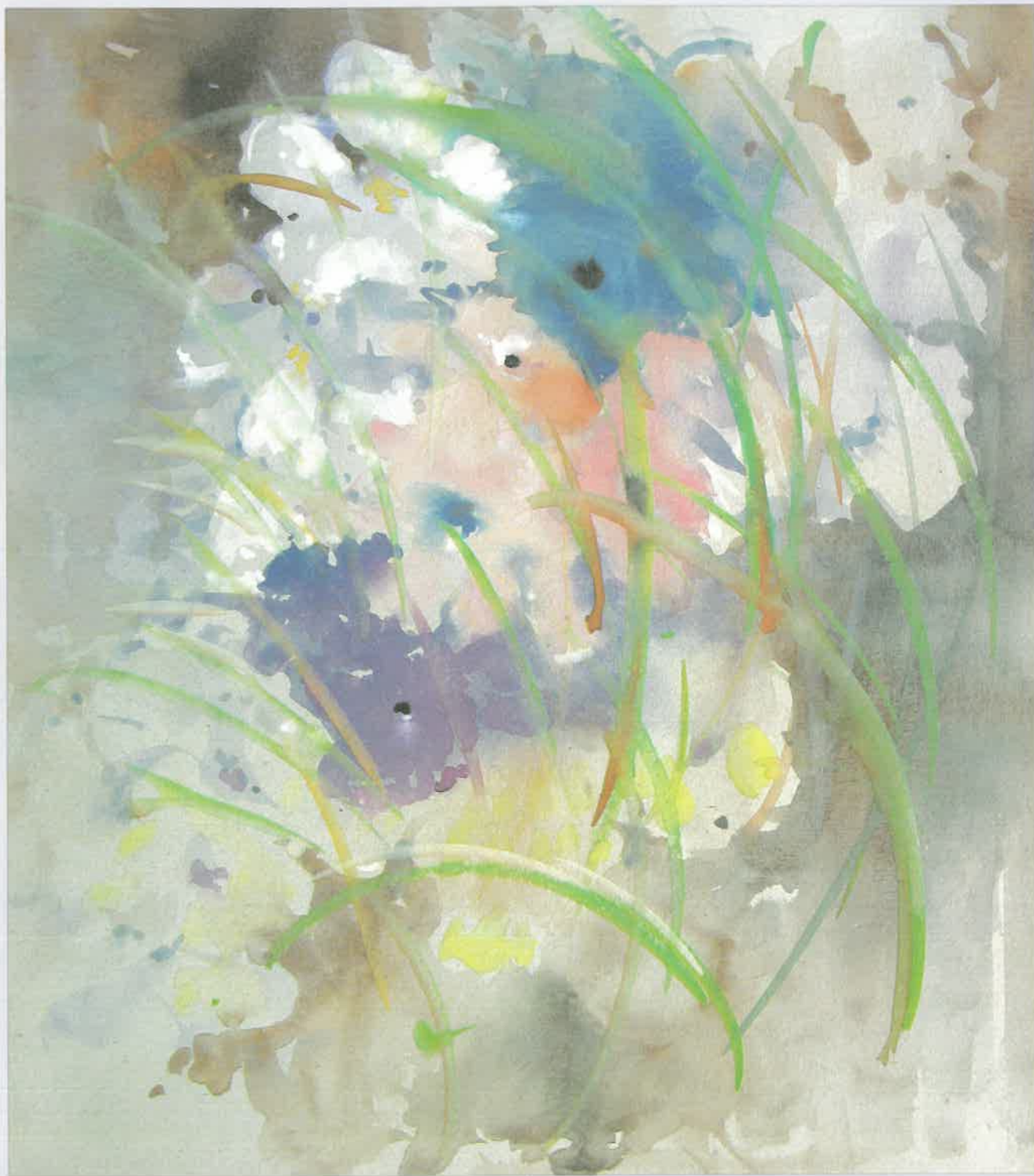


Plate 381



Plate 382



Plate 383



Plate 384



Plate 385



Plate 386



Plate 387

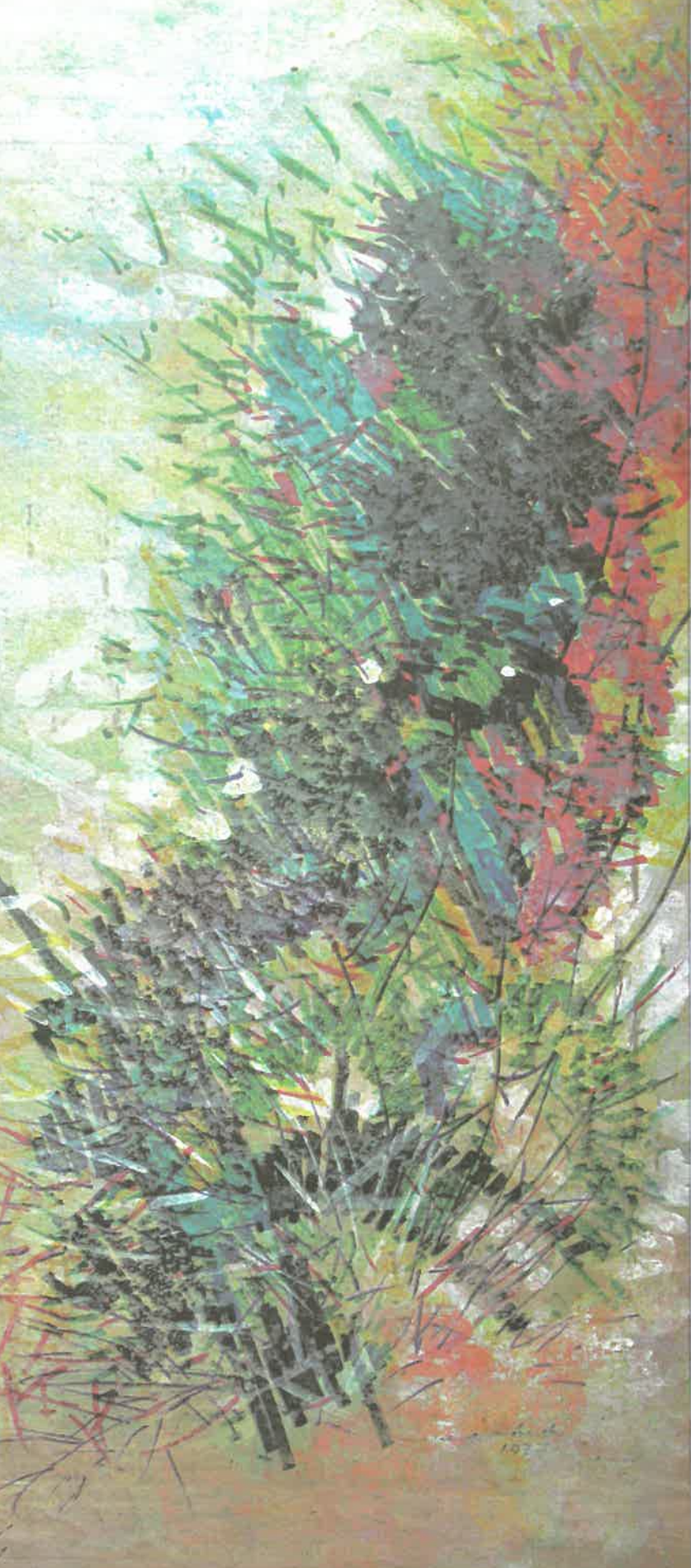


Plate 388



Plate 390



Plate 389



Plate 391



Plate 392



Plate 393



Plate 394



Plate 395



Plate 396



Plate 397



Plate 398



Plate 399



Plate 400



Plate 401



Plate 402



Plate 403

... In contrast to the morbid paintings of a decade earlier, these watercolour paintings are executed with spontaneous, swirling strokes of vibrant colours, exuberantly sprinkled and splashed in a joyous celebration of life.





Plate 405



Plate 406



Plate 407



Plate 408





Plate 410

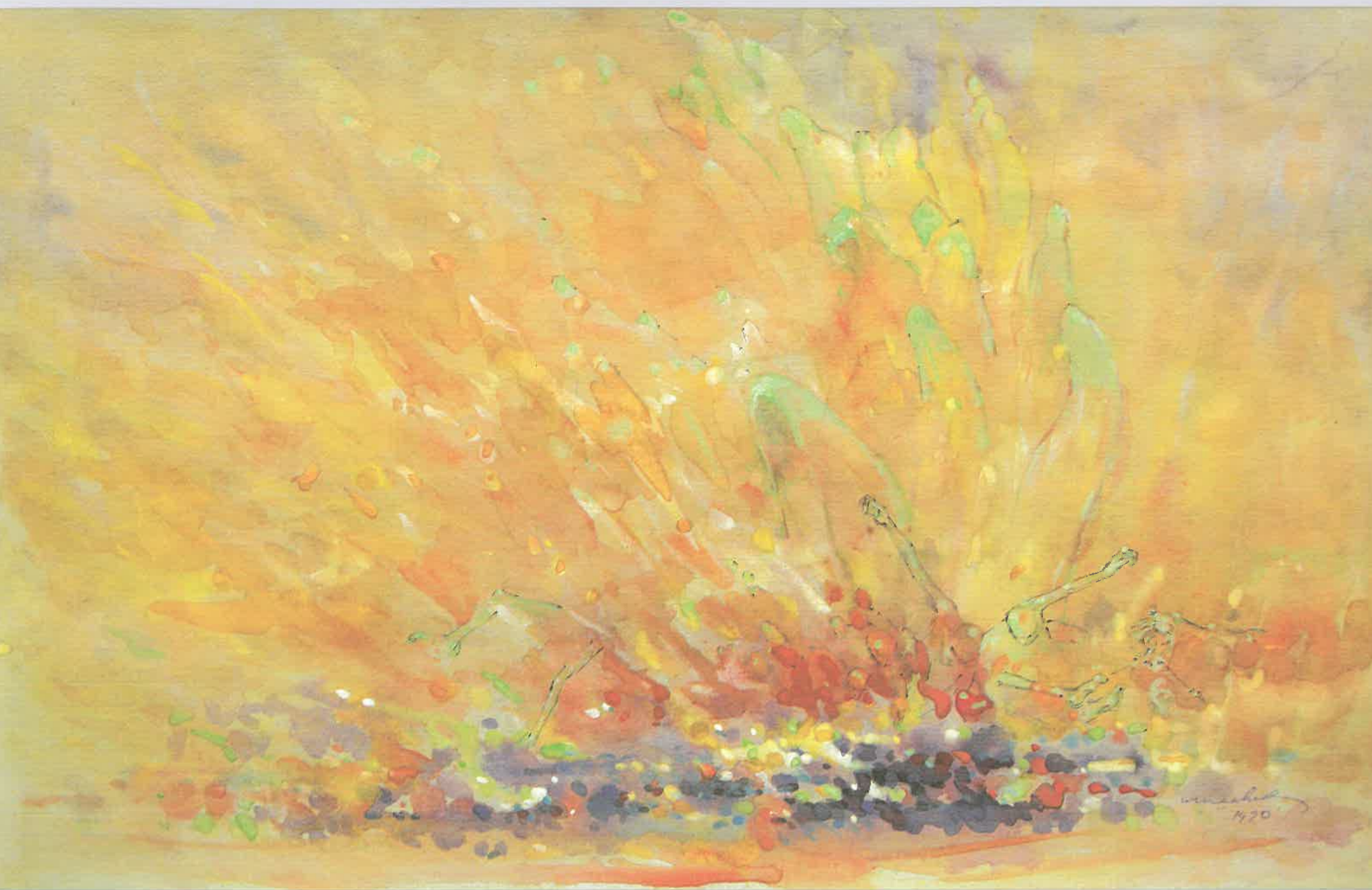




Plate 412



Plate 413



Plate 414





Plate 416



Plate 417



Chen
1992



Plate 418



Plate 419



Plate 420



Plate 421



Plate 422



Plate 423



Plate 424





Plate 426



Plate 428



Plate 427



Plate 429

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ahed at school

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ahed as architect

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ENDNOTES

1. Leonardo da Vinci; born in Vinci, Italy in 1452; High Renaissance painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, scientist, musician; died in Clos Luce, France in 1519.
2. *Renaissance*: (French: rebirth)[of classicism]; a period that began in Florence, Italy in 1400 and lasted in Europe until 1600, which is associated with tremendous artistic and intellectual achievements.
3. Louis Isidore Kahn; born in Estonia in 1901; Modern architect; died in New York, USA in 1974.
4. Alvar Henrik Aalto; born in Kuortane, Finland in 1898; Modern architect; died in Helsinki, Finland in 1976.
5. Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris; born in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland in 1887; Modern architect, painter; city planner; adopted the pseudonym "Le Corbusier" in 1920; died in Paris, France in 1965.
6. PPWD: Pakistan Public Works Department
7. Mehdi Ali Mirza; born in Hyderabad, India in 1912; architect; died in London, England in 1961.
8. Minoo Pirozshaw Mistry; born in Mumbai, India in 1912; architect; died in Karachi, Pakistan in 2006.
9. Rustom Sohrab Rustomjee; born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1917; architect.
10. Lorenzo de Medici; born in Florence, Italy in 1449; wool merchant, banker, philosopher, artistic benefactor; died in Florence, Italy in 1492.
11. Dr. Ahmed Mirza Jamil; born in Delhi, India in 1921; portraitist, calligrapher, graphic artist, inventor of Noori Nastaliq script.
12. Mirza Noor Ahmed; born in Delhi, India in 1894; painter, lithographer, miniaturist, calligrapher, horticulturist; died in Karachi, Pakistan in 1966.
13. A computerized form of the Urdu Nastaliq script.
14. Luis Romiz Barragan; born in Guadalajara, Mexico in 1902; Modern architect, engineer; died in Mexico City in 1988.
15. Oscar Ribeiro Niemeyer; born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1907; Modern architect, engineer.
16. Mukhtar Husain, "ICI Architect Series: Muhammad Abdul Ahed, Architect." *Archi Times*. February 2000. pp. 12-14.
17. Frank Lloyd Wright; born in Richland Center, Wisconsin, USA in 1867; Modern architect, product designer; died in Phoenix, Arizona, USA in 1959.
18. Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Arizona, USA; architecture school founded by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1932.
19. Squinch: One of several structural devices in architecture by which a square or polygonal room has its upper corners filled in to form the support for a dome.
20. Johnson Wax Administration Building, Racine, Wisconsin, USA; 1936-1951; designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.
21. Mukhtar Husain, "ICI Architect Series: Muhammad Abdul Ahed, Architect." *Archi Times*. February 2000. pp. 12-14.
22. Felix Candela; born in Madrid, Spain in 1910; Mexican architect, engineer; died in Durham, North Carolina, USA in 1997.
23. Pier Luigi Nervi, born in Sondrio, Italy in 1891; engineer; architect; died in 1979.
24. Eero Saarinen; born in Kirkkonummi, Finland in 1910; American architect, son of Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen; died in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA in 1961.
25. Mukhtar Husain, "ICI Architect Series: Muhammad Abdul Ahed, Architect." *Archi Times*. February 2000. pp. 12-14.
26. *Ibid*.
27. *Bauhaus* (German: house of building); a school that operated from 1919-33 in Germany, to teach architecture, fine arts and product design, which Mies headed from 1930-33.
28. Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe; born in Aachen, Germany in 1886; architect and furniture designer; headed the IIT from 1938 to 1958; died in Chicago, USA in 1969.
29. Mukhtar Husain, "ICI Architect Series: Muhammad Abdul Ahed, Architect." *Archi Times*. February 2000. pp. 12-14.
30. *Ibid*.

31. IIT: Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, USA.
32. SOM: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.
33. PEPAC: Pakistan Environmental Planning and Architectural Consultants.
34. Mukhtar Husain, "ICI Architect Series: Muhammad Abdul Ahed, Architect." Archi Times. February 2000. pp. 12-14.
35. Cave paintings in Chauvet, France; 32,000-28,000 BCE.
36. Mukhtar Husain, "ICI Architect Series: Muhammad Abdul Ahed, Architect." Archi Times. February 2000. pp. 12-14.
37. Frans Hals; born in Antwerp, Belgium in 1580; portrait painter; died in Haarlem, Netherlands in 1666.
38. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn; born in Leiden, Netherlands in 1606; portrait painter; died in Amsterdam, Netherlands in 1669.
39. Johannes Vermeer; born in Delft, Netherlands in 1632; portrait and interior painter; died in Delft, Netherlands in 1675.
40. John Constable; born in Suffolk, England in 1776; landscape painter; died in London, England in 1837.
41. Joseph Mallord William Turner; born in London, England in 1775; landscape and seascape painter; died in London, England in 1851.
42. Claude Oscar Monet; born in Paris, France in 1840; Impressionist painter; died in Giverny, France in 1926.
43. Hilarie-Germain-Edgar De Gas; born in Paris, France in 1834; Impressionist painter, photographer; died in Paris, France in 1917.
44. Paul Cezanne; born in Aix-en-Provence, France in 1839; Post Impressionist painter; died in Aix-en-Provence, France in 1906.
45. Jacob Isaacksz Van Ruisdael; born in Haarlem, Netherlands in 1628; landscape painter; died in Amsterdam, Netherlands in 1682.
46. Syed Sibtain Naqvi; born in Amroha, UP, India in 1925; architect; died in Karachi, Pakistan in 2001.
47. Pirzada Aslam Raza Siddiqui; born in Bijnaur, UP, India in 1928; architect.
48. Ismail Gulgee; born in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1926; painter,

calligrapher, engineer; died in Karachi, Pakistan in 2007.
49. A S Nagi; born in Amritsar, India in 1916; painter; died in Karachi, Pakistan in 2006.

50. Mukhtar Husain, "ICI Architect Series: Muhammad Abdul Ahed, Architect." Archi Times. February 2000. pp. 12-14.

51. Ab'ul Hasan Yamin al-Din Khusrow, popularly known as Ameer Khusrow Dehlavi; born in Badaun, Uttar Pradesh, India in 1253; Persian poet, composer, scholar; died in Delhi, India in 1325.

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CHRONOLOGY

1919	Born in Hyderabad, Deccan, India to Muhammad Abdus Salam and Yousuf-un-Nissa
1940	Begins architecture studies at the Sir J J School of Arts in Mumbai, India
1943	Completes architecture studies
1951	Receives Diploma in Architecture from the Leicester College of Arts and Technology in London, England and becomes Associate Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (ARIBA); returns home to Pakistan
1951-64	Works for the Pakistan Public Works Department (PPWD) in Karachi; Chief Architect (1958-64)
1957	Establishes the Institute of Architects Pakistan (IAP) with fellow architects
1958	Founds and teaches at the Government School of Architecture in Karachi with his architectural colleagues; Principal (1958-64)
1960	Becomes a Member of the American Hospital Association in Chicago
1964	Establishes Ahed Associates in Karachi
1968	Appointed as Honorary Consulting Architect by the Government of Pakistan for the completion of <i>Quaid-e-Azam's</i> mausoleum in Karachi
1970-90	Serves as a Member of the <i>Quaid-e-Azam</i> Memorial Fund Board (QMFB)
1971	Serves as a Jury Member for the International Design Competition for the Regent's Park Mosque and Islamic Centre in London; awarded the <i>Sitara-e-Khidmat</i> by the President of Pakistan
1977	Retires as Managing Partner of Ahed Associates, but continues as Founding and Advising Partner until 2001
2001	Passes away on the 1st of November in Karachi



mailed
29.9.73



Plate 431

خدا جمعگو ایسی خدائی نہ دے
 کہ اپنے سوا کچھ دیکھائی نہ دے

Plate 430

Plate 432

The Foundation for Museum of Modern Art (FOMMA) is a non-profit educational and cultural trust aimed at promoting the study and critical appreciation of contemporary visual arts in Pakistan. It has recently set up the FOMMA-DHA Art Centre (FDAC) in Karachi and is currently working to create an Art History & Documentation Centre (AHDC) as part of Karachi's upcoming Race Course Gardens project.

FOMMA is putting together available documentation on the contemporary arts in Pakistan as they have developed since the formation of the country in 1947; it is proposing to establish a Museum of Modern Art for which four 19th century structures have been allocated, to be converted into a Museums Complex.

Among other titles produced by FOMMA are the following:

Ali Imam: Man of the Arts by *Marjorie Husain*

Zubeida Agha: A Pioneer of Modern Art in Pakistan by *Musarrat Hasan*

Laila Shahzada: Exploring Inner Landscape by *Salwat Ali*

Art Views: Encounters with Artists in Pakistan by *Marjorie Husain*

Nagori: Voice of Conscience by *Amber Romasa*

Lubna Agha: Points of Reference by *Marcella Nesom Sirhandi*

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